

# RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL



A History of The Lodge  
(& Villagers' Personal Memories)



# Reproduction

The next 20 slides in this album are a reproduction of an official booklet on The Lodge first published in 1972. It is created from a copy kindly donated by Mrs Ada Gaskill who, with her husband Geordie, served at the RAF College and lived in Cranwell from the 1950s till their departure in 2004.

A separate album, part of the suite created to commemorate College 100, exists as a tribute to almost four decades of loyal service given to the College by two of our most dedicated Cranwellians, Ada and Bill 'Geordie' Gaskill.



# Front Cover





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## A History of the LODGE

### THE LODGE Cranwell

For many years now, the Lodge has been the official residence of the Commandant of the Royal Air Force College. The building, in varying forms, has a long history and, for what it is possible to find out from local records, the more interesting aspects are given in the following brief summary.

## Manor of CRANWELL

Official mention was first made of Cranwell and the surrounding land in 1066, when William the Conqueror noted that its owner before the conquest was Ulf, an Anglo-Saxon chief. By 1096, William had divided his conquest amongst his followers, and in the Domesday Book it was recorded that Gilbert de Gant, Earl of Lincoln, was Lord of the Manor of Cranewelle. He had in fact, twelve carucates of land to be taxed in Cranewelle; one carucate being "As much land as might be tilled and laboured in a year and a day by one plough" or otherwise equivalent to a 'Hide' of land, i.e. approximately 120 acres.



By the thirteenth century most of the land had passed into the hands of the Knights Templar of Temple Bruer, a military religious order founded to protect the Holy Sepulchre and Christian pilgrims. One of the Knights Templar, a member of the de Well family, Alan de Cranewel, held half a knight's fee of the Templars in Cranwell. In other words, in payment for his services, he was entitled to reap the benefits from a certain area of land in Cranwell. The property subsequently passed into different hands, the last Cranwell family owner being William Cranwell of Cranwell. It was later entirely owned by St John's College, Cambridge.

With the exception of one farm which, as shown on the Cranwell Heath map, consisted of an oblong area opposite what is now Rauceby Lane the Manor of Cranwell passed into the hands of the Thorold family. This was in 1541. It was in fact, bought by William Thorold of Hough and Marston, who later died in 1569, and who left the land to his son, Sir Anthony Thorold. The farm kept by St John's College appeared to have been leased to the Thorold family.

It was one of these later heads of the family who decided to build a house in Cranwell village, and called it Cranwell Hall. By 1816, however, Cranwell Hall proved to be too big for a family house, and it was demolished, the Thorold family moving to Syston Hill near Grantham where Sir Anthony Thorold the present head of the family still lives.

A farmhouse was then built on the site of the old Thorold house in Cranwell village keeping the name Cranwell Hall. Parts of the beams from the original Hall were used to make replacement pews for St. Andrew's Church in Cranwell village.





The Lodge in 1917.



## The LODGE

In 1541, when William Thorold of Bough and Marston had bought from St. John's College, Cambridge, the land in the Manor of Cranwell, his purchase included, in addition to a considerable amount of pasture and arable land, five hundred acres of 'Warren'. This area of 'Warren' was situated to the west of Cranwell village and was referred to as 'The Heath'. It is on this land that The Lodge now stands.

A 'Warren' was defined as "A piece of land enclosed and preserved specifically for the purpose of breeding game". In the sixteenth century, and right up until the nineteenth century, all forest, parks, warrens and woods were stocked with game for

recreational purposes and food. The word 'warren' later became associated with hares and rabbits, but was originally connected with all types of game, including wildfowl.

Although there are no specific records showing when the original Lodge was built, a building so described appears on maps of the area printed early in the eighteenth century; this building is now the only part of the present Lodge - the western half. A lodge at this time was defined as a house or cottage occupied by a caretaker, keeper or gardener, and situated at the entrance of a park, or at some place in the grounds, belonging to a mansion.

It is therefore evident that The Lodge was built to provide accommodation for the Cranwell Hall gamekeeper whose job it was to breed, preserve and prevent poaching of the game in the Warren. This game provided sport and food for the Thorold family at the Hall.

In 1736, a Mr Joseph Aldgate subleased the St. John's College farm and the Thorold estate records show that he had a 'Sheep Walk' on the Heath where he could graze 80 sheep. The 80 acres of sheep walk was clearly defined, and its northern



boundary was a line running East-West through The Lodge. It is probable that during his tenure, Joseph Aldgate did occupy the Lodge and was thus the first tenant.

By 1807, the Lodge had slowly evolved from a gamekeeper's cottage to a farm. It is likely that the Napoleonic wars stimulated the demand for increased agriculture and so the new tenant of the Lodge, Joseph Long, as well as being gamekeeper was a farmer and grazier. The Lodge was rented to him by Sir John Thorold for £400 - a fairly large sum for a house and indicating that it was, even then, of some size; - and the surrounding warren was rented for £600. Mr Long set about turning some of the warren into arable land, and by 1831, when William Lamb was the occupier, the whole of the Heath had been divided and suitably enclosed by loose stone walls into both pasture and arable land. Due to the demolition of Cranwell Hall in 1816, there was no longer any need for game preservation on the Heath, so the Thorold estate in Cranwell merely provided a living for the tenants and rents for the Thorolds.

As the Lodge changed from gamekeeper's lodge to farmhouse, it soon became necessary to add further buildings to the property. The farmer needed barns,

cartsheds and accommodation for his farmhands. These were added during both Mr Long's tenancy and that of his successor, Mr Lamb. In 1819, the cottages at the entrance to the Lodge were built, and other buildings were erected to the west of the Lodge. These now form part of the Royal Air Force College Unit Mechanical Transport Section. (In "The Mint" Lawrence of Arabia - aircraftsman Shaw - describes his feelings when on guard duty in this M.T. section in 1925).

The Cranwell Tithe Awards of 1846 clearly define each enclosed field and the farmer responsible. The Lodge was still occupied by William Lamb, and his farm consisted of 1,089 acres, almost the entire area of which is now enclosed by the 2,500 acres of Royal Air Force Station, Cranwell. The woods to the north of the Lodge incidentally provided the timber for all parts of the Thorold estates. The main road had by then changed from just a footpath, as it was in 1807, to a main cart-track, used primarily for access to the property.

In 1859 William Lamb died, and the farm became the responsibility of Henry West Foster, who was at that time the farmer living in Cranwell Hall, and in addition, was





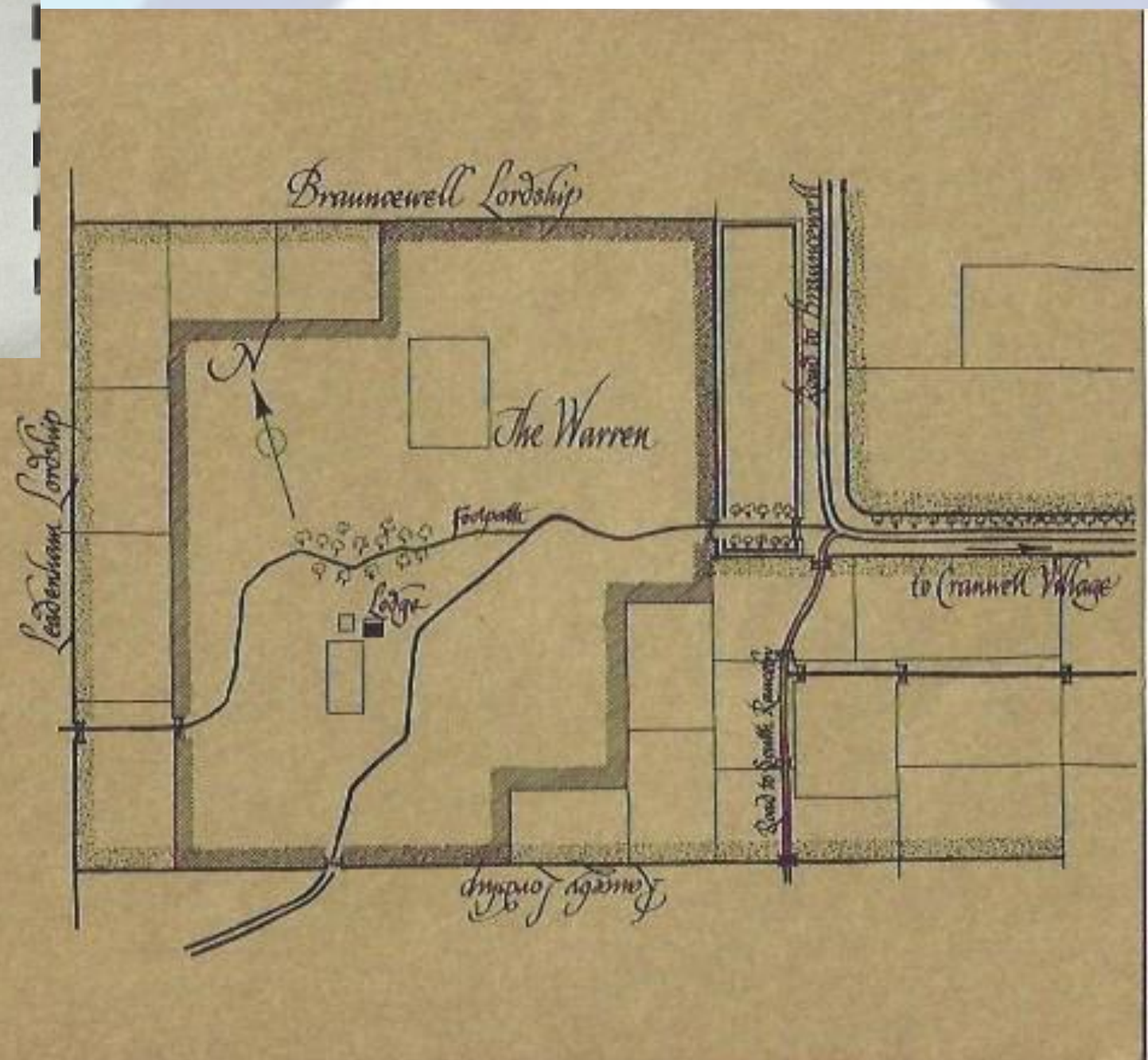
# Page 9 & Insert

## The HEATH CRANWELL circa 1807

From a map drawn up for  
Sir J. Thorold included in  
the Cranwell estate records

### Legend

- Land belonging to Sir J. Thorold Bart  
including pasture and arable land
-  Land belonging to  
St John's College Cambridge
-  Land belonging to Sir J. Thorold  
referred to as 'warren'



responsible for the running of the farm in Cranwell village belonging to St John's College.

In 1863, the St John's College farm was completely taken over by the Thorold family, and in order to cope with the responsibility of these three farms, Mr Foster decided to obtain the assistance of one of his relatives, Francis Foster. This alliance became known as Messrs. Foster and Company. Henry West Foster then decided to move from Cranwell Hall into the Lodge, Francis Foster taking over at Cranwell Hall.

In 1867 Henry West Foster added even more value to the property when he arranged with Sir John Henry Thorold to have three extra cottages built on the site. These were to provide accommodation for the farmhands that were needed for his expanding business. They were built by Rudd and Son, family builders to the Thorolds, and completed in 1868, Sir John Thorold being presented with a bill for £300.

By 1876 Mr Foster's 'Lodge' had become known as Cranwell Lodge, Mr Charles



Edward Robinson having taken over as farmer and grazier. In 1892 Mr Thomas Thurlby was the tenant, and by 1913, William Usher Banks had taken up residence.

In 1914 an Admiralty Survey Party headed by Commander Halahan, RN, had picked the farmland to the West of Cranwell village as a suitable area for an aerodrome. (It is of note that some years later Air Commodore Halahan served at Cranwell as the third Commandant.) It was on a miserable December day in 1915 that Chief Petty Officer W H Whitlock made his way from Grantham via the cart-track to Cranwell Lodge. It was his duty to inform Mr and Mrs Banks that under the Defence of the Realm Act, their property was included in the approximately 3,000 acres of farmland requisitioned by the Admiralty. This was in fact the birth of the Royal Air Force College; development was to follow.

Shortly afterwards, the servicemen began to move in. The ratings took over the cottages, and prepared the Lodge for its first service residents. These were a party of naval officers whose photograph hangs in the Lodge; the party included Sub-Lieutenant F H M Maynard RN (subsequently Air Vice Marshal F H M Maynard CB, AFC,)

whose son became a flight cadet at the College shortly before the second world war and who at the time of writing is also an Air Vice Marshal - Commandant at the RAF Staff College Bracknell.

On the 1st April, 1916, the Royal Naval Air Service training establishment, HMS Daedalus, came into being, and Commodore Sir Godfrey Paine took up residence in the Lodge. Things were somewhat primitive; the farmyard was covered in ashes to give a form of hard standing and baths for the ratings were installed behind canvas screens in the cart-sheds.

During Commodore Paine's stay at the Lodge it was extended to its present form, The eastern half being added. An effort was made by the builders to match this newer eastern half with its older predecessor; the original stone-style was copied, and the window in the present dining room was matched with that in the morning room. In fact a general view of the building from the south does not show the additional work although on closer inspection the joining line in the exterior stonework can still be seen, and also the difference in stone size, and the different mortar used.



In February 1920, the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell, was opened, and Air Commodore C A H Longcroft, as the Commandant, moved into the Lodge and from then until 1939 an unbroken succession of Commandants lived there.

During the suspension of flight cadet training at the Royal Air Force College throughout the second world war, the use of the Lodge was divided into two main phases. From 1939 to 1940 it was the home of the Air Officer Commanding No 21 Group and from 1941 until the end of the war it housed RAF & WAAF officers, on various courses.

Shortly after the outbreak of war in 1939, Air Vice Marshal Baldwin, then Commandant of the Royal Air Force College, left the Lodge, which remained empty for three months before Air Vice Marshal Willock took up residence as Air Officer Commanding No 21 Group. After living in the Lodge for eleven months, Air Vice Marshal Willock moved to a house near Fulbeck and the Lodge was used as accommodation for approximately 20 officers.

It is not possible to state with certainty which of the many courses being

trained at Cranwell provided the officers who were housed in the Lodge, but it seems that they were mainly the short specialist courses.

Signals and Radio Courses seem to have provided most of the Lodge's residents throughout 1941, the November 1941 course containing a number of United States personnel. Throughout 1942 shorter Accountant Officer Courses arrived, and during 1943 the pattern of a longer Radio Course alternating with a shorter Accounting Course appears to have continued. Although courses for padres had been housed in the Lodge earlier, the one which began early in 1944 is the first to be clearly documented. The WAAF also made use of the Lodge, which doubled with Daedalus House as WAAF accommodation.

As hostilities in Europe drew to a close, the use of the Lodge diminished and its wartime function ceased altogether in September 1945. It thereafter remained empty until 1946 when Air Vice Marshal Atcherley took up his duties as the first post war Commandant and the Lodge became once more the residence of the Commandant of the Royal Air Force College. So it has remained from that date.



A list of those who have lived in the Lodge appears opposite.



A view from the South  
showing the original  
building and extensions.

# Page 16 and Insert

## Occupants of the LODGE

### Gamekeeper's Lodge

Joseph Aldgate	C 1736
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### Farmhouse

Joseph Long	C 1807
William Lamb	C 1831
Henry West Foster	C 1863
Charles Edward Robinson	C 1876
Thomas Thorlby	C 1892
William Usher Banks	C 1913

### Commandant's House

Commodore G M Paine	1916 - 1917
Commodore J Luce	1917 - 1918
Commodore R G Talbot	1918 - 1919
Air Commodore C A H Longcroft	1920 - 1923
Air Commodore A E Borton	1923 - 1926



*Air Commodore F C Halahan	1926 - 1929
*Air Commodore A M Longmore	1929 - 1933
*Air Commodore W G S Mitchell	1933 - 1934
*Air Commodore H M Cave-Brown-Cave	1934 - 1936
Air Vice Marshal J E A Baldwin	1936 - 1939
Air Vice Marshal R P Willock	1939 - 1940
Officers on RAF & WAAF Courses	1941 - 1945
Air Commodore R L R Atcherley	1946 - 1949
*Air Commodore G R Beamish	1949 - 1950
Air Commodore L F Sinclair	1950 - 1952
Air Commodore H Eeles	1952 - 1956
Air Commodore T A B Parselle	1956 - 1958



Air Commodore D F Spotswood	1958 - 1961
Air Commodore E D McK Nelson	1961 - 1963
Air Commodore M D Lyne	1963 - 1964
*Air Commodore I D N Lawson	1964 - 1967
Air Vice Marshal T N Stack	1967 - 1970
Air Vice Marshal F D Hughes	1970 - 1972
Air Vice Marshal R D Austen-Smith	1972 -

\*Later Air Vice Marshal as Commandant





## Additional Notes

The foregoing extracts in this album are taken from an official pamphlet of The Lodge, published in 1972, a copy of which was donated by Ada Gaskill who, with her husband Geordie, lived (and served) at Cranwell from the mid 1950s till they left in 2004.

While helping to create this album on The Lodge, Ada also recovered a personal copy of a book by Alice Grant (a Cranwell Villager), authored in 1992 and recounting her personal memories of The Lodge and life at Cranwell in the very early days as RNAS Cranwell.

As a footnote to this album, therefore, we offer the following extracts of those memories, many of which resonated with Ada a generation later and form a unique bond between villagers who boast a proud connection with the College.

# Villager's Personal Memories - Alice Grant 1992 (1)

(Courtesy of Ada Gaskill 2019, who recalls many references and names (underlined) from 2004)

## MEMORIES OF CRANWELL LODGE FROM AUGUST 1915 TO EARLY APRIL 1916

### THEN ON TO CRANWELL VILLAGE

BY ALICE GANT - 1992

#### CHAPTER 1

In August 1915 we were living at Cranwell Lodge. My Father, Mr J W Picker, was shepherd for Mr Usher Banks, tenant of Cranwell Lodge Farm. At that time Cranwell Lodge was a quiet little place to live in.

Not long after, men in Navy uniforms with a lot of gold braid came snooping round, and needless to say, it was not quiet for long when the RNAS took over.

Thirty five men arrived on 16 December from the Isle of Grain and Eastchurch. They paid for a tobacco licence for 3 months for Mrs Aldridge to supply them with cigarettes until the end of March 1916. The first 35 men and a CPO arrived on 16 December; 3 officers had already arrived and were living at the Bristol Arms Hotel in Sleaford. The men were met at Grantham Station by lorries. There was no accommodation for them and they were billeted in the Granary and other farm buildings. Some of the buildings have been demolished and it is now the transport yard. It was an old-fashioned winter and was bitterly cold.

The road was soon so full of deep ruts caused by steam wagons bringing materials that were needed for the buildings to be put up; us children had to walk in the fields to go to School at Cranwell Village.

Sometime in February 1916, Mr Sutherland came running to the School to tell the teacher that there was an aeroplane coming in the distance. School was quickly closed down and my brother aged 10, I was 8 and my youngest sister aged 6 all ran home.

It had landed in the field at the end of our garden. I now know it was a BE2C Biplane No 3999, so we had a good look. Sometime before the beginning of April, several more arrived one Sunday afternoon at Cranwell Lodge.

Before that date, one moonlight night my parents heard a funny noise. When they went out to look they saw a German Zeppelin flying over. Evidently the Germans had heard about Cranwell and had come over to look. No bombs were dropped. Needless to say the neighbours, Mr & Mrs Wheatley and Mr & Mrs Aldridge, were also out watching the Zeppelin.

On the last Monday in March 1916, the women went as usual to Sleaford on the carriers cart to do their shopping. During the day a terrible snow blizzard blew up. A tree came down and blocked the road near Leasingham. The horse and cart had to stay the night at the Rectory, now Leasingham Place. The women had to hold up their long skirts, carry their shopping and walk home to Cranwell RNAS as it was at that time. My mother was one of them. There was also a huge fir tree down across our garden; it was still there when we moved to the Village. There were no weather reports at that time. The Rev Hebert Percy was Rector of Leasingham in 1916.

Mr Usher Banks, the Tenant Farmer, had already moved to another Farm at Pinchbeck near Spalding after the sale of animals and farm implements earlier in the year.

*I can remember some of the names under who  
left in 2004 - possibly by the descendants*

**Ada Gaskill, 2019**



# Villager's Personal Memories - Alice Grant 1992 (2)

(Courtesy of Ada Gaskill 2019, who recalls many references and names (underlined> from 2004)

## CHAPTER 2

On 6 April 1916 after the Cranwell Lodge Farm had been taken over by the MOD for the RNAS, the farm workers had to move out of their cottages.

My parents and family came to live at Cranwell Village in a cottage owned at that time by Sir John Thorold of Syston near Grantham.

As we came into the village from the RNAS, on our left we passed the old Green Lane. In those days the Lane was very wide and no problem for a wagon and 2 horses to go along to New Farm Brauncewell. It was all ploughed up during the last war 1939 to 1945 and except for old maps it would be difficult to find now. The grass verge was very wide from the Green Lane right to the top of Clay Hill. There was a row of elm trees there also. The trees and the pond have disappeared long ago.

On the opposite side of the road is Manor Farm. The tenants were Mr George and Mr John Sardeson. John was Church Warden and organist at Cranwell Church for many years. He was also the only person to own a car in the Village in 1916. At the peace celebrations in 1919 all the children were given a ride in his car as far as Blackthorn Hollow on the road to Leasingham as a special treat. It would be about one mile. Next to Manor Farm was a footpath to Wood Cottage. The tenant was Mr & Mrs Smith and 2 grandchildren, Annie and Ralph. They had 2 cows, pigs and poultry. Past the Village Cross was an old stone cottage where another Mrs Smith lived. It is now the Village Shop and Post Office. Next comes the Blacksmith's Shop, it was rented by Mr Tom Stanley of Leasingham. He came to Cranwell Tuesday and Friday to shoe the horses and do other repairs for the farmers. At the back of the Blacksmith's Shop was the Postman's wooden hut. He came to Cranwell on his bicycle to deliver his letters then he rested in his hut until 4.00pm then he emptied the letterbox and went back to Sleaford.

Round the corner were 3 stone cottages which were farm workers houses for Manor Farm. Next came a detached house; the tenant was Mr & Mrs Joe Bristow. They had a son Frank who was a spastic, he had a crutch made of a long-handled brush with the bristles cut off and padded with some old cloths.

Mrs Bristow kept the only shop in the Village at that time. Another son, Bill, and his daughter Hilda - later Mrs Masters - also lived there.

On the left side of the road was the Carpenter's and Wheelwright's Shop kept by Mr O H Sutherland. Mrs Sutherland kept the Post Office. They also had cows to supply milk and butter. Milk was mainly separated - one large can full for one penny. Mr Sutherland owned the carriers cart which was the only transport to go shopping to Sleaford unless you had a bicycle. It was a big event for us to watch when he was putting the steel rims on the wheels he had made or repaired for the farmers' carts and wagons. He was also Church Warden for many years when the Rev Walter Harrington was Vicar at Cranwell.

Next came 2 bungalow-types of dwellings. The first one was occupied by Mrs Emily Start. Her husband, Sam, came safely back from the 1914-1918 war but met a tragic death when he was thrown from a horse on Good Friday 1919. She later married George Coupland. The second one was the Primitive Methodist Chapel. At the end of the access road were 3 cottages. Mr & Mrs Coupland lived at No 1, Mr & Mrs Charles Hotchen at No 2 and Mr & Mrs Burt and family at No 3. They were owned by St John's College, Cambridge for the Hall Farm workmen. They have all been demolished long ago.



# Villager's Personal Memories - Alice Grant 1992 (3)

(Extracts selected by Ada Gaskill 2019, who recalls many references and names in 2004)

In 1916 There was the first military funeral at Cranwell - a pilot named Dalrymple Clark killed in an air crash. Nobody in the district had seen one before. A lot of people from Sleaford and surrounding villages crowded round the churchyard.

There were more flying accidents, which resulted in military funerals. The Cranwell R.A.F Band would come to the church in a lorry, to the far end of College Rd, and then slow march in front of the coffin to the village church. After the service three volley shots would be fired over the grave. The band would then quick march back to the lorry.

I can remember a small airship having to make an emergency landing at Cranwell Lane and in the field next to the Roxholm Drive gates. Needless to say a lot of children of the village followed it to see it land. We were continually being warned by the crew not to touch the ropes. We were keenly interested to see it deflated and loaded onto a large lorry to take it back to Cranwell RNAS. I have mentioned the MOD several times in my notes - it might be the Air Ministry, not the Ministry of Defence.



# Villager's Personal Memories - Alice Grant 1992 (4)

(Extracts selected by Ada Gaskill 2019, who recalls many references and names in 2004)

This is copied from The history of The Royal Air Force Cranwell by GP Capt E.B. Haslam:

In late Jan or early Feb. Lieutenant Maynard was sent to collect the first aeroplane - a BE2C from Chingford. He tells the story as follows

I duly collected the BE2C no 3999 and set off for Cranwell. It proved to be too long a flight for this elderly aeroplane and I had to refuel. This ~~is~~ I did in a rather small field outside Bowne. The usual crowd gathered and when I explained my needs, some kind chap rushed off and collected 3 or 4 2 gallon cans of petrol from a local garage. With refuelling completed I set out on the last lap. After a rather sticky take off due to a railway embankment, I had a few feet to spare so all was well and I duly arrived at Cranwell to make

the first landing there. The BE2C was housed in a canvas hangar.

The photograph of the biplane listed as the first plane to Cranwell in 1916 is wrong. It is not the first one, it might be one of the several that arrived later. It is at the Cranwell Heritage Centre at North Rauceby. The number of the first plane to arrive at Cranwell RNAS in February 1916 was 3999



# Villager's Personal Memories - Alice Grant 1992 (5)

(Extracts selected by Ada Gaskill 2019, who recalls many references and names in 2004)

'Mrs' Bangay was the leading light of the village (Bell\* and her husband\* was a bandmaster at the College

\*I was working in the garden, when I heard this funny whistling noise, she saw this strange aircraft, so she ran into the house to tell her husband & friend, that she had seen this unusual aircraft with an umbrella - but they just laughed at me.

What Mrs Bangay had seen was the flight of the first jet engine (Her husband had been sworn to secrecy) The aircraft was a Gloucester Meteor, designed by Frank Whittle at Cranwell