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Drovers Bugbrooke Area.

In 1944 we were to move from our old house that stood opposite Bugbrooke Village Hall up to No6 Camp Hill, it meant quite a long walk to go back and forwards to School at an early age from what I was used to, as the old house was only a few yards away.

But when starting to settle down at No 6 Camp Hill along with meeting all the different people that lived and worked within and about the area.

One such person was to be the Butcher Mr Harry Lovell, he would take me about in his van or on his horse and trap looking after his livestock of sheep and cattle, some were kept up the Gayton Road next to Harold Wards Spinney, some in Camp Close at Camp Hill, and the rest up Simon's Barn's off the Litchborough Road, I would open and shut all the gates when going in and out of the fields for him.

One day while helping him with his sheep up Camp Close, some of them had got through a gap in the hedge to one side of the field that had a double hedge, I asked about this double hedge, and about the area within it, that at the time was never used by anyone, for it fascinated me finding out about the area that we had just moved into.

He told me it was one of a several Cattle Pounds that were once used in the Camp Hill Area. One day on our way up to the field next to Wards Spinney, he pointed out to me a Double Hedge that ran from Grougton Pond up to the Canal, as well as some small fields opposite between the allotments and the Canal, at one time he said they were all used as Cattle Pounds, also once when taking his horse to be shod at William Burrows the Blacksmith at Pattishall, he pointed out several areas while on the way to and from Pattishall where there were double hedges, where cattle were held overnight, for he told me that the Banbury Lane that led up to the A5 Watling Street from Northampton via Rothersthorpe, was once a road whereby drovers drove cattle and such likes all the way to and from Wales, to the Northampton area and the water meadows, as the pasture was well known for fattening up cattle ready for market, so they fetched a better price, this old road was known as Welsh Lane, so he said.

Another Mr Lovell (Fred) whom we called painter Lovell who lived at the bottom of Pilgrims Lane, had some allotments that were adjacent to the field where Mr Harry Lovell (Butcher) kept some of his animals, this garden was once part of the cattle pounds.

Between them both over time, I learnt that at one time the large house where Mr and Mrs Clayton lived with Granny Hefford, along with Lynn and Rodger their two young sons.

Was once an Inn and Public House that did a roaring trade by feeding and selling ale to the drovers, as well as putting them up for the night or whatever?

Also a few doors down towards camp Hill was once a shop, that thrived quite well in its time, the ornate woodwork around the door and windows was still there when we moved up to No 6, the Saunders Family lived in this old shop at the time, and next door to them lived a Miss Davis who was quite an interesting lady, of whom told me quite a lot about the Camp Hill area.

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Opposite the old Inn was a large workshop where Mr Horace Bull whose family for generation had been Wheelwrights, Wagon and Cart Makers, Ladder Makers, Blacksmiths, and Undertakers.

For when moving up to No 6, many a time I had witnessed Mr Bull dressed all in Black wearing a Top Hat whilst carrying out a Funeral, this business at one time relied on work from the many drovers that visited Camp Hill, when droving was at its peak, for many of the drovers would have had horses and small carts or wagons of sorts.

From information gathered, they drove the cattle on average from about fifteen to twenty miles a day; hence Banbury being about that distance from Bugbrooke, I was told cattle driven from Banbury would stay overnight in or around Bugbrooke before an early start for Northampton Market, or to the Northamptonshire meadows to be fattened up.

They spoke of time when the Railways were being built, in the mid to late 1800s and by the early 1900s they were taking cattle back and forth in cattle trucks, from Wales to the Northampton Area, instead of driving them all the way by road.

I was told that over night as the saying goes, all the trade from the drovers that once moved the cattle dropped completely off, not only just up Camp Hill area of Bugbrooke, but the whole length and breadth of the country, this change affected many people that relied on droving for a living, or be it indirectly such as the area up camp Hill relied on at one time, but change is change as well as being constant through life, so one has to change with it.

Mr Harry Lovell, whose butchers shop and abattoir was at the bottom of Camp Hill said his family had passed knowledge on from about these early days, and how at one time they once relied partially for a living from all the drovers of the day.

When I left Bugbrooke School in 1954, I was to go and work for a Mr Harold Ward whom made Ladders, along with being an Undertaker; it was while I was working for him a very elderly Drover had passed away in a small Bovey down next to Upton Mill, we had to go down to fetch him out and prepare him for Burial, the Police were there when we did so, and amongst his belongings was a Drovers Badge with a Number on it, from what I was told it was to signify that he was a qualified Drover in his day, also amongst his possessions was a Drovers Check Book, and a Record ledger of his transactions, for I was to be Amazed as to the amount of money that these Drovers handled over time as well as the responsibility that came with the job, this particular Drover was some relation to one of the Chapman's Family from Bugbrooke, and a family from Kislingbury by the Name of Franklyn.

In our youth he would always catch the last Bus from Northampton Bus Station alongside of us young lads after a night out on the town, he always got off the bus at Upton with his dog. His attire always amused me for he always wore a very long old Drovers Smock; it had fancy quilt type work on parts of it, along with carrying a very long stout walking stick come pole, (Quarter Staff).

It never entered my head that one day I would help to bury him, he told us many a tale about his job and to what it entailed, and he mainly found work down on Northampton Cattle market moving cattle for the Auctioneers , from later research, his surname was Franklin from Kislingbury Northamptonshire.

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Another Drover that passed away that we had to fetch out and bury, lived in Bovey that is still standing adjacent to a barn next to the M1 Motorway between Kislingbury and Rothersthorpe, amongst his possessions was a Drover Badge and such likes as the first gentleman that I had helped to bury.

I think that I had helped to bury two of the very last of the old craftsmen of the Droving trade; I do not know what happened to their belongings and artefacts at the time.

Regarding the moving of livestock, during my early youth while being taken to Blisworth via the railway from Northampton with Mother, this was to see her relations in Blisworth.

When arriving at Blisworth Station they were unloading cattle from out of wagons in part of the Station that was almost opposite The Railway Hotel, over time I had seen cattle taken or delivered at this point over the years until the station closed.

When the Second World War was over, sometimes Mr George Freestone who drove a taxi, would run us back up to Blisworth village from dropping a Fare off at the Station, on these occasions it was he who explained a great deal to me being as I was so inquisitive, as to what went on around me, that seemed to please him greatly, for he was to show me all the records and such likes of his interests in life, hence some of my writings and records that he encouraged me to do.

Also in my very early youth St John's Street Station opposite Northampton Cattle Market was still operating, for on travelling back and forwards from Northampton on the Bus I always looked forward to seeing engines going over the road either going or coming from the Station, for many a time large herds of cattle would be unloaded, and took across the road into the Cattle market, Sheep as well as Horses, this was all work that the drovers once did.

Within the village of Bugbrooke were to be the Tarry Family whom were Carriers, with the changes that take place in life, they started carrying or moving Livestock in large Lorries built for the purpose of doing so.

This was partially due to the United Counties Bus Company purchasing all the surrounding carriers licences for the carrying of certain types of goods, such as small parcels, News Papers etc, as well as people, hence the end of most of the carriers within the surrounding villages that once did this type of work.

But the moving of livestock by road became a very lucrative business, as it was from Farm to Market or visa versa, thus taking trade from off the railways in turn.

In my youth I have driven Cows along the road, back and forth from the fields to be milked, or helped drive sheep from field to field, I was to see all the horses go from working on the local farms, and to date sheep are moved in trailers or lorries from place to place, even Cows are a very rare sight, hence not so many dropping, from horses, Sheep, or cow pats on the road, that would remove any type of road surface within days.

And the changes still go on!

Stanley Joseph Clark.

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As to the movement of Cattle and livestock, before Beaching came along and shut most of the rail network, I have witnessed steam engines pulling so many cattle trucks full of beasts on the up line to London through Bugbrooke, they must have been over half a mile or more in length, for the engine was to pass under Birds Lane Bridge, while the Break Wagon would be just passing Jimmy Rainbows Crossing and House.

The drover that I got to know from Upton Northampton, went about looking just like a turnpike Sailor, (Tramp), yet he was extremely wealthy and dealt with very large money transactions, it was part of an instinct to dress and go about this way as much for his own security in one way, for he did not attract certain undesirables to himself or the company that he kept.

I notice in life, the ones that throw or show their wealth about, are the ones that attract the undesirables, hence someone trying to rob them of their wealth or such likes, so there were methods in the madness of drover's way of attire and lifestyle.

His winter clothing was very thick such as his trousers that looked more like Jodhpurs' when held close to his calves with black leather Gaiters covered in dubbing, along with his leather Hobnailed Boots, his heavy leather overcoat that also was covered in dubbing, had double shoulders to Shute off any wet or rain, along with a large rimed leather hat, similar to those worn by Cowboys or such likes, behind the hat band he had several bit of odds and bobs that stuck out from it, I never really took as much notice, as I perhaps should have done, as to what they were.

I know in the winter months when he did not shave he looked quite a wild looking man, not taking in account of the aroma from himself and his attire, his old dog was always very quiet and would only come to you on his say so.

He told me one night when travelling home on the bus from Northampton one late cold autumn evening, that it was going to be a long cold winter, I asked him how he knew, he said look at the coat of my dog, especially around its back end, he said when the hair on animals are thick and long as it is this particular time of the year, it's always a sign it going to be a long cold winter, as all the cattle and such likes he was moving about had thicker coats than normal, he said the signs over the years, had never let him down, they had been passed down from his father, and Grandfather and way back he said, nature gives tell tale signs about everything if you know what to look for, he said of a time when the dogs were getting uncontrollable along with the cattle, and sure enough we experience an earth quake as one of his forefathers said was coming as he had experienced it once before, long before the ground shook.

Another phenomenon he spoke of that I had myself had experienced seeing, was late one hot harvest time evening, when a whirlwind got up in the rickyard taking all the loose straw upward twisting away to a tremendous height, the hissing noise that came from it was very loud, but the interesting part of it was due to the darkness, one could see a blue light with lots of sparks similar to the ones seen at sea during a bad storm, for near to the ground still rising within it was to be a saucer shaped light coming out from it, he said about the times he had seen this phenomenon, as well from his forefather, he did say perhaps only certain folk can see such things, its perhaps the reason whereby some folk think they have seen a flying saucer!

Stanley Joseph Clark.