



100 Years a Family Home

By Linda Neve

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In the Spring of 1915, my Grandparents, Joseph and Mary Weston, moved from their home at Park Farm Cottage which is now called Eidermere, to 5 Rotherview, Sheepstreet Lane, now called Church Lane, together with their Seven children, Irene, Olive, Albert, twins Bess (Elizabeth) and Floss (Dorothy), Evelyn and my mother Marjorie who was 6 months old.

Throughout the First World War my Grandfather was not called upon to fight as he was a Ganger, on the Railway and so was needed at home. Life for them was much more different than our lives today. Drinking water had to be collected from the well that was situated near the railway bridge up the road from the house. This was limited in Summer when the Well lowered dramatically. Washing water was collected in a tank outside, from rainwater.

On washing days a fire was lit under the old stone copper situated in the kitchen, to heat the water and I suppose this was also used to heat water when it was bath time, in the old tin bath. The family's meals were cooked on a coal fired black range in the Living Room. I often wondered how my Nan managed to provide such lovely meals and cakes without the help of a Thermostat to tell her the heat of the oven. She also made the best coconut ice and fudge that you could wish to taste.

As the family grew up, the girls mainly went into Service. My Aunt Olive worked for Colonel Hornblower at the Croft, as a Parlour Maid. My Uncle Bert joined my Grandfather on the Railway. When my mother was Fourteen she went to work for a Mr Mitchell who lived at Applegarth and who was a Writer. Tragically, one day as she went back in the afternoon, he had disappeared. A search took place and it was my father who found his body in the river just past the bridge at the back of the shop.

The family all left home eventually to get married. My Aunt Olive set a first in the village on her Wedding Day as she had a pink wedding dress and veil. The wedding cake was also pink and a first for Pantries the bakers.

When World War Two broke out my parents were renting Park Farm Cottage where Mum had moved from when six months old. My father had enlisted into the Medical Corp before it was compulsory, so

Mum moved back in to No 5 with her parents. It was here on 25th March 1940 that my eldest brother Brian was born in the front bedroom of the house.

During the War Mum worked at Aldridge's Stores, which is now the Etchingham Shop & Deli while my Nan helped out at The Village Hall with jam making and canning food. When the War ended, my father returned to Rotherview to join Mum and my brother together with Nan and Grandad. In October 1946 my twin brothers John and Peter were born and they became part of the Household living there.

Then in late 1947 my Mum and Dad and my three brothers moved out to live in the newly built Oxenbridge Row(4). My Grandparents must have seemed quite lost to be on their own after so many years with a full house.

The next big event that happened at Rotherview was in the early '60's when Mains Drainage and the installation of mains water occurred. My biggest sadness was that my Nan never lived long enough to enjoy it. Grandad continued to live alone here, but there was a short period when my cousin Philip and his new wife Linda shared the upstairs of the house with him. Unfortunately, in 1968 Grandad fell in his downstairs bedroom and spent a freezing night on the floor. So for his own safety he then went to live with my parents in Oxenbridge.

In 1970 when Nigel and I got married we moved in to Rotherview. In September we had Stephen and in October we moved to Oxenbridge whilst major building work was done. A bathroom and inside toilet were added and the kitchen had a boiler fire installed to heat water and in the Living Room a cupboard was used to install the hot water tank and airing cupboard. Before this the Range Fire had been removed and replaced with an open fireplace. When we returned in March it was so lovely to be able to run hot water and have the inside toilet. I often say how I wish my Nan had been able to enjoy such a luxury which we, today take so much for granted.

Over the next ten years we had three more sons, Paul, David and Matthew. During this time the only major work that was done was the removal of the walk-in larder in the living room to give us more space. In 1995 we had major work done on the house which included the installation of oil central heating and the removal of the fireplace and chimney-breast in the living room. The staircase leading from the back bedroom up to the attic was replaced with a new one that meant access was not needed through the bedroom. An upstairs toilet and shower room were also added with dormer windows overlooking the fields, to add extra ventilation in hot weather. The main roof and the kitchen roof were both insulated and had new slates. In the sitting room we had a new fireplace installed with tiles that kept the 'cottage theme' for the house and which I hoped, my Grandparents would have approved of.

Everything was fine until October 2000 when we lost the whole ground floor of the house owing to the flooding. During the nine months that it took to get everything back in order we chose to stay in the house, as I needed to be near my elderly mother who lived in Park Farm Close.

One of our worst moments came when the fireplace we had so lovingly chosen, had to be removed and we were told they didn't think they would be able to replace it with a similar one. Thankfully, with much effort they managed to trace and obtain an identical one. Flooding in the house had thankfully, never happened before and I pray it never happens again.

The year since the Flood have flown by and in June 2014 Nigel and I will have lived here for 45 years and whereas we were the young couple back in 1970, we are now the oldest resident in the Rotherview Row.

I often say to Nigel, I think Nan and Grandad would have approved what we have done with their beloved cottage over the years.

Linda Neve.