

Down Memory Lane – Michael Jones (as told by Mary Gurteen)

Part 2

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:

Michael came into the world at home at Little Witchingham in 1934 after a difficult labour. His childhood amusements and entertainment were out of the ordinary. Says Michael 'my very early memories are of catching ducks in the farmyard, and feeding and riding a fat lamb which died of shock before slaughter the very next day!' By the age of nine he could drive an Aliss Chalmers Model B (16hp) petrol paraffin tractor. The start-up process was very complicated involving switching from petrol to paraffin. If this was not done correctly the engine stalled and a crank handle was required (older readers may remember using these for cars). Harrowing, hoeing and cutting corn were part of his 'play' and experience. 'I would sit on my father's knee when he rode the binder, cutting the corn, and would sometimes fall asleep from all the fumes and heat from the paraffin fuelled tractor'!



George Cushing and Michael on the Tractor

Michael remembers that no car doors were locked in those days. After shopping on a Saturday market day in Norwich with his mother (which he hated) the shop staff had loaded the shopping into the unlocked car (an Austin12/4). Unfortunately Michael fell out of the car on a corner on Oak Street, cutting his head on the cobbles and being stitched up by Dr.Johnson of Costessey.

It is often said that in the days before television people made their own amusements. In Michael's family this was indeed the case. 'My parents visited various friends for an evening out, darts and cards were played at the Coplestones, where Walter Spriggs, the butcher, was a very good player at both. When I was younger I would fall asleep in a chair on these evenings and would wake up the next morning in my own bed. At Christmas . . . I would play with my cousins – sardines and murder. . . great fun when played in a big house, lots of rooms and not many lights.'



Michael (right), Miss Green and the kindergarten

A kindergarten arranged at Witchingham by his mother marked the beginning of Michael's education. Two of the children, Ted Danby and Bridget Gooch came from Reepham. Michael was to take Bridget out once or twice in later years. The teacher was Miss Green, whose boyfriend was a Spitfire pilot. 'When he flew low overhead we would all rush out to the gate in the park and wave to him as he circled overhead. He would waggle his wings before heading back to Coltishall, his

home base.' Miss Green left when Michael went to Lenwade Primary School. Michael's mother would send a deck chair down to the school, so that he could have an afternoon sleep.*

Mention of airplanes indicates another of Michael's great interests in aviation. He has fascinating personal recollections of World War II in the Norfolk countryside, of which more next time.

*Michael adds that his mother suffered from coeliac disease, a feature of which is fatigue. Being concerned that Michael might have the same problem, the deck chair was provided for the afternoon rest.