

PERSONAL CHILDHOOD MEMORIES - EARLY 1950s



This is my aunt, Maud Carr, born in the mining village of Blucher, near Walbottle, in 1905. In order to support her widowed mother and younger siblings, she worked in domestic service for many years.

During the 1930s, she came to work as a cook, in Humshaugh, at Wayne Riggs House. I believe that her employers were two spinster sisters, who had been doctors at one of the Newcastle hospitals. Their surname was Watson, a fact that has been verified by one of the older village residents.

Photographs show that they had a small

black dog, seen here with my Aunt Maud on Chollerford Bridge. The Watson sisters must have been good employers, as they welcomed my mother as a visitor. She lived in Throckley and was able to come directly to Humshaugh on the Newcastle to Bellingham bus, along the Military Road. I can remember travelling on the same bus route as a young child.





This is my mother, Winnie Carr, during one of her visits to Humshaugh. On the left she is at Wayne Riggs. The photograph on the right is taken outside of the church, although I was puzzled by the height of the wall. I am fairly sure that it is taken on the vicarage drive, although there are



now shrubs in front of the wall. In the shadows on the ground, the small black dog from Wayne Riggs is just visible.

It looks as though this photograph was taken on the same occasion as the ones above. The location must have been somewhere local, although I do not recognise the building. My photographs are not dated, but I would guess that they are pre-war. My mother was born in 1918 and she seems to be quite young. They were certainly taken before her marriage in 1941. I would welcome any suggestions as to the whereabouts of this location.

In 1943, at the age of 38, my Aunt Maud married Arthur Fogerty, a widower, who worked as a gardener at Wayne Riggs. By the time he married my aunt, he had two grown up daughters and a son, serving in the R.A.F.. After their marriage, they lived in Chollerford, at New Houses. Their house, now split into two and greatly extended, was the first on the right after Chollerford roundabout. The original double-fronted house was later made into two and each of the new units were subsequently extended sideways. The extension on the left is on the plot that used to be my Uncle Arthur's wonderful kitchen garden.

The house belonged to the Chesters estate and had no mains services at all. There was a calor gas cooker, although my aunt used her coal fire and its range oven for most of her cooking. Without electricity, the house was lit with oil lamps, which hung from the ceiling. I remember the very cosy living room, on the right of the front door, which was the heart of the house; everything happened there. It was here that my Aunt Maud patiently taught me to knit and sew. She was a skilled needlewoman and I remember soft toys and rag dolls that she used to make for me. Her needlework box and the drawers of her treadle sewing machine were treasure troves to me.

Behind the living room was a large, stone-flagged walk-in pantry with shelves around the walls. As big as many modern-day kitchens, it was used purely for food storage, being a very cold place. The gas cooker and a stone sink were situated in a small passageway near the back door.

The house was double-fronted and the room to the left of the front door was the 'best sitting room', which was very nicely furnished, although I have no recollection of it being heated or used during any of my visits. Behind the sitting room was another room with a stone floor, which was virtually empty, although I have bad memories of that room, concerning the advent of the water supply.

Initially there was no piped water to the house; they took buckets to a freshwater spring, known as the well. This involved crossing the main

road and stepping down to where the water gurgled out of the ground from under the road. They also collected rainwater in two large butts, at the back of the house. I vividly remember this rudimentary water supply, but, at some point in the early 1950s, piped water arrived. Taking advantage of this novelty, my aunt and uncle had a bath installed in the large, cold room behind the sitting room. Water was piped to the bath, but there was no drain, so it had to be emptied by hand. As a little child, having to take a bath in that icy room used to fill me with great dread. On the subject of sanitary arrangements, the toilet was a dry closet in the back yard, in a shed set against the boundary wall. Visits to the loo were accompanied by the lowing of the cows, whose heads seemed to be permanently resting on the wall.

My memories of the upstairs of the house are of a bedroom on each side of the staircase, at the front of the house. At the back was a long room, known as the attic, which stretched from one end of the house to the other. Because of the way the roof sloped at the back of the building, it had limited head-room, so there was a step down into the room.

Using the bus, as she had when she was younger, my mother used to bring me to Chollerford every Wednesday in my pre-school days. We also used to visit, with my dad, for whole weekends. One of my most vivid memories is of the wonderful kitchen garden that was at the side of the house. I was allowed to ‘help’ to pick soft fruit and vegetables and learned the joys of eating produce straight from the garden. There were flowers around the edges and in front of the house and the smell of certain flowers still brings back memories of that garden. This is Aunt Maud in her garden with one of her step-grandchildren.





In the early 1950s, my uncle, Arthur Fogerty, worked at 'The Factory', as the old Ministry of Defence building was known. Seen here prior to its demolition, the building was used as a workshop for the repair and maintenance of agricultural machinery. It was demolished in 1996 to

make way for the Beechcroft housing development.

As a very young child, I had a folding buggy, or pushchair, as they were then known, which stayed at Aunt Maud's house. It had a green canvas seat and was always referred to by its brand name, the Nibs Chariot. The sound of nesting rooks always evokes a strong memory of being pushed, by my dad, up the Military Road. I also remember the circular evening walk that we did, along to Chollerton and Barrasford, across the river by ferry and back to Humshaugh and Chollerford via Haughton Castle.

As an older child, I used to walk across the fields with my aunt and mum to do the shopping in Humshaugh. They were able to buy most of what they needed in the village, although we also made trips to Hexham or Carlisle. I particularly remember a draper's shop in Humshaugh that had rolls of material on the shelves. It may have been in the building that is the current shop, but I would need someone to verify this.

My trips to Chollerford came to an end in about 1954, when, sadly, the Fogertys separated and my Aunt Maud went to live in Manchester, near to another of her younger sisters. She still visited us, but we never came back to Chollerford. It was not coincidence, therefore, that, as an adult, I have returned to the village that I remembered so fondly from my childhood.

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