

## *THE SYDERSTONIAN*

- April 2012 -

### Village News

#### St Mary's Church

The Rev. Clive Wylie has been appointed the new Rector of Syderstone along with the parishes of North and South Creake and Sculthorpe. His installation service will be on 3<sup>rd</sup> May at St Mary's, North Creake at 7.30. Clive has previously worked at parishes in Armagh and Glasgow. We wish him a long and happy association with Syderstone.

#### Art Exhibition

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May – Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May (12 noon – 4.30pm) – an exhibition of work by local artists where there will be an opportunity to buy various works of art.

There will be no Open Gardens event this year. The village energies will be channelled into the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations which are as follows:

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June – Garden Party with stalls and refreshments to be held in the grounds of the old rectory followed by a barbecue in the evening.

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June at 3pm – Diamond Jubilee Celebration Service at St Mary's, Syderstone.

#### Flower Festival

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August. Daily 12 noon – 4.30pm. This is the church's most prestigious event and attracts many visitors over Norfolk and beyond and raises a substantial amount for church funds.

#### Amy Robsart Village Hall

The plans for solar heating panels have had to be put on hold as previously promised grants were rescinded and the current position has to be clarified before further action can be taken.

#### Art Exhibition

Saturday and Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> May – 'Art at Amy Robsart'. This event runs parallel with the Art Exhibition at the church and represents work by local handicraft groups in the form of paintings, drawings, beadwork, bag making and jams, chutneys and marmalades.

#### Village School Cinema

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May (7.30pm) – My week with Marilyn (*The story of the extraordinary encounter between Laurence Olivier and Marilyn Monroe in London (1956) for the making of The Prince and the Showgirl*)

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June (7.30pm) – The Artist (*It's the late 1920s in Hollywood and handsome George Valentin is a silent movie idol. During the premiere of his latest film, Valentin meets Peppy Miller, a starstruck extra and aspiring actress. The two are attracted to each other and Peppy is given a small dancing role in his next picture. As their romance progresses, Peppy's career begins to take off and Valentin fears that a new fad in the movies business – the talkies – will ruin him*).

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July (7.30pm) – Beginners (*A romantic comedy with some serious undertones about truth and relationships. Ewan McGregor stars as Oliver, a guy who has a closer relationship to his dog than anyone else – until he meets Anna, a wild French actress, The revelation is Christopher Plummer (Oscar winner – best supporting actor) as his dad comes out as gay at the age of 75!*)

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August (7.30pm) – War Horse (*Steven Spielberg's much anticipated film of the acclaimed National Theatre hit about a young man names Albert and his horse, Joey, and how their bond is broken when Joey is sold to the cavalry and sent to the trenches of World War One. Despite being too young to enlist, Albert heads off to France to save his friend.*)

### Post Office

In spite of rumours that the post office will close, it will remain open on Wednesday mornings and Friday afternoons as usual.

### Village Archives

Material is always welcome in the form of photographs, documents etc which can be copied and returned to the lender by Sheila Riches 01485 578171 or Avril MacArthur (01485 578588)

### Ambitions – Ken Edge

The scene is Mrs Ivy Baxters classroom c. the early 1950's. 'What do you want to do when you are grown up?' Round the class came this question. 'A nurse, teacher'. 'A film star, teacher'. 'A nurse in hospital, teacher'. 'A tractor driver, teacher'. 'A train driver, teacher'. 'A cowboy like Hopalong Cassidy, teacher'. Then my turn. 'A bus driver, teacher'.

What had first raised this modest ambition? It happened this way. Up until my early teenage years I spent a substantial part of my school holidays at Glandford. The tiny but very pretty village on the River Glaven became my home for several weeks of any year when I stayed with my Aunt Aggie and Uncle Ernie. Thursday were a red letter day for me. Aunt Aggie and I would wait beneath the lime tree at the top of the village to await the arrival of the bus from Blakeney bound for Fakenham. In due course the bus would emerge from the direction of Wiveton and, brakes whispering, would come to a stop. We mounted up and I would make for the prized seat behind the driver. There was two Bristol L5G single deckers ran by Eastern Counties in those days from an outstation at Blakeney. There were two drivers, Alan Hudson, tall, slim and bespectacled and a driver I judged to be of the highest order. His opposite number was Archie Stearman, short, squat, wide mouthed, even his uniform cap sat squatly on his head. His appearance resembling Mr Toad and although his driving was spirited the resemblance to Mr Toad lie only in his appearance. There were three conductors who we came into contact with regularly, Jack Bishop, slim, receding hair combed backwards, cheerful of manner with an inclination to whistle, 'MacNamara's Band' and 'Buttons and Bows' being within his repertoire. The other were Ray, young, smart and polite and another seen less often whose name I cannot recall but was dapper with a Clark Gable moustache.

Our crew that Thursday was Archie and Jack Bishop and I watched Archie closely as he moved the bus through its crash gearbox as it headed towards Bayfield Hall. Nobody waiting and the bus picked up speed as it roared its way into Letheringsett. I peered at the speedo and was surprised to see it only registered at 30mph. I thought we had hit at least 50. Up to the T-junction and left towards Holt, a right, a left and a right hand bend in quick succession causing the bus to heel over at each one, the ladies keeping a tight hold on their bags and belongings. Then up the steepish hill into Holt. The bus

slowing as we approached the summit almost to stalling point then a double declutch with its accompanying roar from the engine sent the bus like a giant refreshed, swinging left into the Market Place where at the end, Archie would heave it into a full 'U' turn and bring it to rest outside Larner's shop. I always took this opportunity to cross to the opposite side of the street to spend tuppence on *The Beano* or *The Dandy*, compulsive reading in those days. Often a large cream coloured Alsatian would lie outside the shop, enjoying the sunshine. Inside, the shop was gloomy and the proprietor of 'Strutts' wore dark glasses and had grimy hands. This was mainly due not to any lack of instinct for hygiene but through handling the large volume of copper coins of the day. This was an occupational hazard for newsagents and bus conductors in those days. Although that mattered nothing to a small boy with coppers in his pocket to spend. The bus could be counted on to wait at least five minutes at Holt and I had plenty of time to regain my seat, start reading my comic and await the pleasure of Archie and Jack who were smoking and chatting at the front of the bus. Archie climbed back into the half-cab isolation of the driver's position while Jack rang the bus off and collected the fares from the newly joined Holt passengers. Although Holt is by some distance the biggest place on this bus route the number of passengers from there is minimal. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly Holt would hold its own market day on Friday, the very next day, and secondly the train from Holt to Fakenham (West) or Hempton as we locals called it outpaced the bus by a considerable distance and it was but a short walk into Fakenham market.

Down Holt Hill we go, through Letheringsett for the second time taking the bus at bends at a spirited speed then on a good stretch of the A148 for nearly three miles before the next stop at Sharrington Swan. The Swan has gone the way a number of village pubs of those days and is now a private house. Just through Sharrington the bus peels off the main road to the right. This much narrower road will take us into Bale. Bale is known for the Great Bale Oak which dominated the village many years ago. Before its demise the then hollow oak housed the village cobblers shop. It was said that a village football or cricket team could barley encircle the gnarled trunk with outstretched arms, fingers touching, without the help of umpires and scorer to complete the circle. Be that as it may the bus swings sharp right, passing the duck pond and the council houses. This is a straightish narrow road with wide verges which takes us to Hindringham, the largest village on that route. At Hindringham our bus route merges with the route of the second bus from Blakeney to Fakenham which would take in villages, Morston, Langham, Binham and Field Dalling before joining the route common to both services at Hindringham. We stop at Thursford 'Crawfish' and wait a short while for the other bus. The crews gather around the front of the first bus during a good five minute layover. Our bus has filled up but nobody is standing and pipes and cigarettes are lit and a buzz of conversation begins. 'Haven't seen your poor father around for some time, how's he a-goin' on?' 'He's a poor tool at the moment, nurse comes in each day but he don't alter' Then from another quarter, 'How dreadful about poor Mrs Lake? They say the skid marks that fella made was fifty yards long. They say she died instantaneously. The bloke has been had up for manslaughter'. 'Yes, that was a bad job. My Bert said that bloke always stopped with a squeal of brakes and in a cloud of dust'. My ears pricked up although I knew the story. Aunt Aggie and I knew the Lake family when they lived briefly at Glandford before moving to an isolated cottage at Bale. Tommy, the son, worked for my Uncle Billy for a while at Glandford Mill. His sister Mary was a lovely, friendly girl. I know Uncle Billy had a very high opinion of the Lake family. Mrs Lake was tall and slim with long dark hair and brown as a berry. She was such a friendly, caring woman and the accident which led to her untimely death at the hands of a reckless motorist was utterly tragic. There was more mundane talk of how the garden crops were shaping up. Who had started 'harvest' and who had seemed to be behindhand. 'Did your neighbours dog come back?' 'No, that that never. We think that old keeper shot her and buried her somewhere. Nobody has seen hide nor hair of her for over a fortnight'. The bus crews were getting back on to the buses. Alan Hudson

and Ray were the crew of the second bus and the two buses would drive in tandem until we reached Fakenham.

We had some way yet to go and crossed the A148 bumping across the level crossing at Thursford station towards Barney. Barney is a long, straggling village where bricks were still made at the time of this journey. The bus is filling now and people are standing and by the time both buses reach Fakenham they will be bulging full. Across a tiny, meandering stream and Barney gives way to Fulmodeston where more standing passengers are collected. Jack has to struggle to collect the fares encumbered with his ticket machine and leather money pouch. Over the steep railway bridge at Croxton and then left by Kettlestone pond and into the village. The pretty All Saints church stands on the right but the churchyard in those days was a wild, unkempt place. Back on to the A148 again, no stopping now until we reach Fakenham, no room for a single soul more. Past Altethorpe which must be the smallest place in Norfolk. Two cottages on the main road and the hall in splendid isolation in the background a considerable way off the main road. Into Fakenham via Holt Road then into Norwich Street where all the bus drivers skills are brought to bear in avoiding scuttling pedestrians, low hanging shop blinds, slow moving, overloaded cyclists then past the white gauntleted policeman on point duty at the top of Bridge Street. Slowly though the upper Market past the flower, fruit and veg and other sundry stalls, a left turn and the bus comes to rest outside the Central Cinema. Slowly we all get off and depart on our various errands of business or pleasure until the return journey at about 4pm.

Aunt Aggie has a few bits to get but mostly she gets her shopping in Holt the next day. Granddad wants some seeds from Stark's and there are potmenders to get at Fakenham Hardware. I am allowed to go into Newman's to add to my collection of die cast animals, farm or zoo depending upon what is available. We then head off towards Hempton along the causeway, past Dewing and Kersley's mill, past the smelly gas works, over the level crossing right into Back St to 'North View' where Aunt Jessie, Uncle Jack and Doris live. Eventually we will be joined by my cousin May and Robert who bike over from Little Snoring. We boys talk about what we heard on the wireless, 'Take it from Here' or 'Hancocks Half Hour' providing conversational topics. We ask Aunt Jessie if she has anything to be dumped and she finds us some rusty chicken wire and some scruffy odds and ends from Uncle Jack's shed. This is an excuse for us to trundle Uncle Jack's wheelbarrow to Bullock Hills where we watch the cascading junk bounce its way to the bottom of the hill. Not an environmental conscience between us. On wet days we would play the bagatelle game. The original mechanism having long perished we punched a ball bearing round the board with a solitary drumstick. Sometimes we would play nap or 'poppy wolly' and were allowed to play for small stakes. If lucky we would depart for home with our pockets bulging with coppers. If fine we would generally tramp across Hempton Green to Uncle Jack's allotment where Aunt Jessie would cut some flowers for Aunt Aggie to take back home. Gallardias, Esther Reads, Golden Rod and sometimes Gladioli would make a colourful bunch which would, in due course, be wrapped in an old copy of the 'Daily Express' and bound with garden twine for carriage to Glandford. Aunt Jessie always did us proud at dinner time (we never called it lunch), steak and kidney pudding, apple or rhubarb crumble and custard, treacle sponge pudding – marvellous stuff. Just after three we said our farewells and headed back into town where we would call at Swan St to see Aunt Rose (dad's sister and Aunt Aggie's sister in law). She was such a hospitable soul who would ply Thursday's visitors with tea and buns. Thursday was the day when many friends and family would call on her and all were made welcome and news was exchanged. We cannot linger too long as the bus will not wait and soon we are settling down for the homeward journey.

Aunt Aggie's bunch of flowers is admired and talk is of bargains secured on the market or the truly shocking price asked for some items but most passengers are encumbered with bulging string or hessian bags, brown paper parcels and mysterious items concealed in newspaper. 'I got the wallpaper. The last they had in the hardware. Cheap mind. I

do wonder if I'll be enough to do out the parlour. Hope so'. Archie climbs into the cab, the starter makes a deep drawling sound and fires the engine which ticks over causing the whole bus to vibrate like a jelly. Steering column, gearstick, handbrake, seats and even the windows vibrate under the tickover of the powerful Gardner engine. Jack is busy at the back helping a lady load a pushchair. A latecomer rushes up breathlessly. 'Hold on Jack, don't you go yet. Annie's just popped into Feaks's for a currant loaf'. Annie appears flustered and gets on bearing a 'Feaks's' brown paper carrier bag. Archie turns around to look into the saloon to see what the delay is all about. Jack rings the bus oft and, heavily laden, we rumble through the Market Place where stallholders are packing away their wares amid empty packaging, wrappings and general debris. A few late bargain hunters hover hoping for some greengrocery to be had at a knockdown price.

'Did you find anything good on the market?' A bottle of yellowish liquid is fished from the depths of a hessian bag. 'Ah, this is real good stuff. This fella demonstrated it right in front of us'. 'What do it do then?' He rubbed it into this grubby old cloth, worked it into a lather with a little stuff brush and brought it up a treat. Looked like a bishops's robe time he'd done'. How much was it then?' 'Half a crown. it should bring our two old armchairs up a treat. Even gets out biro writing'. 'Do that bishop use a biro then?' 'Go you on, I'll tell you how I get on with it. 'The bloke says it'd get the spots off a leopard'. 'Ah, or half a crown off us shoppers!'

By the time we reach Bale the bus stops for a crew break and waits outside the church just barely visible through the screen of evergreen oaks. The bus is about half full now and Annie, who got off at Hindringham will be buttering her current loaf now. 'I thought May looked tired. She works like a Trojan down at that school', confided Aunt Aggie. There was no school holiday for May, she would have been washing, scrubbing, dusting, polishing and cobwebbing till Little Snoring school dazzled the eye. 'Aunt Jessie says she does far too much there', concludes Aunt Aggie.

Break over and by the time we drop off at Holt the remaining passengers number about half a dozen. As the load lightens the vibration becomes more pronounced. Jack's black box is rattling on the luggage rack and Jack no doubt sensing that journey's end is nigh begins to whistle. We're past the Bayfield Hall gates where Commander Cooke lives, past the lower end of Dragaway Hill and Aunt Aggie and I move towards the back of the bus, which is slowing down in answer to Jack's ring. Jack pulls open the door, 'Goodnight missis, goodnight young man'. 'Goodnight', we call back although it is only a bit after five. Uncle Ernie is waiting for us and we all walk back to Mill Cottages relating the days doings in answer to his questions.

During the course of my stay, a visiting relative asks me, 'what do you want to do when you grow up?' Unhesitatingly I answer 'a bus driver'. There is a thoughtful pause and then, 'I think you'll be something better than a bus driver. I don't think Eastern Counties pay all that well'. Pay all that well? I'd have done the job for nothing for the sheer pleasure it would have given me.

### Summary

Sixty years on all this may seem like small beer. In the context of the early 1950's when communication was poor this was splendid day out where we met friends and family, shared news and small gifts. Very few people were on the phone, very few had cars and the travelling ambitions of most were satisfied to the extent that they could ride their bikes. So a bus ride of this magnitude was a positive treat. Fakenham was such a vibrant place on market days and all the surrounding villages would have been served by a bus service, either Eastern Counties or a private service such as Jimmy Bunn's from Walsingham. Between them they brought folks into the town who made the place buzz. This period was the heyday of bus travel, the high water mark being reached in 1948. I

just loved those red half-cab Bristol buses but there were even more impressive ones on the horizon. Eastern Counties had a few new full front Bristols, in a mainly cream livery with a maroon waist rail with the 'Eastern Counties' logo emblazoned on the sides in gold lettering. The seats were adorned with white anti-macassars and the destination blinds usually bore the word 'excursion'. To top it all off the steering wheel was white! Such sophisticated transport was only occasionally spotted at Cromer or Yarmouth or perhaps Norwich. I imagined that only the cream of Eastern Counties drivers would be allowed to drive these handsome coaches. The ambition to be a bus driver burned strongly within me. The dream would hold sway for many more years yet. K.E. (Jan '12)

#### My Early School Memories – Carole Gilham

I can still remember my first day at School - I was only just four years old, but my mother who was then in her mid-forties felt I was ready for school and at her age, I think she needed a break from me.

I remember mum riding me on a seat on the back of her bike to the school. I can't remember what I actually did in class on that first day, in fact, I don't recall much at all of my time in the infants (Mrs Baxters) class. The next class up, which was taught by Miss Parrott, I do remember quite a lot of what we did in lessons.

At that time, the Royal Family were very much to the fore and we were encouraged to cut photos and articles out of papers and magazines, take them to school and they were pinned up on notice boards around the room, or posted in our personal scrapbooks.

Other things we learned about were Australia and New Zealand, which at that time must have seemed like outer-space, somewhere that ordinary folk like our families would never ever visit!!

I think this must have coincided with the Queen and Prince Philip's tour of Australia and New Zealand in the early fifties. We were taught the history of the countries and all the different state and what their capitals were. I found this very interesting and can remember most of it to this day.

On a Friday afternoon in the summer, we did English country dancing held out in the playground on a fine day. Miss Parrott had a gramophone outside and we used to attract an audience outside the school gate. It was fun doing it, as I expect we were all looking forward to the weekend. Another outdoor pursuit I enjoyed was our 'nature rambles' across the common and down to the woods, learning about various plants, bushes and trees.

These have been some of the interesting and enjoyable aspects of my primary school years, but of course, as in all life, there are lessons and happenings that we don't have happy memories of. We must try to remember 'the good' and forget 'the bad'.

Carole Gilham (nee Havers)

#### A Trip to George's – Ken Edge

back in the mid 1950's the head of domestic logistics of our household decreed that we must have another wardrobe. Something substantial with drawers and hanging space that would repose in my bedroom overlooking the street/ Not that I would have much claim on any space it offered as my own clothing piled on the bedside chair, garment upon garment, would barely have reached the top of the backrest. I was not privy to any discussions as to where this wardrobe was to be found but knew that the search would not take us to any of the posh furniture shops in Lynn or Norwich. 'Let's have a look down at George's. We can go next Sunday after dinner'.

We motored through Fakenham on to the Norwich road and just as Guist clock tower came into sight we turned off to the right and eventually into a yard which was a repository for huge old mangles with wooden rollers invariably bearing the brand name 'Acme'. There were piles of ancient garden tools with worm eaten handles, rusty and neglected. There were agricultural tools, pitchforks, muck forks that work have taken a boy all his time to lift much less apply it to its designated purpose. Various items of hardware were left to take their chance outside in the weather, the odd ancient bike, saucepans both enamel and cast iron, candlesticks and the items of furniture that were more difficult to sell. Marble topped washstands with brass towel rails and huge wash bowls and jugs with sometimes matching soap dish decorated in the taste of the late Victorian or Edwardian period. Nobody it seemed wanted these items any more.

Dad and Ida had gone into the large warehouse to browse among the choicer items of furniture. George Phillipo, tall, lean and dressed in an old raincoat bound around his middle by some rough twine, the ensemble being topped off by a beret. The latter was worn not in the distinguished military style of Field Marshall Montgomery but in an unflattering pancake style with its 'tit' prominent. George's motto seemed to be 'pile it high, sell it cheap'. No reasonable offer was refused. I had been instructed not to touch or meddle with anything and although I took an interest in the domestic odds and ends I did not find the articles as interesting as those in 'Gigero' Gray's scrapyards along the Docking road where reposed a wonderful rusting collection of ancient automobiles. Among them not a few pre-war Rolls Royces with spoked wheels and horizontal radiator bars. I decided to leave the accumulation of saucepans, enamel bread bins and chamber pots to investigate the contents of the warehouse.

This housed the more refined items of George's collection. Beds with headboards of inlaid decoration, beds with brass finials the size of cricket balls. Dining tables and chairs with claw and ball feet, comfy chintz covered chairs and settees, stair carpets, bundles of brass stair rods, brass curtain rails with brass rings attached almost as big as hoopla rings. All had, no doubt, enjoyed life in more distinguished surroundings were now subjected to the scrutiny of Sunday afternoon bargain hunters. I caught sight of Dad and Ida examining a large and capacious wardrobe, trying the doors to see that they moved freely without sticking and looking for any signs of woodworm infestation. There were a few cobwebs round the back and some fluff on the inside corners but it was without a doubt a fine, solid piece of furniture with a full length bevel edged mirror. 'What kind of wood is it made of?' I asked. The front and sides were finished in a purplish black and although it would have benefited from some polish and elbow grease it appeared to have met with the approval of the head of domestic logistics. 'Looks like ebony to me', said Dad. It certainly did, darker than rosewood, anyway. An application of 'Mansion Polish' would make it shine like a top hat. 'Go and find him' said Ida, 'and find out what he wants for it'. Dad returned with George. 'Not surprised you like it, one of my best pieces. Was thinking of it for myself'. 'How much?' asked Dad. George eased his beret towards the back of his head and rubbed his brow with his forefinger. 'Fiver' said George. 'Can bring it on the lorry Tuesday'. That do you. Syderstone you said?' Dad nodded. Dad paid up with one of those old white five pound notes. 'See you Tuesday, George'.

We drove home feeling pleased with ourselves. It occurred to me that it would be a tricky manoeuvre to get it through the back door and onto the enclosed steep staircase sited off the kitchen. Through being at school I missed the delivery and on returning half expected to see our new possession standing in the back yard, but no, there it was taking up a fair chunk of and dominating my bedroom. George was a past master at getting a pint into a half pint pot and it turned out he had removed the sash window and the wardrobe had been hoisted with block and tackle from the back of the open lorry and manoeuvred through the aperture. Very decent value for the money. That wardrobe gave fine service for as long as I lived in the house and eventually my stepbrother,

Colin, dismantled and reassembled it as a built-in unit and painted it white where, as far as I know, it serves to this day in its modernised form. K.E.

The following piece comes courtesy of the London Police Pensioner magazine and was supplied by a friend and former colleague of mine, John Horne, and confirms what I have long believed that technology provides just as many problems as it does solutions.

Top this One – John Horne

Two British Traffic patrol officers from North Berwick, east of Edinburgh, were involved in an unusual incident while checking for speeding motorists on the A1 Great North Road.

One of the officers used a hand-held radar device to check the speed of a vehicle approaching over the crest of a hill and was surprised when the speed was recorded at over 300mph. The machine then stopped working and the officers were unable to reset it.

The radar had, in fact, locked on to a NATO Tornado fighter jet over the North Sea, which was engaged in a low-flying exercise over the Borders district. Back at the police headquarters, the Chief Constable fired off a stiff complaint to the RAF Liaison Office.

Back came the reply in true laconic RAF style: "Thank you for your message, which allows us to complete the file on this incident. You may be interested to know that the tactical computer in the Tornado had automatically locked on to your 'hostile radar equipment' and sent a jamming signal back to it. Furthermore, the Sidewinder air-to-ground missiles aboard the fully armed aircraft had also locked on to the target. Fortunately the Dutch pilot flying the Tornado responded to the missile status alert intelligently and was able to override the automatic protection system before the missile was launched". – John Horne

## **Book Review**

A Painted House – John Grisham

This is a departure from Grisham's tales of the US legal system and its attendant vagaries. It is based on his early life experiences at Black Oak in rural Arkansas where his parents and grandparents eke out a precarious existence as cotton farmers. The setting is 1952 during the Korean War where his cousin Ricky is fighting with the U.S. army. The Chandler family are anticipating a bumper crop. They take on a gang of Mexican pickers along with an oddly assorted hill billy family, the Sprules, from the Ozarks.

If the weather holds fair for six weeks the bumper crop will be harvested and the Chandlers will survive to farm another year having paid their debts and their labour force.

Into their uneventful lives are admitted the Mexicans and the hill billies along with love, passion, violence and death. The weather, the cotton farmers ally and enemy hovers, a significant force, in the background.

The story was related through the medium of seven year old Luke Chandler, a very precocious young man indeed. However, this does not spoil an excellent story where, at times, the tension is palpable. – K.E.