

Rowell Heritage

The Rothwell Arts & Heritage Centre Magazine



Alan Mills Tribute Edition

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Issue 14.**

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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:
Alan Mills

G Davis. 2014

This has been a difficult issue to produce but I hope it will be a fitting tribute to three people who have recently died and who all made a special contribution to Rothwell.

The Heritage Centre will be holding a Macmillan Coffee Morning on October 1st from 10am and it is dedicated to the memory of Alan Mills. Everybody is welcome.

On a personal note I will be standing down as editor of this magazine after the publication of the November - December issue. I would therefore like to appeal for someone to come forward who is willing to take over the task. It is a voluntary post but a very worthwhile one.

Enquiries can be made to Ray Davis the Centre's Manager, either by calling in or by using the contact page on our website:

www.rothwellheritage.org.uk/contact

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who have kindly contributed articles and photographs over the last two years. Thanks also to our advertisers for their financial support. Hopefully, the magazine will continue and will go from strength to strength.

***Deadline for November - December issue is
Tuesday 25th October 2016***

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.

ALAN JOHN MILLS

12th July 1955 – 21st July 2016

On Monday 8th August at 12.30pm there was a funeral at Holy Trinity Church which was most certainly one of the biggest in its history. Hundreds were present and there was standing room only from well before the scheduled start of the hour long service. Squires Hill too was crowded with people, some quite elderly, but all were prepared to stand for a considerable length of time in order to pay their respects to a man who had meant so much to them. As the bell tolled, there was a real sense of sadness, - a sadness that had not lifted since the announcement of Alan's untimely death in July. Rowell Fair Society members stood as guards of honour at the church door and the funeral procession itself was accompanied by ceremonial Halbadiers. Alan's insignia as Bailiff to the Lord of the Manor was carried solemnly on a velvet cushion and the large crowd stood in total silence as the cortege walked slowly from the White House.

The hymns chosen were 'Lead us heavenly Father, lead us', 'Make me a channel of your peace', and 'How great Thou art' which was Alan's favourite and which he sang with Paul Crosby in Holy Trinity at the Rowell Fair Civic Service in July 2013. The tributes from Alan's brother Duncan Mills and his close friend Karl Sumpter, who is the current Mayor of Rothwell, were incredibly moving but also had humorous touches to make everyone smile and that is exactly how Alan himself would want to be remembered, - with a smile. Paul Crosby played the guitar and sang the poignant words of 'So long, my friend...It's been an honour'. The address from Canon John Westwood was just perfect for the occasion and everybody outside joined in fully with the service. The Bailiff's horse, waiting patiently at the bottom of Squires Hill, added his own voice a couple of times and when the funeral was over, many of the people present made their way to Rothwell Cemetery for the burial. It was a moving and extraordinary day and showed the deep feelings that this town had for Alan. His son Lloyd has said "I think the people of Rothwell loved him as much as he loved them". That love was never more evident than on Monday 8th August.



Photo, Geoff Davis

Alan John Mills was born in Broughton and didn't actually move to Rothwell until 1997. He set up his stonemason's business at the Oddfellows Hall in 2000 and soon made an impact on the town by becoming involved in so many aspects of its life, from council to charity work. He served on numerous committees and local boards such as the Rothwell Preservation Trust, the Orton Trust and the Citizen's Welfare Committee. He was a member of the Town Twinning Association, had served as a school governor, was an elected member of Rothwell Town Council and Kettering Borough Council, had been the Mayor of Rothwell and next year was to become the Mayor of Kettering. Alan was Chairman of the Rowell Fair Society and Bailiff to the

Lord of the Manor. He was instrumental in raising funds to pay for a school crossing attendant on Rushton Road and he was always willing to do his bit for charity. He belonged to Kettering Huxloe Rotary Club and earlier this year received one of the highest accolades when he became a Paul Harris Fellow in recognition of his charity work.

Brian 'Noddy' Martin, the presenter of a 2 hour tribute programme on SplinterWood Rock'n'Roll Radio (26th July) commented that you could ring Alan up and say "We're doing a charity event" and he'd immediately respond with "I'll be there". He was never afraid of getting his hands dirty either and could be seen helping to look after the library garden and carrying out the laborious task of wheeling containers of water there to keep the plants alive in hot weather. It was also Alan who was so determined to keep the public toilets open when there was a funding crisis, that he not only locked and unlocked them but even cleaned them himself. He never complained, was unfailingly good humoured and had time for everyone.

Alan will be remembered too for his deep love of music and he was still performing in February this year when he entertained a large crowd at Wicksteed Park. He achieved fame with Coast to Coast and had a Top 10 hit with '(Do) the Hucklebuck' in 1981. Alan had left the band just before this single was released so he didn't perform on Top of the Pops but it is his voice that can still be heard on the record. Fellow band member Eugene 'Sonnie' Torlot who played the saxophone, said recently that if Alan had remained in the group he was sure that Coast to Coast would have gone on to do bigger and better things.



Photo, Bud Smith



Photo, TNM Guitars

Alan was involved with Rusti Steel and the Star Tones in more recent years and played on three tracks of their 2014 album 'Watch Out!' which was released by Western Star. He was also the writer of 'My Train's a-Comin'. Lloyd Mills, Alan's son, is a guitarist with the group.

At the start of the tribute on SplinterWood Radio, guest Sonnie Torlot (who now performs as Sonny and the Honeydippers) said "You couldn't be down in Alan's company so tonight we're going to keep it bright and cheerful." It was a very emotional programme but was full of happy memories too and Sonnie added "If Alan was going to leave a legacy it would be to enjoy every day. I know he did and everyone around him did". Paul Crosby (aka Rusti Steel), who also took part in the tribute, said of Alan "He was a true gentleman and would help anybody with any need. He never ever thought about himself. He was a fantastic singer but it was never all about him. He would always encourage other people and would do anything for anybody".

Bernie Keith of Radio Northampton dedicated part of his Rock'n'Roll Heaven Show to Alan Mills on Saturday 23rd July and he also wrote the following on the show's Facebook page on 21st July:

I'm so very sad to hear of the passing of Alan Mills today. Alan loved his rock'n'roll, was of course in Coast to Coast and played with many many people. More than that, he was an exceptionally nice human being: kind, decent, modest, funny and incredibly helpful. His hometown of Rothwell gained so much from his largesse and many people there are heartbroken today. He helped so many young people in music, driven by a real passionate sense of community. The first time I met him...well, I didn't really "meet" him: I was stood behind him at a Jets gig, feeling too inadequate and nervous to go and speak. Then when I did, some time later, I found him to be so thoroughly decent that it left an indelible mark on me. The way he conducted himself was inspirational and he did so much for both the music and county that I love. His huge heart and generosity of spirit will be remembered forever. Rest in peace, Alan. Bernie xx

These are just a few of the many heartfelt tributes on The Facebook page dedicated to Alan Mills:

If you were to ask me to describe a true gentleman, my reply would be that we've just lost one. Alan Mills was a true gentleman through and through. He lived to help others, always putting others before himself. He had the God-given gift of brightening up every room he walked in, spreading happiness to those around about him ... you just knew he genuinely cared about you and wanted to help and encourage folks wherever he was. He was a super-talented singer with great charisma, but was so modest that he'd never talk of his own talents but rather he would encourage and extol other musicians. I thank God that He blessed me with Alan's friendship – he was a true and dear friend and I feel very proud and privileged to have walked with him for a while. So long, dear friend ... it's been an honour! Paul Crosby

Beautifully written, my friend. He was all of those things. A true supporter of all we do. There'll never be another like him but, as you say, it was wonderful to have a person like that in your life no matter how long you have together. I wish there were more Alans in this world because it'd be a better place. Darrel Higham

Saddened to hear of Alan Mills' passing. Have some great memories of working on his guitars many years ago. A great man, always smiling, always enthusiastic. He helped me more than once, nothing was too much trouble. Rest in peace Alan, our thoughts are with your family. Phil Norsworthy

Very sad to hear of Alan Mills passing and just wanted to thank him for his amazing support last year to raise more than £3,000 for Kettering General Hospital Charity Funds by performing with his 'Coast to Coast' Band FREE OF CHARGE! I will always remember him for his kindness, generosity and charisma. I hope you are now playing to packed audiences in Heaven RIP xxx thinking of his family and friends at this time. Shirley Newman

Today we said farewell to a true gentleman and friend to all of Rothwell. Alan did so much for us over the years and we will miss him. We will never forget you Alan and thank you for all your help. Rothwell Citizens Welfare Committee. Pat Heald

I've been thinking about my old mate Alan Mills. Our lives took us in different directions and we didn't meet for a good number of years. However, when we met again he was as friendly and welcoming as he had been all those years ago. It appears to me that Alan's musical, political and community works seem as nothing compared to the personality of the man himself. I remember being at his house when he was living on Shire Lodge in Corby. It was early morning and Alan was ready to go horse riding. Someone rang the doorbell. Alan opened the door and his dog escaped, disappearing into the estate. Al came back and said he couldn't go outside after the dog because he was wearing jodhpurs. The man could perform in front of any crowd but he couldn't be seen in jodhpurs in Corby! Fair play! Bob Gorman

So sad to hear Alan Mills has passed away. I will always remember his kindness and gentleness when he made our baby daughter, Phoebe's gorgeous headstone. Rip Alan xx Jacqui Tamplin

Alan shall surely rest in peace having touched the lives of so many people in so similar a fashion. Life cut far too short for a man with so much warmth and generous affection to share, it's just not fair. Alan was a talented musician who loved to entertain but also was an incredible skilled craftsmen in stone masonry, all round building, and restoration. Alan was a thinker, a calm collected character, sometimes an amusing mimic with such a quick wit that made me laugh until my jaws ached. He was definitely kind and generous. Alan has played his part very well and I am so grateful for my memory of him. Thoughtful best wishes of course to Karen and all his family to hopefully help them through his passing and their loss. His memory will live on. Philip Haynes

Thinking today as we heard the sad news "Thank you Alan Mills" for letting us be part of your life, for the charity events you helped us do, your music and your tireless efforts for Rothwell people, you will always be in our hearts. Our thoughts go out to Karen, Lloyd, Jordan, Casey and all the extended Mills families. You will be sadly missed but you'll always be around through your music. If I could choose a fitting song for you it would be "Stairway to Heaven" because every step would be filled with the greatest musicians greeting you! May you rest in peace as your memory lives on. Love Gill & Chris Gill Hill

Many thanks also for his support of Cransley Hospice and for making such fabulous music. He will be very much missed. X Terry Young.



Photo, Terry Neil McArthur, TNM Guitars

Alan remained positive and strong throughout his illness. He was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2013 and died on 21st July which was exactly 3 years to the day from the time he first fell ill; sadly it was his daughter Casey's birthday too. He was a devoted family man, happily married to Karen and very proud of his three children. Lloyd had followed in his musical footsteps while Jordan had taken over the stonemason's business. All were married, - Casey most recently in 2015, and Alan was thrilled to have two grandchildren, with another two on the way when he died. Poignantly, Lloyd and Monique's daughter Zara May Mills was born on August 10th, just two days after the funeral. Alan was so determined not to let anybody down that he somehow managed to take part in the Proclamation Ceremony on May 23rd (assisted by Bob Denton), attend a Buckingham Palace garden party on May 25th and be present at the judging of the Rowell Fair Tart Competition on Saturday 28th. His condition deteriorated at this point but he remained smiling and good humoured to the end, a clear favourite with his nurses too. When Alan began his duties as Bailiff for the last time at that unearthly hour on Proclamation Monday, the people around him sang "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow". He was exactly that, - a jolly good fellow.....and so say all of us!

S.D.



Photos, G Davis

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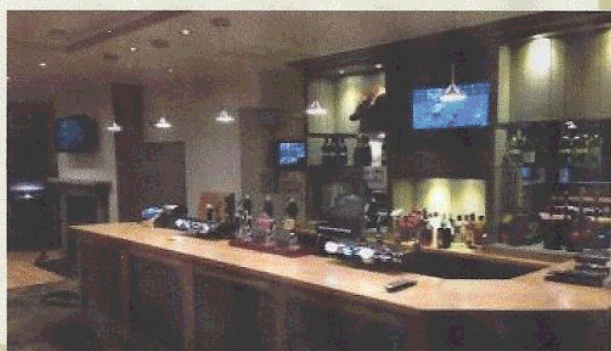
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Dr. Gerald Gibbons O.B.E

by Helen Brown (nee Chapman)



Our family doctor, throughout my childhood in the forties and fifties, was Doctor Gibbons. He lived and worked from his house at the top of Tresham Street. His doctor's surgery was part of his house. The waiting room contained an assortment of odd chairs for patients who were waiting to see him and the only magazines to look at were a few old, tattered copies of 'Punch'. There was no appointment system, no receptionist and it was up to each patient to remember who was in the waiting room so that no-one 'jumped the queue'. There was either a deathly hush in the waiting room or lively laughter and gossip, depending on who was in there. As soon as one person exited the inner sanctum (i.e. the surgery) then the next person went in to see the doctor. In the surgery, Dr. Gibbons sat behind a large desk. Facing him were two chairs for the patients, and behind the chairs was a small gas fire, with flickering blue flames which hissed and gave off a gassy smell. In front of the fire, Dr. Gibbons' dog lay curled up – I think it was a terrier.

Dr. Gibbons was a small, stout man who called 'a spade a spade' – he didn't mince his words. He had dark hair and a small moustache. He liked to smoke a cigarette. As well as running his doctor's practice at Rothwell, he also performed surgery at Kettering General Hospital. He was held in very high esteem by all Rowellians; he was a kind man who took an interest in the lives of his patients and their families. On Rowell Fair Sunday each year, Dr. Gibbons proudly led the St. John Ambulance Brigade cadets in the procession for the blessing of the fair. The cadets all looked very smart in their uniforms. I remember that Misses Gladys and Alice Smith were in the procession as they were the officers/ teachers of the Brigade. There were several different categories of cadets - Men and Boys as well as Senior and Junior Girls. Carole Atter led the cadets and held the flag (photo shown of her walking past Lingley's shop in Well Lane). Other members of the Brigade who were part of the procession were - Mr. Tom Sturges, Mr. Fred Grantham, Alan Glover, Donald Grantham, Ann Rowlett, Reita Houghton, Jennifer Johnson, Janice Chambers, Jennifer Souter, Maureen Herbert, Wendy Baxter, Jean Scotney, June Spencer and Margaret King. Jayne Atter, Margot Panther and Eileen Wells were younger members. There were of course, many more than those I've named, as it was a very popular interest for young people at that time. Ann Rowlett thinks that Dr. Gibbons may have been involved in the men's/boys section of the St. John Ambulance Brigade and that he also invigilated at some of the exams.

On a personal note, I remember one very cold, dark, snowy night in January, going out to play with my older sister Dorothy and the rest of the Crispin Street gang of girls. We went down the rec. and made a huge slide from the compacted snow. In those post war years most of us had Blakey's segs on our shoes. These were boomerang shaped pieces of metal which our dads nailed on to the heels and toes of our shoes to make them last longer.



After we'd all slid on the snow for about five minutes, it turned to a strip of ice and the metal segs on the bottom of our shoes helped us to whizz down the slide at a phenomenal speed. We each took it in turns and didn't have a care in the world. We didn't feel the bitter cold as we were racing from the end of our ice slide to join the queue at the front to have another go. It was so exhilarating and exciting to be out in the dark under the black starry sky. It would have only been about half past six but it seemed like midnight, it was so dark and cold. We were fearless and invigorated!

I still remember distinctly taking my turn on the slide and falling over at the end of it. There must have been a large stone or brick beneath the snow at the end of the slide and I banged my face on it. I remember seeing stars for the first time in my life.....and they were not the stars in the sky. I lay there at the bottom of the slide and the Crispin Street girls thought I was fooling around and continued to play on the slide and ignored me. I eventually managed to sit up and my sister Dorothy shrieked in alarm and fright when she saw my face. I had cut my eye and it was bleeding profusely. Poor Dorothy knew she would get into trouble from my parents for not looking after me, and was extremely worried.

All of the girls helped to take me home and my mother took one look at my eye and immediately took me to see Dr. Gibbons. I remember it so well, as the surgery had just closed. Mum went to the doctor's front door and knocked. Dr. Gibbons answered the door, took one look at me and said to my mother, "What has she done this time Nancy?" We went into his surgery – the spluttering gas fire was still on and the dog was lying next to it. Dr. Gibbons examined the cut above my left eye, declared that I had been lucky as I could have lost my sight, and then stitched up the cut. He told me that I would have a 'boxer's shiner' the following day – and he was right!

My sister Joan remembers going to Dr. Gibbons' surgery, when she was in her early twenties. She needed a vaccination which was injected into her upper arm. Dr. Gibbons told her that his previous patient, a young man, had a naked woman tattooed on his upper arm; – the doctor said to her, "I just didn't know where to put the needle!"

Many thanks to Ann Rowlett and Carole Page (nee Atter) for their help in naming some of the St. John Ambulance Brigade cadets and especially to Carole for providing the original photograph showing her holding the flag.



Tresham House photo by John Sharman

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NORMAN RICHARD MASON

24th March 1928 – 21st July 2016



Norman was so proud of his hometown of Rothwell and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of its history and people. He was a founder member of the Heritage Centre and wrote a column in the 'Down Your Way' section of the Northants Evening Telegraph for many years. Norman also contributed to the 'Rothwell People Remember' spoken archive which was the excellent project conceived by Maurice Goodwin and Elvin Royall in 2001. The recorded words of local people were collated into a publication, printed in 2003 and which can be seen at the Heritage Centre.

A few extracts (in italics) have been included here as a tribute to Norman. They illustrate his remarkable memory and keen sense of humour.

I was born in 1928 at 34 Jubilee Street at 12 noon on Saturday 24th March. I know the time because my family told me I let out my first yell just as J.T. Butlin's shoe factory hooter sounded the end of work.

....I finished up with five sisters spread over a period of 20 years. June was my eldest sister, followed by Janice, Pam, Margaret and Ann. Ann was born while I was doing National Service in Gibraltar. I was rather wicked because when my Mum wrote to tell me I had got another baby sister I sent her a letter saying "Dear Mum, drown it".

Norman attended Victoria Infants School from the age of 4 and then went on to Rothwell County Junior School (now known as Gladstone Street School). At the age of 11 he was offered a place at the Central School in Kettering but his father wouldn't let him go and he therefore stayed on at his Rothwell school until he was just over 13 yrs old and wanting to get a job. Norman then went to work at the Co-op Boot Factory in Kettering which was where his father was employed.

...So I never had a choice of my school or my job and I have basically spent most of my life making boots and shoes. I had to catch the 7am bus in the morning to go to work and came home on the 5.55pm bus at night. The working week then included Saturday mornings when I came home at about 12.30pm. It was a bit of a farce really because from being 12 years old I did a paper round for which I got paid 4/6d a week for delivering 84 papers daily. I gave my mum 2/6d and I had 2/- which was my pocket money. Then I started work and for a 48 hour week I got 12/6d. With stoppages taken out of it which were more than usual because of the war, my bus fare of half a crown (2/6d) a week and my dinners paid for, I had precisely 4/6d. My mum had 2/- and I was left with 2/6d....so I worked all week for just 6 pence more than my paper round. That was life!

Norman worked at the Co-op Boot and Shoe Factory from 1942 until he was called up to the Army in 1946. He eventually finished up as the corporal in charge of the garrison workshops in Gibraltar where he was needed for his shoe-making skills. On returning to Rothwell in 1948 Norman was once again back in the

shoe industry and worked at the Dolcis Factory in Kettering where he spent several years dealing with customer complaints and repairs. He also spent time at Groococks of Rothwell

...Rothwell has changed a lot regarding work in the town. There used to be J.T. Butlins, Sargeants, Taylors, Avalon and Gambles all making shoes. I was a foreman at the Groocock Factory at the end of Gordon Street. I was there for 8 years in that section. When I first went there they were making 1,000 pairs of shoes a day and when I left they were producing 3,000 pairs a day. It was a record I was proud of as we always met the requirements for quality, quantity and cost. Groococks employed 200-300 people then. The loss of the shoe trade employment has had a devastating impact.



On 19th August 1950, Norman met Audrey West at the Tresham Hall and they married in 1952.

...My daughter Sandra was born in 1954 at a time when I was playing football for the Corinthians. I went down to the telephone box to ring the hospital to see how she was and they said "Mother and daughter are doing fine". There were three of the team whose wives were expecting and the other two both had daughters so with mine being the third one, my only thought was what are the Corinthians going to do if we all keep having daughters?...

Norman was involved with the Corinthians for most of his life and his article about them appeared in Rowell Heritage, July-August 2015. He was also a keen member of the St John Ambulance Cadets from the age of 11 until he joined the forces. This was a very strong organisation in the town and had about 30 members in those days.

Norman and Audrey had three children: Sandra, Alan and Janette. He was enormously proud of his family. Sandra gave a warm and humorous tribute at her father's funeral and Alan too had written a perceptive and witty poem. Sandra made everybody laugh when she said that she used to warn people to 'have a dental appointment ready' if they met Norman in the street because he would engage in conversation for hours. That was part of his charm though; he had a ready word for everyone and was never happier than when talking about the history of the town he loved. He once wrote a thoughtful piece for his ET column about the value and importance of outsiders moving into Rothwell because 'new blood' as he put it, was essential to keep the place alive. That has never been forgotten by the editor of this magazine who came here from West London and who in recent months has enjoyed chatting to Norman in his Madams Gardens flat. It is ironic that we lost Norman Mason, a grand old Rowellian, on the same day as Alan Mills, - the new blood who had taken Rothwell to his heart and who made such a difference. We are grateful to both these very special men for their invaluable contribution to the community. They will not be forgotten.

A collection in memory of Norman raised funds that have been kindly donated by Audrey and her family to the Methodist Church and Rothwell Heritage Centre.

Some boyhood tales from Norman Mason

(the 'don't try this at home' section.)

As boys we used to go into someone's orchard to get a few apples, - scrumping. We never damaged the trees because we wanted them to be there for another year (if we were lucky and didn't get caught the first time). During WW2 in the blackout we got up to some pranks. In Jubilee Street for example, where the houses are opposite each other, we used to tie black thread from the door knocker of one house to the handle of the door of a house on the other side of the road, leaving a little bit of slack. Then we knocked on one door and hid somewhere to watch as someone opened it, found nobody there and shut it again. Knock, knock went the door across the road and so on. We nearly got caught at that because people would creep out of their back entries to see what was going on. During the war the lamps were all shaded so they did not throw much light. There was one at the end of Jubilee Street and there were iron railings round the garden at the corner house (before they were taken away for making aircraft). In those days most men wore trilby hats so we tied some black elastic cotton from the fence to the lamp post across the pathway. We tied it at the right height so if a man walked underneath, the cotton would catch his hat and knock it off. That was alright until the local policeman came along and had his helmet whipped off. He wasn't very amused. He realised what had caused it and found the cotton but by that time we had beaten a fairly hasty retreat along the back alley behind Jubilee Street.

On one November 5th there was a bonfire in the back yard of one of the houses in Jubilee Street and I went along with a tuppenny banger. They used to go off with a real bang in those days and they had a fairly long fuse. I lit it, put it in the middle entry between some houses and then ran like the clappers up the street and back down through the yard at the rear. What I didn't know was that there was a very sick elderly gentleman in the bedroom above it and his family had been sitting at his bedside waiting for him to die. The unexpected bang shook him so much that it gave him a new lease of life and he lived for another three weeks after that.

On another bonfire night some of us decided to make our own fireworks with saltpetre and other chemicals. To avoid any doubt in the mind of the local chemist, each of us who went in asked for a different powder. At that time the houses only went half way along Jubilee Street on one side and in the space there was a big diesel oil tank that supplied the engine room of the Butlin's factory and a garage. We went round the back of this garage and put all our powder together with the idea that we were going to make a firework. We put a match to the fuse but it only gave a splutter. The golden rule nowadays is never go back to a firework but we hadn't heard that and wouldn't have taken any notice anyway. One of the boys who was into the chemistry of our activity went back just as it exploded. It took his eyebrows and eyelashes off and his face was as black as could be. It was a lovely firework display but it was a wonder we didn't set fire to the oil tank and the garage.

In our day at Rowell Fair we had fun with water pistols, potato pop guns and things of that nature but never played tricks on people apart from on Rowell Fair Monday morning. On one occasion, a policeman who was a bit of a miserable so-and-so was the object of some fun. We got some fire extinguishers which we filled with water and we set one off over the top of a fairground stall. On the other side was this PC keeping an eye on events and he held his hand out and said "Oh God it's raining!"....but he was the only person in Rowell getting wet. We used to block the roads off by linking arms when the procession passed. We would let the band go through and then we blocked it off so that Bailiff Reg Hall and his Halbadiers were stuck and couldn't get past the barricade. They then used to turn the horse round and back it into us so we had to get out of the way. We would barricade by the A6 and stop the crowd following the Bailiff down to the last reading of the Charter. There would only be 20 or 30 people who heard it. When we finally broke away and went down to Sun Hill, Reg Hall would be gone so we used to hoist Frank Marlow up on our shoulders and he would recite the Charter by heart. We stopped the 7am bus from going to Kettering by just leaning on the radiators so it couldn't move. Nobody bothered and the driver just said "no skin off my nose". We held it up for 5 minutes but not long enough to make everyone late for work. Once we stopped a truck full of army girls. We didn't know they were land girls until they suddenly piled out, grabbed hold of a lad and hauled him into the truck. We all gathered round the back to see what was going on and they drove away. The girls tipped our lad out of the lorry when they got up the hill to Loddington and he had to walk home. Those were good days; plenty of fun and no damage. The police never used to bother because it never got out of hand and that was the life of the town.

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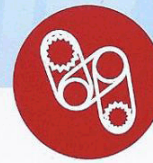
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*With the summer now
coming to an end, I have
included the two pictures
opposite of harvesting in
Rothwell circa 1965.
The tractor driver is Tony
Austin and he is with Bert
Hill & Geoff Austin (who is
talking to his wife).
Thanks to Diana Smith for
the identification.
Photos by John Sharman.*



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Christine Cocksedge

24th October 1937 – 29th July 2016



We are sad to report the sudden death of Christine Cocksedge who, as a volunteer, worked very hard for the benefit of the Heritage Centre. For some years she was a Heritage Centre Board member and the art gallery co-ordinator. During this time she encouraged many new artists to exhibit their work and she would hang each exhibition with meticulous care which the exhibitors appreciated. As a contributing artist herself, her landscapes were bold and direct - just like her.



Christine's maiden name was Bee and she was born in 1937. She married Victor Cocksedge in 1957 and they had two sons, Paul and the late Darren. Victor died in 2000 and Christine who had a great interest in art, became involved not only with producing her own work for exhibitions but also with the development of the Rothwell Heritage Centre's gallery.

Christine was interviewed twice by the Northants Evening Telegraph. This photograph appeared in the paper in March 2013 and shows her looking at some of the gallery's exhibits. Christine's son Paul is an internationally renowned artist and designer who has won many prestigious awards.

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On this Page
**WORK FROM
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ROTHWELL MEMORIES by Jenny Jackson (nee March) 1907 - 2000

From the archives. First printed in the Parish Church magazine.

I was born on 26th October 1907 in a small terraced house in Fox Street, Rothwell, just opposite the Congregational Church (now the United Reformed Church). These terraced cottages were called Inkermans Cottages. The reason why they were called this was because at that time the boot and shoe factories sent the 'uppers' out to the cottages to be inked there.

My earliest memory was that somebody gave me a sawdust tinsel ball when I was in my cot. It must have been Christmas. I remember the roof being all iced up with snow and icicles were dripping from the gutter.

Next door was a family called Buckby. My sister and I used to go and look at the rabbits and feed them with cabbage leaves and grass etc. The Buckbys used to give my sister an orange and she couldn't pronounce it, always saying 'NORINGE'.

The next incident I remember was that my brother Sam took me in the pushchair down the pathway and as he reached the bottom of the path into Fox Street, he tipped me out, accidentally smashing my milk teeth on the pavement. My mother came out in a snow-white pinafore, with a white handkerchief to put around my mouth. She didn't scold my brother and just took me back home.

The Congregational Church ministers were very kind to my mother because my father drank excessively, so my mother acted as both mother and father to us all. My father was deaf from 8 years of age which was why my family are over-zealous in our speech; - we had to shout at him all the time. Father was a very keen gardener and won lots of prizes. Once he had a champion collection of vegetables and was presented with a beautiful hearth rug by Sutton Seeds which was decorated with the Royal crest, - a unicorn and a lion each side of a coat of arms. It was too good to walk on so mother used it as an eiderdown on their bed.

Father worked at the Cransley Furnaces. I remember mother saying that she could hear him walking up Kettering Road as she stood at the door waiting for him, but he wouldn't come home, he'd just carry on walking past our house with his flagon of beer and head for Cooks Lodge in Glendon Road for a game of cards with his mates. He would turn up later for his dinner which was thrown on the fire if it wasn't to his liking. Another thing that made him angry was that when he went to the pub he would imagine that people were talking about him, which they weren't but because he was deaf he assumed they were.

I had three sisters and four brothers. One brother, George, died of tetanus after cutting his hand on a cheese wire at the age of 13. My eldest brother, Cyril, was my mother's favourite. He was a very good son because he realised that mother needed his help to run the home. Cyril planned to get married but he just kept helping mother until one of my older brothers, Jack, was able to get a job to help contribute to the housekeeping. Jack cycled into Kettering each day when he eventually got work at Timpsons Boot and Shoe Factory. Just after the First World War ended, Cyril was due to marry Irene Sissman who lived in Kettering Road, Rothwell, but unfortunately there was a great 'flu epidemic which struck down my family and many other people. I remember the many coffins being carried four at a time in a horse-drawn cart down to Rothwell Cemetery to be buried. It was December 1919 when Cyril died at the age of 27. There was a lot of water in the bottom of the grave and mother was very upset to think that he should be buried in water.

After Cyril died, Jack decided to get a job in Rothwell, in another shoe factory, Groococks. My brother Sam was a Co-op milkman for many years and unfortunately developed Motor Neurone Disease in later life. Another sister died in infancy and my eldest sister Emily worked in a boot and shoe factory in Rothwell. She courted and married Hubert P. Palmer who was the son of the manager of Rothwell Gas Works.

Each holiday time, the children of the street used to go 'along the hedge' as we called it, to play. Margaret Glover made little dresses for us out of crepe paper, all different colours. We would parade along the street and any money we made went towards a street party with afternoon teas. Margaret Glover was a good friend to us all, - a good organiser who tried her best to keep everybody amused and happy. She would enter us in any processions that were taking place in the area.

One summer we walked down to Rushton Hall to enter into the parade at their summer fete. My mother used to dress us before we went to the parades. For the Rushton fete, mother dressed me as a rag and bone man with a cap, short trousers and a ragged jacket. My brother Sam went as a scarecrow and our Nellie went as Bo-Peep. As we were waiting outside Rushton Hall gates to get in, a policeman shouted to me "Run away, you can't come in here". He hadn't realised that I was a little girl dressed up. Eventually we all got in and I won first prize (7/6d). My brother Sam also won a prize.

Meanwhile, my musical career had started. I went to Edward York, the organist at Harrington Church, for piano lessons and I had singing lessons with Constance Read, known as Mrs Harwood. Sister Nellie went for piano lessons with Mrs Florence Capp, the schoolteacher, and she could play the piano before I could. I was stuck with the theory side of music and I was a bit envious that Nellie played better than me but later in life I realised that Mr York was right to persevere with the rudiments of music. Nellie eventually gave up the piano but my career went from strength to strength.

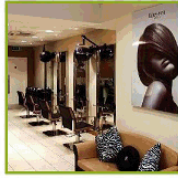
I was entered in the Sunday School Union Festival singing competition by my mother. I begged my mother to let me attend the Sunday School at the Methodist Chapel in order to be able to enter. I sang 'The Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill' at the competition. The adjudicator, Grenville Cooke, slated me for singing what was considered to be more of a pub song, so I didn't win anything. The following year however, I was entered in the Kettering Eisteddfod and I won first prize with 'The Knotting Song'. The prize was a gold and silver medal. The year after that, in the autumn, I entered the Co-op singing competition which was held on two consecutive nights in the Oddfellows Hall on Bell Hill. I won first prize twice, though I was told off by the adjudicator for not singing 'Solveig Song' two nights on the run. I changed my song for the second night.

From there I went to the Leicester Music Festival in the De Montfort Hall and won a certificate. Then I entered a competition in Oundle and won another certificate. I won about nine prizes during the 1920s. My first boyfriend was Percy Shortland who lived in Gordon Street and I was about 17 at the time. Fred Barlow, the organist at the Methodist Chapel, coaxed me along to sing there and I went regularly. One day, Percy Shortland said to me "You've either got to give up your singing or give up me". I said "I'm not giving up my singing for anyone". He turned on his heels and left me. He tried to make me change my mind later and his father was furious because he'd bought a plot of land on Desborough Road for us to build a house on. But my music and singing came first!

Editor's note: Jenny was the daughter of John Henry March (1868-1964) and Martha Eleanor York (1871-1954) who married in 1891. In 1932 Jenny married Reginald Thomas Jackson (1908-1971).

.....

Norman Mason talked about the childhood practice of scrumping. The late Mrs Effie Panther who was married to a policeman, recalled how one local resident used to regularly phone up about the problem. Eventually this lady got so fed up that she left a barrow-load of apples outside her house in Kettering Road with a notice saying 'Help yourself'. Someone then did just that.....and took the wheelbarrow as well!



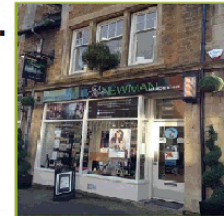
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Editor's note: Thanks to David Page who contacted me to say he took the photograph of the Thor missile in Harrington Road, which was printed in the last issue. This iconic photo has appeared in many publications and I even found it on a Russian website, so I have great pleasure in finally giving credit to the photographer. David very kindly sent us some more pictures and explained that they were taken from the first floor window of the former New Inn Public House which was the home of Oxford Products at that time.

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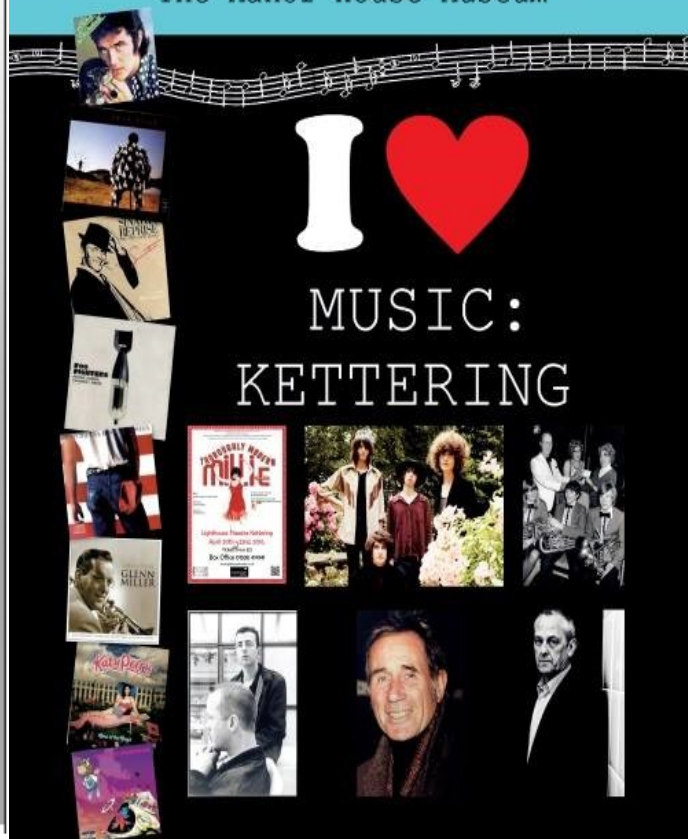
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Three Rothwell musicians, Jim Dale, Alan Mills and Barry Hale, have been included in the excellent exhibition in Kettering which is coming to an end on 17th September. I would like to thank the Manor House Museum & Art Gallery for kindly giving me permission to photograph the relevant exhibits which have been on loan to them.





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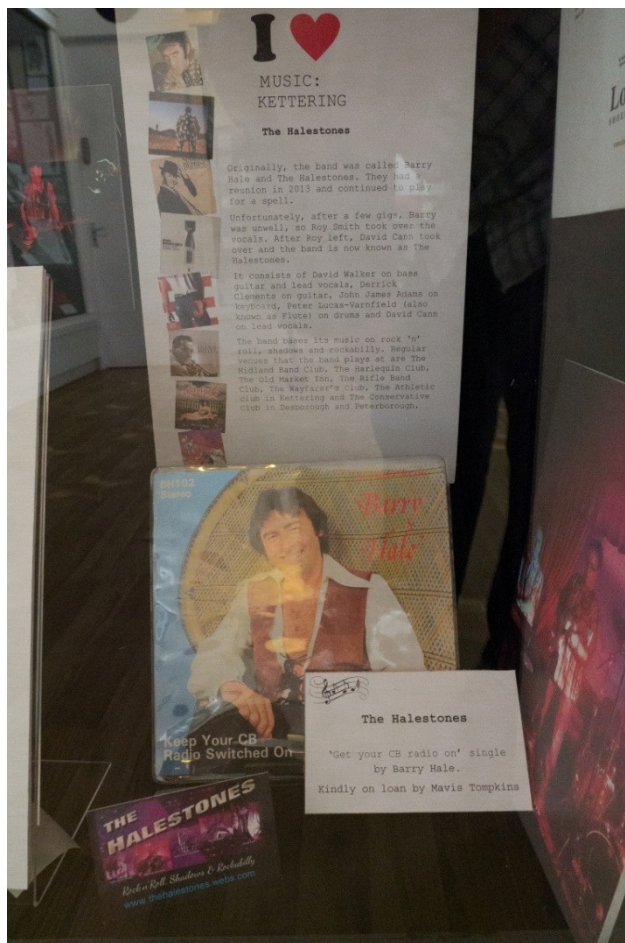
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