

My Life & recalled times of Canal farm at Austen-Fen .

Well folks it started on the 31st of July 1940, not that I could remember that particular date at the time, however I am assured that was the start of my life on earth.

This was the beginning of a long and happy road for me and the family in the future.

My first early recall was being in a cot in the living room full of a rash called measles followed by chicken pox, who needs them, told don't scratch it will leave a mark, not that it presented a problem to me, the room red quarry tiled floor, and the fireplace with a cooking range, oven a trivet for the kettle, and black leaded fender to keep all it in.

The kitchen,

Well enter via the back door, stairs on the left to the spare bedroom and cupboard under the stairway holding 1939/1940 year regalia gas masks which still smelt of rubber two glass eye holes and a carbon filter, yes we did try them on just for fun, also in the stairwell shot guns and one ball cartridges, loading equipment and black powder old hammer shot guns which had seen better years, the 16 bore my first gun, couldn't hit a barn door at fifty paces, with it, but the later rifle sportsman five I made my mark.

Pigs for bacon the old sty's still there when I left the farm but used by dad for pigeon stock lofts but I still recall the feeding though with the swinging boards for the pig swill,

Pig killing day, now children we were always told cover your ears as the squeals rang out as pinkie and perky were put to sleep.

Now as the day moved on that fireside cooker it really came into use on the pig killing day making sausage mix, always tested prior to the final filling of the sausages, and the Haslet, yum.

Charles & Doris Smith always a helper in the busy times, the rest of the pig salted down and stored on the pantry slabs with salt and salt peter, don't know why, something to do with the preserve. What is now the best living room was once had a wooden ceiling and bacon hooks screwed in to hang the mature

joints on, now recovered with plasterboard for a formal ceiling. Granddad Burton bought the farm when he retired from the police force in 1908 he was a keeper of honey bees which was located along the old orchard side, facing the home field I continued to keep the hives going in my younger days very prone to bee stings which caused excessive swelling and pain for three days.

Livestock in the early days Dad started his hobby of rabbits for show, all the cages were in the large shed with the sliding door next to the barn, the cages stacked four high, Breeds of Silver fox, Dutch, Flemish giants, one falling out of its cage at feeding time using my face for a soft landing leaving its claw marks down one side of my face.

Moving on, from fur to feather, racing pigeons, lots of them winning many prizes over the years, in fact the last prize of a pool win Dad never saw, it was the week end he passed away

Shire horses used for pulling the large wheeled wagon carts always painted orange fitted with side boards to increase the loads, although I have recollection of this, no doubt the horses would have been used to work the land.

Memories growing up, the horses pulling carts for the harvest loaded with corn sheaves from the binder, transported to the farm yard and stacked in a fashion to stand firm slowly in a shape to fend off the rain, stems outwards sloping downwards.

After winter the threshing machine pulled along the stack side and I think, kirks steam engine to drive the drum aligned with the drum pulley which gave off a distinct hum as the beater picked up speed and sheaves feed head down to produce the corn and the dreaded chaff hole which no one liked clearing out, Jo blogs got the job.

Ducks & chucks always a part of a farm Indian game a special venture but the eggs were just the same as ordinaire, ducks always laid anywhere Just had to find them.

Milking cows about a herd of thirty out to grass summer time and during the winter months bedded down in the crew yard, milking time all moved in turn to the stables along the passage way to the milking stall.

The canoe, made by Dad and the ribs of the canoe steamed into shape with the coppers in the old wash house, two coppers with independent fires plus a full fire range as in the house, I do remember when you were looking round to buy the farm, you said do you know what I see?, yes history.

Far right the old loo once just a board with a hole in and a bucket to catch the poo now, converted to water flush.

Moving leftwards old coal house, then the washhouse with the coppers and fire place and what was our only bath in the early days, now, no plumbing it was a case of bucket fill and empty and the remaining waste allowed to go on the floor to drain away on the quarry tiles bedded on sand, accompanied by the odd rat that chose to gallop across the floor in an impromptu manner followed by a bar of soap thrown from the bath much to say get out of here.

Next the boiler house, with a boiler to produce steam to sterilise the milking equipment, pipe work transferring the steam to a large container in the churn house where the water pump is situated, the steriliser for milking churns. The petrol Lister engine driving the vacuum pump which I still have in Australia in working order, a blast from the past. Now the milking stables, all along the outside walls, fitted with the vacuum pipes to drive the milk machines, click click as they took the milk from the cows, the only light all by paraffin lamps during the winter month, the smell of the cattle very distinct, along with the oil lamps and told by the milkman don't stand there, you might get kicked, but in reality the tail being raised was the real danger and time to move out of the way of the liquid downpour which presented the real danger.

1947 now you will recall the snow, buckets full of the white stuff, all roads totally blocked and what do you do with churns full of milk? Well Dad heard the road from Louth to Yarburgh had been cleared so the milk man, Alan Frankish and Dad put all the churns on a Tractor & trailer made their way along Yarburgh road nearly all day to over the snow drifts to get the milk collected, hard times overcome with determination, and a need to maintain income.

Now this is the start of my school days now seven years old and do remember both mum & I walking along the grainthorpe road to the primary school over the snow drifts which were quite deep, Olivers, who lived half way along that

road had dug under the snow making a tunnel to access the road, yes it was that deep. Heaven knows why I had to attend in those conditions but yes I made it all the way and back home with mum, bless her.

Now as time rolls on I move to North Somercote, school eventually leaving in 1955 not learned a lot, but wiser, and started my work on the farm, all graft, cleaning out the chicken huts in the field collect the eggs I do recall I was so slim I could get into the huts via the small chicken hatched, but not anymore!.

The old international tractor sold to the coal man Collins and a petrol Ford major taking its place which I leaned to plough with and drove it on the road despite having no licence at that time,

More changes as time rolled on Diesel fords but always under power for the heavy clay land but I managed despite breaking the gear transmission several times which meant both rear wheels were locked and you were unable to steer round corners.

Moving from binders to combine harvesters' seemed so easy bags of corn dropped of a Shute to be collected on the field, just had to pick them up load onto a trailer and transport to the farm, then carry them up the granary steps, no wonder I have back problems in my later life getting married quite an event as everyone knows, still on the farm but not enough income to support me my wife and subsequent family, so giving in my notice to leave the farm much to disappointment of Dad so I am told, moved into the plastics industry, there starts another phase in my life away from the farm and the fen, later on to be rekindled in a new storey.

There will be more to tell.

From a herd of cows all sold bar two which were kept back for house milk but mainly the cream off the top, no wonder I have cholesterol problems in my later years.

Rabbits gone, the herd gone,, here comes the dogs, greyhounds all kennelled in what was the stables and the black shed once occupied by rabbits, greyhound racing to top prize the waterloo cup which both the cup and the plate are held by the family ~~today~~ ^{For years}, a blood sport now banned.

Now what next? The dogs have gone, in come the pigeons, filling the old stables & dog kennels, many prizes won by the first bird home, lots of silver cups which Mum bless her hated the polishing most of which were only held for the year , but a sport which dad loved and continued with until his last day .

But the need for income always persisted, to fill the old crew yard, all disinfected and sprayed white with lime wash, six hundred chickens supplied by "Thornbers" just for hatching, all eggs had to be cleaned with a curved sandpaper tool never washed and had to be kept at a constant temperature of 60 f degrees, and all collected each week by Thornbers transport, I do love eggs for breakfast, but hated the collecting and cleaning of hundreds of them every day.

The chickens sold off each year and the deep litter quite deep after a year all cleaned out by hand, fork full's and the air full of ammonia and the prize find amongst the litter a rotten egg thrown over the other side of the trailer next to cousin John landing with a loud bang and a stink worse than the stink bombs you could buy at a joke shop, just a bit of fun, all the deep litter taken to a field and left for a year before being spread on bare ground prior to ploughing, feeding next year's crop.

Time to relax from a hard day's work, fishing a sport I still love, evening time pick up my fishing rod always assembled dig up some worms hop over the river wall cast in a baited hook & line, Perch, Dace, Bream, and the always Hungry pike all good sport and then fish returned to the river for another day.

The river and its many states, some early years the water level so low you were able to walk across to the opposite bank on the weed bed, but not any more since the river was dredged out, Dad was not very happy as it allowed the out building to move, and in later years dad made a claim against the river board and they rebuilt the whole of the barn wall in engineering brick with very deep foundations, and that included the window overlooking the river

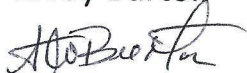
High water flood time well, I have seen the water level so high it was squirting through the cracks in the retaining wall a worrying sight but always stayed dry at our house, but I don't have to tell you about high water do I.

I hope this story of my time at canal farm and some of the pictures can be incorporated into your brochure.

Our very best wishes for your continued holiday home business.

Please keep in touch.

Tony & Joy Burton

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony & Joy Burton', written in a cursive style.