

Old Village Characters. The Gregorys.

Throughout my first 21 years living in Dinton I knew the Gregory family well and during these years their main concern in the village was at Westlington farm but it all began long before that.

William James Gregory was born in Ford in 1881 to parents John and Martha. John Gregory was born in Dinton in 1857 and Martha Welford in Gibraltar in 1863 and on their marriage in 1879 they set up home in Ford. Young William attended Dinton School until he was 12 years old and that was the end of his formal education as was the case of most of the children in Dinton at that age.

Full time work followed school for William at the bake house in Ford where he learned the art of bread making along with all the other skills needed to work in a bakery, over many years. He met and courted Alice Woodford from Cuddington and they eventually married in 1905 and just after marriage William and Alice became publicans together of the Seven Stars public house in Dinton. (William's grandparents James and Frances Gregory are listed as publicans in Long Crendon in the 1881 census so this may have influenced their decision to become publicans).

During their tenancy of the Seven Stars Alice gave birth to their four sons, Hubert, Leslie, Arthur and Eric and at some time in the 1920s they had a change of heart, giving up the pub and taking on the tenancy of Westlington farm to become farmers. William had been a baker, a publican and was now to become a farmer in which he certainly succeeded.

The farm flourished with a mixture of arable and cattle and with war approaching one of their sons, Arthur, joined the Royal Air Force for the duration of the war and left Dinton. He did not share his father's love of the land. Neither did their youngest son Eric who also volunteered to join the RAF but had previously been involved in a serious accident which had badly damaged one of his legs. Because of this he was turned down by the RAF and deemed unfit for military service. Although disappointed Eric was then drafted into electronic war work which continued after the war and for the rest of his working life. This left William with just two sons, Hubert and Leslie (known as Jack) to maintain the farm.

Westlington farm supplied Dinton villagers with their daily milk which was brought to each household usually by William or Hubert carrying two churns using a yoke. It was very heavy and hard work but the milk was brought each day around the village, six days a week from the farm on a small cart. The milk was ladled out of the churn in a half pint measure and poured into the householder's jug and they always received a good measure! As children we would often visit the farm and were shown how the milk was Pasteurised skimmed and how butter was made. We were also there at haymaking, harvesting and threshing times throughout the year and were always made welcome by the Gregory family.

Hubert was a very much loved hard working character in the village and although we would sometimes play pranks on him he took this in good part and was a friend to us all. He died in 2007 at the age of just over 100 years old.

Sadly in 1941 Alice Gregory tragically died leaving a devastated family and a stunned village. After William's retirement his son Jack took over the reins of the farm which continued to flourish. William died in 1968. Jack was a churchman, captain of the bells and very keenly (and safely) taught many of us youngsters the art of church bell ringing. He also sang in the church choir on Sundays and was a very avid cricketer in Dinton cricket club, useful with the bat and ball. Jack died in 1986.

Although Eric worked in electronics and didn't share his brothers' enthusiasm for farming he remained in Dinton for a long time. He was also a church bell ringer and sang in the choir. He would encourage us younger ones to take up music. The Gregorys owned two pianos and Eric persuaded his father to sell one of these to my father so that I could learn to play! Eric was and still is an accomplished pianist and also excelled playing the piano accordion and would give many solo performances at concerts etc. Even at his advanced age he still entertains with his accordion. I would like to thank Eric who now lives in Stone for supplying me with the photos and some of the recollections of the Gregory family.



Hubert



Leslie (Jack)



Eric