

NEWSletter

Number 61

The End of the Driveway and Long Necked Geese

After moving from Church Street in the heart of the village of Appleby I still rode the Midland Red bus to Ashby and the Ashby Ivanhoe School. I caught the bus at the end of our Lower Rectory Farm driveway. Walking through mud on cold wet days, and kicking up dust on dry days I wore my much loved 'Wellies'. These shiny, new Wellington Boots, had been purchased so that I could arrive at school with clean black shoes. I would leave the farm house with the laces of my black, school shoes tied together and I hung them around me neck or carried them over one shoulder, my school bag on my other shoulder, and my 'wellies' one on each foot. Once at the farm gate that opened on to Snarestone Lane, I hopped from one foot to the other and my 'wellies' were kicked off and on went my school shoes. The 'Wellies' I laid down on the sloping bank of the ditch with the open end pointing downward. By doing this they were kept dry, but cold, and ready for me to repeat in reverse my walk back to the farm house. There I stood beside the hedge, waiting for the bus and listening to the birds singing their morning songs.

After a few days I thought about changing one other item of my dress and this was because my Grandmother insisted that white knickers should always be worn next to the skin. But the school uniform had we girls all wearing navy knickers with our navy gym tunics. What to do because doing as I was told meant I had two pairs of thick knickers on and felt bulky which made it difficult to button up my coat. I had an idea, once at the end of our driveway off came my navy blue knickers and also my white knickers, then back on only the navy blue knickers. The white ones I stuffed into my 'Wellies' and I was ready for the big red bus to Ashby.

This worked well until someone and it could have been one of our young workers, must have twigged on to my scheme for on my return one day there were my white knickers flapping from

the top of the sign, 'rabbits for sale', which was set on a gate post. Those white knickers there for all on the bus to see. Much laughter from the passengers as I tried to hide my face.

When first we moved to the farm I had one fear on my walk up and down our driveway because Grandpa had purchased some geese. I was very frightened of them and especially their long necks. Some time later I came to understand, geese were the very best alarm any farm could have. It didn't matter who approached the farm house or farm yard those geese ran to the person approaching at what seemed to me, top speed with their long necks outstretched and they hissed at full volume.

At first I skirted them by walking around the cowsheds, but this had me walking in deep mud and slipping and sliding in the ruts made by tractors and wagons. Slowly I found if I approached the geese slowly and made a sort of humming deep in my throat they got used to me and I got used to them. To help me with these geese I took on the chore of feeding them after school. I spread seed in their bins and chatted and hummed as I did it. Did food have me appear friendly, or perhaps they got to recognise my face and maybe my voice. Finally they seemed to know me and allowed me to pass along the driveway, which was the shortest way to the house.

I think geese are so smart, because they certainly knew someone who didn't belong at the farm and this made them a good alarm, especially for me in the evenings when I was left alone in the house as my Grandparents went into the village for meetings. I called them 'my geese alarm'. The geese lived in the barn yard and paraded the driveway, this was their space. The few gypsies who would call at the farm always gave those geese a wide birth, waving their arms and yelling. Someone arriving in a vehicle would toot their horns many times, and the geese scattered, but not without trying to peck at the sides of the vehicle.

This is another wonderful recollection from Anne Silins

Star find !!! Sally Lowe explains more ...

Its amazing what you find at the back of cupboards ...

In a recent 'tidy up' in one of the rooms used by the Sir John Moore School something startling came to light.

It was an original letter sent to Sir John Moore in 1694. Sally Lowe our Museum Manager has contacted a very kind 17th century researcher who specialises in letters and she has transcribed the letter to Sir John Moore. It turns out William Smart was a cousin (in those days, the term "cousin" simply meant relation), who was in need of money for his medical fees. He didn't have long to live.

It doesn't really shine a light on any new information about either Sir John or the times in which he lived, except to confirm that he had relatives in the area.

I've done a bit of research about the provenance of the letter itself. It was sold at Christie's in 2015, in the condition in which it was found at the school. It was part of a lot of two letters. All I know about the other letter is that it was also from Austrey, but dated 1697.

This is the transcription that can make it a little more clear what indeed was said back then ...

Austrey December 17 1694

Honoured Sir, I sent a letter to you this day 3 weeks [ago] wherein I did signify my condition amongst other things: but I fear it did miscarry, because I have received no answer, since which time I am a great deal worse at the time arriving to the Chirurgeons [Surgeon's] Judgment and my own. I was in every good way of recovery but now it is far otherwise for although the first sum be much **amend[ed]** 'tis yet a great sum. I fell in my foot which was lamed and at this **present** runs very much and a very sharp **burn** is fallen into my thigh which they endeavour to assuage and draw out by poultices and other means, but it is so very bad and makes me sick insomuch, yet we all despair of life. I hoped I should not have been so chargeable to you and am **forced** to **express** the Chyrurgeon's charges will amount to a great sum, I doubt I cannot give you a just account at present and also my other charges will be great, which my son FFarmer and his wife will not be able of themselves to defray, wherefore I am **enforced** to remind you of your former promise (viz) to desire you to send me £20 which I hope may discharge all my concerns, and likewise my funeral charges for I do not expect a recovery. I am at my daughter FFarmers and she is very careful of me. My Daughter Martha is come to me at Austrey, and I believe must then continue to pray good Sir and let me receive an answer as speedily as may be for I conjecture my time is but short in this life. If it shall please God to recover me you shall be made acquainted by your most obliged servant and poor kinsman.

Most compassionate Cousin

I desire you pray to the Almighty

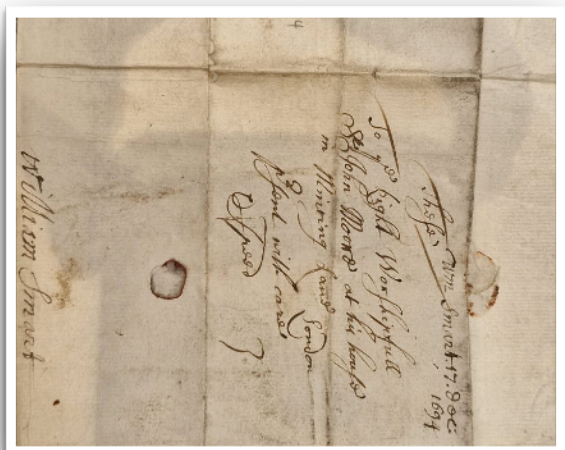
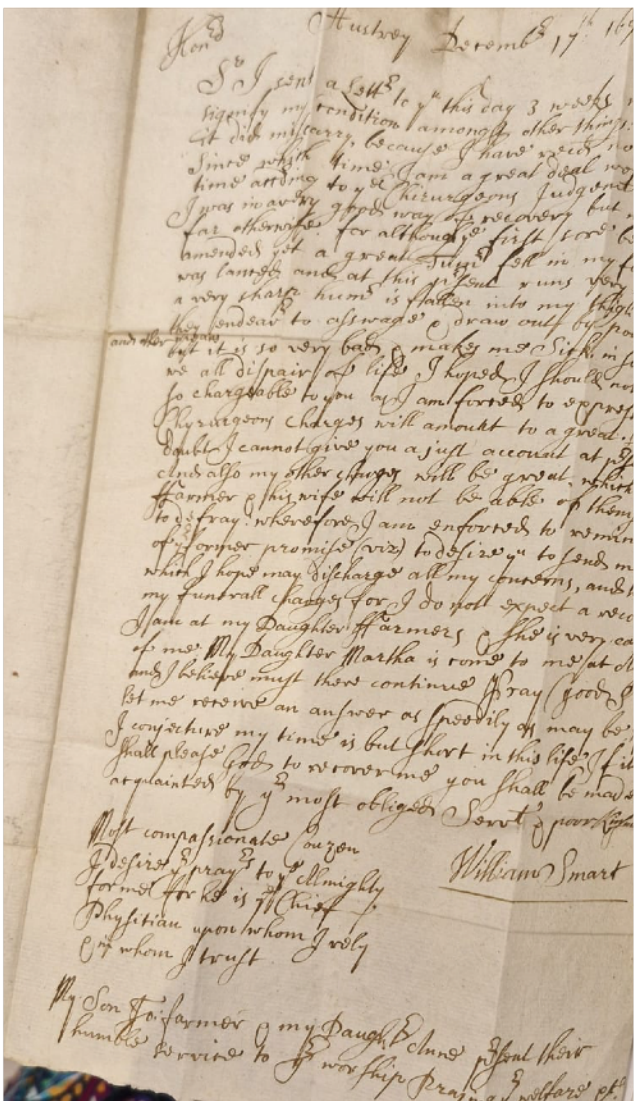
For me for he is the Christ

Physician upon whom I rely

And in whom I trust

William Smart

My Son, John Ffarmer and my daughter Anne present their humble service to the worship praying and welfare, etc



Its a cruel life ...

A diary from a child inmate, held in a Victorian Workhouse

As I sit in our overcrowded dormitory, I find it nearly impossible to sleep. The biting cold seeps through the walls, making rest elusive. In an effort to write, I hold my diary up to the window, using the moonlight to illuminate the page. Today has been as bleak as any I can remember, perhaps even worse.

This morning, our master stormed into our room at 4:30 AM, rousing us from our slumber and ordering us outside to wash our faces at the water pump. The frigid temperatures had caused the water to freeze at the end of the spout, forming tiny icicles. We stood huddled together, boys seeking warmth in numbers, while I searched for my sister Charlotte, knowing that we are kept apart at all times. It has been ages since we last saw each other, but I refuse to lose hope.



Breakfast consisted of little more than a cup of water and a small piece of stale bread from the previous night. The bread was so tough that it felt like a challenge to bite into. Afterward, we were herded into the bustling workroom, where I was assigned the gruelling task of unpicking old ropes to separate them into threads for resale. The material is rough and unforgiving, leaving my fingers crimson and blistered. The pain is intense, and while tears threaten to fall, I dare not show weakness; the master is quick to punish those who cry.

We endure this laborious routine every day, five days a week. The meager wages I earn are sent home to help Ma care for the baby, who needs it more than I do.

Dinner tonight was a repeat of breakfast: small piles of stale bread and bowls of cold gruel placed harshly before us. I noticed some of the boys discreetly stashing pieces in their pockets for later, a testament to our constant hunger.

When will this suffering end? I feel weak and weary, and at times, I dream of escaping through the doors. Yet, the memory of the last boy who attempted to flee—and the beating he received as punishment—haunts me still. I can still hear his cries echoing in my mind.

Another diary entry ...

An extract from a scullery maid's diary ...

As the first light of dawn creeps through the narrow windows, I, Eleanor, rise from my small cot in the scullery. The chill in the air is sharp, a reminder that winter is still clinging on. My day begins before the rest of the household stirs, with the smell of last night's meal lingering heavily in the air. The grand dining table, now stripped of its finery, holds the remnants of the upper-class lifestyle I serve.

My duties are relentless. I scrub pots and pans until my hands are raw, each piece a reminder of the chef's extravagant dishes. The heat from the kitchen is suffocating, but I find solace in the rhythm of my work. Between washing and peeling vegetables, I catch snippets of conversations from the family above—an elegant world I can only glimpse from the shadows.

Throughout the day, I steal moments with my fellow maids, sharing whispered laughter and dreams of a brighter future. We talk about what life might be like outside these walls, where we are not defined by our station.

Despite the grind, there is a sense of pride in my work. I help maintain the household that embodies both grace and grandeur. Each plate I polish reflects not just my labour, but the stories of countless others like me. In the heart of this Victorian mansion, I am a silent witness to the lives of the privileged, while my own dreams await a time to flourish beyond the scullery's confines.



This last month has been extremely warm and very uncomfortable even by modern standards. It set us wondering how the good folk of Appleby Magna would have managed over a hundred and fifty years ago.

During the Victorian era, the challenges of extreme weather conditions, including heat waves, were met with a blend of ingenuity and practicality. With no modern air conditioning or cooling systems, Victorians relied heavily on their surroundings, architecture, and social practices to endure sweltering temperatures.



Victorian homes were designed with features that aided in keeping interiors cool. High ceilings, thick walls, and strategically placed windows allowed for improved air circulation. Homes often boasted large, shaded verandas where families could escape the heat while still enjoying the outdoors. Heavy drapes were drawn during the day to block out the sun, and rooms were ventilated during cooler evenings by opening windows to let in a refreshing breeze.

In urban settings, where heat was intensified by the dense population and cobblestone streets, residents sought refuge in parks and gardens. Public spaces like Hyde Park in London became havens where families gathered to enjoy leisurely picnics and partake in social activities. The Victorian love for nature was evident as people sought solace beneath

Phew what a scorcher ...

The weather has always been a hot topic of conversation

the shade of trees, immersing themselves in the beauty of their surroundings.

Hydration was essential during these hot spells, and Victorians turned to various beverages to cool down. Refreshing drinks like lemonade, iced tea, and fruit punches became popular, often served over ice when available. Some households even made use of ice from frozen lakes, a luxury that only the affluent could afford.

Fashion also played a role in survival during heat waves. Women tended to wear lighter fabrics, such as cotton and linen, which were more breathable than the heavy garments typically worn. Straw hats and parasols became essential accessories for both men and women, providing shade and a semblance of comfort.

In addition to these adaptations, the Victorian era also saw the rise of awareness regarding public health. Local authorities sometimes implemented measures to combat the effects of heat, such as setting up temporary shelters for the vulnerable and providing access to clean drinking water.

Through a combination of architectural ingenuity, social adaptation, and a keen awareness of health, the Victorians developed effective strategies to cope with the challenges posed by heat waves, showcasing their resilience and resourcefulness in the face of nature's extremes.

