

The Big Freeze of 1947.

I forget the date but snow on snow fell all day and into the night of a Sunday in early January 1947.

I forget the date but well remember the day. At the time I was living at Heighington in a house on the top of the hill, not far from the railway station, on Branston Road. I was a teacher at the Branston Primary School and usually cycled the two miles to my class.

Monday morning dawned and everywhere was clothed in a very thick blanket of snow.

My husband John, who knew he was unable to make the journey by car to Scampton, expected that I would be unable to get to Branston & school. However I was determined to walk! in spite of his pleas to me to reconsider.

However, after a while he conceded to my request to walk! I donned extra woolies, his long gabardine raincoat, his wellies over my shoes, sunglasses, & at 8 o'clock I set off!

Gaining the top of the hill with difficulty I caught up with a colleague, Frank East of Backside Heighington. He was setting out to walk to Janvats School, Hetherington Fen, where he was headmaster.

The two miles I was going seemed nothing when compared with his 9 or 10 miles!!

After leaving the top of the hill I took to the fields and found the going somewhat easier until I arrived at the Council House Branston, where I followed, with great difficulty the footpath to the School in the High Street.

ON ARRIVAL I FOUND THE HEADMASTER, MR WILLIAMS, MISS EDENBROW, + MRS. FRESHNEY, THE OTHER TWO TEACHERS

and 3 children sitting round the old tortoise stool in my classroom. The headmaster said, "You are very late this morning Mr. Clark!" I was nearly in tears after the harrowing experience of walking in such deep snow 4-6ft high in some places, and a very blustering cold icy wind.

I replied, "If it's like this tomorrow I shall not come!" However the day passed with more snow & icy winds, we closed school at 3pm!!

The road between Branston & Heighington was now closed. The snow being as high as the tops of the hedges & frozen solid. How was I to get home? The local bus, belonging to Mr. Johnnie Gelatkoose was able, with great difficulty, to ply between Branston & Lincoln. On the top road, then round Washington to the centre of Heighington, so I boarded the bus & went via Lincoln, but on reaching the Flagpole, near the shop, all passengers had to get out. The bus did the reverse journey via Lincoln back to Branston.

Then I had to plod through, what seemed like a frozen wall of snow up Station Hill & up to my house at the top of the Hill on Branston Road, reaching home at 6pm. Incidentally I did not walk to school on Tuesday morning! But during the morning we were informed that buses would be able to negotiate the Branston ~~Road~~ Road as this had been made usable German prisoners digging out the snow in the middle of the road. What a bumpy ride that was to school! I arrived at 1pm! We were to have those very severe conditions for the next 6 weeks!!!

The frost was very intense and we travelled UP AND DOWN THE ROAD BETWEEN WALLS OF FROZEN SNOW AND WERE ABLE TO WALK ON THE TOP OF THE HEDGES.

"Schools did not close for weeks on end" was reported in the Lincolnshire Echo."

In 1947 the Head Teacher lived in the School House, "on the premises as it were" and the assistant teachers lived on the spot in the village.

No one had to travel far in those days, there were no problems with heating classrooms. There was the old iron Tortoise Stove in each classroom sometimes open fires - kept going by the teachers! No fears of bursting pipes causing school closures in those days.

There were families living at Branston Mere who walked the distance of about 3 miles to the school. And they seemed to cope with the snow. They were not often late. Those were the happy days, or were they?

INTERVIEWED FOR POSITION BY MR. PELLIS (RECTOR) & MR. WILLIAMS (HEADMASTER)

WRITTEN BY SCHOOLTEACHER AT BRANSTON SCHOOL -

MRS. CLARK - STARTED SPRING 1937.
LEFT 1959.