

Collingham in 1914

In 1914 – in fact, up until 1974 - Collingham was divided in to two separate villages; South Collingham and North Collingham, with the boundary at the scutchell on Bell Lane across the Royal Oak crossroads. The two villages had their own parish churches and parish councils as well as their own shops and trades. A quick glance at the trade directory entries for 1912 shows there was little need to leave the area for anything. There were butchers and grocers, confectioners and bakers, a chemist's, drapers, cycle agents, undertakers, joiners, painters & decorators, a photographer, a monumental mason, a Co-op, brush and boot makers, an ironmonger, hairdressers, tobacconists, tailors, plumbers, coal merchants and chimney sweeps - to name but a few.

Education

There were two schools¹, one for girls and infants and one for boys. An infants' school in South Collingham – now the Youth and Community Centre – closed in 1909 although it was used as an 'overspill' classroom for a period afterwards. Most children stayed on at school until they were 13



Figure 1 Collingham Girls' and Infants' School. Headmistress in 1914 was Miss Mary Wilson

and then left to find work. Boys from wealthier families or who had won scholarships transferred to the Magnus Grammar School in Newark at the age of 11. For scholarship girls, there was the opportunity to go to Lilley and Stone School (opened in 1905) in Newark under the guidance of its first headmistress, Miss Skues.

¹ The Girls' School and Infants was behind 15 High St, now a private dwelling. The Boys' School was in the Wesley Room behind the Methodist Church. Both closed in 1962, to make way for John Blow Primary.

Other amenities included a rural library, a police station, a bank (Bank House - 94 High Street) a post office (at 69 High St Chatwood House) railway station, the Public Hall and several public houses.



Figure 2 The County Police House in North Collingham (now 'Jasmine Cottage' 145 High St)

In addition to the Royal Oak, King's Head and Grey Horse, there was The Jollybargeman², The White Hart (now 119 High Street, a private dwelling) and the Crown Inn (now Crown House - 158 High Street). It was the Royal Oak, however, where many of the important meetings and social events took place. For those who wanted to socialise but not drink, there was a Coffee Room behind what is now 2a Station Road. Many meetings, night classes and talks were held here.

The village also had a crier and a lamplighter. Miss Isabel Gould (1903 - 1998), the daughter of Canon Gould, vicar at All Saints Church from 1906 - 1932, paints a clear picture of these last two roles:

'The first crier I remember was a wonderful man with a stentorian voice; he was the village sweep and had been a chimney boy when young. He was also the cricket club groundsman³ and used his voice in no uncertain manner to keep the boys in order and to call them between the innings to push

² The Jolly Bargeman closed about 1920. It is now Wharf House on Carlton Ferry Lane. It served the barges passing along the Trent.

³ Possibly Mr Jack Sharp who was made Honorary Groundsman in 1921 after '25 years' service' (Source: Jack Aitken History of Collingham Cricket Club – copies in Collingham Library)

the old horse roller over the pitch. The other crier I remember had not a very good voice and the best way to find out his news was to go out and ask him when one heard the sound of the big brass handbell. This man was also the lamplighter (gas came to the village in 1856) and turned up the lights with a long pole, which reached to the top of the nice old iron gas lamps as he walked round the village at dusk.⁴



Figure 3 Miss Gould as a child in the doorway of the Vicarage (now Copper Beeches Care Home) with her father, Canon Reginald Freestone Gould (1861-c. 1939) and sister Margaret. This post-card dates from c. 1908.

Clubs and Activities

There was no shortage of clubs and activities. The Cricket Club was well established (1850) as was the Angling Club (1900) and Football Club (1900). There were also Gymnasium and Swimming Clubs. There was a Mutual Improvement Society⁵, founded by Rev. Gould, to debate issues of the day and the Choral Society would give concerts in the Public Hall. For those wishing to uphold Conservative Party values and get a pretty enamel badge at the same time, there was the Primrose League. The 1st Collingham Boy Scouts company was already seven years old but new from September 1914 were the 1st Collingham Girls Guides.

⁴ The Old Order Changeth series, The Fleet magazine 1970 (held in Collingham Archives)

⁵ Mutual Improvement Societies were popular in the mid to late C19th People would give talks on topics of interest. Prizes would sometimes be awarded for the best 'speaker.'



The Gymnasium Club was listed in trade directories between 1908-1916. Secretary: Fred Hoe. Names of the men in the photograph unknown but Charles Bunn (killed in action Nov 17th 1916, was known to be a member.

Church

Church was, of course, a large part of many villagers' lives. North Collingham had All Saints as well as the Wesleyan Church, Baptist Church and a Jericho Hall (since demolished). near the current site of the Cross.

South Collingham had St John the Baptist and a chapel behind where Dennis Thacker's Garage (41 High St) is today.

As well as church attendance there were many groups associated with the church such the Methodist Guild and Mother's Union. The churches had choirs, bellringers and, of course, Sunday Schools for children that included treats such as outings and picnics by the Trent.

Transport

The Midland Railway operated a train service through Collingham but there was no bus service until the 1920s. A carrier service (horse and cart) took people and goods to Newark or Lincoln on market days.

Thanks to the mass manufacture of the 'safety bicycle' and the dominance of Raleigh in nearby Nottingham, cycling was popular and becoming affordable for all. Cycle agents in Collingham included Alfred Broadberry in the single storey extension off Aberdeen House and Walter Davies, next to the original site of the Cross⁶.

⁶ c. 150 High Street
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The motor car was becoming fashionable for those who could afford one. In 1912, Herbert Hatcliffe on the corner of the High Street adjacent to the Royal Oak was listed as a tobacconist but by 1916 was a tobacconist, cycle agent and motor agent. By the end of the war he would be selling top class Chevrolets from a converted military hut that can still be seen today.

Farmer Walter Armond was also known to have his own car and several members of the gentry employed chauffeurs to drive them round. Interestingly, one of the earliest references to cars in the South Collingham Parish Log book was in 1910 complaining of the '*excessive speed of motor cars through South Collingham.*' A year later (July 1911) John Wigram's motor car ran over a child's pet dog.⁷

Lighting

Street lighting was provided by the Collingham Gas Light & Coke Company. During the war blackouts were enforced and anyone caught with light coming through their windows at night was fined.

That Collingham was such a vibrant well-served place was largely down to its farming heritage. Twenty-four farmers are listed altogether in Kelly's 1912 trade directory. There were also market gardeners, corn merchants and cowkeepers.

Carrots

Collingham was especially renowned for its carrots, which would be taken by cart to the railways station to be washed in huge tubs, before being loaded onto trains bound for Manchester and Liverpool.

Other occupations linked to farming, such as saddlers, plough makers, blacksmiths and wheelwrights could be found at various points on the High Street and surrounding roads off.



Figure 4: Farmers Jane and Henry Liley (left) of Cottage Lane, loading their carrot crop with the help of their daughters and the station staff. Mr Arthur Kind, Stationmaster on the right.

⁷ From a postcard to Miriam Newstead of Bell Lane July 1911 in the archives
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The Ploughing Match and Show

The pinnacle of the farming year was the Ploughing Match and Root Show held on the last Thursday of October in 'Bailey's Paddock'⁸, North Collingham. It was a grand occasion and the whole village would turn out. Henry J Crocker (born in 1904) describes the event:

'The Ploughing Match was then one of the most important parts of the Show, the work, of course, all done by the horses. I remember the thrill of seeing the 'away' ploughmen come in to the village the evening before with their ploughs loaded on to carts. Many of the ploughs would be Bealby's⁹ who were noted for making good ploughs. There was one class for 'swing' ploughs – that is, without wheels. Two names I remember who always did well were Mr Herbert Drury from Valley Farm, Swinderby and Mr 'Strolly' Jackson who worked for Mr Nicholson¹⁰. Further down the High Street¹¹ would be a fun fair with roundabouts, swings, side-shows and 'all that goes on at a pleasure fair.'



Figure 5 The inscription on the post-card reads: 'Ploughing Match, Collingham' and is dated 1904

⁸ Bailey's Paddock was so called because it was the paddock where cattle and sheep were assembled ready for driving to Newark Market to Edward Bailey's auction. The paddock was on the corner of Swinderby Road, opposite the White Hart. The show moved to Dale Field in 1920

⁹ 12, Besthorpe Road 'Brook House' Bealby's were established c 1840 and the Bealby family remains in the village to this day.

¹⁰ David Nicholson's farm was on Swinderby Road

¹¹ The paddock was the land where the car park and Medical Centre is now situated.

Farming It would be wrong to paint too cosy a picture of village life at the outbreak of World War One. British agriculture had been going through a difficult time. Stiff competition from overseas and newer technology meant arable farmers couldn't compete with cheaper imports from countries with warmer climates, especially with regard to wheat crops. The amount of land under cereals had fallen by around 725,000 acres¹² in the past two decades. Dairy farming proved more robust, as milk couldn't be imported, and pig breeding was on the increase, but many farmers still struggled to make a decent living. Agricultural wages had never been generous and in 1911 averaged 15/1 a week¹³ (75p or about £76¹⁴ today) in the East Midlands. By comparison, a general labour would earn 26/11 (£1.34)¹⁵ and a bricklayer in a large town 40s (£2.00 = to about £200 today). There was little surprise Collingham's population had been dwindling since 1861¹⁶ as the workforce sought better wages in towns. However, the outbreak of war would make huge demands on those who lived in the countryside.

The government, faced with the urgent need to feed an army decreed that British farmers must 'grow as much wheat as possible.'¹⁷ Land which had been allowed to subside into 'twitch' (poor grass) suddenly needed to be ploughed and properly cultivated. However, the same government appeared to think that fields somehow ploughed themselves. From 1916, after conscription was imposed, the Newark Rural District Tribunals would be awash with Collingham and Brough farmers pleading for exemption from active service for themselves or their employees so they could carry on their business.

Class System

In 1914, the class system was still as much in evidence in Collingham as it was in the rest of Edwardian England. Before the war it was still common practice for the gentry to give 'Gentleman' or 'Lady' as their occupation on marriage certificates. Henry Crocker, in his piece on the Collingham Show, refers to one of the Feast Week nights being 'graced by the 'aristocracy' of the time.'

Collingham's 'aristocracy' in 1914 were principally the Curtis Family, the Wigrams and the Smith-Woolleys. Charles Constable Curtis lived at Langford Hall and owned areas of land in and around Collingham and district. The Curtis name crops up time and time again in the archives. Charles Constable Curtis (1852 -1936) and his son, Colonel Thomas Lancelot Constable Curtis (1888 - 1956)

¹² 6,214,882 in 1891, 5,488,684 in 1911 'Straight Furrows' p72

¹³ Appendix given in 'Straight Furrows' published 1950 p 96

¹⁴ £1 in 1914 = £108 in 2018 <http://www.in2013dollars.com/1914-GBP-in-2017?amount=1>

¹⁵ Hansard Written Answers to the Commons Average Weekly Wages HC Vol 187

¹⁶ Pop'n in Coll 1911: 627 (South) 784 (North) Population in 1901: 813 (North) 670 (South) Population in 1861: 1010 (North) 863 (South) Source: Trade directories

¹⁷ Mr Starkey's speech, Collingham Farmer's Dinner, 1916 p 69 'Straight Furrows' by N Pickerill

were generous benefactors, donating time, land and money to many village causes. However, some of the farmers and tradesmen before Charles Curtis at the tribunals (he was the military representative) might not have found him quite so magnanimous.

Also hugely influential in all aspects of Collingham life were the Smith Woolley family.

Smith Woolleys

Founded by Thomas Smith-Woolley Snr in 1810, this firm of respected land agents based on the Green, exerted a huge influence on the village and beyond, bringing with it employment, wealth and prestige. To work at Smith-Woolley was to be held in high esteem. By the turn of the century it was Thomas Smith-Woolley Jr's two sons, Reginald and Thomas Cedric¹⁸ who were the senior partners, with son-in-law Gowrie Colquhoun Aitchison also working for the firm in a senior capacity from about 1911. Most of the large houses in South Collingham were Smith-Woolley owned or occupied, including South Collingham House, the Burnt House, The Cottage (Westfield House) and the Small House. In addition, Mr John Wigram had joined the firm in 1870 and became a senior partner in 1875. He bought the Manor from the Smith-Woolleys around 1892.



Figure 6 *Thomas Cecil Smith-Woolley 1853 - 1913*

In 1912, Wigram's son, Henry, occupied The Lodge on the corner of Dykes End and High Street. During this period the firm was known as Smith-Woolley and Wigram.

The Smith-Woolleys were, like the Curtis family, generous benefactors. Cedric Smith-Woolley in particular, seems to have taken his civic duties seriously. A devout Christian, he built St Stephen's Church and school in Brough, helped raise finances for the Public Hall (now the War Memorial Hall) and served on many committees and charity boards. Unfortunately, he was killed in a cycling accident on his way home from a church service at Brough in 1913 and the village mourned the loss of a great patron.

¹⁸ 1854 – 1913 Thomas Cedric Smith-Woolley lived in The Small House on the corner of the Green and Church Street



Figure 7 John Wigram (1846-1943) at his desk at The Manor c 1920s. Wigram and his wife Gertrude (1850-1929) gave generously to South Collingham Church.

Middle Classes

The middle classes were flourishing. Many were sons of farmers and maltsters who branched out to subsidiary trades such as corn merchants, seedsmen, auctioneers, land agents and so on. Others took to the professions such as law. Often marrying the daughters of other prosperous farmers, they were able to afford to live in handsome properties such as The Chestnuts, Crescent House, Rutland House, Brooklands, Mayfield House and The Red House etc.

Leicestershire-born Thomas Letts Berry (1880-1915), for example, was a corn and barley merchant who married Mary Alissimon Kirk (1877-1949), daughter of maltster and farmer David Kirk of Crescent House, Low Street, in 1905. His name crops up often in farming circles as he used permitted use of his fields for the Ploughing Matches and Show. Unfortunately, Letts Berry would be the first man from North Collingham to die on the Western Front (March 13th 1915), leaving Mary widowed and a 3-year-old son, Thomas Hugh, fatherless. Mary later lived in 'The Pleasaunce' on Swinderby Road (now Swinderby Lodge).

Skilled Tradesmen, Journeymen & Shopkeepers

As the trade directories (the equivalent of the old 'Yellow Pages') show, the village had a fine array of journeymen on the High Street. Many, through sheer hard work, had worked their way up from apprentice to running flourishing businesses. William and Martha Holland's family is a good example of this. William (1830-1908) began working in 1845 as a shoemaker. By 1870 he was a 'licensed hawker' (selling goods from door to door). As his family expanded, so did the business. By the 1880s William was running a draper's and general dealer's business while his son Walter trained as a

draper. By the end of the 1800s, William and Walter were running a successful business from 1, High Street. A third generation would expand the business further, running draper's then grocer's shops from 1, High Street, 105 High Street (known as 'Middle Hollands' and 'Collingwood' 148 High Street. Hollands grocery shops would stay in the village for six generations - 144 years - before the last shop closed in 1994.

Agricultural Labourers

At the other end of the scale were the agricultural labourers. These families survived at subsistence level, earning low wages and living an almost nomadic lifestyle. The 1911 Census reveals how so many of the agricultural labourers living in Collingham just before the war and born in the 1870s had moved from place to place almost annually, evidenced by the various birthplaces of their children.

The term 'agricultural labourer' could cover a variety of jobs from 'cowman' 'horseman' 'ploughman' 'farm servant' 'shepherd' 'carter' 'milker' 'hedger' 'gardener' or 'yardsman.'

A typical agricultural labourer's family lived in a 4-roomed cottage with a privy in the yard and a shared well for water. There was no electricity until long after the war. Some were detached cottages built on small plots of land (croft and toft - above) others were in terraced rows of 4 – 6 tenements. Many of these rows of cottages were named after established families such as 'Bocock's



Row' or
'Jallands Yard'
and have since
been
demolished.

Figure 8 'Miss Hemsall's Cottage'. This small brick and pantile cottage is typical of the area. Situated behind the Manse on Low Street it was demolished sometime in the 1970s. Photo c/o Mr and Mrs P Holland

Domestic Service

Many children who left school at 13 went straight into domestic service. The larger houses such as Langford Hall might have eight or nine staff 'living in' and most middle-class families had two servants on average.

These domestic roles included housekeeper, cook, servant, houseboy, nursery maid, nurse, gardener, groom, and chauffeur.

Charities

There was no welfare system and those in need relied on relief from the parish. There were several charities in Collingham and the village still had Overseers who were in charge of doling out the monies or arranging medical care. The Trustees of Fisher's Charity, for example, decided in 1906 to use the charity's bequest towards library books and in 1913 to purchase '*medical appliances necessary to children attending schools whose parents and guardians are unable to procure them though lack of means.*'¹⁹

In 1912 the charities for North Collingham amounted to £40 (c £4000 today) per annum given out in 'flannel, coal and money.' South Collingham had £17 (£1,700 today).

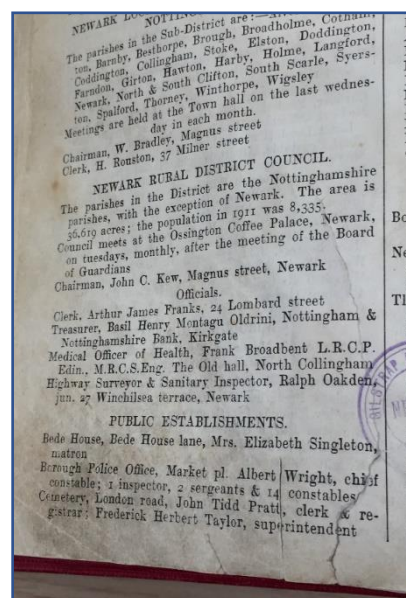
Those in dire need or infirm were sent to Claypole or Newark Workhouse.

Medical Care

There was no National Health Service and any visit to the doctor incurred a charge. Poorer people often used their own remedies or bypassed the doctor altogether unless it was an emergency. The well-off often had private physicians.

Collingham's doctor since 1883 was Dr Frank Broadbent (1860-1915). He was also the Medical Officer of Health for the Newark Union. He also had that rare thing – a female doctor- sharing the practice with him from the Old Hall. Dr Catherine Love Smith (1872-1919) graduated from Glasgow School of Medicine in 1899 and

Figure 9 1912 Trade Directory page of Newark's officers showing Broadbent as Medical Officer
Source: Newark Library



¹⁹ South Collingham Parish Council Ledger March 1913 – held in Nottinghamshire Archives PAC 85/1
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worked in the village until 1916.

All in all, we can see Collingham was a busy and bustling village at the outbreak of War. Its resources and strength as a community would be severely tested but its men, women and children would all do their bit to serve the country in its time of crisis.



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