

My Recollections of Sutton Coldfield in the "Fifties"

(Now known as 'The Holbeche Diary')

by Col. R. Holbeche



"Haec memorare juvat."

Blenheim Mansions

Jan^y 1893

THE HOLBECHE DIARY

Transcription by Janet Jordan
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Richard Holbeche wrote his 'diary' in 1892. It is a recollection of the places he knew and the people he met during his childhood whilst living in the company of family, relatives and friends, in and around the quiet rural town of Sutton Coldfield, and provides a wealth of detail and insight into the life and times of the mid 19th Century.

A old typed transcription of the 'Holbeche Diary' can be found in the Local Studies Department in Sutton Coldfield Library (Ref: Q726.50942496HOL). There are a few errors in that interpretation.

This present transcription accords with a photocopy of Richard Holbeche's original handwritten 'diary' which can also to be found in the Local Studies Department as part of 'The Holbeche Family Papers' (Ref: BCOLQ942.496082HOL). I have not edited Richard's text but believe my interpretation of his handwriting to be more correct.

(March 2017)

A manuscript by my Aunt Helen Holbeche having for its subject Sutton Coldfield in the days of her girlhood, interested myself and others so much, that I have thought it well to put pen to paper, in order to have some record of what it was like in my boyish days, and to keep my memory green as to the old people, the like of whom no one will see again, and some of the customs of the old-world town which have also passed away.

The dear old home as I first remember it, can have differed very little from it as described by my Aunt, with the exception of the garden, which had been to a certain extent modernised, and the dining and drawing rooms, which had been enlarged by the addition of bay windows. Its front was to the town, not a fine front by any means, and giving really little indication of the excellent interior, and lovely view at the back. We, as children, used to believe that there was nothing like it elsewhere, and I remember feeling much hurt when some friend of my father's suggested that Mr Brown's house was as good, and the view better, (is it not strange that these same views have in each case been lopped off?) and now where in a short time it will no longer be "home", I still feel a little animosity towards the man who made the remark.

The east or garden side was (and is) picturesque to a degree. A long, not low house, covered from ground to roof with large leaved ivy, the three large gables and one small one edged with broad barge-boards, irregular windows, no two being of the same size or in the same plane, giving it an air of quaintness which the inside quite bore out. It had a good hall, with a heavy dark oak staircase, the floor being large alternate squares of blue and white stone. These quarries I have heard my father say were given by Mr Hacket. A glass

door opened to the garden which was reached by fine white steps. The breakfast room was on the right of the entrance, and had been used in my Grandfather's time as the drawing room, the room on the left being the day nursery, and having a swing hanging from the beam in the ceiling. There was also an arrangement supported by india rubber bands which taught us to feel our feet.

The house had been wittily described as a rabbit warren, a very good simily, for the numerous rooms led into each other in (to a stranger) a most perplexing way, and the whole circuit of the house was to be made. There was no passage in the entire building.

To the south stood a very old rough stone continuation (used as the offices) with old mullioned windows, bricked up ages ago, and beyond a large tythe barn, with a granary and enormous loft which when we were young was a paradise. It was here that we could hide ourselves in the straw, build eaves with the hay-trusses, or when the loft was full, slide from roof to floor. From the granary was a windlas and rope running through a trap door to the yard below, or rather through the great archway which led from the street to the yard.

A three stalled stable, saddle room, dairy and pigsty bounded this yard on three sides, while the fourth was taken up by the orchard. The stable was interesting as containing dear old "Black Prince" of whom more anon, and my father's horses; the dairy chiefly because, when no one was looking we dipped our fingers in the cream, and sucked them afterwards; and the saddle room for everything, little odd jobs of all sorts were done there with the aid of Joseph Reeves; bits of carpentry, whips made, toys mended, and apples and pears roasted on the top of the stove. Joseph generally had a sweet apple or pear hidden to ripen among the corn.

The pigsty was very popular with us, and the pigs gave us much sport. There used to be complaints that they would not fatten. We knew the reason. We improvised a circus. One of us would stand with a whip called the "pig whip" in the middle, and it is really wonderful what pace we could get out of those pigs. No doubt, with boys' appetites we did them ample justice afterwards. Once we were leaving over the wall playing puff-and-dart with them, when we fell - but enough - ! We never amused them again.

Close to the house to the East were shrubs and trees. Those I remember best were a yew planted by my Uncle Henry Addenbrooke (who brought it as a seedling from his dog's grave at Kingswinford), a pink hawthorn, a holly and lilac. A cherry tree near the door leading from the yard was cut down in 64.

The lawn sloped gently down to iron hurdles which separated it from the field, and was of beautiful fine turf. It is rather remarkable that only this year (1892) I noticed when the hoar-frost was on the grass, the outline of the straight walk that my Aunt Helen mentions, and I pointed it out to my Aunt Fanny who was, I think, as much surprised to see this ghostly record of the past as myself.

The garden was shaped like the letter "g", the lawn and the flower beds taking the whole of the upper part of the letter, a circular gravel walk running parallel with the outline. Against the north wall of the garden, where the tail of the "g" begins was a rough

brick buttress, and there stood a sort of summer arbour, consisting of upright oak beams, (evidently brought from some very old house, as the nails in them were of ancient pattern) covered with a profusion of wild clematis called I think small clematis. This roof embraced myriads of snaky stalks, very good for smoking in lieu of cigars and harbouring all sorts of insects. Overshadowing it, was what my memory paints as an enormous oak, a beautifully stately and symmetrical tree. It was cut down about 1860, and the arbour removed at the same time. Why, I don't know. It was a delightful bit of the garden. In front of the entrance to the arbour stood a crab-tree (still there) on which is carved my brother Ted's E. A. H.

Mill and I made a bank to fill up the corner, getting a penny for so many barrow-loads of earth got from a hole in the orchard. We had little blue barrows with solid wheels. Who gave them to us I cannot recollect. Down the tail of the "g" were kitchen-garden beds, and there was a walk on either side; the one on the north between high holly hedges with hazels, some fine walnut trees, and a pear tree that bore thousands of rather indegestible pears. At the lower end was a dear old mulberry tree which showered bleeding fruit, and which we climbed and swung upon and sat in. Also guelder roses, and two beautiful willows.

The mulberry tree was removed in 1876, to the upper garden and still thrives.

There was a wee little pond banked on one side with bottle reeds, and a little trickling stream bridged by a rough and broad oak planking, which took us to a black wicket gate opening on to the field.

It was in this part of the grounds that we gardened, and otherwise amused ourselves; often digging in the hope that we might find fire or water. At the bottom of the lawn as an open drain called the "rough". We were told that bogies lived there, I suspect to prevent us from grubbing in the filthy mud.

A large railway station on a high embankment covers all the lower part of the garden.

So much for the north and west part of the field. On the south ran a series of kitchen gardens, which with the exception of that in our own occupation, were afterwards thrown into the field in 1865. There were damson trees in a row, which, besides bearing fruit, exuded delicious and palatable gum, which we much appreciated. A footpath called the "alley" running between thick hawthorn hedges from the town bounded the property. In one hedge were two tall Lombardy Poplars. The alley was always cob-webby, and generally muddy.

The field sloped for about 180 yards to iron hurdles which divided it from the "Mettels" a meadow with a stream bisecting it. In the corner of the Mettels was a black hovel for sheep and cows. We found the hovel convenient, for it was there that we caught the sheep and lassoed the cows. In the opposite corner was a white barred gate which opened into the "Slash" Lane. It has since been placed more to the left. The footpath after leaving the alley was open and passed over the brook on a red brick single arched bridge. The allotment gardens then formed part of the meadow.

Beyond the Mettels was the Broomy Close with its splendid avenue of lime trees, leading right up to the Rectory front door.

My Aunts, Sarah, Elizabeth, Jane, Catherine, Helen and Fanny, lived in a large red-brick house a few hundred yards up the town (my Aunt Mary resided in Leamington). It had a much finer front than ours, and the internal arrangement of rooms was much the same as at the "Lower House", but the purposes to which they were put were different. Thus the large room corresponding to our dining room, was a pantry. The room on the left of the hall, their dining room.

My Aunts each had pretty bed rooms: with the exception of Aunt Helen, who with Aunt Sarah occupied the large one outside the drawing room, beyond that Aunt Catherine slept over the gateway. The room had little windows which we admired. Aunt Fanny, after Aunt Elizabeth's death took the one on the left of the landing. Aunt Jane's attic was charming. As there was no parapet as at home, she had a nice view from her dormer window; a white cottage and a field where Mr. Cull's cows grazed being opposite. These rooms had pretty tent bedsteads, and in each was a quantity of little pictures and bric-a-brac.

The landing over the hall was quite spacious. There were cabinets, a clock always half an hour too fast, a miniature greenhouse, and a lantern in the shape of an owl with transparent brown eyes, which half frightened, half amused us, when lighted from within.

At the back of the house was a delightful grass grown yard, with tumble down buildings covered with a profusion of ivy, and a large orchard with good apple trees, and one which bore sweet crabs. An old boiler was sunk into the ground, and called the "toad hole" to which frogs and toads found their way. It has always been a puzzle to me to know what became of them for they could not get out.

A dear old sandstone wall of the roughest build, ran all down the north side of the garden under the shade of which were all sorts of old fashioned shrubs, and flowers, such as hollyhocks, dahlias, and other bright flowering things, there was a pomegranate planted by my Aunt Sarah, on the day that I was christened. It had many vicissitudes, was cut down by frost and grew again and was eventually taken to Warwick. There seemed an analogy between us. Verily, Aunt Sarah was good to us both. A gravel walk with a kitchen garden on the right, parallel with the wall, took us to a charming little Dutch garden with pretty beds, bordered by box, and three venerable yew trees at the entrance. An arbour where tools were kept was in a corner, and opposite to it was a seat and some rustic work; in summer covered with creepers. It was always connected in my mind with Job's seat under a gourd.

This last bit remains, but how altered, a railway cutting runs where this pleasant house was, and orchard and "stonefield" are not.

My Father was a man of middle height; stout and with broad shoulders, and a powerful frame. He was the best of companions, full of information on all local matters, and I think the best "raconteur" I have ever met. He sang a good song with a fine round

voice, had a good word for every one, gentle or simple, was the soul of hospitality, and a excellent judge of wine. At the head of his table he was at his best. How well I remember him there. His genial face as he told some good story and paused to see the effect. He was generous to a degree, not only to his own sons, but to every school boy who left the house and in fact in every respect. All his ideas were manly.

He had been a great horseman in his youth and we often used to hear of his deeds on a black horse called "Random" (a picture in oils of whom, hangs on the lobby) not only from himself but from his numerous friends. He held a commission in the Warwickshire Yeomanry for many years. He used to take us hunting on Black Prince, he riding a horse, and keeping Prince in order with a leading rein; his friends when they saw us at the meet always making the remark "bringing them up in the way they should go, Eh! Holbeche?"

Of the gentle lady who ruled the house I cannot at present write.

Of my brothers, Vincent was the eldest. Ted, the second a year younger, myself, with three less years than Ted; then Mill who as a lad was delicate. After him twins Gertrude and Arthur, and lastly Edith. A quiver full.

Vincent was the great man to us, particularly when he went to Rugby. I used to consider that he was at times a little arbitrary, but I reflect that I was impertinent and disagreeable. Ted went to school at Marlborough, I think about the same time. He was stout and merry, and went to sea I think about 1859.

I began school (after having had several governesses) at Mr Cull's. This must have been about 55. I remember with what trepidation I used to pass Miss Bracken's house, for there on the steps would be her great dog "Warder" (rightly named) watching me.

Mr Cull had a nice large house adjoining my Aunts'. It had railings in front, and between these, and the wall on the right hand side of the hall door, was a tall holly-tree in a rather cramped position. When I first went to their academy, there was a little school-room, looking down the yard or play ground, but during my career there, and as the school became more prosperous, it was very much enlarged. The school fellows I remember best were the three Fishers, all dead but one. The elder Robinsons, who used to ride to their lessons on an old yellow pony, a boy named Gordon who had a kettle-drum, Hurst and Ralph Sadler, Blackley with a squint who played the "Harmonious Blacksmith" on the piano, and Barnabas.

Mr Cull had a pupil, Charley Perkins, I should say about eighteen years of age at that time. He said he was "reading" with Mr Cull. He did read a novel a little, in an arm-chair and got up at intervals to spit out of the window, which was all very fine and impressive. He was tall and had a lovely pink and white complexion.

I wore white drawers with starched frills round their bottoms, but I was breeched in 59. This I remember to have been a comfort, for as all the seats were covered (at home) with horse-hair, and very prickly, it was necessary to sit down with some circumspection. My first pair of trousers were of a large and very pronounced shepherd's plaid, and were somewhat different in construction in front to those now worn.

Mrs Cull, a kind motherly woman did most of the teaching helped by Miss Craven who had, well! warm coloured auburn hair. Mr Cull taught us writing and dictation, and did the caning with much good will. We used to have a breaking up party at the end of half-year. It was grand. My Aunt will remember the names. I have often reflected that I could not have greatly distinguished myself at this school, for the only prize I received was one for "Gentlemanly Conduct in the school room". I fancy it must have perplexed good Mr Cull to find out even this virtue. The book is by me as I write.

Mr Cull was a church-warden for many years, and was a generally useful man in town matters. A really good fellow, and a character.

Perhaps it would be as well to mention here, some of the persons, and "personages" who inhabited the neighbourhood in those (to me) far-off days.

Mrs Oughton lived at Holland House, which was then very unlike what it now is. Several pools surrounded by evergreens took up what is now the garden. In one of these pools I must have caught my first fish. There was a long porch in the front of the house, with a trellis work side. (I remember the pattern), covered with creepers. It was very deep, and had white steps and pavement. Beyond were three pools and a mill-dam, on which was a mill in which bayonets and gun-barrels were found. Another dam which divided what is now the ozier bed has been removed.

Mrs Oughton was very kind to us. She was a very old lady, and had something black about her fore-head or head, but what it was I cannot recollect.

The Rector was a young man then. He wore whiskers, as every one did, and a hat of the present opera hat pattern. He did not wear gaiters, as later. We used to spend a good deal of time on the cricket ground, where at intervals were played some important matches. Mr Bedford was one the founders of the "Free Forresters".

The Rectory was, as it is indeed still, a lovely residence, with its beautiful park, and well grown timber. Through this park a very pretty lane from the white gate, wandered irregularly between high banks and white thorn hedges, and an open foot path ran from the Mettels diagonally across the avenue, joining the land nearly opposite the Rectory.

The Rector's sons were considerably younger than Mill and myself, but we amused ourselves together occasionally. It was great fun to catch the fowls, take them up to the loft, and throw them out of the window.

At Penns lived a friend of my father's, Baron Webster, a loud good natured man. I think a great talker. He was very prominent in all local affairs. His mill was then standing nearly opposite the hall door, and was worked by the water from the pool. Mr. Webster was the chief promoter of the new Town Hall.

His father lived at Ashfurlong, but of him I do not recollect much. Mr Montagu Webster is still Vicar of Hill.

I should say that there were three boys at Penns. Charley the elder, died during his school days. The other two were Baron who took to farming, and Monty who held a commission in the 20th Regiment, but has since married and retired.

The Vicar of Walmley was Mr Robinson. He had been a subaltern in the 24th Regiment, and was not a good, but a lengthy preacher. He was a handsome man with a refined face and manner. We were often taken to Walmley Church in the Sunday afternoons, but we did not like it, as we thought the service rather long and full. The two elder sons were of about our own age. Fred the eldest was a cheery fellow, and joined the 84th Regt. in Jamaica, but soon afterwards sold out. Of the others (except Mainwaring) I knew little. Mrs Robinson was a trifle narrow in her views. She had remembered Cardinal Wiseman, Cardinal Newman, and the tractarian movement, and the establishment of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, and was convinced that England would again own Papal Sway. Jamais!

A remarkable man lived at Peddemore Hall, a little old place with the remains of a double moat. (Strange to say I never saw this house). Thomas Benjamin Wilkins by name, though called by his neighbours "Tom the Ben". Fat, dirty, and coarse, he was a quaint figure in his old fashioned clothes driving into Sutton in a ram-shackle gig, drawn by a half fed horse, as lean as his masters was gross.

At Bull's Lane Mr & Mrs Wright used to receive us occasionally, and regale us with cowslip wine and cake. We were often sent on our pony to enquire after these old friends of my father's and on others, Mrs Launder at Wishaw, Mr. Wakefield at Minworth and his brother the clergyman at Curdworth, an eccentric man, with black hair or a wig - Mill will remember that he always gave us ginger cordial, and that the trunks of his fruit-tress were white-washed. His brother's house at Minworth was the most dreary habitation I have ever seen. The horse-hair chairs and stiff furniture gave one quite a chill. A little beyond on the Coleshill Road was a beautiful old gabled house, half timbered with much ivy, alas! now lately pulled down.

Of our nearer neighbours the Hartopps who lived at Four Oaks were the most important. The house itself, designed by Wilson, a son-in-law of Sir Christopher Wren's may have been graceful in its youth, but having been modernized, was and still is a hideous cube with four cubical turrets. The park was very fine and some of the timber magnificent, notably the beeches. In spite of its ugliness there was still a dignity about it that was impressive.

Sir William was a fine well set up man, with grey hair and whiskers, and looked a patrician. He had a large family, the daughters who all married well, I remember best. I fancy I remember when they lived at Doe Bank, but I am not quite clear about it. If they did so in my time there was a stuffed fox on the stair-case.

It was a sight to see them come into church, always when the psalms were being read. They would enter by the north entrance walk into the Chancel in single file, then down the middle of the Nave, and gain their gallery, while a flunkey, bolted by the side aisle opened their door and escaped by a second into his own pew, as the party passed with

ridiculous dignity. While they were at the preliminary devotions, he popped out, shut down Sir William's seat and regained his place.

"Verily there are snobs of every degree".

I do not remember any Hacket living at Moor Hall. A Mr Garnet, a Manchester manufacturer was the first tenant in my time.

After old Mr Webster died Mr Proctor took Ashfurlong. He was an immensely stout man with a white-waistcoat, and had previously lived at the Manor.

I have a vivid recollection of looking out of a window of the latter house, and seeing the hounds draw a spinney exactly where the London and North Western cutting now is.

A tribute of affection I must give to our dear old friends Mr & Mrs Chavasse. He was of the best type of the old fashioned family doctor. He had the kindest of hearts, charming manners, liked boys, drove or rode at a great pace, and seemed every few days to have been thrown out of his dog cart. He had a coachman William Barrett. There was always a parrot in the dining room, and a nice dog, of some sort or other, also a barking dog in a kennel at the lodge. Mr Chavasse's courtesy might be well imitated by younger men. After I had entered the service I never came home on leave without his calling on me within a few days.

The sons of his first marriage were much older than I, and the second, younger. I think of Jenny lying on a sofa near the window in the dining room, of Mrs Ridsdale being married to Mr Whitehouse, and how we gathered guelder roses from the tree, that was afterwards lopped to adorn an arch over the east entrance of the churchyard, and of some one shouting "Here they come", as the carriages were seen down the Blind lane coming across the dam. How kind was Mrs. Chavasse, so hearty and hospitable.

Their nice garden has long been shorn of its beauty, and the house much altered.

Mr & Mrs Kitloe, after the former's appointment at Boldmere, or the "Coldfield" as it was then called, lived in the Chester Road, next door to the Yates, until his own house was finished. I stayed in the new vicarage soon after their move, and helped to plant the yew hedge in front of the conservatory.

A curious old gentleman Mr Pepper occupied Falcon Lodge. He had an extraordinary old chair in the back of which was a writing desk, but if one wanted to write, it was necessary to turn round and sit with the back of the chair between one's legs. He had also an interesting series of views of Paris which could be projected on to a mirror through a lens. He was white haired and had a genial manner. His son was Saunders, and his daughters Mrs Dunnaloe, Mrs Spurrier and Emily. The latter was given to romance. They had an old black dog with a white hind foot.

It is related of Mr Pepper that for many years he returned thanks for the toast of the navy at the Warden's Dinner resting his claim on the fact that he had once lunched on board a man-of-war.

Doctor Boddington who brought me into the world and frequently reminded me of it, once, at a public dinner rather inconveniently, kept a lunatic asylum at the Driffold. His patients used to interest us very much. More particularly one Mr. Fisher who wore a grey tail coat covered with buttons and white beaver hat.

Dr. Boddington was a great Conservative and frequently offered to stand in that cause for Birmingham, which in the days I speak of seemed preposterous. One of his sons was drowned in India at Marble Rocks. I went to see his grave in 1871 when quartered at Jubbulpore.

Mr Wiggan, a tall old sportsman, with shepherds-plaid trousers, spats and thick boots, occupied my father's old house in the park, his wife was a pretty woman seen in her old age, and with them lived Elliott and Mrs Trevannion, a lady with a nice voice and very charming manner. The latter had a son Johnnie who was in the 1st Bengal Native Regiment, the poor fellow died in India in the sixties. In this house were always nice things for boys kept in a large closet in the dining room. We went occasionally in the Summer to spend the afternoon and catch trout by putting up a grating and then stirring the mud. Elliott was the idol of boys. It seemed that he could do everything. A splendid shot both with gun and bow, wonderfully active, he was (and is) a genius. He could carve grotesque figures out of cork or ivory, turn in wood or metal, and only wanted tuition to become an artist.

Sutton Coldfield in the early fifties had not I should imagine (with the exception of the dam) changed for a century. The streets took roughly the form of a capital Y with its tail northward: now streets and roads extend in every direction. Alas! for the old field walks, old quiet lanes, and picturesque black and white cottages.

The old Town Hall stood at the junction of the streets, and I remember how interested we were in its demolishment. It was on the same lines as the Town Hall at Warwick.

In Coleshill Street on the left I had my being moved and lived. Opposite to us was Betty Perkins, a stout and ancient dame, and the Mother of Mrs Weaver who inherited her tissue. They both sold cheap sweet stuffs much affected by Mill and myself; as did also their next door neighbour Mrs Allen. There was rivalry between these two tradespeople, which occasionally culminated in bad language. We found that if their wares such as brandy-snap were kept for a time in a trouser pocket, or carried in a heated hand, the flavour was superior, so also with treacle-stick which was invariably wrapped in leaves of the Bible.

The Shorts, a worthy couple lived next door, and had a relation named Moses Dyke. They rebuilt their house in 1862.

Who kept the Old Sun before William Betts I do not know. I do know that Betts must have been a very popular host, for in the pre-railway days, his house was a great meeting place for Birmingham tradesmen, who on Sundays drove their wives in gay bonnets, to take the Sutton air. They came in smart dog-carts drawn by fast trotting ponies of a type not now met with.

Neale and his wife (who had a goiture) took the next house when they moved from the cottage opposite. They were quiet chapel-going people, and one of their sons George was a clerk in my father's office. These sons were great friends of ours and were fine fellows. They all emigrated. Neale was a boot maker, bent and bandy legged, and attended, after the Town Hall was pulled down, to the weighbridge (called by the irreverent - the Pepper Pot) which rose on its ashes. We respected the Neales.

Then came the Botterils, man and wife, Botteril did not seem to do much towards supporting the establishment, but was generally to be found walking slowly in the park, his left hand under his coat tails, his right having a brown worsted glove for covering. I remember his so well, walking with his head down, as if he had trouble. Mrs Botteril was a busy person and she too sold sweet stuff, chiefly peppermint sticks, spiral with brightly coloured lines, also flour and grain. We bought bran there for our rabbits. Over her door was an elliptical board and in faint white letters (one does not see it now but it was common then) "Jane Botteril, licensed to sell tea, coffee, pepper, vinegar, tobacco, and snuff".

She must have been a good woman for when Mill and I broke her window, with a pea-shooter from the loft window, she came to her door and shrieked in a high falsetto "I'll tell your Pa", and retreated quickly fearing a volley. She never did or we should have remembered it. On the other hand she had her faults, and Mill and I had to pay a half-penny a quarter more for bran there than we did elsewhere, but then she gave us sweets when we paid the house bill.

Commander the Police man (Mark! the one and only policeman) lived in the white house next to the church yard. He was a smart and soldierlike man. When we were coming out of church one Sunday, I remember his telling my father of the death of the Prince Consort.

Now comes the dear old Church, much altered now, and it must be admitted for the better though I cannot think that some of the alterations have been carried out with a great deal of taste, notably the peaked roof of the nave, which from outside dwarfs the noble tower.

The organ then stood in a high loft against the upper part of the Western arch. It was a curious old machine with gilt pipes, the keys and pedals being worn into holes where fingers and feet had been felt. Mr Cull at one time was organist, and there was a poor attempt at a choir, so much so indeed, that on one occasion Mill and I were the only singers. Mr Lampert afterwards played although he was a Catholic. He was a good deal given to little unnecessary flourishes, which a whit described as being as curly as a pig's tail.

George Brentnal the clerk, always gave out "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God the -th psalm". They were time honoured chants, but we all went at it with a will.

Over the north and south aisles were heavy oak galleries. Ours was on the south. On our right extending to the east wall of the south chancel (where the organ now is) sat the

blue coat school boys in tiers. A blue curtain separated us, and it was quite pleasant to hear the knocks that "one legget" Mr Felton administered to their heads. Ours was a long pew and so was the service, and I have often pinched my father's leg and asked "how much longer will it be".

Behind us sat the Mendhams, and on the left the Perkinses, beyond again Miss Webb, and right at the north end my Aunts. When we had visitors and our own pew was full, we would sometimes sit with them, and on one occasion perhaps I merited my Aunt Sarah's anger by paying more attention to a pair of new boots, than to the service. Behind my Aunts was the pew belonging to Mr Brown's house. The Howard Chavasses afterwards sat there. The Sacheverill Monument was close by. Harry Holbeche thought that it was a group of idols. The whole of the West Gallery with the exception of the part taken up by the organ and its loft was occupied by the Hartopps and their retainers and went by the name of the "Four Oaks Gallery".

On the north side in the corner sat Miss Birch's girls. Who occupied the next block, I cannot say, but Harry Bromwich and Whorwood and his wife in their more virtuous days (I do not include Mrs Whorwood in the last part of this sentence) sat somewhere there. Then came the Grammar School boys (what fine fellows we thought them) and Mr Wright and his family. Right in the corner were the infant school children with Miss Colman and Mrs Corton, over the Bishop's monument, I should have said that next to the Grammar school boys and between them and the infant school were the blue coat girls.

The pulpit was just in front of my Father's end of the pew. It was high and had a crimson velvet cushion with yellow silk tassels. There was no sounding board over it as at present, that beautiful piece of open work was put aside over the box porch which was then inside the north chancel door. Below was the reading desk, and below again George Brentnal occupied a tiny square pew, something like an old kitchen chair. He sometimes had a dog on his lap which could only be seen from our pew. We knew a good deal more about people in church and their behaviour than they thought. Old Bayliss was verger and sexton. He wore a livery coat and carried a wand. The coat was trimmed with red.

The body of the church was filled with high oak pews of different sizes, large square ones pertaining to the large houses. Thus there was the Manor pew, next to it the New Hall pew. Behind that my Uncle Henry Addenbrooke sat, on each side of the door being fluted pillars, and to his front an immense official prayer book carried by a specially made shelf. The Perkinses sat in what might pass for a square room in the corner by the Bishop's monument, or rather the monument occupied part of this room by Aunt Sarah's window. There were iron railings in front of it. The Rectory people sat in the chancel. The Miss Brackens under us, and in front of our servants William and George Wilkins, William Smith and their families on the opposite side.

There was a heavy reredos of oak of Queen Anne period in the chancel which blocked up the bottom of the east window. This reredos is now in the Council room of the town hall, where it appears to greater advantage.

There was no coloured glass in the whole church with the exception of a glass door which opened to the Vestry under the Four Oaks Gallery. The roof of the Nave was flat and the walls plaister and white wash.

All the men on getting into their places turned round and made their first prayer into their hats. The clergy preached in black. The Rector was absent a good deal, and old Mr Packwood the senior curate did most of the work. He had a rather monotonous and rather soothing voice, so that we frequently got into trouble for sleeping.

The Church yard was very badly kept, and sheep grazed it. It was uninclosed and the Birmingham roughs used to sit and make a noise about Mary Ashford's grave during service.

At the corner of the Blind Lane lived Smith the carrier, and up the next steps Big Charley, a huge and unwieldy shoe maker was to be found. He wore corduroy trousers short in the leg and inordinately long in the waist. Beyond in what is now called Coleshill Lodge Miss Riland resided. My mother used to spend an evening with her occasionally and we went to escort her home. Miss Riland was a very old lady and I should say wore a wig. She was very nice and gentle, and would go out in a bath-chair accompanied by her servant Smith.

A little lower down, and on the opposite side of the road, the Misses Shaw kept a school in the pretty white cottage. Some doors above in the graceful little house was their brother a doctor and great friend of ours. He always had something pleasant to say when we met. He had a brown snuff-box.

Then in the first standstone house lived Mr Eddowes when he first came to Sutton, and before he was married. Miss Bashford (Mrs Hayward) lived there afterwards. Next to them were Mr Packwood and Miss Wildsmith. Mr. Packwood in his old age taught us to hop, skip and jump in our dining room, when he came periodically to tea. He had the reputation of having been a great skater in his youth, and it was currently believed that he had been able to cut the Lord's Prayer.

Then came old Charles Smith. He was a genial and kindly man, and had driven the Birmingham and Sutton coach. His brother Harry, at the Whitehouse Farm, had kept the Three Tuns, was an equally nice old fellow. One of nature's gentlemen. They both had many stories to tell of my Father's and Uncle's younger days.

Some pretty cottages came next with steps up to their door, the end ones being half timbered. On the spot where the Rectory Road now opens was a yard belonging to Hill the builder, who had his workshops in an old house facing the Church. His carpenter's shop was on the first floor and was reached by an outside flight of brick steps.

A butcher's shop came next owned by one Jerry Gwyn. He had a ruddy face and was a good deal given to the pleasures of the bar, wore a blue-coat school cap and a smock, and drove a thick brown pony with kneecaps which were kept in place by straps from the collar, and which we always thought was to prevent the ancient beast from falling down. Jerry had several jolly, fresh-coloured, strong lads.

Old Betts, William's father, occupied the ugly red house opposite the church yard. He was a pleasant, old-fashioned man, and wore breeches and gaitors and sometimes a long smock. His wife was tall, grey and had an upright figure and a very prepossessing face.

The alley separated this house from our cottages. Steward had the first, with the forge at the back. Oh! the delight of that forge, where our leaping poles were ferruled and our hoops made. The Stewards must have been very good and long-suffering for we used to run in and out a great deal. The Neales were next till they moved to the opposite side and the Woodcrafts took their place. Adcock the barber had the room on the left, but that was afterwards. Then Joseph Reeves' cottage came, and before him Hooper. Hooper is the first man-servant I remember. He was a tallish loud talking man with bad teeth and a large nose. He expectorated vehemently and did not like boys, and was in nothing like our old Joseph Reeves, who was the handiest man I ever met. He had a dodge for everything, and I owe I think any little mechanical knowledge I may possess to him, for he unconsciously gave me a love for it. He was quite a sportsman and had the true instincts of one. Vincent will remember how well he used to mark birds. He could catch rabbits sitting, knew exactly what holes they might be in, and I picture to myself now how he would lie on his side with his arm up a hole, with Tinker and Terry looking on with every appearance of confidence. I remember (this is a frequent word) my Father engaging him at the Stork Hotel in Birmingham, and remarking that he thought that he (J.R.) had better wear trousers and not breeches. Long life to him!

On the other side of our property in the house now called Clifton Mr & Mrs Wadhams dwelt. He was a stout man, with very bushy whiskers, later with a beard, and was fond of velvet coats. She his wife, had a pippin face, and was rather care-worn in appearance as she kept a girls school. When my Father bought their property, he turned the long narrow croft into our own fields making quite a park. In the house the two very long, inconvenient and uncomfortable rooms - now divided up - made the class rooms and dormitory.

A low white stuccoed beer house the "Beehive" occupied the site of the new shops. I am not sure that Abraham Lamsby really lived there. At any rate he was generally to be seen in its vicinity. He was supposed to be a lambs-tail cutter, by profession, and wore a broad skirted coat, sometimes a smock, knee breeches, worsted stockings and thick shoes. He was a well set up man, and a really remarkable figure.

Part of Aston's House was burned down in 6 strange to say the night before the adjoining property was sold. Aston's house or rather houses have been rebuilt. They were nasty squalid places; salt butter, strong cheese, and sweets were in close proximity to drapery and boots, while the part nearest to our own house was filled with cheap toys. We never fancied sweets or anything else that came from Aston's, as it was invariably of an inferior quality.

Next to them, where the Midland Railway road now is, stood Mr Yeld's house, afterwards for many years occupied by Mr Eddowes. It was large, square and ugly, and approached by steps with iron balustrades. It had a yard with great gates, and a good

garden and green house at the back. The gabled houses on the new road opened into the yard. Mr. Yeld was a master at the Grammar School, and took boarders. I remember best Carlos Bennet George (?) and Willie Hilbers. Mr Yeld had an action (I think) with one of the Jones family, and I recollect standing on the steps of his house and seeing him pulled by the boys in a carriage on his return from Court, in triumph. Then came William Brentnal, the watchmaker, a nice, tall, spare man, with weak eyes and a large mouth. He was a great friend and sold us pocket knives and pencil cases. We also bought our first watches from him. Mine cost £2, and had a bilious face; Mill's £2.10 as it had a hunting case, and Mill was the more saving and consequently the richer. Over the shop window was a large board displaying one word "Asamteadepôt" (Sic). Walking past his window with my Father one day we noticed that the new almanacks for 1858 were exposed for sale. "Dear me", said my father, "how time flies".

Rochford, the saddler, was next. He charmed away a wart that I had on my thumb by cutting a cross on it, and rubbing it with the point of a straw. The entrance to his shop was inside the gateway on the right, with Bess Brentnall's opposite. She used to shew on her window-ledge a couple of pairs of ready-made women's boots, cloth-topped, and lacing up the side. These were popularly supposed to be made in Paris.

In the Ivy House were the William Smiths. He always passed by the name of "Smith the Druggist". A good-looking cheery man was he. Such a nice face he had. I can see his white head, a pen in his mouth, looking down on his desk now as it was always to be seen through the bow window. He had two sons, one a doctor Tom, and the other William, a thin-faced delicate little man with weak knees, and who stammered dreadfully, much to everyone's regret (for he was a favourite); he died in 66. We purchased at this shop a compound of tartaric acid and sugar called "Lemon Kale". It was very excellent; also biscuits and ginger-bread. Everything was good that came over that counter, except perhaps the medicine.

Next door, also in a house with bow windows, lived Willey (he had been a policeman and worn a tall hat) and his wife. Then came an old woman named Smith who kept a drapery shop. She was suffocated by something in her bedroom catching fire. One of our nurses was a grand-daughter or neice of hers.

Mr Kempson occupied the white house. He was a cheery, bald man - an auctioneer - always had a joke for boys, and drove a chestnut cob in a gig; had a hairy terrier named Cribb, and a brother Scott who was much crippled by rheumatism.

What a lot of bow windows there must have been in Sutton, for the next house in which the Woods, the painters, lived, had one. I cannot remember who occupied (didn't some Bedfords live there?) what was afterwards Hardy's shop, but Mr and Mrs Richard Sadler owned the nice old place now the bank. Mr Sadler died early in the fifties. I just recollect him. Mrs Sadler was very hospitable to us and we went there a great deal to play with Hurst and Ralph, in fact we had quite the run of the house, and a nice comfortable warm house it was with a beautiful piece of tapestry in the oak-panelled dining room, and a pretty bow-windowed drawing room at the back, which looked on to the garden, but without any view. A large vinery was at the bottom of the flower garden in which was a

fountain and an orange tree. The live stock consisted of a very fast white pony, and a long-legged wire haired terrier "Pedlar" who came from the Albrighton Kennels.

Miss Pim, afterwards Mrs Honey, lived with the Sadlers and had her own horse. We liked her very much.

Mr Sadler's office stood next to his house, but had previously been in the yard up the steps. Wilkins kept the Sadler's shop, and for a time the post office was next door. William Wilkins, with a stout wife, and a stouter son, a nice boy Joe, and a very pretty daughter, resided at the red house now an office. A good looking man, something of the same type as William Smith was he, and he had courtly manners. In his house were blue glass spirit decanters. He was a chandler, and farmer by trade, and I have heard bred the wonderful horse "Chandler" who to this day carries the palm for having made the longest jump. Wilkins' barn beyond the toll gate was periodically burned down.

The Gable house contained "Taylor" Baylis, a worthy old man with a nice voice. His daughter Mary Anne was my school mistress at Miss Thrupp's. Baylis was blind towards the end of his life, and was generally to be found sitting before that comfortable fire place in the front room.

Next door were Pratt and his wife. The former was a very stout man, and his spouse was bulky. When the former died they could not get his body downstairs, but had to lower it from the bedroom window. Mrs. Pratt afterwards supported herself by selling sweetmeats. A card was in her window on which in blue letters was printed "Sparkling lemon pop". The blue letters were in flames, and suggested that the drink was not of a cooling nature.

Beyond the 'upper house' stood a veritable relic of the past. The old Malt house of rough sandstone with the remains of rough cast on it, with yew trees on either side of the porch. Brick steps ran to an upper storey, which was something like the loft at home, though it had evidently in a previous age been a dwelling house of some little consideration. It had mullioned windows and on the north gable were quaint old sandstone figures which are now built into the wall of the new aisle to the Church.

Wells, the father of the well-known jockey, was the first malster I remember, and with him was the nice old fellow called "the Malster". Poor old fellow, he became blind, but I think owing to the kindness of my Aunts had a happy old age.

In the middle of the pretty old block of buildings in the little house mentioned by my Aunt Helen as the place where she learned the rudiments, Hackett resided. He was clerk to Mr. Perkins, and dressed in light trousers, nankeen waistcoat, and old-fashioned stand up collars with a real neck cloth. He was the type of legal dignity.

Then after a little interval came "Cock Sparrow Hall". May the possessor of the property be forgiven for demolishing it, for it was wanton: a pure piece of vandalism. Such a pretty house, with an old shutter opening into the street which you were apt to run into at night if it were not closed; inconvenient certainly as the inhabitants had to come from the back of the house into the street to open or shut it, and if it were not shut gently it

broke all the glass in the window, but what does that matter? It was time honoured. The walls were of black and white half timber. On the ground floor the window was a lattice with another peeping through the thick thatch on the dormer principle. The Westons lived there, but I think not as early as the fifties.

Then came the house we called the "Perkins's" with a moat and a sundial, both of which judging from the style and age of the building I should take to be shams. A little bridge went over the moat to the hall-door. Mr Perkins and his daughter seemed to be very reserved people, in fact we boys did not even know them.

Stephenson the carpenter with the largest and reddest nose I have ever seen, lived a little above and beyond again Father Harkness a very pleasant and unaggressive old priest.

Where the new part of the Grammar School now stands was a little house with two bay windows, a little back from the road. An old couple named (also) Weston sold groceries, candles etc. It is to be hoped that the old Swan Inn may long be spared. It is to my mind to the Grammar School what the mill is to Warwick Castle, or St Margaret's to the Abbey.

Mr Wright the Head Master of the Grammar School was a rigid disciplinarian and believed in the efficacy of the cane. In private life he was agreeable but he was too aristocratic in his view for a middle class school. It is related of him that one morning he was discovered armed with a nice fat floggable boy named Bond; by a local tradesman. Mr Wright motioned the intruder away saying "leave us alone in our disgrace".

Beyond the Grammar School Mr & Mrs Mendham lived, he a tall sad looking clergyman, a scholar and a book collector. I have lately seen in the paper that his library was very valuable. A field walk ran from the corner of his front garden into the Tamworth lane.

The tollgate was the next. The gate crossed the Lichfield Road on the Sutton side just at the top of the hill, the house in the corner, small white and one storied. Another pretty field walk ran from the gate, along fields at the back of the Anchorage, to the top of Cotton's or Scotton's lane.

Descending again, the first house was the Anchorage, where Mr Wilson kept a boys school. Then at the Rookery (there was a rookery at the time) lived old Miss Webb, a kind and very charitable lady. We paid her occasional visits with our Mother.

In the White Cottage opposite my Aunts house already mentioned, was an old man who bore our name (or perhaps I some how associate him with the house) he wore an indifferent tall hat, and was altogether a very respectable person, and a carpenter by trade. Next came Mr Grundy in what is now the Swan Hotel. We did not see much of him, but I respect his memory as an early and devoted disciple of photography. What would he say if he saw the progress it has made since his time. He had a curious van built, in which was his dark room, and several conveniences which are no longer required drawn by an old brown horse, and driven by Tom Bromwich, who himself shared his masters taste for the art.

An entry led along the garden wall (where the hotel road now runs) into fields, where the Hotel is, over which there was a pretty walk down the hill, on beautiful turf to the park, but bending to the right. From there no buildings were to be seen, but the Manor House bosomed in trees, Mr Wiggins house, and the park lodge now modernised and which had been built a few years earlier from designs submitted by Mr Packwood.

Genders the butcher had his shop close to the entry I have mentioned. He had two very pretty daughters. He himself was a fine well-bred looking man and had an elder brother who never appeared to be prosperous.

A few doors below, in a house now a shop lived two extraordinary characters, brothers James and Joseph Hughes. They were wool-staplers, "warm" men and were supposed to be misers. The latter died first and James survived him for some years. Old James hated boys and I think humanity generally, for he was very much given to saying disagreeable things of his neighbours, but somehow he was tolerated on account of his wealth presumably. He was stout and old fashioned and had a thoroughly disagreeable expression.

Up Cotton's entry on the right hand side lived old George Eastwood, who had (and his son also) rickety legs, broad shoulders and a head a size too small. In his kitchen on the wall on the right of the fire place hung a black and white panorama of the funeral of the Duke of Wellington. Just above was the "Hughes's wool ware-house."

The Three Tuns was the Hotel then, and I should imagine very comfortable, for it was patronised by gentle folk, and I once went on a Sunday to call on Mr Cheshire and Dr Wade, and found them drinking port. It would not I fear be safe to drink port at the Three Tuns now.

The Miss Grundys had the tall red house for some time, and then came some half timbered houses which were pulled down to make way for the new road to the Railway Station.

George Wilkins kept the butcher's shop, a burly man with bibulous nose and cheeks. He dressed well, and affected the style of old fashioned country gentlemen, whom we see in prints, wearing breeches, and gaitors made to imitate top boots.

He had a lordly manner and waved his hand to you as he passed in his jig, with great geniality. A good old fellow was he to us, and lent us the long tailed brown poney that his butcher boy used to ride, with great pleasure.

Brockass and his wife did a good trade as undertakers matters etc; what they did with all the hats was a puzzle to me, as there seemed to be hundreds in white paper on the shelves. They must have been very much out of date by the time they found purchasers. The shop had two bay windows and was approached by several steps.

In Vesey House were three sisters the Misses Bracken. The eldest was Agnes, the like of whom I do not know or have ever known. A woman first, authoress, artist, antiquarian,

philanthropist, of the strongest individuality, with the softest heart, such was Agnes Bracken, and I speak of her with respect and affection. Her delightful book on the place she loved so well, is a local classic, her pictures adorn many of the drawing room walls of what few old Suttonians remain, and record the park as it was, the town as it was, and many friends as they were.

She was thorough, her mission work, her activity in every thing that was likely to benefit others or animals, are not likely to be forgotten till the old Sutton folk have quite died out, which will perchance be ere long.

She took great pains in trying to teach me water colour drawing, and would take me for long walks in the park, telling me of the Roman roads, barrows and cromleches. She went to her rest in 1877.

Her two sisters Caroline and Emily the former my god mother who had a great deal of quite wit were good ladies, proud of dress and sterling withal.

In Mr Evans's house lived old Richard Brown. The entrance was quite different then, and if I remember right the pavement was much higher.

Old Edward Sadler lived in the white house. He was fat swore lustily and was fond of strong waters. At the corner of his yard, where Harry Bromwich's shop now is, was a pretty little dutch garden with a wire fencing in which on warm days was a parrot. He (Mr. Sadler) was brother to Mr. Richard Sadler and had a son who wore a great deal of jewelry.

Arnold was the butcher in Mrs Paget's house, a red nosed truculent looking man was he, and his face did not belie him, for he beat his mother. He had a good black cob.

Next came Tilley the tailor who wore black felt slippers and no coat, and who had for neighbours the Maskels Mrs Grange and Evans the carrier lived below, and Hogan kept a shop; There was a black-smith's forge at the bottom kept by Furniaux who was also a horse-leech, and was for this reason dubbed "Doctor" I dont think he knew much about farriery for his remedies were of the most drastic and heroic, so that nothing with an impaired constitution could stand them. He was a little man chiefly remarkable for his unwashed face and the drenching-horn he always carried.

Beyond the black-smiths a pretty lane with high white thorn hedges ran to the park, nearly meeting overhead. No houses were on either side and no hideous blue bridge.

I should have said that from Arnold's shop to Mr Edward Sadlers ran a high causeway bordered by white wooden rails of the pattern still to be found on the other side of the street

Along what is now called the "Parade" (we are refined in our vulgar youth we called it the dam) were no trees. White railings topped with sheet iron enclosed it on either side. The view was then pretty, as the park could plainly be seen before the embankment was constructed. The first house was the little white one just beyond the bridge and is much as

it was, a wire covering to the window looking uphill towards the Cup suggested that a dairy was inside. Hayward the present owner of the Manor lived there in happy humbleness. He was a wheel-wright and had a wooden shed just where the entrance of the Manor Road now is. Above was and is the Cup Inn. I do not know a prettier wayside inn. There used to be dancing on the green in the garden and a large arbour at the end. Opposite were no houses, a pretty narrow lane with high banks called "Love Lane" ran towards Holland.

Descending again towards Sutton and crossing the red stone bridge, that hideous terrace where I think my Uncle one lodged was the first effort in brickwork. Another pretty back and white cottage recently pulled down stood behind the yew tree. The Mill was then working at Skinners pool. Before this however, is Ashby House then the "coach and horses" Inn, and it had a sporting representation sign with a very blue sky. There are nice Queen Anne mantel and fire places in this house.

Hollis lived at the house at the corner, and had china dogs in his windows. The pound was a great deal used in those days, and we used to go and see the prisoners as if they had done something wrong. They were very badly treated, and starved, till Miss Bracken drew attention to the matter.

The new school was of course then un-built and the white part which still stands was governed by Mr Felton who had a wooden leg, and who lived in the same block. George Brentnall the clerk, his wife and family, lived there, also Mrs Brentnall being the school mistress of the girls. George had a kitchen garden at the angle of the Slash Lane, just opposite the Rector's gardener's cottage.

The Almshouses were all tenanted by old people, whom one knew, but they changed, poor old folk, so often that I am ashamed to say who were the occupants during the period of which I write. I do not remember.

The Gaol stood on part of the site of the present town hall, and adjoined the old workhouse, which has lately been very well restored and turned into municipal offices. George Beech and his nice wife lived there, after they left the Park Cottage, and very cosy they were. A school friend of mine Robert Startin spent his holidays there, one winter. We used to go down to tea and get the most succulent buttered toast. Poor Startin afterwards was in the 10th Hussars and was killed accidentally by a brother officer who ran his spear through him, when out pig-sticking in India. Good people were the George Beeches. However on one occasion George did not meet with our approval. Uncle Henry lent us his poney "Charley" for a days hunting. As it happened both Mill and I possessed spurs which we were too proud of, not to wear. We intended to ride and tie, but thought it best that both of us should ride to the meet. Just by the Rectory sunk fence we met Beech. Wanting to show off, we tried to trot by him, but the good Charley objecting to having four spurs in him wriggled ducked and bucked. We asked Beech to help us, but he found the incident so amusing that he was quite incapacitated, so wildly clutching we fell.

Part of the old workhouse was used as an infant school, the mistresses being two nice quiet women, Mrs Corton, with white hair, and Miss (?) Colman. In front of this part was the Town Pump which was used by every one, I think in Mill Street. It was only removed a short time ago. People used to go with their pails and gossip there, as they do at

fountains abroad, and its situation being very central, it was very well known. Although I regret the loss of the pump I must admit that the introduction of the South Staffordshire Water was in every way an immense blessing.

Mr Secker lived at the little corner house of the Church hill. Good old James Beech with his white ringletted wife, kept the post office at what is now the office of the local paper. We used to go and see her and get stamped on the forehead and hands with the Sutton Coldfield post mark, and she would cry excitedly "dont attempt to rub it off now wait till its dry". Whorwood then a prosperous tradesman had the boot shop next door.

This concludes the round of the town, but there are several other worthies who should be kept in one's mind. The brothers Wood were a most extraordinary pair. They were drovers by profession and lived at Hill. Both were extremely dirty, and one was lame both in hand and foot, and consequently went by the name of "Slapfoot" Wood. His brother persisted in wearing a tall hat. I was told that they had a sister (though I never saw her) who kept their house beautifully clean.

Then there was Sally Salt a little old woman who was always on the trot. How she lived I do not know. Ellen Taylor too, she used some times to weed our gardens walks, and get a shilling and a meal, and I have heard that she took her cut of mutton at intervals at Wylde Green. Poor Ellen had no palate and it was hard to understand her. My Aunt Fanny was very kind to her and on Sundays used to teach her hymns and writing in the little room on the right of the hall at the Upper house.

Miss Shaw lived at the top of Reddicap Hill and was I think Aunt to Mr Shaw already mentioned. He was very peculiar and frightened Gerty when a little girl. Partly paralyzed she crawled about the floor by the aid of a stool.

I cannot for the life of me recollect how the town was lighted before, the gas was started but I well remember the excitement there was when it was first turned on.

Sutton was then paved with pebbles called "cobbles" large ones in the street. and small ones on the foot-paths, as at present exist in front of our house. The surface drainage must have been of very primitive construction, for when there was a severe rain storm, the water used to rush with great force down the open gutters, and even into the road, to our delight.

Now think of this. Early in the morning on a Fair Day people came and tied hurdles all along the foot paths to make sheep pens. There are still stables in the barn wall which were used for that purpose. Sutton was "en fete" in those days. Cattle and sheep and pigs were hustled about and horses trotted up and down in the hollow. Booths occupied the middle of the town, by the town Hall or Pepper Pot. (By the way - before the present edifice was erected a sort of brickwork pen sufficed for the weighing of coals, manure, etc. This was occupied on Sundays by blatant dissenting preachers).

On the stalls was yellow rock, ginger bread, brandy snap and nuts; in the booths Feegee caffirs (the genuineness of whom I have since begun to doubt) and all sorts of wild

animals. There were shooting galleries, and roulettes the indicator of which always stopped at the cheapest prizes and merry-go-rounds. It was all magnificent - it was the Fair.

All the vendors had strident voices and I remember well, a very red faced lady, who had a long booth, and Charley Smith who had an iron hook for a hand like Captain Cuttle. I saw him the other day in his shop at Erdington. He is grey, rosy and fat.

If you desired to see real pomp you should have seen the fair proclaimed. The Sergeant at Mace certain old crippled friends with halberds and the crier, undertook this responsible duty.

Then the omnibus from Birmingham crowded inside and out, would come toiling up the hill, with its four steaming grey horses.

The club met on Whit Monday which was an exciting day for Sutton. They marched to church in procession. First came a large yellow flag carried by two slawart Higgses with their unmistakable noses; then a brass band and finally the members of the benefit club, two and two, with blue wands surmounted by golden acorns. After church they adjourned to one of the respectable public-houses for their annual dinner, and after to the park. The flag was placed against the hollies just beyond the "Punch bowl" and country dances and country games became the order. It seemed to me that the bandsmen as often had the beer pot to their lips as their mouth-pieces and later in the evening the basser instruments were much in evidence. However, everything was cherry and fresh and it was a most enjoyable afternoon.

There was public rabbiting in the Park at intervals, in order, I presume to keep the number down. It was great fun, every one turned up with dogs and sticks, and the silly conies, bewildered by the noise would fall an easy prey.

I remember Mill and I being with our nurse on Holly Knob one day and seeing horses and people where the old trees, and the new shelter are on the old race course. They were going to race but were forbidden by some one in authority, probably Windebank. They then trooped towards the town in a body but changing their minds returned. We went towards Sutton, and just at the spot where the hideous railway bridge (mentioned before) now is, met the Rector who as a Magistrate had been called on, to interfere, and was proceeding to the race course with a posse of officials. Soon afterwards deep trenches were dug across their course and having served their purposes were filled up.

The dam at Keepers Pool broke one day, and carrying off all the water much surprised the Wiggans.

A joyous day was that of "Warden's Choice". About 10 the mellow old bells began to ring, and the boys and girls were to be seen hurrying to the Blue Coat Schools (not so called I believe now) the former appearing a little later in brand new blue jackets with silver buttons and corduroy trousers. They had also woolen caps with a tuft-a-top. The girls had new clothes, and neat straw bonnets ribboned with blue. The Warden was always a gentleman of position, and although every one knew who was to be elected, it was quite proper to evince anxiety and later surprise. Later the Warden's dinner took place. We had

a holiday on this occasion. The choosing of the Mayor now-a-days seems very common place.

Fireworks and bonfires were the order on the 5th November, but have now been almost given up.

Haymaking was with us quite a function, almost as important as pig killing. All sorts of helpers male and females were engaged. Ingley and old John Bird were always the mowers, and Burke did the carrying (his horse's name was Short). The women wore cotton print sun bonnets and turned the hay in an oblique line, while we rollicked in the sweet grass, caught field mice and chased rabbits. There was a plentiful supply of beer and the whole business was of the merriest character.

Miss Bracken organised what was called "repository" which however had the flavour of a bazaar. All sorts of fancy work, toys, besides useful things were sold, and a considerable sum was thus raised annually for the Church Missionary Society.

There was once a great Bazaar in the fifties held on the slope close to Perkin's Pool. All the quality were there, and a military band. I remember my Mother's stall very well, and how pleased she was to be congratulated on the sum she realised. It was I believe a great success, and the building fund of Boldmere Church gained considerably.

I remember the opening of Boldmere Church. My godfather Dr Williamson was to preach, and stayed with my Aunts. It was the last time I saw this good man. I walked with him as far as the corner Inn at the Coldfield where he lifted me up to what appeared to great height, kissed me, told me to be a good boy, and to go straight home.

Going to Birmingham we either drove or went by omnibus. We had a phaeton with a hood and a dicky behind, in which Mill and I sat. The horses were "the old horse" who was shod with a bar shoe (one of which still hangs on the stable wall) and Heron, the former a brown the latter a bay, both fine horses. The omnibus was an imposing vehicle. I should say that there were two. The better, "Shepherds" driven by Tom of that name, and Archer in turn left little to be desired. It was painted red. Tom Shepherd had a red face and Archer a redder. Four greys composed the team, and a very good one it was. The floor was covered with straw, and the fare was one shilling. Sampson Tomlinson travelled with me once when I was going to school and was very angry with me because I could not understand him, which I think was not to be wondered at. How well I remember Joseph coming round the corner at Moseley leading Fairy to fetch me home for my holiday. I rode and he led her, as far as the "Swan with two necks" and there consigned me to Shepherd, he himself clambering on to Fairy in rather an unhorsemanlike manner.

John Line drove the other omnibus but it was indifferent. It was drawn by four ragged horses, and had a blue band. Line also drove a one horse "car" in the morning, and, softly be it spoken, Mill and I used to ride behind on the axle going up to school, getting off just below our Aunts house, running by with demure faces, and establishing ourselves again, when opposite the Malt house.

Of our ponies "Black Prince" was the first and most beloved. He was a pretty little Sheltie given to us by Mr. Robinson of Kingswinford, and had a thick mane falling on either side of his neck and a white off hind foot. He was a good and patient little animal, was very fond of a liver and white spaniel "Carlo" who used to jump at his nose and who could climb the ladder to the loft like my little Fritz. Prince, in spite of having the most exacting of masters, boys always kept fat.

His successor was "Peggie" a brown mare and a very fast trotter. She was also given to us by Mr Robinson. After her "Fairy" was ridden both by my Father and Mother. A rare little mare was she, blue roan with an ugly brown head. She could jump as well as a hunter, and one could not get to the bottom of her. I have ridden her hunting from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. and she would take her food on arrival. Mill and I frequently jumped her over the iron hurdles. She lived to a great age and was shot at Pye Hayes in 85. After we had given her away she carried Mrs Harry Bagot, then a child in Rotton Row.

Of dogs Carlo was the dog of our childhood. He was run over and killed. Grim, an ugly black and tan terrirer we gave to Miss Bamford. Tinker and Terry were our greatest and most affectionate friends. They both died - so to speak - in their beds.

We constantly went up to our Aunts house, generally after our lessons were learned at night, or indeed whenever we pleased, and we were always welcome. In the winter there were splendid fires burning, and there my favourite seat was a square stool on the right hand side, near Aunt Sarah who would always be knitting at night. We often played games, and sang old minstrel songs about banjos, plantations and wooly heads to Aunt Fanny's accompaniment. Vincent and a few other festive spirits once paid us a visit there with banjos, bones etc., all complete. They danced so violently that a fine china bowl slipped off the piano and was broken. My Aunts made the best of ginger wine, which was very comforting to our little interiors. The stoney field with its fairy rings, and old buildings were rare places to play in.

My Aunt Mary lived at Leamington, and my Father took me there to see her on the day on which the Princess Royal was married. Aunt Mary gave me, or my Father bought me, an india rubber baloon then a novelty. In Birmingham some one ran against me and burst it much to the consternation of myself, himself and every one near, and to my Father's amusement. We stood in Collins shop in High Street and watched a large illumination V.R. on a hoarding opposite.

Hollyfield was a pleasant house too. Aunt was very good to us and we often went there, and had games of "Pope Joan", "Old Maid" and various other old fashioned gambles for pence. Aunt was very fond of cards, and was always the soul of the party. If we carried two pence or three pence home we walked with the dignity of millionaires. Uncle was kindness itself, and would continually lend us his poney for a day's hunting, and as we got older his horses. He must have had a good deal of confidence in our riding and judgement. What a pretty place is Hollyfield with its lawns, sunk fences, beautiful trees, and lovely views over the town. I think quite the nicest moderate sized house in the neighbourhood.

Kingswinford is sixteen miles from Sutton Coldfield but as it entered so much into our young lives I must mention it.

Our visits there were really delightful. We generally drove and went through rather bare country as far as Barr, and then penetrated the "Black country". It was black then. The roads were black, the people were black, great blast furnaces flamed and smoked, chains rattled over pulleys, and hammers banged. It was most fascinating. At one place going up a hill we could see through barred windows lines of red heated iron being passed along or beaten by shiney copper-coloured men. Then there was Dudley Port, and the "Blue Pig" Inn and anon Dudley castle with its old towers peeping through the green trees at the top of the hill, which was a conical oasis, and a few miles further on looking down from a canal bridge we saw Kingswinford Church in the hollow and felt that we were nearing the house we thought so much of.

The Grandmother with a dignity and grace quite her own, would be sitting in her high backed red chair, and would welcome us very heartily. What a beautiful woman I used to think her, as she sat at the head of her table on New Years day, with a scarlet embroidered Indian Shawl over her shoulders, a thick gold chain and diamond rings, every thing on her and she herself looking so handsome and "real".

Oh! they were good days: We had perfect liberty could eat as many pears and cherries as we liked, roam about that garden and fields and yew tree walk with Jet(?) and poor old bob tailed Dash with warts on his nose, or tramp the farm with Harry Webb.

There was in the house at Kingswinford brightness and warmth that I have known in no other, also just before dinner a beautiful but unobtrusive smell of good things. Not the least charm was the kindness of our Aunts Laura, Fanny, and Hetty, who not only did all in their power to make us happy, but tipped us generously when we left. With these tips we generally bought India Rubber or rather Gutta Percha whips at Penger's the saddler and would melt them down and make balls when we were tired of them thereby spoiling our clothes. It was not easy to forgive the several husbands of my Aunts for taking them away.

I just remember my Grandfather sitting with me on his knee in the dining room and teaching me a nursery rhyme.

Then, was not Uncle George to be visited at beautiful Green Hill, where was Mrs Westwood who liked to hear me whistle; the Downings at the white cottage, Miss Callow, and the Misses Briscoe with their large mince pies.

Yes! Yes! they were good times.

Of the old houses that have been swept away I have mentioned I think nearly all, but I must not omit one at Maney on the ground where the forge now is. It was black and white, built off the ground and had four sandstone steps.

There are still some pretty ones left, notably one in the Maney Lane, another at the bottom of Reddicap Hill, the Swan Inn, the Cup, the beautiful one opposite Vincent's house, another in the Blind Lane and several further afield.

Having expressed so much regret at the various and many changes that have taken place, it must not be imagined that I am not quite sensible of the real improvements, and they are improvements in nearly every respect. Streets are cleaner, houses better, and means of locomotion extraordinarily good. The water supply is an unmixed blessing. The town is now drained, and in time will cease to be offensive; it is lighted by gas from Birmingham which will no doubt at some future time enable us to find our way about at night. All this indicates real and healthy progress. The public buildings do credit to the new regime, though I fear that the same cannot be said of the treatment of the Park, which shows to me that its governors have not either appreciation of the picturesque, or respect for its ancient history. This latter cannot perhaps be expected of a new generation of a new class.

Many more and great changes will happen, but the greatest of all have already taken place; when Sutton Coldfield lost its character of being a sleepy old-fashioned town; when the people and their customs changed; when the freshness of country life disappeared and the ideas and manners of a large provincial town were substituted.

"So the old order of things giveth place to the new".