

Annie Louise Gardiner
Born in Cromer Hyde 27th April 1912
(Daughter of William Henry and Mabel Gardiner)

Some of her memories of Cromer Hyde

The lane as I knew it had high banks most of the length, with a pond opposite Symonds farm which used to cover the road in winter. In the bad winters the lane used to fill up with snow blown from the fields. The last bad snow I remember was when I was about 16. I had Xmas Day off from service and had to stay home for nearly a week, then we got into the field and managed to reach the main road.

Washing water was caught in butts and when they failed we went to a pond which had a dipping board. This never dried up as on the far side there was a spring. Drinking water was drawn from a well 96ft deep, about a ¼ mile down the lane. It was collected in buckets slung from a yoke which was carried on our shoulders.

Grandmother Harriett Walby used to collect the rents of the Cowper owned ones twice year and walk about 3 mile through Brocket Park to Ayot Green. Mum (Martha Gardiner) did it once and then I started to do the trip. We used to be paid 2d for each rent we collected (I was about 13). Only one house belonged to Brocket, the new house for the under-keeper, (next to the Walby's).

I can remember Aunt Ruth Tuly (Tooley) who lived on Ayot Green coming to visit us, she was a little old lady in bonnet and cape, and she died in 1921.

We had no milkman, as the farm men got a ration, and dad when back home we had 2pts skim milk a day. We always gave Mrs. Cochrane a cupful for her cat. He was artful and most days came to see us first and so got two lots.

We had a grocer come from Welwyn once a week and also brought bread 2 or 3 times a week. One baker, Billy Hulks, came from Hatfield. No one could go to bed until he'd been, as it was usually after the pub closed and he'd leave the bread anywhere. We also had a warehouse man call regularly.

On Sunday we went to Sunday school morning and afternoon and later when in the choir it was church A.M. and P.M. and Sunday school in the afternoon. When Auntie Louise Sear played the church organ, I often went with her to pump the organ for practise sessions.

Hales Farm just above us was not lived in by the farmer, but let out to different people. Quite often it was empty for months. One wealthy family had it after the war and we benefited by being given super toys. They went and some people named Aylott came

In September some of the fields belonging to the farm used to have lots of mushrooms, the women from the bottom of the lane used to come up about 5 am with clothes baskets to pick them and take them to St. Albans market. Mr Hale tried to stop them saying they were cultivated. He got his answer as they had been growing there before he was born & his notice got tarred.

The journey to school used to be fun as we used to run behind a milk cart (with churns for Hatfield Station) or a Foden lorry, doing the same job.

Brocket Hall

Queen Mary used to visit Brocket and we had to line up in the drive to see her. **Lady Mount-Stephen** was a great friend of hers and left her all her jewellery when she died. Old Lord Mount-Stephen would not have a car on the place and one had to be hired each time she came. King George used to come to all the shoots and two of the local poachers always had to be there to meet him. They were twins from Ayot, **Ebenezer Albert and Albert Ebenezer Fox**. They helped to build Hatfield prison and were the first to be put in it. They were so alike that I doubt their mother knew which was which. Each would swear he was the other when caught. They must have been known widely as their deaths were reported in the London Evening News. I had the cutting for ages. They are buried in the same church yard but some distance apart.