

Lincolnshire Within Living Memory

To a Lincolnshire fellow Betty
with love & Best Wishes
on your birthday

From a Maid of Kent.

Compiled by the Lincolnshire North,
Lincolnshire South and Humberside
Federations of Women's Institutes from notes
sent by Institutes in these Counties

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SPALDING

'Come with me back to the Spalding of the 1920s, where children in the Westlode Street council school are playing with whips and tops, and skipping. A peculiar smell comes from the factory further on, where hay is cooked and made into cattle cakes. Across the road is the Prince's Cinema, where children pay two pennies (three for a plush seat) on Saturdays, to watch a black and white silent film. A lady plays suitable music to accompany the film, on the piano.

Into New Road, where the cattle are weighed and stand in temporary pens, made by inserting poles in the road and putting planks across on brackets. Occasionally a beast runs away down the road; one bullock fell into the river Welland and had to be rescued. Later in the day the drovers drive the unsold cattle along the roads, back to the farms. Around the corner squealing pigs and bleating sheep are in the sheep market pens, while people are busy in the poultry market opposite. An auctioneer is selling second-hand goods on the cobbled stones in Hall Place. A tall, ornate drinking fountain stands in the centre.

In the market place, the stall-holders shout to the women, offering their home-grown fruit and vegetables at bargain prices. Other stalls are filled with clothes, pottery, linens, fish, and many other goods. Here, the farmers gather in groups, discussing the sale of their stock, then go into the Red Lion or White Hart hotels to compare notes on crops and equipment over a pint of cool ale, and relax with their pipes of "baccy". The women hustle and bustle among the stalls and shops, stopping for a chat with a neighbour or friends.

The smell of fresh baked bread and cakes, and the delicious home-made pork pies, haslets and succulent local hams, wafts over the town, mingling with the perfume of the fresh cut-flowers, standing in galvanised buckets of water on the cobble-stones, while the clock on the Corn Exchange chimes musically every 15 minutes. Inside the hall are stands packed with small sacks of corn, where the buyers are checking the contents for the quality. The Corn Exchange is used for furniture auction sales, demonstrations, dances, concerts and other activities. Outside is a passageway along the side of the building. At

the rear end, and going partly underneath the building, is the cool Butter Market, where fresh butter, cream cheese, chicken and duck eggs are being sold.

Another narrower road leads from the market place to the lovely old stone bridge built in 1838. This is Bridge Street, with more shops on each side. Over the bridge spanning the river Welland stands an ironmonger's warehouse on the bank side. Across the road is a seed merchant's, and the beautiful White Horse Inn, with its thatched roof. The road ahead, Church Street, leads to the parish church and cemetery.

To the right, in Cowbit Road, the magnificent Ayscoughfee Hall can be seen, with its beautiful gardens, goldfish and lilies lake, with the war memorial in the background. The public relax on the many seats, or walk in the rose garden under the rose arches, or under the avenue of trees. On the lawn the children play, running up and down, and round the rustic wooden bandstand where the Spalding Silver Prize Band entertains the people on Sundays and special festivals.

Some folk prefer to walk on the riverside path, chatting to the residents of the cottages and the workmen on the wharf, who are lifting heavy sacks from the carts by crane and swinging them into the warehouses. Across the river a barge is being unloaded of the sacks of grain, linseed cake, cattle cake, beans and meal, which the horses take across the road to the granaries in High Street. The workmen carry the 18 to 20-stone sacks on their backs and stack them in the storehouse, while the corn is taken to be milled.

To turn the barges, the barge-men swing them across the river into the "swinger", which enables them to turn around more easily without hitting the banks. A "swinger" is a portion of the banks cut away. These silt up sometimes with the flow of the tides, and men have to shovel it away, until it is clear for the barges to manoeuvre round. Before making the return journey to Fosdyke the boat-men have to wait for the turn of the tide. As the tide rushes into the river, it creates a wave of built-up water called the eagle, or bore. At times, the sound of a seal is heard, and people lean on their tidal walls, built to withstand flooding, looking for its bobbing grey head, and hoping the outgoing tide will take the creature back to sea again.

As soon as the tide is high enough the barges go on their way, past the houses and the public houses, the beer storage warehouse and the coal-merchant's yard where his cart is kept and the beautiful chestnut shire horse, with a white blaze on his forehead and four white feet, is stabled, and the mineral water factory.

On reaching the footbridge from Albion Street to Commercial Road, the harbourmaster comes to turn a large handle which swings the Albert Bridge from the Albion Street bank, across to Commercial

Road. This bridge is still called the "Chain Bridge" by the locals, because it originally had two central sections pulled upwards by chains to allow the barges to pass through. After much damage to the masts it was dismantled and the Albert Bridge was built, a swing-bridge.

A cheery word is exchanged with the harbourmaster, as the boat-men pass by. He is the blacksmith and farrier, and many children and adults have watched him in his workshop on the river bank, taking hot metal from the red embers and hammering it on his anvil into horseshoes. After cooling them in cold water, he takes the horse's hoof between his knees, removing any stones which are embedded in the foot, then nails the new shoe onto the hoof, filing around the edge to smooth it. The fascinated onlookers ask for an old shoe, and many cottages have horseshoes hanging on their gates or doors. They are considered to be an omen of good luck, as long as they are hung open-end up. Otherwise the luck is said to "run out". When the farrier is not busy with horses, or the barges, he makes and repairs implements for the farms.

Further down the river are more cottages, and the gas factory wharf with coal trucks running on rails, as the coal barges fill them. Horses and carts then take the coal across the road into the gas factory, where it is burnt to produce gas, and coke for the coke stoves in the town.

The slipway into the river is seen next, used by the boat builders who shout and wave as they work in the yard, repairing boats and making the huge sluice gates for the river. Ahead now is the large bridge from the end of Albion Street across to Commercial Road, which opens upwards to allow the barges through, while pedestrians, horses and carts, cyclists and an occasional car or lorry, wait behind large chains strung across the bridge ends.

The barge continues, passing the sugar beet factory, where sugar beet is brought from the land in the autumn and is processed into sugar and stored. The beet pulp that is left is used by the farmers for animal feed.

Now the barge sails onward into open country with wide panoramic views over the flat fens, and the vast expanse of sky, dominated occasionally by the towering spires of churches and a windmill, with its great sails turning in the wind.

The barge is almost at the end of its journey, and the barge-man skilfully manoeuvres it under the Fosdyke Bridge, where the big ships are waiting for it to draw alongside and pick up their cargo. When the tide is right, the barges make their journey back to the granaries at Spalding. The *Violet Birch* tug tows the *Sarah*, *Nelson* and *Harold*, as they do not have engines and rely on the tides carrying them along. The *Pride Of The Welland* has an engine, and