

Memories from Patrick Baker, who lived in the village until 1959/60, who was exploring the village web site recently.
January 2020

I am of course very happy for you to keep and display any of my memories of living in North Dalton. I am not sure about many details as I was only nine when I left the village and that was in 1959 or 1960 - more than sixty years ago now.

On the left of the school photo is my father Robert Baker, who was the headteacher from 1952 until 1959. 1953, the year this photo was taken, was the year of the queen's coronation. My dad set up a television set in the school hall so people could watch the coronation ceremony. Few people had their own TV then.

We lived in the school house adjoining the school, and I remember playing alone in the school hall at weekends. There was a cupboard full of musical instruments. Another cupboard held library books and dad ran a library service one evening a fortnight for people to borrow and return books.

Alongside the school was a cottage where Jack Barr lived. Jack was a widower, maybe in his seventies. When I was 7 or 8 I was often with Jack, playing draughts, and sometimes helping him collect eggs from his bantams which were free to wander the yard and outbuildings where Jack had once kept a horse and, I think, a few pigs. My mother made Christmas dinner for Jack and I remember taking the plate of hot food across the road on Christmas Day.

When we left Dalton in 1959 to move to Lancashire Jack gave my mother some horse brasses which I've still got.

I'm pretty sure I remember Ted Duffill who used to work on Cayleys' farm up the road from the school house. Mr and Mrs (Nesta ?) Cayley must have been Catholics and took me and my mother (who was a Catholic) to church in Driffild every Sunday in their car to go to mass.

I remember Mr Dixon who ran the post office, and the shop along the main street that was run by Mrs Briggs. Her husband Bert Briggs used to keep pigeons and my mum liked going to the shop to chat with Mrs Briggs who often complained at length about Bert (!)

I do remember that my Mother (Anne Baker) was very friendly with the Foxtons who had a farm at the top end of the village. Before I was school age my mum often went up to the Foxtons' farmhouse to have tea with Jean Foxton and I would get to see Watch with Mother on the black and white TV there - Bill & Ben, Andy Pandy and Muffin the Mule.

The things I didn't enjoy so much were the fox's head on the wall in the passage there. You could see all the fox's teeth and I wouldn't go past it on my own. They also had two dogs - terriers called Whiskey and Brandy. They were ferocious dogs and would bark and snap at the slightest movement and so had to be put in a separate room when I was there with my mum.

Molly Foxton worked for British Railways in York, and Jean Foxton stayed at home looking after the house and her father until he died.

I was really sorry when we left Dalton to live in a mill town in East Lancs, and the year after we left I came back for a week in the summer holidays and stayed with the Foxtons at a new house that had just been built over the road from the old farm house.

I am now retired and living in Gloucester where I keep an allotment and play chess.

Best wishes to all at North Dalton.
Patrick Baker