

Cottingham and Middleton

...memories



John Heathcote (born 1945)

Bristol-born John Heathcote moved to Cottingham when he was adopted in 1946, aged just over 12 months and lived in the village for about 21 years. Read John's memories of school days and life in the village.

John now lives in Kinmel Bay near Rhyl North Wales. John is pictured here in his Cassock and Surplus, around 1954.

I was born Feb 1945 Filton, Bristol and was adopted in 1946, when my adopted parents George and Eveline Heathcote moved from number 1 The Octagon Corby to The White House, School Lane, where my mother looked after Mr Heath for board and lodgings plus a wage of two shillings and sixpence, which was half the going rate. I don't know if it's true, but I was led to believe that the White House was haunted. I was told that some weird things would happen there and that someone was hung in the drawing room.

Village shops, pubs and businesses

When we moved to the village, my father got job at Peter and Mary Bidwell's bakery on Corby Road as a baker's assistant and delivery driver. After a short period (it must have been after Mr Heath died) we moved into lodgings at Bidwell's bakery then, when the new council houses were built, we moved to 29 Ripley Road, which was known as 'The Circle'. At that time Bancroft Road wasn't quite finished and there was a footpath that went past the old windmill leading to Corby Road. Who can remember old Ma Brooks who had a shop where the old foot path had been?

Not long after we moved to Ripley Road, I recall we had a lodger - I only knew him as 'Fatty Veasey' and he was a farm labourer at Swingler's Dairy Farm in Middleton. He sometimes took me with him and I helped him put the cardboard tops on the bottles of milk. I would only have been about 4 or 5 yrs old. Across the road from the Dairy Farm was Doctor Blackstock's surgery, which a few years later moved to the other side of the road down a little lane. On the way home from the Dairy, we often stopped at the Blacksmith's on Main Street and watched him working at his forge.

When we were lodging at Bidwell's bakery, I remember watching my father, the Bidwells and another baker, Frank Corby, making bread and going out in the bread van. Next to the bakery was the Co-Op butchers which had a large red van which would go round the village. It would stop in 'The Circle' (Ripley Road) and people would go to the van for their meat.

There was a mobile fish and chip van and I also remember the chip shop opposite the bakery, next to some ruined old buildings which led to the high wall below The Royal George.

Mrs Rose Smith ran the chip shop a couple of days a week and I remember ordering 4 pen'worth of chips and 6 pen'worth of fish. If you hadn't any money, you would ask for a bag of batter bits. Mr Smith ran the taxi service and I think they had a son who was an AA Man and had motor bike and side car, and a daughter called Sadie. When they moved from Corby Road, near The Cross, they lived in Ripley Road about three doors down from me at 29.

I remember Mrs. Stapleton's shop on the corner of Corby Road and the old Spread Eagle when it had a thatched roof. I think the landlords were Mr and Mrs Horsley. In Church Street, the village Post Office was ran by Mrs Claypole and across the road was Downton's Bakery. At the side of Downton's was a small lane, at the top of which was Eric Lawson's greengrocer's shop.

The Crown Inn on the corner of School Lane was also known as 'Up The Steps'. Landlords I recall are the Corkhills and Entwistles.

My mum used to clean at The Royal George and I would go with her and help. Mr and Mrs Shelton were the landlords. At the top, where the car park is now, there used to be a lot of outbuildings where they kept chickens and pigs. At the bottom of Blind Lane, where it meets Corby Road, Bernard Smith had an upholstery workshop.

Fun and Games!

When we were kids, we would spend hours in the spinny and up The Dale. In the winter, as you could guarantee snow, all the kids and some adults would meet up The Dale and go sledging. If you didn't have a sledge you would cadge a ride on someone else's or find anything to slide on (ie tin lid).

On hot days, when you came out of school, the kids would go to pump (trough) at The Cross for a drink of cold water. One day, I was going for a drink when someone lifted the pump handle - it hit me on the forehead and knocked me spark out. I still have the scar today.

I used to play with Jimmy Kiddy. One day, we were playing up The Dale and, on our way home, we were walking past The Church and saw some black bowler hats and top hats on a bank. We thought someone had thrown them away, so we picked them up and made our way home. There was no one home at Jimmy's so we went to my house feeling pleased with ourselves. Boy did we get in trouble! What we didn't realise was that there had been a funeral and the funeral directors had left their hats there. We had to take them back and say we were sorry.

Behind the bus stop on Corby Road was a footpath to the allotments and the Stone Pit. The footpath went right up to Mrs Kiddy's back garden on Bancroft Road. People would use this as a short cut from the bus stop, climb over her wall and walk down her path. Can you imagine people walking down your path at all times of the day? Not likely!

School Days

I remember going to the infants' school where the teacher was Mrs Liquerish (who lived on the left hand side of Church Lane, going towards the Church). We had a large open fire in the classroom when it was cold. There were no flush toilets, just wooden boards with a hole in and a bucket underneath. The toilet blocks for boys and girls were at the far end of the playground, so you had to make sure you gave yourself plenty of time to get there (or else!).

Children in the higher classes had duties - one was to empty the buckets into the cesspit (smelly) another was to stoke the boiler for the heating. When I was older, my job was pump duty in the school kitchen. Because there was no running water, we had to pump water into a large water storage tank every day. This usually took two boys because it made your arms ache, and I recall doing this with Michel Freeman. In summer, it was hot work, but the dinner ladies looked after us with cold drinks, and sometimes goodies like jelly, cakes, if there was any puddings left over from the school dinners we got a treat.

When I was in the infant class, every day we had to queue up for spoonful of cod liver oil (nice). After leaving the infant class you went into Mrs Muggleton's class. At that time, the headmaster was Mr Porter - he was a very nice man. After Mrs Muggleton's, your next class was Mr Kisby's. He was a great teacher and a brilliant artist. All the kids in his class would try to get him to tell stories as he was a great story teller. When I was in his class, I recall him designing the school badge. If I remember, it was a shield with the letters C & S entwined coloured green and yellow.

Your next class would be Mr Porter's. When he died, Mr Trevor became headmaster. When Mr Trevor died, Mr Kisby became headmaster. After your 11 plus, you went to Samuel Lloyds Boys or Girls School in Corby, until they built the new school Hazel Lees Corby.

Church, bells and choir

I used to be in the Church choir with Nicky Claypole, Richard Ward, Reg and Ron Claypole and Mr Ingram, with Mrs Ingram playing the organ. I became good friends with Chris (Kip) Trevor. We used to wind the church clock up once a week and clean the belfry out every now and again. On Sundays, we would chime the church bells ready for each service. Afterwards we would go to Vere Coles' shop for an ice lolly or some sweets. We became quite partial to mint imperials.

At that time the vicar was Rev Roberts - I think his initials were GWLP and when he wrote his name it looked like Glop, so everyone called him 'Glop Roberts'. Vera Mole cleaned and cooked at the rectory. Chris (Kip) and I used to go to the rectory and ask 'Glop' if we could clean his family swords just so we play with them.

Around the village

A few more things I remember....

Police House

There used to be a Police House on High Street opposite Bury House, when PC Greenhow was the village bobby, before the Stewart family moved into the house. I think PC Greenhow retired and moved to Bancroft Road. He had two sons, Richard and Edward. When they built the new Police House at Frog's Island on Rockingham Road, a PC Shawley took over.

Rockingham Road

At one end of 'Frog's Island' on Rockingham Road lived Colin Bradshaw. They had a huge orchard and his mum used to sell apples and plums. At the other end before Captain Lucas's son Harry took over Bury House, there used to be a little shop.

Turning left onto Rockingham Road from Ripley Road, the first house on the left was where Mr Porter (school headmaster) lived. The next bungalow, set back, is where George 'Sketch' Patrick lived with Mr and Mrs Abbot and their son Martin. Martin had a nasty accident while riding on the back of Ellis & Everard's coal lorry from Caldicott. He fell off and one leg went under a wheel. He had to have it amputated and have a false leg.

Before the factory was a row of cottages. In the last one lived Mrs Hilda Pitts and Son Glyn. Her husband used to cut hair in his back room - one shilling for men and sixpence for boys.

School Lane

I seem to recall a nurse living on the left hand side of School Lane, before the school. I attended her once with a dog bite on my leg and remember having that purple stuff put on it.

Blind Lane

Off Blind Lane to the right there used to be a row of cottages which led down to Corby Road called Barrack Yard. Going down the path, the cottages were on the right and a row of outside bucket toilets were on the left. I used to run errands for an old couple (Mr and Mrs Fred Coles).

Church Street/Water Lane

Below the Church, on the corner of Water Lane, was a water trough and next to this was what we called 'The Wash'. I suppose you could say it was an early form of car wash. The farmers could drive their horse and cart, and later on tractors, through it to wash off the mud. It was filled in some years ago.