

29th June 1986.

The Rothbury.
72. Popple Street
Wymondham
Norfolk.
NR18 0LP.

Dear Michelle, Janet and Andrew,

Thank you very much for your letter. I was so pleased to hear you are interested in All Saints' Church at Branston. I was 3 years old when we moved from Willshire where I was born. My three brothers were all older than me. My youngest brother, who is 86, has just been staying with me. My eldest brother died 12 years ago. He lost his leg in the First War. My second brother was killed in the Battle of Loos in 1915. For 50 years we sent a wreath to the Branston War Memorial which Miss Agnes Applewhite very kindly put on the memorial on his birthday. We loved the Rectory and much enjoyed playing in the garden. There was a big mulberry tree which we used to climb. My brothers used to fish in the lake at the Hall. We knew Mr & Mrs Melville and often went to the Hall. When their grandchildren went to stay there I used to go and play with ^{them} one was Frances Bacon who is Mrs Vivian Neal's father. I met him a year or two ago when he came to Norfolk and we talked a lot about Branston. Mr & Mrs Leslie Melville were very good to the people in the village. The old and poor people were given soup in the winter. There were no social services in those days and many people were very poor. We used to have lovely flower services at All Saints' Church when all the children brought bunches of flowers which were afterwards given to the elderly and people who were ill. Whenever I smell sweet peas my mind goes straight back to those services.

When I was about 14 I used to help my Father with the Choir boys' supplies and one day he locked

me in the Church by mistake. I tried ringing one of the Church bells but no-one took any notice because they thought the bell was being tolled for someone who had died! In the end I attracted the attention of a Miss Edith Archer who went to tell my Father.

In 1918 my eldest-brother, Hugh, was badly wounded in France and my Mother and Father went there to see him. My Father was gone for two months. Meanwhile I tried to run the parish and arrange for another Clergyman to take the Services. I was 14½ then. During that time I saw a Zeppelin go past the village on its way to drop bombs at Waddington aerodrome. It was very big and went very slowly, quite low.

The last house on the Lincoln Road was well before the top gate going into the Hall, and there were only a few houses past the Post-office (opposite the Memorial) on the way to Heighington.

The parish extended to the beginning of Bauldrey. We used to go with my Father to a Mission Church down there which was reached by crossing a very wobbly plank over a deep ditch.

We had a 1905 De Dion French car which would go at 15 miles an hour if the wind was behind us. We often used to get out of the car at the bottom of Canwick Hill while the car was still moving and push it up the hill and then jump in!

There was a Carrier Cart which went to Lincoln once a week. It was all shut in with a narrow door at the back. There were hard wooden seats down each side. It was drawn by a poor old horse. Some of the fat-ladies had quite a struggle to get in.

My Father went to the School every Monday morning to give religious instruction to the children. We had a very good Choir and Organist and large congregations. I used to play the organ sometimes but at first I was too small to reach the pedals. I was very sorry indeed when I heard the organ was burnt. It was a very good one.

I am afraid I cannot really remember the Coronation festivities as I was only 7 years old, but I knew all the people on the Committee. The Buchnells twins were great friends of mine, and I remember Mr. Sharpe very well.

Unfortunately I cannot find any old photographs of Branston. I had hoped to send you one of my Father but after careful search there do not seem to be any left. If I do come across any I will send them to you.

Please excuse my bad writing but I am getting clasp in my fingers!

I hope you have great success with your topic on the Church.

With best wishes to you all
Yours sincerely

Mary Hanning.