

TICKHILL HISTORY SOCIETY.

Interviews with Betty Franks (nee England). 03/05/08 and 20/06/08

Betty was born in 1924 at Tickhill Station where her father Charles England was Station Master.

The family had moved from the Bamsley area and her mother, Jesse, found the place very quiet and lonely.

Betty's father had charge of both Tickhill and Maltby Stations and also the signal boxes as far as Kirk Sandal. He was also in charge of paying the staff and signalmen every Friday, and, accompanied by Mrs. Bridges, "who dressed like a man," and worked in the District Superintendent's office, used to travel by car to visit the signal boxes in his area.

Betty's father had a large garden in which he grew vegetables, and reared goats. He was a veteran of the Somme having served with the Sheffield Pals Battalion (York and Lancaster Regt). As a result of trench warfare he had suffered from trench foot and chest problems. Dr Kaley of Tickhill advised him to remain at Tickhill, for health reasons, rather than seek further promotion. During the war he suffered from an ulcer. At that time there was very little that could be done except to drink milk. Cows milk was rationed so having a supply of goats' milk was essential. He also bred rabbits, mainly for show purposes, and had won prizes. Betty's help in both the house and the garden was in constant demand. "There was always work to do".



Betty's mum feeding one of the goats

At the Station master's house there was neither electricity, mains water or gas. Water was pumped by a windmill into a tank. All cooking and baking was done on a black leaded range, where coal provided the source of heat. Betty's mother's first task every morning was to light two "primus" stoves, to boil a kettle for tea and to prepare breakfast. Tilley (paraffin) lamps lighted the house.

The station itself had two platforms and on each stood two single storey buildings which contained a porter's room, waiting room, booking office and station master's office. There was a porter, porter/signalman, and booking clerk employed at the station.

At one time the platforms were joined by a pedestrian bridge, which Betty played on as a child. This was dismantled and sent, Betty says, to Scotland.



Tickhill Station 1937



**Undated photo of station staff.
Back L-R Hill, Pennington, not named.
Front L-R Not named, England, Jackson**

2.

Betty went to a small private school in Tickhill run by Miss Goodwin. There she had a broad general education, including some French. Miss Hartley came to the school and taught country dancing and waltzing in the Parish rooms, where concerts, and "little plays" were also performed. She started at 5yrs old and left at 14 to go to Doncaster Commercial School.

When she was a girl, Betty went bird nesting with Evelyn and her two brothers who lived at Wadworth Bar Farm. Bird nesting was not illegal then and there "seemed to be so many more birds". She became skilled at blowing eggs, which were kept in chocolate boxes. Her birds' egg collection was eventually given to Roy Taylor.

When asked whether she went to church, as a girl, Betty said that her parents were brought up as strict Methodists and were "fed up to the teeth with it", as their parents had sent them three times a day. She had once attempted to go to a service but it had already started when she got to Tickhill, so she never went again. On Sunday the first bus was at midday.

In the evenings, the family listened to the radio which was powered by an accumulator (a bulky and heavy rechargeable battery). The family had two accumulators, these were used in turn and recharged weekly at Priestley's Garage. Listening time was therefore limited and Betty's father decided what was to be listened to. This was sometimes dance music but the radio often ran out of power before the weekend.

Betty liked shopping at Jarvis's which was a "lovely shop, very refined" with Crawford's biscuits on display and a musical box playing at Christmas time. There were three butchers in Tickhill.

MAS - England

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Sub 17 1948

JARVIS & SONS
THE GROCERS
TICKHILL
1 MARKET PLACE, TICKHILL, NR. DONCASTER.

1	TEA	1/11
2	SUGAR	7 1/2
3	CHEESE	9 0/4
4	BACON OR HAM	6 0/4
5	MARGARINE	12 0/4
6	BUTTER	12 0/4
7	FATS	1/4
8	EGGS	1/4
9	3 lb S. Sugar	1/4
10		3 10
11	2 Demade	1 1/4
12	Hamase	1 1/4
13	2 Packs	1 1/4
14	2 Packs	1 1/4
15	2 Packs	1 1/4
16	6 lb 6 Cornmeal	3 0
17	2 1/2	2 6
18	1/4	1 1/4
19	1/4	1 1/4
		8 1/4

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JARVIS & SONS
THE GROCERS
TICKHILL
1 MARKET PLACE, TICKHILL, NR. DONCASTER.

1	TEA	
2	SUGAR	
3	CHEESE	
4	BACON OR HAM	
5	MARGARINE	
6	BUTTER	6/4 51 - 3-6 3/4
7	FATS	
8	EGGS	
9	20 layers	3-6
10	5 1/2 lb 1/2	1-1 1/2
11		
12	Poultry meal	
13		
14		1-8 - 2 1/4
15	Best and fat	4
16	Pond 13 1/2	
17		
18		
19		

This bill is dated September 17th 1948. Total in decimal currency is about £7.50

3.

Betty's spending money 1d (an old penny) was spent on sweets at Mrs. Woolas'. "Mrs. Woolas got a cone shaped bag and filled it to the top. She never weighed it."

Jesse, Betty's mum had was a member of Bamsley Cooperative Society, and ordered her supplies from Bamsley. These were brought to the station in a van. Betty clearly recalls her Coop number (10429). Later on she shopped at Jarvis's when the Coop van stopped calling.

Betty always looked forward to the annual holiday which was spent at Southport, and always in the same accommodation, where they had a private sitting room.

Christmas, Betty remembers as being very lonely. Although there was one Christmas she remembers particularly well.

Scarlet fever was an extremely infectious disease and was treated very seriously.

In December, when she was about nine Betty and two other Tickhill girls contracted scarlet fever. Betty was the first of the three to catch it.

To avoid spreading the disease six weeks isolation was essential. No visitors were allowed. A disinfected curtain was hung across Betty's bedroom door. The ends of this curtain were in the bowl of disinfectant, so that it was permanently saturated.

Throughout the six weeks her mum was the only person to enter the sick room. Her dad called through the door to her. Apart from the doctor no visitors were allowed, even the window cleaner was reluctant to call. Christmas presents were brought in one at a time. They were played with, for a few days, then taken out and burnt.

In the New Year of 1940, two months before her sixteenth birthday Betty started work in the South Yorkshire Office of British Railways. On reaching the age of 16 she was paid £1 a week, which she gave to her mother. Her mother gave her 2/6d. (12p). Out of this she "treated herself" to a bar of chocolate(2d) . The rest was spending money and savings.

The war had just begun.

During the war, Betty remembers how seats were removed from the buses, and passengers were "herded in like cattle." Wadworth hill in those days was much steeper and the buses "had a job to get up it".

One weekend, when relatives from Deepcar were visiting, Sheffield "went up". There was an air raid. Betty remembers standing at the door with her father seeing a red glow in the night sky. Sheffield was aflame as the Luftwaffe were trying to put the steel works out of action.

When her relatives tried to return home they actually got to Sheffield but found most of the trams "burnt out" and no public transport. They walked as far as Middlewood and then found a taxi. Fortunately their house had escaped damage.

On another occasion, Betty remembers the intermittent deep drone of bombers passing North of the station towards Sheffield, and returning on the Tickhill side. Again, she was standing at the door when she heard a sound "like an express train coming for you". Her father dragged her back inside, and a bomb exploded "not all that far away, creating a crater big enough for a horse and cart". What the family didn't know was that a further two bombs had also been dropped. These were time bombs and they exploded in the small hours of the morning.

4.

The A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions) said that her dad should have reported these bombs as they'd been out looking for them.

The "big freeze" of 1947 began at the end of January and went on almost until March. There was a shortage of coal and transport almost came to a complete halt. There was no water at the Station house. because the water tank was frozen solid and remained so for many weeks. So, a milk churn of water was sent daily from Maltby station. This was to be used for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. Baths were out of the question. Betty's mum broke off icicles and smashed up solid ice to obtain the water to wash clothes. "There was plenty of it". Betty used to do some personal washing at work.

The frozen water tank 1947



In 1954 Betty's family came to live in Tickhill.

When asked "Is there anything you miss about the old days?"

Betty replies, "No. I'm glad it's behind me".



Betty's dad with a billy goat

Footnote.

Dennis Walker of Wadworth recalls that one day, after the war, Charles England bought a goat in Doncaster market. At the Waterdale Bus Station, the driver and Conductress had gone for a tea break, which was the usual thing to do.. So, he and the goat were able to board the bus unnoticed. Because the bus was crowded, it was well on its way up Balby Road before the goat was noticed, and passenger and goat were “invited” to leave. As the goat was carried off the bus its horns kept getting tangled in the female passengers hats. Betty had not heard that story but said she “wouldn’t be surprised if it were true”. Dennis enjoyed recalling this story because he had actually “made it “ home to Wadworth with three geese before being “spotted.”

He was not, however, on the same bus.