

## Down Memory Lane - John Watts part 4 *(as recorded by Mary Gurteen)*

In our last articles John's paternal ancestors were revealed. Here we learn of the other side of the story – the Medlers.

Great grandparents: John and Sarah Ann Lubbock

Grandparents: Horace Medler and Ada Medler

Parents: Leonard and Hilda Watts

Many of John's ancestors are farmers. His great grandfather, John Lubbock, is listed as farmer and publican at the Black Horse in Swannington in the 1911 census. John also took an active interest in horse breeding as evidenced in the family album. Both he and his wife Sarah were born in Swannington, returning there after John had worked as a gardener in Letheringsett. Two daughters, Ada and Mabel are listed.

Some of our articles have emphasised the lighter side of life. However John's family, like many of the time long before Health and Safety was a byword, suffered some sad, but not uncommon medical conditions. Grannie Ada Lubbock married Horace Medler in 1903. They had three sons in reasonably rapid succession, with John's mother Hilda being born in Church Farm in 1909. The half-timbered pink house opposite the church is one of the oldest in Swannington, and more than one of its occupants have said it is the coldest!

John's grandfather Horace died when John was a year old. The photo shows his fine moustache. A tale handed down the generations was that baby John tried very hard to pull it off! He is also shown mending a horse collar, relevant to his hobby of breeding Percheron cart horses. In times when farming was not the most lucrative profession Horace, often made more from horse breeding than farming.

As a young man Horace had been apprenticed to the miller at Lenwade.



*Grandad Horace Medler*



*Uncle Gordon and Auntie Elsie*

However breathing in the floury air had the unfortunate effect of permanently damaging his lungs, which was the reason he turned to farming.

Horace and Ada, with their sons, Donald, Stanley and Gordon and daughter Hilda, moved to Church Farm, Attlebridge in the 1930s where all worked hard in the dairy and on the land. Horace was bedbound at times with his chest condition and so his formidable wife Ada often held the reins. At a time when female farmers were not thick on the ground Ada would travel to the Norwich Corn Exchange with her samples, bartering with merchants to get the best prices for her grain. John's cousin Joan has memories of being made to sit at disciplinarian Grandad's table until she ate the very fatty meat on offer.

John's uncles went into farming, including Gordon, who married the elegant Elsie Smith (see picture). In 1941, while out shooting with a friend, Gordon suffered an accidental wound to his stomach. Despite valiant attempts to save him, he died days later in hospital from septicaemia. Auntie Elsie never remarried, moving to Exeter where she worked for Standard Life Insurance. John remembers her kind 21st birthday present of an insurance policy, which eventually helped him buy his first Subaru car.

Uncle Stanley had suffered a serious motor bike accident, resulting in costly hospital treatment (no NHS then), but was left lame for the rest of his life.

To be continued . . .