

Down Memory Lane - John Watts part 2 *(as recorded by Mary Gurteen)*

The Family

Great Grandfather and Great Grandmother:	George and Sarah
Grandfather and Grandmother:	Arthur and May
Father and Mother:	Leonard and Hilda

The Watts family has lived in Swannington, in the same house, since 1902. These are some of John Watts's memories and stories of his family.

Last month's article ended with the birth of baby John to Leonard and Hilda in January 1947. In those pre-NHS days John was born in the privately run Grove Nursing Home in Norwich, under the care of Dr. Alice Townsley, in whom Hilda had great faith.



John's arrival in Swannington in the winter of 1947 was dramatic. Leonard drove to Norwich to fetch his wife and baby home in a snow storm, getting stuck on the Reepham Road. Leaving his new family in the car Leonard went for help, having to be pulled out of a drift by a local farmer (71 years later John performed the same service to at least two damsels in distress!).

Living just a field apart from Grandad Arthur and Grannie May, John spent many happy hours of his childhood with them. Another vivid memory is of Arthur keeping a pig in the back garden, fattening it up for the table. When the time came for the pig's demise John would be kept inside and the butcher summoned. Once piggy had met his fate Arthur would set to, immersing pork joints in a large brine bath (made by him of course). This was turned and rubbed with salt each day in what May called the vinery; in fact a large greenhouse containing vines. Finally the joints were hung high in the ceiling of the kitchen. Pork cheese was made from the trotters (similar to calf's foot jelly). John remembers having this delicacy served up when he was ill, and remains unconvinced that it was helpful!

In time young John attended Swannington Primary School, next door to the Firs, being one of around 40 pupils, drawn from Haveringland, Attlebridge, Alderford and Ugate. The school consisted of infants and juniors. Two teachers, Miss Benyon and Miss Wade (headmistress) presided. John remembers Miss Wade as being very strict, although on a pupil's birthday, after the singing of 'Happy Birthday', Miss Wade would bring out her purse and give the child a silver coin.

Grandad Arthur comes into the picture again when he was persuaded to donate a piece of his land to the school as its playground (where the house Schoolfield now stands). Cricket, football and rounders were played on the land behind the School Road local authority houses.

John went on to Costessey Secondary Modern School, which, he says, was a revelation. He had great respect for the headmaster, Mr Reeve (otherwise known as 'Spot') whose mission statement was to find the potential of each pupil and then develop it. John excelled at woodwork (no doubt helped by early days with grandfather), metalwork and science, none of which had been part of the primary school curriculum. There was a genuine rapport between teachers and pupils, despite the dispensing of corporal punishment, one teacher wielding a 2ft steel rule, while another had a plimsoll named 'George'!

To be continued.