

ALFRED TUCKWELL

1873-1955

I have put the following text together mostly from information given to me many years ago by my father, Alfred Edgar Tuckwell, about the life and work of his father, Alfred Tuckwell.

Alfred Tuckwell was born on 30th April 1873 in Raydon, the second of nine children of Walter and Mary Ann Tuckwell. Walter was a farm labourer. Alfred attended school in Raydon for a short time but he had very little education as at that time farmers could go to the school to employ boys when needed. However he did learn to read, write and count, infact his handwriting was beautiful. By 1881 Walter and Mary Ann left Raydon for Walter to take up work in Waldringfield as a farm labourer but they lived in the Wesleyan Chapel house in Newbourne for about a year before finally moving to Waldringfield. Whilst in Newbourne they attended services at the Chapel, their fifth child was born and the older children went to school in Waldringfield, probably walking across the fields.

I am not sure where in Waldringfield they lived initially but they eventually settled in the Manor House. Walter worked as a farm labourer for the rest of his working life and Mary Ann kept house, baked bread in the brick oven, grew vegetables, brewed beer and gave birth to their last four children.

The census of 1891 shows that Alfred, aged 17, was still living at home and he too was working as a farm labourer. On 29th September 1899 he married Ellen Bear at Kirton Church and the couple settled in Waldringfield. Alfred was aged 26 and a labourer while Ellen was 31. He had his first house, 'Sunnyside', built in School Road. The builder was paid a percentage of the total cost at the time of the contract to start the build and then a bit more was paid when reaching the first floor, a further installment was paid when the roof was put on and the final payment was due on completion. Sadly, their first two children were stillborn but my father, Alfred Edgar Tuckwell, entered this world on 10th August 1903. In 1901 Alfred senior was working as a labourer in the Cement Factory in Waldringfield which closed in 1907.

They continued to attend the Wesleyan Chapel at Newbourne walking there through the fields while they were young enough to do that. In later life they went by horse and cart. William Jordan worked at Church Farm for the Wallers and my father thought he was the organist at Newbourne Chapel and may have been instrumental in teaching Alfred to play the organ. Alfred became the organist at the Chapel around 1901 and gave thirty years of service in this position. The instrument he played was actually a harmonium and apparently on one occasion he played for a service with my infant father on his knee as Ellen was at home feeling unwell. He finally ceased playing in 1931 because of failing eyesight. In addition to his musical contribution, Alfred was also a Trustee and Chapel Steward. In the

1930s he set up a Sunday School when the Settlement moved into Newbourne and there were more children about.

About 1902 Alfred bought a Carriers business from Mr Farrow and had also returned to agricultural work as a farmer working on his own account. With the Carriers business he was occupied three or four days a week, this seemed to vary a bit over the years. The rest of the week he was on the farm. He went to Woodbridge and to Ipswich and was always there on their respective market days. The day started by feeding the cattle before he set off, he also had some part time help with the farm and in due course my father was working for him on the farm too. Alfred went out with his four wheeled Carriers cart or van with a hood for shelter and drawn by two horses. Seating was a number of boards across the van. Parcels would be stacked underneath them, passengers having to climb over to get to the back. The seating capacity would have been about ten to twelve but a few more were often squeezed in. One feels for the horses especially on the return journey with all the purchases on board.

People could travel into town to do their shopping or they could ask Alfred to do it for them. So he carried people, parcels and goods of any kind no matter how awkward or inconvenient. He sometimes had to buy a pair of boots or shoes for someone. "You get what'll fit you, they'll fit me" they would say. Villagers might ask him to get them a joint of meat, you could get a full leg of lamb for two shillings and sixpence at that time. He would also get people's weekly orders of groceries. On arriving in the town he would put up at 'The Coach and Horses' in Ipswich or 'The King's Arms' in Woodbridge, get the horses stabled and fed and then deliver his orders. These would be prepared and sent to the Inn and then he would go back to the shops to pay for them. On delivery the customers would pay him plus a fee for carriage. After Harvest there could be a little extra cash available so this was the time to buy winter clothes. Coming up to Christmas there could be a few barrels of beer or some bushels of malt for those who brewed their own beer.

Alfred would leave home about nine o'clock in the morning, spend about five hours in the town and begin the return journey about four o'clock in the afternoon. Parcels were packed on the van in a systematic way to make delivery easier. There was a rail running round the top of the van acting like a luggage rack for things like carpets, rolls of lino and anything too long to go inside. At the back was a tail board for heavy items. During the first world war period Alfred was afraid that his horses might be commandeered by the army for war purposes. He was especially concerned whilst he was in town. He would ask the ostler to find him a stable where there was not much light and he got away with it although it did happen to some. Imagine having a van full of parcels and passengers all ready to return home and no horses. It would have been like losing the engine out of a car. It was quite an exodus at the end of the afternoon with all the Carriers leaving about the same time.

When the age of the motor vehicle came about the Carriers began to give up their horses for motor vans but even these didn't survive for very long as shops in the towns began to

deliver groceries, bread and meat to the villages and a bus service took people to and from the shops. This transformation brought an end to the Carriers, the end of an era.

At this point Alfred settled down to more extensive farming with cattle and pigs, wheat and barley. He had a piece of land in Waldringfield opposite his house and this included an apple orchard. Storage was needed for the apples so Alfred looked into the possibility of building a storeroom. He discovered that this would cost as much as building an entire house so the decision was made to build a new house incorporating the storeroom. 'Silverside' (now 'Silverdale') was built in 1909 on a plot adjacent to 'Sunnyside'. Apparently Alfred chose the name because it was his favourite cut of beef as did one of his nephews living in Hampshire and for the same reason. The apple store could only be accessed from the outside and must have been ideal. Also in 1909 Ellen Tuckwell's brother, James Earthroll Bear married Flora Victoria Runnicles at Kirton church and they moved into 'Sunnyside'.

The first person in Waldringfield to own a car was Mr Harry Sutton the school master. The next was Mr John Waller (Revd Trevor Waller's uncle) who had a Ford T. Alfred bought his car, a Singer ten horsepower, about 1927 probably through Arthur Bloomfield who had a garage in the village. When petrol was first sold at the garage Mr Bloomfield had a few two gallon cans of it which had to be kept buried for safety and he didn't have much call for it. Petrol tanks were filled through a funnel. Cyril Sutton took Alfred out for a ride to teach him to drive and later Alfred was to do the same for my father and all on one lesson!

Alfred was also a tenant farmer at Walk Barn Farm in Newbourne which he rented from Captain Prettyman of Orwell Park Estate, Nacton. Soon after buying a car, he bought a motor tractor which he used on his own farm and also did contract work on other farms on the Nacton Estate charging by the acre. He had a self binder for gathering the corn, first with horses and later with the tractor. Then the threshing machine would come. Mr Prettyman had one but Mr Rackham did the actual work for a shilling a coomb (corn sack). The coomb was in common use in Norfolk and Suffolk until well after the end of the second world war, in fact as long as grain was handled in sacks. This practice ended with the introduction of the combine harvester. A coomb of oats weighed 12 stone, barley 16 stone, wheat 18 stone and peas and beans 20 stone. Then threshing machine came with two men, the driver and the feeder. The farmer had to supply the water and coal and six extra men to do the work. Alfred then took the corn to sell at the market in Woodbridge or Ipswich. His apples were also sold.

Cattle were bought in spring and summer by auction at the market. They were fed on grass during the summer and mangles, suedes, turnips and hay were grown for winter feed.

On 24th February, 1928 Alfred's wife Ellen died at the age of 59. She is buried in Waldringfield churchyard. The following year Alfred married his cousin Caroline 'Carrie' Tuckwell in Leeds. That branch of the family had moved from Raydon to Yorkshire towards the end of the nineteenth century. Alfred enjoyed a silver wedding with each of his wives.

Sometime in the 1930s Alfred gave up the farm in Newbourne to take up market gardening. He was described as a market gardener on the 1939 register at the beginning of the second world war and by this time he was aged 66. His produce was sold in Ipswich where he would deliver to his customers. This was to be his last job and he retired at about the age of 70 in the mid 1940s.

Alfred lived out the rest of his days at 'Silver-side' with Carrie and he died there on 26th February, 1955 at the age of 81. He was buried on 3rd March next to Ellen. Carrie then returned to Leeds.

Miriam Ellis

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