



1948-1956: Part 2



Crowton House/The Old Vicarage

claim any nuts which fell over the wall. The living room of our flat is the small window furthest right. There was a gate below to the stable yard and coach house which is just visible.

The Southside rooms you can see and most of the front were part of the main house and occupied by the Rev. A.E Cann and family when I was born, followed by Alan and June Lewis as

1. Crowton House/The Old Vicarage

This is the front aspect of Crowton House at the time we were living there. The weathervane on the top bore the date 1871. It looked out across a sweeping drive backed by mature trees including a massive monkey puzzle much favoured in Victorian times. Next to the perimeter wall were splendid walnut trees which the village boys would pelt with missiles in autumn to



The southside

newlyweds, then three different American Airforce officers and their families from Burtonwood Camp.

This back view is as I remember it and differs from the earlier view on the Crowton 150 site which I like very much because it shows the grounds well-kept and a house in full use with someone at the



Back/west

window above the seat. There is also a glimpse of the servants' entrance to the left of the small path, which was the front door to our two bedroomed flat, and the step which we would clean with a donkey stone.

Through that door, with a row of bells up on the inside wall, the corridor led round to the servants' stairs and up to our part of the house. Both bedrooms overlooked the tennis lawn which was used by the village club in summer and that sometimes kept me awake.

The balcony must have been a later addition but was already unsafe in the early 50s.

The grounds would have been beautiful in their heyday with shrubberies, lawns and flower beds and a large fruit orchard behind. Bulbs had naturalised and the seasons were marked first by snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils and bluebells. Then the rhododendrons whose petals we used as flower girls at the summer fete and finally fruit. Sadly, the gardening staff had gone, but it was all mine to play in and explore

alone or with others. I knew how to avoid nettles and where the wild garlic was, and I didn't mind the 'weeds'.



The stable yard, first car, and Pikenall

The yard was cobbled but that was well concealed by weeds as you can see. There was a mounting block and a water trough, two stable stalls, a coach house and an office area which was used by the tennis club. The walled garden was behind the coach house and I

think there was a gap or gate there until after the vicar and family moved into the new vicarage when it became their garden.

I loved the walks 'down Pikenall'. There were meadows, trees, crops, streams, animals, cowpats oh and some clicking electric fences! But mostly space, and country sounds and smells.

I can see now that it was not an ideal place from an adult's perspective with only cold water on tap and a narrow staircase to negotiate with anything brought into the house. After my grandmother came to live with us, it was even more impractical. I had no idea though that Mum and Dad had applied for one of the post war council houses being built in Mid Cheshire.

2. Crowton Voluntary Aided Church of England School



This is the only image I have of any part of the old Victorian school. It shows Mrs. Jones and the infants in October 1953 in the girls' playground. There were two classes and about forty-five children in the school during the years I was there and I remember all these faces and nearly all the names.

Pictures in my Mind: Infants.

The enamel stove behind the teacher's desk, burning solid fuel in Winter.

Cupboards at the back containing various bits of equipment like brightly coloured wooden puzzles in boxes, and lots of cowrie shells which we used for counting.

School dinners which were brought in from central kitchens. My Grandmother said I always told her that we had stew. I can only really remember one element of the main courses for which I have a lifetime aversion.....butter beans!

The mats that the front row are sitting on are probably the same ones that the youngest children rolled out for a nap after lunch.

The day Mum came on supply and got cross with me, just as Miss Heaton came through the door in the partition. (She told me later that she didn't want to show any favouritism. My own children would understand.)

Juniors.

We were organised into rough age groups in each row, sitting at double desks with bench seats that could be tipped up.

A roaring open fire in Winter with a metal guard and if freezing, all the bottles of milk around it to warm up.

We would stand up to recite our tables, and sometimes our Catechism which I remember being asked to write out using 'dippy' pens -red for the questions and blue for the answers. Half way down the page I realised I had done it all blue so panicked, and went over the questions in red. It didn't help.

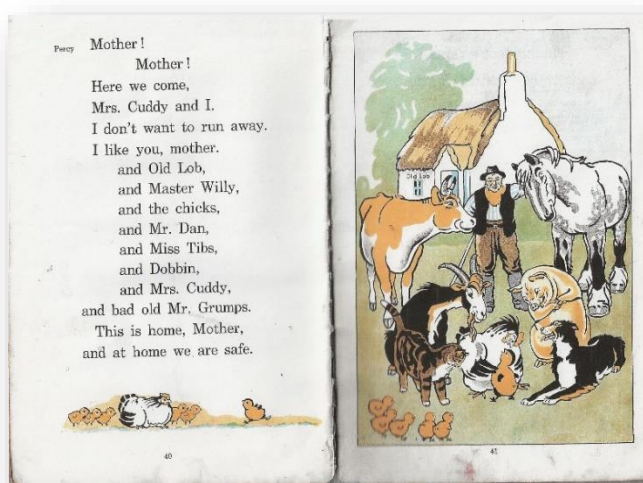
Country Dancing which I loved- usually in the extra indoor area where we had lunch.

We played a game called Reds in our playground which my mother had introduced from Liverpool. There is one caller who chooses a colour, and everyone else runs from one end to the other depending on instructions.

Whilst we are in the girls' playground, who could forget the lavatories??! They were as far away from the school building as possible for a very good reason and the kindest description is 'primitive'. *In my first few days in my new school in Cuddington (with all mod.cons.) I tentatively put up my hand and asked, "Please may I cross the yard?" as required at Crowton. I blush now to remember the quizzical expression on the teacher's face, and the giggles from new classmates.*

Savings stamps with a picture of either Prince Charles or Princess Anne, which we could buy once a week and stick in a book. A framed picture of the Queen in coronation robes hung on the back wall.

Finally, I recall practising our own version of the coronation for the crowning of the Rose Queen at the annual fete. We had an impressive set of props and costumes made by parents and other villagers. There was a crown, orb and sceptre made from papier mache, heralds' tabards and hunting horns, and a long red velvet train for the queen. We always entered to the tune of Greensleeves and left to Colonel Bogie! My Dad always won me a coconut at the shy, and I went several times to the bran tub. The feel and smell of real bran was all part of the anticipation.



You may remember these reading books about Old Lob and his farm -Percy the bad chick who got into trouble and the grumpy goat. Weren't the stories just perfect for children who were surrounded by farms and fields?

The school rooms were used by the whole village for other occasions too:



A W.I. performance: my mother in the striped dress



Only the schoolhouse still survives. The Victorian school was attached to the right, looking from the road.

3. The village shop near to the brook, run by Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Parker.

The building I remember was right in the middle of the village near the old pump. There was an L-shaped counter in the main part and a side room for storage. You could buy anything from postal orders to paraffin, and digestive biscuits to donkey stones.



There is one more instalment of Carol's story still come: keep checking this site for updates!

Does the school or W.I. photo spark any memories for you? Perhaps you recognise some of the people in the photo? Are you one of them?!

Have you got a story to tell about Crowton? A treasured photo to share?

Contact us at amdland@hotmail.co.uk or ring 01606 853556; we're happy to listen and take notes.