

Letters to the editor

► *'Good old days' never happened*

I did enjoy Penny Frazer's article on the 'Good Old Days' in the January edition of 'Lincolnshire Life'.

My dear mother, who died some years ago, did tell me that there were no such things.

I well recall Mondays being the washday with the kitchen swimming in water, door and widows wide open to let out the steam, the kitchen table unfolded to give mum the mangle that she needed (and which she broke the casting with the strength she wielded). Fridays, of course, were taken up all day with cleaning out the flues and oven in the massive cast-iron grate in the living room.

Winters were indeed shocking. My mother insisted on bedroom windows being kept open on all but foggy days. Snow and ice made no difference. With no insulation in the roof, the snow blew under the roofing tiles, fell into the ceiling and then dripped onto the bed. In the mornings we needed shovels to clear a path through the deep snow with the milkman and breadman delivering by sledge. After that, of course, there was the bicycle ride to school through the floods created by the thawing snow.

Summer times were great days of heat and thunderstorms. Of course, there was no 'fridge, they were only for the rich. We had sterilised milk delivered and placed in the lowest, darkest corner of the larder to try to keep it fresh. At a pinch, it was placed in a large tub of water to try to keep it cool.

And then holiday times were spent with mum and dad going to the local park. There was no travelling about! I was thirteen years old before I ventured outside the West Midlands. At sixteen I cycled by myself from Birmingham to Salcombe in Devon, staying in Youth Hostels. The following year it was up to North Shields, across to Carlisle, and the return trip to Birmingham.

In North Shields I parked my bike whilst I walked on the beach, but when I returned I found my headlamp had been stolen. Getting to the next Youth Hostel through the woods in pitch dark and following the star pattern between the trees was quite an experience. I do recall that in Carlisle I did a quick check which revealed I had just enough cash to buy some more oats to go with the milk and sugar I still had, which would provide me with food until I arrived home.

The Good Old Days - just what were those?

Eric Pemberton, Ulceby Cross, Alford.

► *Research pays off*

Thank you for printing my question in the January Issue of your magazine.

Since this was printed I have had some help not only from other readers but also from local aviation historians.

After writing to you I approached the Lincolnshire FHS and as a result was put in contact with a local aviation historian. I spoke with him and he advised me to try and establish a year and approximate date for the incident. I then remembered looking around the library of the North East Scotland and Aberdeen FHS when I had been a member. I remembered seeing a book by W Chorley about Bomber Command Losses. I also spoke with the Estate Agent of the Brocklesby Estate to establish if they maybe had any records of the incident. He could not help me but he gave me the telephone number of a retired Estate worker who had worked on the Estate during the war. When I contacted him I made some progress, as he remembered seeing the aircraft just before it landed and was able to say that it was 1942 or 1943 when it crashed, and that it was early in the year.

This was followed by my searching the internet to find out when RAF Kirmington opened as a Bomber Base and discovered that it opened in October 1942. This left 1943 as the approximate date. I then obtained a copy of the book by W Chorley for 1943 Bomber Command Losses from the local library. There was one promising entry.

After contacting the local aviation historian again he searched his records but could not find the incident in them. However he in turn, contacted someone he knew in the Air Historical Branch (MOD), and passed on the details I had given him. They were able to confirm that what I had found was the correct incident.

As a result I now knew that the Wellington had landed on the evening of the 19/20 February 1943. It was a Wellington Mark X serial number HE531 and was a No 466 RAAF Squadron Aircraft from RAF Leconfield. It had been on a bombing mission over Wilhelmshaven and had been engaged in combat by a German ME 110. The aircraft had been badly shot up and two members of the crew were wounded. They were the navigator and

the Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. The aircraft had also been set on fire. However during this combat the tail gunner had hit the ME110 and subsequently claimed No 466 Squadron's first aerial victory. Also presuming the worst, as the aircraft was on fire, the Bomb Aimer baled out, but was unfortunately killed.

Then the fire was brought under control and the aircraft returned safely to England. I presume that the pilot decided that as the aircraft was short of fuel, and was unable to make Leconfield, he elected to land at Kirmington. I was initially told by one of the guards of the aircraft at the time that the pilot was told to hold off until all the Kirmington aircraft had landed. But as his situation was urgent he elected to land while he still had both engines going even though he could not lower the undercarriage fully. So he decided to land in the field known locally as Blue Gate Pasture. The landing was successful and no one was injured. However I believe that a cow killed.

It was a few days later that I was able to view the aircraft and was given a conducted tour of it.

There are a few questions that still remain such as, why did the bomb aimer die? Did his parachute not work? Did he bail out too low? I saw a bullet hole in the back of his seat so was the fact that he too was wounded, the reason he died. Lastly did the aircraft fly again?

Ted Brown, via email.

► *Waiting room coincidence*

A short time ago I visited our local doctor's waiting room and casually picked up the only magazine that was there. It was a 'Lincolnshire Life' magazine, and as I opened it I immediately saw the photograph which I had sent to 'Bygone Gallery' - a picture of my mum, husband and small daughter at Trusthorpe.

Wasn't that a strange coincidence. I thought you may be interested.

Mrs D Towndrow, Sheffield

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