

Down Memory Lane – Michael Jones

Part 1

The Family

George Jones and Annie Delilah Leonard (Paternal grandparents)

Robert Arthurton and Alice Woodcock (Maternal grandparents)

Harold Jones and Myrtle Arthurton (Parents)

Michael Jones is at the heart of a farming dynasty with numerous ancestors and descendants making their living on the land. He has such clear and detailed recall of so much of his history, that only a book could tell the whole story. Here are some extracts:

Grandfather George Jones came originally from Cambridgeshire and his wife Annie from Shipdham. They eventually farmed at Wood Dalling Hall as tenants of the White family, having also farmed at West Dereham, where Harold, Michael's father, was born, and at Themelthorpe. Harold was the youngest of George and Annie's brood of twelve children, seven sons and four daughters (having lost one baby). Michael remembers one sister, Aunt Bessie, a spinster, who wore an iron caliper as a result of polio. All the children went to Briston school by pony and trap, and helped on the farm with chores, milking the house cow, and feeding the hens and pigs.

As the boys grew up George found them all farms to work as tenants. Some of their descendants farm in the area today.

When Grandfather George and Annie retired to Dereham Michael's Uncle William took over at Wood Dalling.

In his turn father Harold took over Wong Farm on the Great Melton estate. Says Michael 'it was hard work, with heavy old land. He (Harold) lost too many horses trying to pull equipment through the heavy soil . . . the team man would be in tears on finding another dead horse when he went to feed them in the morning'. Harold then moved on to Norman's Charity Farm* at Little Witchingham, where his grandson Edward Jones farms today.

Michael's maternal grandparents were Robert John Arthurton and Alice Woodcock 'Robert was a successful business man', says Michael. 'He was a horse dealer, and started off at Oak Street, Norwich where he had

up to 40 horses stabled. He had a contract with the council to do haulage work and started up the penny buses . . . you could go anywhere for a penny. He lost the contract one year, so he went round all the farms close to Norwich, buying up all the feed . . . effectively starving the new contractors out of business'!

After tenancing Hall Farm, Taverham he accumulated enough money to buy Little Witchingham Hall Farm. Grandfather Robert and Grandmother Alice had four children, Blanche, Bridget, Myrtle and Donald. Blanche and her husband Sam's farm was expropriated by the War Department for Coltishall Airfield. Bridget married Percy

Copplestone and eventually came to Church Farm, Alderford, having four children, Merlie, Joan, Robert and Dorothy. Living close by Michael saw more of these cousins than some of his much older relatives, particularly Dorothy, who played with him as a child. Donald, who had been a prisoner of war in the First World War took over the Little Witchingham Farm on Grandfather Robert's death, and was succeeded by his son, Bob. Myrtle married Harold Jones at Little Witchingham Church in September 1928 with Michael being born in 1934 at home at Little Witchingham.

*The name Norman's Charity Farm is derived from the fact that the farm was owned by the Norman's Educational Charity, set up by a Lord Mayor of Norwich in 1724.

To be continued . . .

