

Memories of Enid Holland (nee Hornby)

The Hornby's of Cockey Moor (otherwise Ainsworth)

1939 - 1952

In the summer of 1939, the Hornby family moved from their home, 51 Ollerton terrace, Eagley Bank, to 3 Arthur Lane, Ainsworth, taking the tenancy of a share of the land that formed Davenport Farm, with its barn (dated 1723), stables, shippon, pig sty, hen cabins and other sheds, old house (no longer habitable) dated 1742 and outside lavatory building. All in need of repair and subsequent upkeep.

The old garden was a wonderland of overgrown plants and flowers, hedged mainly with hawthorn but also with old Oak trees (great for climbing), beech, elderberry and a big apple tree.

The family comprised of:

Father: Harold Hornby, born 3rd June 1901, at Park View, Eagley Bank

Mother: Bessie Hornby (nee Ramsden), born 5th March 1901, at the King William Public House, Turton

Daughter: Helen, born in 1927 at Brief Street, Tonge Moor, Bolton

Daughter: Enid Mary, born in 1932, at Townley's Hospital

Daughter: Margaret, born in 1939 at Townley's Hospital

3 Arthur Lane was a newly built semi-detached three bedroomed house across the lane from the land and out buildings; satisfactory for the family in 1939, but a bit of a squeeze when...

...Daughter: Marian Kathleen was born in 1940 (during a particular noisy air raid)

...Son: Philip James, born in 1945

Both births attended by Miss Fielden of Bradley Fold Road, the village District Nurse and Midwife – a remarkable lady

In the meantime, the sale of Ollerton Terrace was prevented as it was requisitioned by the government to house a family of evacuees from the Channel Isles – they lived there for the duration of the war. Harold and Bessie therefore were unable to realise the capital from the house to fund the expenditure of their smallholding venture, which must have caused them financial problems and have curtailed their ambitions. There were other evacuees who came from the Channel Isles to Eagley and some found work at Eagley Mill. Industrial Bolton was a far cry from their beautiful isles, but they were safe for the duration of the war.

When the evacuees returned home, Elsie, the unmarried sister of Harold, was invited to visit Guernsey for several holidays by the families of the girls she had taken under her wing when they were working in her department at the mill. She was made very welcome and was particularly impressed by the extensive market gardens and the beauty of the island and the friendliness of everyone wherever she was taken.

Helen and Enid settled quickly, enjoying the good summer of 1939, making many new friends in the village. After war was declared in September 1939, life went on quite happily for the children of the village, blissfully ignorant of the real dangers of the air raids and the very real concerns of their parents. School was interrupted by the severe winter of 1939-40. Arthur Lane was blocked by snow, and ice had to be broken on the hen's drinking water; also bus services to Bolton and Bury were disrupted. School was closed again in 1940 whilst an air raid shelter was built in the Vicarage garden for the school children. In fact, these were never used in a raid, though regular evacuation of the school to the shelter was practiced. Brick air raid shelters were built throughout the village of domestic use and whenever there had been an air raid in the night, school time was put forward to 10am to make up for lost sleep. The shelter for 3 Arthur Lane was built in the field adjoining the front garden. This land was boggy and therefore the shelter flooded and was never used. Harold and Bessie believed that the only danger to the family would be a direct hit and that that could happen to the shelter or the house, so they took the risk and the family never used the shelter, but stayed cosy in their beds and the children only lost sleep when the bombing could be heard; that was when Manchester and Liverpool were bombed and stray bombs were dropped nearer home.

Helen soon started to put her organising skills to good use. After leaving school, aged 14 years, she kept in touch with her new friends and the following year persuaded them that a "Rose Queen" event in the village – based on her experience gained by taking part in the annual event held on Eagley Cricket Field prior to moving to Ainsworth – was a must! Once the idea was muted neighbouring farmers offered their flat topped hay carts with horses to carry the tableaux and the small children in the procession. Mr Clarence Walker, Headmaster, offered school forms to be roped on to the hay carts. Health and Safety regulations did not exist in those days! The farmers were Mr Wainwright of Arthur Lane Farm and Mr Walter Heys of Dearden Fold Farm.



1940 Davenport Farm - First Rose Queen event. The girl guide organising event and giving speech is Helen Hornby who organised the Rose queen events throughout the war years . On Left Barn with big sliding door, window and door to stables. Old farm house on the end

When the collecting boxes were gathered in, it was the farmers and some of the dads who counted the money raised. The Rose Queen parades were real community events and made everyone feel that they were doing their bit for the war effort and gave the children, especially the girls, something to dress up for.

The stage, ie. A hen cabin base was arranged on the field by Harold for the crowning ceremony, with such flags as could be mustered. Most of the girls in the village took part, wearing their “Sunday Best” dresses and white socks,

The second year, Mrs Birtwistle, who lived in one of the big houses towards Starling, agreed to take part in the proceedings and did the occasion proud by wearing an impressive hat and giving a generous donation to the collection for the Red Cross Agricultural Society, Billy donkey and Ginger the pony gave rides for a small fee. Billy was a rescue donkey retired from a pit at Atherton, a most gentle, friendly animal unless a heavy adult tried to ride him; then he would either turn to snap at their feet or he would walk near to the apple tree to rub their legs against it and force them to dismount. Ginger, his constant companion, belonged to John Buntin, who lived in the village and stabled his pony at davenport Farm.



On one occasion, John rode Ginger over to Walshaw to stay at his uncle’s farm in the school holidays. Ginger was left out in a field at the Walshaw farm, apparently safely secure for the night, but Ginger must have felt homesick and lonely without his pal Billy; he came home alone in the early hours. Harold and Bessie were wakened by Ginger trotting up and down the lane and Billy “ee awing” for all he was worth, probably waking all the neighbours too, until Ginger was let into the field and they were reunited.

Back to the Rose Queen – some of the mothers used their rations to make scones and drinks to sell, using the barn as their base for these refreshments. Helen organised these events for three years and then the sports Club took up the challenge and it became a village tradition. One year, Margaret was Queen and Marian her Crown bearer; Bessie (mother), Helen and Enid making the dresses and Margaret’s train.

Life must have been hard for Harold and Bessie. Harold was an oil refiner working for Moscrop's, St George's Road, Bolton. The workload there increased after the bombing of Liverpool and Manchester; the younger men had gone to war, there was Fire Watching to be done through the night and weekends. He was also a special Constable, meetings and training sessions were held in the basement of the library in the Crescent, behind the town Hall. Harold held a driving licence for all vehicles from the early 1920's without ever taking a test.



Davenport Farm Harold surveying his first crop of oats

A Typical day for Harold: Tending the animals early morning; walking to Bury Old Road at the end of Arthur Lane for the 7am number 8 bus to Bolton; doing hard manual labour in hot conditions through each day; returning home at 6pm to share the evening meal before going “up the field” to attend to all the jobs that were too hard or too difficult for Bessie to undertake – fencing, mucking out, carrying water, boiling peelings (collected by the children from residents in Delph Lane and others) to prepare them for feeding to the hens and pigs. Bury Corporation collected waste from residents in the Borough, heat treated it and sold it to farmers and small holders for animal feed (this was often referred to irreverently as “Bury Black Pudding”). This was officially called “concentrate” and when Marian went to work at Bury Town Hall in 1957 in the cleansing department, she found dad's invoices in the ledger.

At this time the farm was being built up – hens, ducks and pigs to begin with, Billy Donkey and Ginger the pony. Eventually Harold built up a pedigree herd of British Saanen goats, starting with the gift of a rejected kid (rejected because she had a malformation of her udder - i.e. a double teat). She was a wonderful pet and proved to be a fine mother to many prize winning offspring. Serious goat keeping didn't start until after the war, when the pedigree herd was registered with the British Goat Society as “The Cockymoor herd”



Harold Hornby with daughters Margaret and Marian with "Cockeymoor herd" at Davenport Farm

The farm work for Bessie must have been difficult to fit in, being already fully occupied with the growing family and with no labour saving devices in the house. With hindsight I'm sure the children didn't do as much as they could have done, it all seemed like play to them and their parents protected them from the realities of the war, though the news at 6pm was obligatory listening, preceded by "Dick Barton, Special Agent" each weekday evening

Lowercroft, the south end of the village by the bottom lodge, became an army camp and a mill at Black Lane (now Ainsworth Road) was used as a Royal army Pay Corps base. Soldiers training at the Lowercroft camp often passed the farm on their training runs and would stop to talk to Margaret and the pet piglet, Grunter. He was the runt of a litter given to the family by a pig farmer to be bottled fed. They all became very fond of him, but that didn't stop them from eventually eating the pork – it was war time and meat was scarce!

Pantomimes, Nativity plays and musicals with much practicing were performed in the C.of E. school room, when the school was closed for the holidays. Organised and implemented in the main by Alan Strong, an incomer to the village (as the Hornby's were). Mr Strong not only organised the cast and directed, he acted too, often playing the Dame in the pantomimes. He and his wife Edith made curtains for the stage and many of the costumes for the cast of various productions. His other attribute was that of musician, playing piano and arranging music for all the dancing and singing. Without Alan and Edith Strong, the village would have been a sadder and poorer place to live in those dark days of the war and for years afterwards they were active in the Amateur Dramatic society. Of course there were many others who did much work in the village for the war effort and to keep moral up – too many to mention. On one occasion, the pantomime cast walked to Lowercroft camp to entertain the troops. They were greeted by the sentry with a loud "Who goes there?" It would have been interesting to know what the soldiers thought of being entertained by little girls from 8 to maybe 14 years. If they were disappointed that there were no young ladies of their age, they were very polite and didn't show it. They clapped and cheered as though it was the best show on earth.

A P.O.W. camp was developed quite close to the electric railway line between Whitefield and Bury. When passing on the train, the prisoners could be seen gardening and working around the camp

Shops in the village

Post Office – run by Mr Chadwick; Postman – Mr Law

Bakery – owned and run by three spinster sisters – the Misses Rigby

Clogger – Mr Openshaw

A small general and Toffee shop – owned and run by Tom Shepherd and his wife

The Co-op shops – General store, which had a mixed tantalizing aroma of all the tempting goods sold there (providing you had the appropriate ration Book); Butchers shop – the butcher ironically called Marshall Fish; the Drapery run by Miss Amy walker, who wrapped all purchases, however small, with neat efficiency!

Further along, towards the end of the next terrace was another general store “Greenhalgh’s” – in addition to general groceries and vegetables, there was a counter stocked with sewing requisites, everything a seamstress might need, plus ribbons and lots of trimming

Across the road, was the newsagents shop on the corner of Bradley Fold Road and on the other corner was the White horse Public House, landlord Mr Howarth, next to the library, which had very limited opening hours, the public telephone was there too – the only one in the village. Very few houses had phones, maybe some of the farms and the vicarage.

The Duke William Pub at the back of the recreation ground, landlord Mr Pickup