

## Granddaughter of the Earl's Carpenter

Whenever I come back to Hankerton I get a very strange feeling that I'm coming back to my roots.

My family, on both my Mum and Dad's side go back 400 years in Hankerton. My mum had many stories about the village that she used to relate to us when children. Amusing, some sad and some really scary, especially when she told us stories of the ghosts of Hankerton.

Over the last few years I'd been researching my family and was able to get back to my great-grandfather who was born in 1811, and great, great-grandfather who was born in 1750 with certainty, but that was about it. I used to come into Hankerton church as a child and was told, William Beale, vicar in Hankerton in 1600, was an ancestor of mine, but my mum didn't know how we were connected. I have now established that link.



My first memories of Hankerton were sitting down around a lovely coal fire at home in Letchworth in Hertfordshire on Halloween evening listening with my brothers and sister to my mum telling ghost stories of Hankerton. I think she

embroidered the details a bit. She had many stories about her life and those connected to the village and I will try to recall things that she told me.

My mum (Eva Woodward) was born in Hankerton in 1906 and lived there until she was married in 1933, so she had many stories.

My first memory of actually coming to Hankerton was walking round Pear Tree Cottage on the flagstone path and smelling the perfume of the Honeysuckle and Night Scented Stock in the garden. It was a beautiful smell.

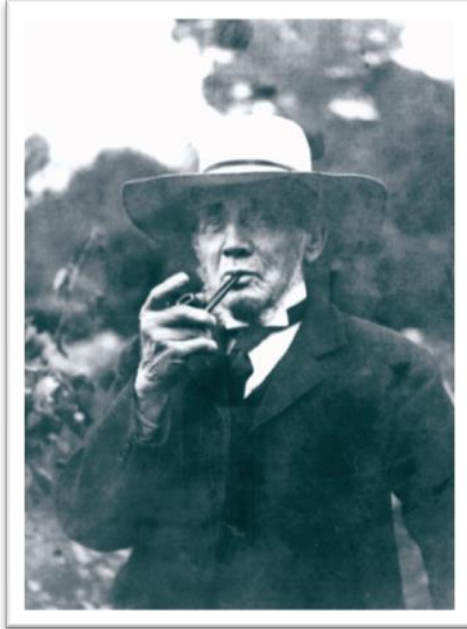
Pear Tree Cottage or 28 Hankerton as I knew it was a real fascination to my brothers and sister, as we had never experienced a house like it before. No toilet or bathroom, no sink and running water in the kitchen, except when we kicked the buckets of water over that had been drawn from the well, and there was washing and ironing everywhere. The first thing that I was warned against was, not to go anywhere near the well. It was very deep and it was the only source of water. It was drawn up by a bucket on the end of long wooden pole, like a shepherd's crook and was very clear and icily cold. The toilet was in a tumble down lean-to on the side of the house. It was much to be desired. Next to it was the coalhole, so you can guess it wasn't too clean. The largest spiders I had ever seen lived there. At the back of the house was the washroom where all the laundry was done.

In 1909 the house had the most modern toilet in the village, a closet at the bottom of the garden, but sorry to say Lord Suffolk didn't visit his property much and a flush toilet wasn't installed in the house until 1975

I feel very fortunate that both my mum and dad came from Hankerton. In fact they were about 4th cousins. My dad's grandfather was a man called Charles Pennell. He was the deacon at the Baptist Chapel in the village and he lived in a house next to the chapel. At the time there was a row of houses next to it, which were demolished long ago. He

died in 1940. My oldest brother can remember him and always thought he was a real cowboy as he used to wear a hat like a Stetson. His trousers pulled up to his chest with a large belt round his middle. In his young days he was quite a tearaway, but one day he had an experience in his life that turned him to God. From then on his life was changed and he

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of the



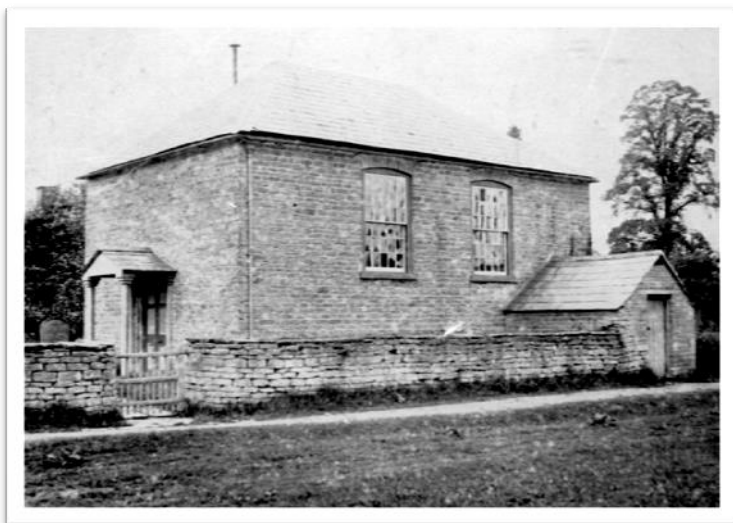
became  
mainstay  
Baptist  
Chapel.

*(Charles Pennell)*

In the Baptist chapel people are fully immersed when they are baptised, but because there wasn't a baptistry in the chapel, they were baptised in the river at Malmesbury. I have been told that folk came from miles around to witness these baptisms.

My grandmother Annie, Charles Pennell's daughter, was baptised in February 1909 and apparently there was ice on the water! My dad was born in May 1909, just 3 months later, which shows that she must have been quite a strong person. It's a wonder my dad was born normally!

They didn't have a piano or organ at the chapel, so my grandmother, Mary Woodward would start all the hymns. She had a beautiful voice and perfect pitch.



*(Hankerton Baptist Chapel)*

Charles Pennell and his wife Elizabeth had 3 children, William, George and Annie. My grandmother, Annie Pennell, married Charles Thompson from Cambridgeshire. They were married at the chapel in 1900.

William went into the Metropolitan Police Force and George worked with his father on their small farm and married a local girl. In the 1st World War he went into the Grenadier Guards but was killed in France in 1917.

My Grandmother kept letters going back to 1898. Among them were letters from her father and brother George.

Reading them brought home to me the sadness and distress there is in war, so I have included a few.

Hankerton

Dear Annie

I am well, I have just been to see poor George off to France. We went some way to meet them a fine handsome lot of fellows. We were able to wait by his side until Waterloo station in fact I took his arm. Lots of girls and relatives were walking to the trains with the men. The band was playing lovely. I had a great deal of trouble from breaking down and I think Will did. Oh dear how the people cheered them and the poor fellows cheered back again. Some looked very bright, others looked down. After the men had gone on to the platform we were allowed through too so we were with George when he was in the train and kissed him good bye and then the band played `Auld Langs Syne` and they steamed out of the platform waving their hats and cheering . George waved to us as long as he could see us. He went off very bright and cheerful and smiling. I thought I saw his eyes moisten just before starting but he went off very jolly, a true soldier. You see some sights, relatives crying. I had to cry after he had gone poor fellow. He will miss coming to see us and we shall miss him. He went home last Wednesday to Monday. He went to Kemble and had wired home and they didn't get it till next morning when George was home. So he had to walk all the way from Kemble to home. He said he never met a soul till he got to Oaksey. They had gone to bed when he reached home. They were surprised to see him and now hoping you are all well.

With love

Dad

Can you imagine the sadness Charles Pennell had when he saw his son, perhaps for the last time?

France

14th December 1916

Dear Sis

Just a line to let you know I am quite well and getting on all right. Hope this will find you all the same. We all come from the line. At present resting and have very good billets, and the living is very good, much better than I had expected, far better than in Africa, but I don't suppose we shall be here long. We have just done two days march which of course don't go down very well as it was raining nearly all the time which wasn't pleasant I can tell you.

I am sorry Norman is looking so bad, it's the change, you will see he will be better after a time; it was the first going off. So dear sister the French people seem to be a dirty lot, can't fall in love with any I've seen yet.

I haven't been in any large town yet only villages.  
Will close now with fondest love from your affectionate and loving

Brother George

Sis was Annie Thompson (nee Pennell) whose own son was also in the war. Thankfully her son survived.



*(George Pennell)*

British Red Cross and Order of St John  
Enquiry department for wounded and missing  
18 Carlton House Terrace T 2 11 19th February 1917  
Corporal G. Pennell 27980  
12 Pltn 3rd Grenadier

Dear Madam

We have now obtained a leaflet about your brother's death from Pte C. Marshall 13981 3rd Grenadier guard c/o Record Office Buckingham Gate London S.

He knew Corporal Pennell well and went out in the same draft on the 27th November 1916. The Grenadier Guards had attacked the village of Fontaire in front of Cambrai, but not being able to take it had returned to the trenches. Corporal Pennell and Marshall were in the trench. He was smoking a cigarette and Marshall cleaning his rifle when a shell came over the top of the trench where he was killed. He gives a distance as 200 or 300 yards back from the village of Fontaire. We hope in your sorrow it will be a comfort to know that your brother's death was instant and must have been free from suffering and also that he received attention and burial at the hands of friends.

Yours faithfully  
for the Earl of Lucas. I.C.R.

Owing to family commitments my grandparents moved from Hankerton to Harston near Cambridge where granddad Thompson managed his father's farm. Moving house wasn't as easy as it is nowadays. They auctioned most of their farm equipment and animals and also most of their furniture. Having 6 children they still had a lot to take with them so they piled all their goods sky-high onto their horse and cart. It took them 3 days to travel to Cambridge, sleeping under the cart at night. It must have felt like moving to the other end of the world as Annie had lived in the village all her life.

The auctioneers receipt is on the next three pages.



Cirencester, May 12<sup>th</sup> 1910

C. F. Moore,

AUCTIONEER,

Corn Hall Buildings.

Sold for Mr. C. Thompson

Lot	at Hankerton	l.	s.	d.
1	Heifer in full milk	13	10	
2	Heifer calf	3	3	
3	Heifer in full milk	15		
4	Heifer calf	4		
5	cow in milk	10	5	
6	cow in milk	13	5	
7	Fat pig	3	6	
8	- do -	3		
9	Spring cart		10	
10	cart	2	7	6
11	Harness		6	
12	brease jacket			6
13	Sub		2	6
14	Sub		3	
15	Sub		1	9
16	Saw & tools		2	6
17	Root pulper		14	
18	Hay knife, prong <sup>hoop</sup>		1	6
19	chaff cutter		19	

20	Hillwood	2	
21	do	3	6
22	do	3	
23	do	4	
24	Roll of Wire	2	6
25	do	3	6
26	do	4	3
27	Barb wire	3	
28	low chains	1	9
29	Churn	19	
30	Separator	2	7 6
31	Cream tin	3	6
32	Strainers & Skimmer	2	6
32	Butter jars & bucket	4	6
33	Scales & weights	5	
34	Sack bags		6
35	Carpet & Rug	2	
36	Fender & jars		9
37	Dressing Table	1	17
38	2 chairs & nail	4	
39	Washstand	2	
40	Washstand & ware	5	
41	Low rail	2	
42	Swing Glass	2	
43	Chest of Drawers <sup>not sold</sup>		
44	Iron bedstead & mattress	17	
45	oil cloth		9
46	Spring mattress	1	3
47	Iron Bedstead	2	6

40	marbles & pillows	2	6
49	— do —	2	9
50	Boots	1	6
51	Round Table	1	3
52	cupboard & clotheshome	1	3
53	6 Chairs 3/.	18	
54	Easy Chair	12	
54	Easy Chair	7	6
56	Sofa	17	
57	Chimney Glass	11	
58	Mattress	3	
59	Kitchen Table	12	6
60	Picture	2	6
61	do	2	
62	do	2	6
63	do (not sold)	.	.
64	oval pot Saucepan &c	1	3
7.	Chair covers	1	9

2	7	6	3	6
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		£	89.19.	6



*(Elizabeth, Eva and Nellie)*

My mum Eva Woodward, lived in Hankerton until she was married in 1933. Her parents were Mary (nee Beale) and Mark Woodward.

Mark's mother Elizabeth Woodward made sure all her sons were properly apprenticed.

My grandfather Mark was considered the finest carpenter in the area. He started his apprenticeship in Charlton with the local undertaker, and in fact he made the coffins for his two children when they died.



*(Grandfather Mark Woodward)*

He was a real joker and tease, so there were many practical jokes going on in the workshop while he worked there. The undertaker for whom he worked was a Methodist lay preacher and said he would sack the next person who played a joke, even if it was his best worker. Well, Mark was the best worker, and the undertaker kept his word dismissing him after another of his pranks.

Nailing the youngest apprentice in a coffin was not the best thing to do!

Eventually he set up business with one of his brothers, but wine and beer was the ruin of them as they drank heavily,

drained the business of money and eventually went bankrupt. They could have lived in luxury if they hadn't drunk all their assets. It was during this time that Mark Woodward built the barrel-roof over the altar in Hankerton church.

When the business packed up, Mark went to work for Lord Suffolk and was working there when my mum was born in 1906. At that time my grandparents lived in a house across the fields opposite Chapel Lane, but they moved, as it was isolated and a long way from the school. It was also very small for a growing family. Two children died in infancy. There's nothing left of the house now, but is marked on some old maps.

They moved to a Cotswold stone cottage with a tiled roof. Now known as Pear Tree Cottage, it had a sitting room, a kitchen with pantry, 2 bedrooms and an attic. It was a very damp house. The attic was used to store the produce from the harvest. The trouble with this was that rats would get at the produce first. It was the norm to lie in bed and hear them overhead rolling the apples about. My mum would often say they weren't worried by the rats at all, it was quite common to have them run in front of them as they went down the garden to the closet. They always had lots of cats, presumably to catch the rats!

They had a lot of bother one year as the rats burrowed into the walls of the house. The cats weren't doing their job properly, so my grandparents decided the best way to cure this problem was to cement the holes up that the rats had made. This was fine and the rats died in the walls of the house, but the smell of decaying flesh that summer was not pleasant to say the least!

One day while my Aunts, Nell and Liz were in bed whilst unwell, the dishcloth went missing. After several days it was found, in the saucepan of stew that they had been eating!! I don't think hygiene was priority.

As I said, my grandfather worked for Lord Suffolk. Everyone liked Mark, especially Lord Andover. He was the eldest son of

Lord and Lady Suffolk and he spent a lot of time in my grandfather's workshop where Mark helped him to make a cricket bat. This was one of Lord Andover's treasured possessions. One day he asked some of the workers on the estate if Mark the carpenter could swear, as he only knew

damn and blast, and he wanted to learn some new swear words.



*(The carpenter's shop at Charlton Park)*

Sorry to say, my Grandfather knew plenty. Mark was obviously a rogue, but his misdemeanours were not restricted to drinking, joking and swearing!

Mark also had a second family in another village. My mum would never really speak of it, but she did recount the following story:

One day my grandmother was in the butcher's in Malmesbury, when the butcher remarked on a local rogue outside, who not only had a wife and family in one of the villages, but also had



another family elsewhere. As she looked out of the window, she realised it was her husband he was talking about. She immediately passed out and had to be brought round with a dose of smelling salts!

Mark used to go home with many stories about the Suffolk estate and I remember my Mum telling us one about the Beaufort Hunt, where the farmers would get their old nags out and follow behind it. One farmer brought his old mule to ride with the hounds which gave the gentry a laugh as he came along. There was a lot of hunting and the Prince of Wales came regularly.

Mark's mother Elizabeth Woodward had a farm in Hankerton. She was a well known character in the area for her home made cheese and butter, and her hams were famously known as the best in the area. She wouldn't tell anyone how she cured the hams but my grandmother knew. The secret ingredient has been passed down to me, but it wouldn't be something I would use! She would often see the Countess or other members of her household, sometimes it would be Lady Catherine Howard as she delivered her butter, cheese and hams to Charlton House, and she'd say, "Fancy seeing you m'lady and tiz my birthday". Well, she would get 10 shillings out of them and one year she had so many birthdays it was unbelievable. She would tell a lie for ten shillings, as it was worth it! She would ride around in a little pony and trap and always had a smutty joke to tell the local farmers at the market.

One day she went to the local drapers in Malmesbury to buy her husband James a shirt and said to the assistant that she wished she were buying his shroud. When she arrived home, she received the news that her husband had been found dead in the fields. (I don't know whether she took the shirt back). My grandmother was very ashamed of her mother-in-law's behaviour as she was a God-fearing lady and hadn't been brought up that way.

My Mum went to the Hankerton School. She had fond memories of being at school where the vicar's daughter, Miss Hanky, was the teacher. She recalled, when she started school they were given sand trays where they learnt their letters and numbers, then they progressed to slates and slate pencils, then pen and ink when they could write properly.



*(Hankerton School)*

As the school was right next to the church she would have to go out in the playground and watch as the funerals came up the lane. In some cases she would have to attend the funerals, particularly if it was one of her school friends. This had a lasting impression. There were some hymns that she was never able to sing, as they always brought back very sad memories of those who had died from illnesses such as Tuberculosis.

When she was 12 years old she passed the Scholarship exam and went to Malmesbury Grammar School. Discipline was very good at both schools. Teachers were respected and obeyed. They were kind and strict. My two aunts weren't deemed bright enough to take the entrance

exam and had to stay at Hankerton school until they were about 13 years old. Of course this made the sisters very jealous, and I suppose you can understand it, as my mum was able to play hockey, learn French, ballroom dancing and gymnastics, which were unheard of in the village.



*(Grammar school children (Eva Woodward front far right))*

She was very happy at school except for the teasing and was made to feel very inferior by the other children there. My grandfather was still spending his money on wine, women and whatever, so not much money was available. She only had one set of clothes for school and had to use the school hockey sticks when everybody else had their own.

It was difficult for her at home because she was going to a lovely school but her sisters were staying at home doing washing and ironing all day. Of course she had to help on a Saturday, but homework was every night. She cycled to Malmesbury and back each day, come all winds and weathers.

She left school when she was 16 years of age, before her scholarship had ended, as her father died in 1919 and there was no money coming in except earnings from the laundry

work. Her mother could not afford to keep her at the school, what with uniforms, books, and games equipment to pay for. What a difference to nowadays! She was intelligent and loved languages.

So with an extra pair of hands, the laundry business expanded, with clients like the Vicar, Lady Suffolk, Judge Randolph and Judge Lawrence who presided at Malmesbury trials, the latter, later becoming Lord Oaksey.

My grandmother held the purse strings so there was no pay at the end of the week for the girls. The money that was earned was put in a communal purse and grandmother was responsible for everything. (In fact it wasn't until my mum was married when she was 28 that she handled any money of her own).

There was soon enough money though to buy a piano and my mum had violin lessons, eventually playing in an orchestra at Malmesbury.

Although I didn't know my grandfather, I think my mum had some of his traits, because she was a real tease. They had to make their own amusement when they were children and she had a pet toad that she used to play with and tease. It would come and wait at the door for her. One night as they shut the door, something stopped it from shutting and in the morning, to my mum's horror, the pet toad was squashed in the door!

Mum liked to reminisce about her childhood. They loved sweet things, and would suck Cowslips because they were lovely and sweet, they would find Sorrel and chew that, then in the early spring when the Hawthorn had lovely green shoots, they would pick them, bread and cheese it was called. A lot of children ate berries in the autumn, but she never liked them.

On Mother's day they would go over the fields and pick Cowslips.

They all had to curtsy, and did a lot of curtsying as children especially to the Countess and her children, the vicar, and all those who were deemed above them. The Suffolk's didn't give parties for the estate workers, but if there were any, they would be hosted by one of the big farmers in the area. At Christmas time, Grandfather always had a joint of venison from the Suffolk's and a big Christmas pudding made at the house. They had a goose too, which was bought and cooked on an open fire on an old jack. Christmas presents were very sparse. The children would hang their stockings up on Christmas Eve, and on Christmas day they would have an orange, apple, nuts and an inexpensive toy in it. Everyone was happy!

During Lord Andover's school holidays he spent most of his time with my Grandfather, but he would worry about his Lordship playing with the chisels, axes and saws in the workshop. Lord Andover was 12 when my Grandfather died and there was no financial help of any sort from the big house.

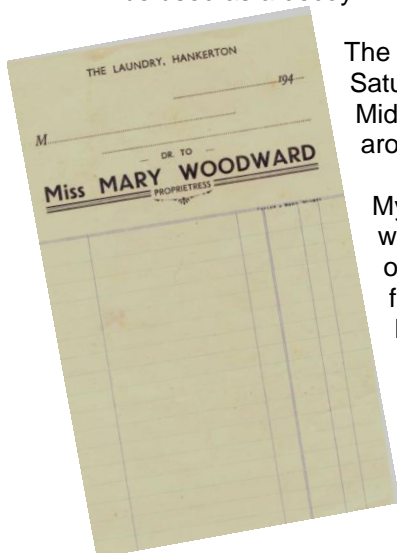
In church, the ordinary village folk weren't allowed to sit where the farmers sat. If the cottage people had attempted to sit in their pews, they would have been told to leave. People of the upper classes were held in awe, there was no answering back. Not even the farmer's daughters would mix with the cottage people, because my grandfather was an estate worker, they just wouldn't speak.

My mum did the usual chores at home, washing up, dusting, and helping in the garden, such as planting potatoes in the spring and gathering in the harvest, and gathering nuts for Christmas. Grandfather didn't help in the house except for carpentry, but worked in the garden. It was a large garden and they were quite self sufficient in vegetables and fruit. Everyone would comment on the garden being so beautiful. After my grandfather's death my grandmother paid for a man to tend the garden. My mum had to riddle through the ashes everyday, keeping the large cinders for the next fire and black-lead the grate and draw the water from the well using a

long crook and a bucket, which often disappeared down the well. This was all done before she went to school in the mornings.

The cooking was done in a big pot, a cauldron affair, put over an open fire. Everything would be put in nets, which were bought from the gypsies when they came in the spring. For example everything was boiled in the same pot including vegetables, a piece of Wiltshire bacon and a spotted dick pudding. My mum and her sisters would come home from school hungry, so their grandmother would give them a cup of 'pot-liquor' and a piece of bread. The pot liquor was the vegetable water and this would tide them over until their dad came in at 6 o'clock when they would eat together.

Sometimes they would have a sixpenny rabbit, cut up and put in a pot with onions and bacon and cooked in the oven as a stew. The joint on Sunday would last until Wednesday. Their dad would sometimes poach a rabbit. The local farmers were very good, as one day he met one of them and a rabbit's foot was sticking out of his pocket, but the farmer said nothing. They didn't mind the cottage people taking a rabbit but grandfather would not dare take a pheasant. Sometimes he would take my mum and my sisters with him and they would be used as a decoy.



The Baker used to deliver bread every Saturday. He was always known as the Midnight Baker, as he usually arrived around midnight.

My grandmother had been doing laundry work since 1881 when she was 10 years old. She just carried on the business from her mother, which enabled her to have a regular income, as her husband was not bringing in much money from his work.

Their customers sent the laundry in large hampers, delivered by the

servants, mostly by horse and cart, although some did have motors. They were all stored in the pantry.

It was 4p for big linen sheets,

2d for stiff collars, 4p for

gentlemen's evening shirts, and riding breeches.

It was a hard life with so much ironing. (My Mum resented it because she could have done something much better).

She washed and ironed all week, Monday till Saturday, not a



day off. That was her regular job, as well as her life and everyone had to help. Sunday was church in the morning and chapel in the evening. Summer Sunday evenings after chapel they would go out for walks.

Every Monday morning Grandmother would put her hair in steel curlers and they would be in her hair until Saturday night, ready for Chapel the next day. I suppose

that's one way of keeping the hair out of your eyes!

When my mum was in her teens, she would go with her sisters to the local dance in Charlton on a Saturday evening. She had learnt to dance properly at the grammar school so she was always in demand to partner those who could dance, much to her (*Mary Woodward nee Beale*)

sister's annoyance.

In 1933 my mum married and started a new life in Hertfordshire but Nellie, her sister, continued with the laundry business with her mother.

My mum used to come for visits to Hankerton with my two oldest brothers and help when she could. My brothers were sent to Hankerton School and each morning they were given hot chocolate drinks in the winter. They came in the wartime with my mum and another brother and sister, travelling by train from Letchworth, across London to Paddington. It was quite a struggle for her but that was the only transport she could afford and the only way she could see her family. It must have been quite frightening for her with the bombs dropping. Sometimes the pet dog would go as well. Her other sister Elizabeth lived in Charlton with her husband Harry Vizard.

When my grandmother died, Uncle Harry (Vizard) and Aunt Nellie decided to clean the attic out and burn everything. Sadly there were lots of old books and manuscripts of sermons, possibly belonging to the William Beale who had been the vicar at Hankerton church.

They said they were only old and nobody would want them! My mum was horrified when she found out but it was too late to rescue them.



Eventually Nellie married Frank Winwood who was once a jockey. In the 2nd World War he was a Desert Rat and fought at El Alemein, Alexandria and Tobruk.

He was only 5 foot 2 inches tall and a really cheerful little man. He would do anything for Nellie.

*(Frank Winwood)*



Soon after the war food was very scarce so they decided to buy a pig, fatten it up and then kill it. Lovely you might say, but Frank would clean the sty out regularly and make sure the pig had all home comforts and then would stay in the sty and play with it. They became real pals, but sadly the day came when it went to the slaughter-house and then it was returned to them all nicely jointed up ready for the pot. For some reason they decided to cook the head first, but this was too much for Frank and Nellie. They just sat at the table and cried. The head wasn't touched and the rest of the pig went rotten, so they buried it in the garden.

Aunt Nell really loved cats and it's a good job she didn't have any neighbours, as I don't think she knew how many cats she had at any one time. Eventually because there were too many of them, Frank decided enough was enough. According to Frank, Nellie woke him in the night and told him to get the vet in straight away and have all the cats put to sleep and he dutifully obeyed, digging a large pit in the garden into which they were placed. So another part of the garden was dedicated to cats! After that she just stuck to dogs.

It would seem that Pear Tree Cottage garden is very fertile.

Frank was a churchwarden at Hankerton and he also rang the bells when they were in use. He died in 1967 and is buried at the eastern end of the churchyard.

When Pear Tree Cottage was modernised in the 1970's the house was gutted and Aunt Nellie at last had a bathroom inside the house. She was very pleased with the modernisation. It was nice to visit her with all mod cons, but the loo still caused us problems. It wasn't the large spiders you had to worry about but her Pekinese dog she kept in there! My daughter was terrified of it. If you managed to get in the bathroom, would Mitsey let you out? The bath was never used by Nellie.

Even in the 1970's she carried on the laundry business started by my grandmother. Washing and ironing had been in the family for many years and her customers thought very highly of her, but if they only knew how she washed their clothes! She would fill the washing machine up on a Monday morning, washing the clothes all week in the same water emptying it at the end of the week. When the next customer's washing was delivered to her she would get the scum off the top of the washing machine and heat the water up again. I don't think she would have had so many customers had they known what was going on!

Nellie was an eccentric and towards the end of her life was excluded from a nursing home for turning the fire hose on the



nurses and fellow inmates and smashing windows! After she died my mum received a bill from the nursing home for the damages.

*(Nellie in the laundry)*

She was a very determined person and when she didn't want to do anything she would let people know. She was quite a character and if anyone can remember her, they will know what I mean! Auntie Nell played the organ at Hankerton church for many years. She's also buried in the churchyard with her husband. She was our family's the last link at

Hankerton, but when I come back its nice to wander round the village and remember the stories that I was told as a child and to think of all those in my family that once lived there.



Frank & Nellie Winwood with nephew David



*Annie Pennell and Charles Thompson's wedding*