

Chronicles of the Tonge Family

By W E Tonge

Introduction

I have written this chronicle at the express wish of my younger son, John Tonge, and it is a true account as far as I know.

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7 April 1985

5 January 1985

On a Spring day in the year 1880, Ann Tonge said to her son John (my father) "We must go and see your Grandad Tonge today. He is not here for too long". So they walked the four miles from Tonge's farm to the home of "Old Billy Tonge" who lived with his wife in a cottage where the Skirth River joins the River Witham.

Dad never forgot the words his grandad spoke to him, "Never have anything to do with lawyers and money lenders". Billy Tonge had been a big strong man in his time. He belonged to a team of men who wore "bovver" boots, hobnailed boots with a cruel metal toe cap, and they used to visit neighbouring parishes where they fought with other men who also wore "bovver" boots and kicked one another on the shins until one man dropped to the floor. His wife said she often poured blood out of his boots when he came home from a contest. His shinn bones were pounded to a pulp and his legs were dead a fortnight before the rest of his body. They called it sport! (Have we progressed since then?)

Although he could neither read nor write he was a man of considerable ability and could make money. His compatriots said of him "Old Billy Tonge has some money" and that was in the days when money was scarce and precious.

He farmed Anchor Farm and in those days it was a public house also called "The Raffle and Anchor". Most of the produce off the farms went by boat on the River Witham and the boatmen and their horses needed feeding, drinking and sleeping facilities and so there was a public house approximately every mile on the banks of the River Witham.

During his time at the Raffle and Anchor Farm, the River Witham was cleaned out by a little army of navies who slept in his house and buildings and at dinnertime he would take a barrel of beer with a horse and cart to slake the navies thirst! It was a bonanza time for him.

It was also the time of the Crimean War when wheat normally £1 per quarter of 36 stones rose to £5 per quarter and fen land sold normally at £20 per acre went up to £80 per acre. Billy Tonge had money to invest so he bought half of Tonge's Farm (25 acres) at £80 per acre and paid for it. Later he bought the other 25 acres and took money (10 per cent) out of his first purchase to fasten his second purchase and later he also bought Raffle and Anchor Farm, 42 acres, at £80 per acre and fastened it with another 10 per cent out of his first purchase. It remained like that until the farms, Tonge's Farm and Anchor Farms, were purchased by Messrs Tonge Brothers in 1933 at £43 and £32 per acre respectively.

7 January 1985

He also had money to invest and a London Company called Paul E Vanderpump & Eve persuaded him to let them invest £1,500. He received a first interest payment of £80 and a second and final payment when the firm was wound up bankrupt 20 years later. It was a cause of friction between him and his wife who had worked hard to get money. In their retirement and old age at the cottage where they lived they kept two cows and they had a chain fastened to the ceiling to help them get up when they had finished milking the cows. At that time it was fashionable to have a piano and when someone asked her "Are you going to have a piano Mrs Tonge?" she promptly replied "I like a piano that shits!" (My apologies for having to use such a word, but a chronicler must be precise and truthful).

They had four sons. Twins Robert and Herbert and two singles, Joseph and another whose name I do not know. The other two, Joseph and the unnamed one, were a bit disgruntled because they thought that

their parents favoured the twins. So they emigrated to California (of whom more later). Herbert married a Miss Shaw and farmed Anchor Farm and Robert married Ann Lamyman from Old Fen Lane and farmed Tonge's Farm.

Ann Lamyman was the youngest daughter of a family of twelve children. Her father was a big man physically and a good businessman. He was a butcher and farmer and also had a sand pit and sometimes he sold £5 worth of sand a day. When his wife walked with him to Boston Market, 9 miles away, when they came to a puddle of water, and there were many, he just popped her under his arm and strode through the puddle of water. There were six girls and they were named Mary Ann, Polly Ann, Nancy Ann. They ran out of double-barreled names for their sixth and youngest daughter and so she was called just plain Ann. There were also six sons.

I only know of two of Ann's brothers and sisters. Nancy married a Mr Shaw and for 60 years she and her family supplied milk to the villages of Timberland and Martin. In her younger days she conducted Evangelistic Missions in Lincolnshire and later she was a well-liked preacher for the Primitive Methodist Denomination. She had a family of four children.

Uncle Hylton Lamyman was a man of considerable charm and scholarship and although he only went to school for 8 weeks from the age of 26 to 30, he was an acceptable local preacher. Brother Jack took Dad, Tom and I to hear him preach his last sermon when he was 90 years of age. He lived to be 97 years of age and a minister about the same age preached his funeral sermon. Jack, Tom and I and another Lamyman were bearers. I never knew a man who could walk like him. Often he would be walking home when the bells of Anwick Church were chiming midnight from a preaching appointment. I remember once going with him when he was in his eighties to a neighbouring chapel to take a service and I was in my teens and had to "dog-hotch" to keep up with him!

He loved to tell of how he started farming in Ruskington Fen on about 40 acres of land. He used to say "There wasn't even a post to tether a sparrow to!" He built a house and buildings and made a living. Unfortunately his wife died when she was about 50 years of age and left him £200 which she had saved unbeknownst to him. They were childless and for the remainder of his life a niece, Miss S Hammond, kept house for him and looked after him really well.

Now, to return to Ann Lamyman, my grandmother. She married Robert Tonge when she was 19 years of age and they had four children: William, Daisy, John and Thomas, all born about 2 years apart. Robert Tonge was too easygoing and too generous. He was a good living man and a teetotaler but he had (among other bills) a brewer's bill of £80. He could not stand the pressures and so he committed suicide leaving his widow to face the music. Her creditors called a sale and the landlord took half the farm, 25 acres, away from her. But she struggled on and succeeded. About 45 years after when Dad was looking through her papers just after her death he found bills which grandmother had paid in full 20 years after her husband's death. To her they were "debts of honour". (I like to think we inherit a bit of that sort of "pluck and honour".)

Grandmother did not want any of her sons to become farmers so she apprenticed William to be a butcher, Daisy to be a dressmaker, John to be a carpenter and Thomas to be a tailor. William worked for a time in the butchering trade and then he became a land worker. Unfortunately he died of pneumonia when he was 24 years of age. Dad said he was an immensely strong at a lift. He was a man of character. Once when he went to London he got wet through so he bought a long tailed coat. When he was walking home from Kirkstead Railway Station, later called Woodhall Junction, a neighbour said to him "You were walking with your coat tails flying, I wondered if you would be able to stop at your home". William answered "As a matter of fact I didn't pull up until I got to Mrs Lill's farm (a neighbouring farm) and had to walk back". Dad said of him "He feared neither man nor devil, but God and his favourite reading was the Bible".

Daisy Tonge did not last long as a dressmaker and when she was about 20 years of age she married Thomas Holmes. He was one of a family of 10 children. John Holmes was forty years of age when he married his wife who was twenty years of age.

They lived in a very small cottage near Waterside Methodist Chapel. Dad and Mr Holmes worked for Mr John Smeath who farmed 440 acres in Timberland Fen and Thorpe Tilney Fen. Mr Holmes' weekly wage was 12 shillings per week. He had a big garden and allotment. He fed two pigs, one he sold for the rent and the other was killed for the family to eat. Dad said Mr Holmes often took plain bread to work and left the lard for the family. He saved up his harvest overtime and then

got his family rigged out with boots and clothes for the winter. I can well remember "Old Mother Holmes".

First of all Uncle Tom and his wife lived with Grandmother and he worked on a neighbouring farm, then he took the "9 acre field" and sometime after took Chapel Farm. Sometime later he took the 100 acre Delph Farm which he successfully farmed until he retired when he was about 45 years of age. He built 3 bungalows down Tattershall Bridge Road and he died when he was about 55 years of age. (He died the same week as David Tonge, my elder son, was born). He was a staunch member of the Primitive Methodists and worshipped at Timberland PM. He was a generous man and a good businessman. I must tell you this true story.

A Mr D-, a relative, was working for him spreading crewyard muck from a cart and it was a very hot day in July and he was sweating profusely. Uncle Tom went up to him and said "How is it going Mr D-?" Mr D- replied "Do you think that God Almighty intended that I should sweat and work for you like this?" Uncle Tom's swift reply was "Well if He did, God Almighty is disappointed". Mr D-, savaged, stuck his muck fork into the manure and Uncle Tom said "Strike him! Draw Blood! Kill him!" Mr D- said "Kill who?" and Uncle Tom replied "Why the Old Devil he's in the cart with you!" and he walked away laughing!

Uncle Tom was the only rich uncle we had. When I was about 8 years of age he gave me an old discoloured watch which would not go. Every time it stopped I started and eventually I got it going. Next time I saw Uncle Tom I told him I had got the watch going and he promised me a new watch. Sometime later he came to see us and gave Tom and I a new watch each, costing 18/- about a weeks wage then.

Aunt Daisy Holmes was a big strong woman, more like a man than a woman. She and her husband were childless. She could make bands for 3 men making and tying sheaves of corn.

8 January 1985

My Father, John Tonge, was born in 1874. I don't think that he could ever remember his father. He attended the Timberland Dales School which I attended and my elder son David also. The Headmaster for 40 years was Mr Richard Prime, who was not fit to be a teacher. One of Dad's memories of going to school was when a few of the boys, Dad included, were caught by a neighbouring farmer swinging on his

willow trees. He pulled his pocket knife out and threatened "to cut their souls out". For some time when Dad passed his house on his way to school Dad used to go down the river bank side as far away from the house as possible!

At 12 years of age Dad was sent to the nearby carpenters establishment to learn to be a carpenter – and he hated it! He had to put 10 hours work in per day, 6 days a week, live at home at weekends, his mother to find him his clothes etc and no pay for 5 years!!! The first job Mr Scot the carpenter set him was to take a broken wood plough to pieces. Dad started hammering and Mr Scot soon told him "take your coat off and I will soon teach you to use your left hand as well as your right". Dad lived in all the week but went home at weekends. He filled a shed with thatch pegs. He hated it. It was like working on a cabbage leaf he said and it was the only time in his life when he had sweaty feet! At the months end Mr Scot wanted Dad to sign a contract. Dad refused. He did not like having no pay on Saturday night. Mr Scot said he would give him some pay but refused to say how much. Some three weeks later, on a Thursday night he knocked on Mr Scot's door and Mr Scot opened the door and said "Now Jack what do you want?" Dad replied "I don't like this job Mr Scot and I'm not coming anymore. Good night and thank you" and that was that. In later life when he was farming on his own account I never saw him knock a nail into wood and he only had a hammer and a few nails. He used to hire the carpenter to come and make all his gates to swing properly once a year.

He went to work for Mrs Sill, next door farm, for one shilling per day and later one shilling and threepence per day. When he was 16 years of age he went to work for Mr J Smeath who immediately gave him a mans wage, two shillings and sixpence per day, because he could carry corn from the threshing machine. He worked for Mr Smeath for 8 years, soon becoming one of his best and trusted workers. Mr Smeath had a lot stock and some of it was agisted and for several years Dad did the Sunday "garthing". He used to walk there and do nearly four hours of stock feeding. Then at about 10am he would have breakfast with Mr & Mrs Smeath and family and mostly it was hot sausage on toast and he enjoyed it. He also got one shilling for the four hours work.

Mr Smeath, his employer, was a big bonny fine man weighing 18 stones but he did not look stout. He was reckoned to be the finest built man who attended Lincoln Corn Market and Dad, although Mr Smeath had a groom, had to meet the four o'clock market train at Kirkstead. Never once did Mr Smeath go home at 4pm. It was always 10pm and

the sprightly horse full of corn and not very pleased at being in a cold skittle alley for 6 hours. Dad always insisted on driving and he used to take hold of Mr Smeath's right thigh with his left hand to keep him in the high backed trap and drive with his right hand and they always got home safely. I don't think Dad got any pay for the extra 5 or 6 hours he put in. But one Friday they all went to Kirkstead Wesleyan Methodist Chapel to hear Rev Peter Mackenzie lecture on "Joseph and his brothers" to a crowded chapel.

Mr Smeath had a stallion which Dad traveled for 3 years in the Spring months of the year and on a weekly circuit. He met many people during those three years and he was interested and knew quite a lot about horses, so much so that in his early twenties the North Eastern Railway Company offered him a full time job at a salary of three pounds and three shillings a week and all expenses paid. He refused saying he did not know enough about horses for such a responsible job. They said he was just the sort of man they wanted. They could get plenty of men who reckoned they knew all about horses and didn't! Of course if Dad had accepted that job I should not be writing this Chronicle now.

9 January 1985

One other word I must say about farm food 100 years ago. All living in men – waggoners, second chaps, garthmen etc – got fat bacon and skimmed milk for breakfast and it was called skimmed milk from the first day of March onwards. (Those were the days!) When Dad stayed the night and there were many nights when he did so, he could not manage cold milk and fat bacon for breakfast so he used to persuade one of the maids to give him a plate tart instead.

For some years Dad and his elder brother Will farmed in partnership at the "Twenty-Foot" farm in Billingham Dales (about 40 acres). Will lived at the farm and worked it. His sister Daisy kept house for him but she had very long weekends off at home with her mother. Dad continued to work for Mr Smeath. Uncle Will died at 24 years of age and sometime after Dad got married to Rebecca Huggins early in the year 1900 and Brother Jack William Tonge was born on 29 December that year at Chapel Farm, Timberland Dales. Dad, Mother and son Jack then went to live at the "Twenty Foot" farm until 1917 when Dad sold out lock, stock and barrel to Mr Willows his landlord for £1,500 and my corn hoe was included! Three more children were born there and their names are Dinah Violet Tonge, William Enoch Tonge and Tom Abraham Tonge.

Dad was a good farmer and he used to like to tell us of one particular year when the half yearly rent of £45 was due in October and he had it three times over – two haystacks @ £45, 5 young beast @ £45 and 3 foals @ £45. I've often heard him say "There is nothing more sure than death and rent days!"

Dad took over Tonge's Farm (50 acres) at Timberland Dales from his mother in 1917 until 1922 when Bro Jack got married and took the farm over from Dad. About 1918 Dad bought Chapel Farm in 3 lots – house and 13 acres £1,200, allotments £120 and the "9 acre" £350.

One day he took Violet, Tom and I to Woodhall Spa Post Office and opened an account for us in the sum of £100 each. This was in the year 1917 and I have always had a pound or two there ever since.

From 1926 to 1930 Dad farmed Chapel Farm. Bro Jack did his horse work and Dad paid me to work for Bro Jack in return. In 1930 Bro Jack and his wife had a rapidly growing family, 9 children born and reared in 12 years and so they went to a run down farm in North Kyme Fen comprising of 120 acres. The house came out of one hole in a grass field and the buildings out of another hole. In the same year, 1932, Bro Tom and I took over the tenancy of Tonge's farm and did Dad's horsework also. Tom was 20 years of age and I was 22 years of age. Mother died in 1933 and in Dad's years of widowhood for a time he lived with me at Chapel Farm, then a year or two in one of Uncle Tom's bungalows, then some of the war years with Bro Jack at North Kyme Fen, then some years with Ida and I and finally a year or so in the little Chapel bungalow. He often used to say "as soon as I can't work put me to bed with a shovel" and he got his wish for he was gardening the day before he died with heart failure.

He was a real good Dad to all his family and he really used to worry about Bro Jack and his big family. His worry was groundless for Bro Jack proved that he was well able to adequately look after his family. For the last 16 years of Mum's life Dad worried a lot about his wife's continued ill health and after her death he never really settled down anywhere. One has always got to make allowances for a child who has never had the discipline of a father. For example, Grandmother's three sons all liked different kinds of meat so on a Sunday she cooked joints of beef, mutton and pork for their individual tastes! All his life he was a regular attendee at the nearest Methodist Chapel and was a member for many years. I've often heard him say

"I've never made a mucky ha'penny" but I have seen him picking herrif seeds out of a sample of barley! He was a heavy pipe smoker and sometimes we discussed the matter. He was also a life long teetotaler. He told me once that I had never caused him five minutes worry in my life – very comforting to know!

10 January 1985

He was a very strong man physically and he gloried in it especially in his youth and he looked sourly on anyone who couldn't carry a sack of wheat. When he was young he could clap four and five stone weights above his head. Bro Tom was his favourite son as he was ruddy looking, very strong and endowed with a lot of muscles which many other men, me included, lacked. He used to get mad with me when I asked him questions he could not answer and he never possessed a dictionary but he was an avid reader. He would never read poetry and he never bought me a book. I am still living by some of the ideals Dad and Mother showed us. Never a day passes but what I think about them.

The fourth child of Robert and Ann Tonge's family was called Thomas and his father nicknamed him "Todder". He was a rover and he was married at least five times, nearly always to a woman who already had a child or children and he at one time or another occupied nine different farms. Grandmother Tonge used to say that she kept him and one of his children most of her life. I once worked with him for a day. I cannot remember what work we were doing but we were using muck forks. He would work strenuously for four or five minutes and then rest on his forks for a minute or two thinking deeply and then he would start working again.

His last wife was "Donnington" Daisy White and she bore him two sons, Tommy and Derek, who are both married, farming a farm at East Heal and also big huts full of turkeys. They farm under the name of Tonge Brothers. The daughter Lillian married a man called Hoyland Barrack and a few years ago they sold their general store in Tattershall Market Place for a reputed £120,000. When he was about fifty years of age the stresses of life became too much for him and he committed suicide. I must also add that when he was a young man he spent some of his time in Canada.

Now I want to write about my mother, Rebecca Huggins. Both she and her sister Elizabeth never knew their parents. Mum was

brought up by her grandparents Huggins, who in afterlife separated from one another. They had a daughter who "underlooked" mum. One job mum did when she was very young was to pick stones on "No Mans Friend" farm. The farmer measured a square six big yards with a stick at each corner and the square had to be covered with stones for one shilling and sixpence.

Grandfather Huggins was a "catch" had and a bit of a character. He had a seven row home-made hoe which he and his wife, and any child they could get to help, used to hoe neighbouring farmers' corn. If the farmer was "niggly" and would not pay Mr Huggins a fair price, he would leave patches in the middle of the field not done. He also had a hunting cat who often brought them game which it had caught and they had a "cat hole" in the kitchen door especially for the cat. I can faintly remember Grandma Huggins coming to see us once when we lived at Tonge's Farm about 1918.

11 January 1985

Mum went out to domestic service when she was eleven years of age and continued to be a domestic servant until she married Dad. For her first years work as a domestic servant she lived-in and was paid the princely sum of two pounds ten shillings and was given a dress and in those days Mum only had a few hours off on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Eventually she came to work for Mrs Sill for eight years. Whatever name her domestic servant had she always called them Lizzie! Some years previously Mrs Hackett (I don't know her maiden name) at the age of sixteen came from Tattershall and married the son and for sixty four years carried on the farm as neither of her two husbands were any good at farming. She was a slave driver! I've often heard my Mum say if you want a hard mistress go and work for one who has formerly been a servant herself.

Let me tell a story of what my Mum was like. She had an uncle who had a wife and eight children who got a girl into trouble and who had to find £30 or go to prison. Mum lent him the money out of her hard earned savings and it was never repaid.

For the first seventeen years of their married life they lived at the "Twentyfoot" Billinghays, also in a low white-washed unhealthy house, and Violet, Tom and I were born there. As far as I know Mother had only one real woman friend, her neighbour Mrs William Henry Lamyman. In the seventeen years they lived side by side one made cakes and the

other made pastries. It was a nice little farm that William Henry Lamyman had had left to him, half paid for and he steadily drank through the money and for the remainder of his life he worked for another Lamyman as a waggoner. When his four children were born Dad used to fetch the nurse and Mum used to look after the mother and baby. Mrs W H Lamyman was an expert on the then Royal Family.

Let me tell you some more about my Mum. When a young woman whom she liked was getting married she would make a pegged rug for her as a wedding present.

When Mum and Dad got married Aunt Daisy Tonge (who never liked my Mum and who for several years had kept house for Uncle Will and then on his death for my Dad and who had long weekends off, generally from Friday to Tuesday morning) said she had not been properly paid and demanded the house furniture or the 200 laying pullets! Mum soon said "Let her have the furniture, the poultry is part of our living!" And Mum set too and made a dining table and some chairs. I had the table in my workshop for years. Mum always had a small set of tools kept bright and clean!

When Bro Jack was a baby Mum's unloving Aunt called to them and was soon giving her instructions on how to bring Jack up. Mum got up from her chair, opened the door and said to her aunt "This is my house and my son and I will bring him up as I want. This is the door, now get through it and don't ever come here again!" And that was that!

When I was four years old Mum went to look after one of Totters wives who was having a baby eight weeks premature. The mother died and so my Mum carried the baby in her arms the five miles to the "Twentyfoot". When she got into the house she laid the baby girl called Ivy on the couch and burst into tears and said to Dad "What else could I do?" Ivy was encased in cotton wool for two months and one of my first memories is of nursing her in front of the fire. It became too much of a burden for Mum to continue to look after Ivy as Mum was unwell and so Dad paid a relative to look after her.

About a year or so later Mum's right knee began to sell up and I can well remember Mum sitting on the bed and Dad examining her knee. A doctor was called in and he put splints on her knee which continued to swell and was very painful and he gave her sleeping drugs to get her to sleep. After some days Dad called in Dr Smallhorn of Billingham who immediately took off the splints and diagnosed

housemaid's knee. She was given a blanket bath and had some natural sleep forthwith. But the damage was done and three holes were drilled in her knee and three silver tubes inserted to drain off the fluid. She was almost better when she got double pneumonia and she was a long while recovering from it. From then on she was a semi- invalid. Her mind was affected and she had to have long holidays at her sister's home at Boston and at friends in Skegness and was in and out of hospital many times. She also suffered from fits before puberty but she did not tell Dad about that until after they were married. Finally she died of a long lasting stomach cancer at her daughter's home in Walcot Dales. I am not going to catalogue all her illnesses. I often sit and wonder how she did what she did in the hard circumstances of her life. Her child-bearing years were the happiest years of her life.

14 January 1985

Mum liked making and altering clothes for Bro Jack's growing family. She used to buy 20 or 30 yards of shirt material and make shirts for Dad, Tom and I. I don't think that I had a bought shirt before I was 20 years of age. She was a good plain cook but I never remember seeing her eat a plate full of meat and vegetables. She liked Oxo, Bovril and Watmoughs puffy flaky biscuits and cream crackers and raw egg beaten up with some milk and a dash of brandy! Mum always kept some brandy in the house – but it was only used as a medicine!

Sometimes Tom and I were naughty and we would run outside to evade punishment but sure enough when we went inside we were duly punished. A wet dishcloth curled around your neck hurts for a short time. I remember one Tattershall Fair, September 25, when Mum gave Tom and I a 10/- note each to take to the Fair. We thought we were tremendously rich!

When I was 12 years of age and Tom was 10 Mum promised to buy us a Bible each if we would read a chapter a day and from that day to this, except in extreme illness, I have read a chapter or more of the Living World every day.

When Tom and I were attending the nearby Timberland Dales Elementary School a half of a mile away, we used to run home at 12 noon for a hot dinner and if we were not back at school at 12:30pm we thought we would be late! I well remember sitting opposite my Mother while I was trying to eat some rather thick rice pudding with some jam on it and I burst out saying "I hate this rice pudding". Mum stopped

sewing and looking over her spectacles said "Bill you know your Dad and I went to Boston Market last week. We bought some oranges and we threw the orange peel into the gutter. I turned around and saw a little poorly dressed poorly fed lad following us picking up the orange peel and eating it. We took him into a confectioners shop and bought him a big bag full of cakes and here you are complaining about good rice pudding. I should hate myself, I should hate myself". She had tears in her eyes and I think I had too. It is a reprimand I have never forgotten.

For several years after Mum died I felt her presence with me more than when she was alive. Mum always went to Chapel and Class Meetings when she was able. She was a good living Christian woman and her words and examples are ever with me. Mother was eleven years of age when she first went out to domestic service. When she married Dad she brought with her a Jones' sewing machine (still being used!), a brass preserving pan (also still being used!) and a "hobbin" iron which I have in my workshop.

"They being dead yet speaketh".

Now I must tell you a bit more about my Grandmother Ann Tonge who during her lifetime lived in several different houses, to all of which she gave names – dog kennel, barn, rabbit hutch and the only one she called a house was Tonge's Farm House. She was very house proud and in her younger days would go upstairs on her hands and knees to save soiling the stair carpet.

She was immensely strong. For a few months one winter when Dad was about 20 years of age, he and a labourer were carting sacks of wheat out of a barn. The sacks, each containing 18 stonnes, were stacked two high. The labourer clasped one in his arms and put it into the cart and said "There you are Jack, you are a man when you can do that!" and Dad replied "Shut you up mate, I've seen my mother do that scores of times!"

Near to the farm house was a "backhouse" which at various times had been used as a bakery and also as a butchers slaughter house and there the family lived during the summer months.

The two lads (Joseph and his brother who emigrated to California) finally hear of their sister-in-law's plight and they sent her £200 in two installments. Both £100 payments had to be cashed together.

15 January 1985

Here are copies of the two letters which Joseph Tongue (note he puts a "u" in Tongue) sent to Ann Tonge, his sister-in-law: -

Letter No 1

*Gualala
California
June 23^d 1880*

Dear Brother

I received your letter today and was very sorry to hear of Brother Robert's death. I began to think something rong about his not answering my last leter. I was very much surprised about his death. It makes me feel very bad about it and I ham very sorry for is wife and the four young children which is very young and I ham very sorry to hear that they are not well provided for. I wish you to rite and tell me the particulars about Brother Roberts and what was the matter with im when he died. Rember me to Father and Mother and to all old friends. Times are a great deal better in California now then for three years. Harvesting as just started in some places and crops very good all over. I wish theas few lines will find you all in good health as they leave us all this present time. Rite to me again as soon as soon as possible.

*I remain affectionate Brother
Joseph Tongue*

Dridons, Joseph Tongue, Gualala, Mendocino County, California

Letter No 2

*Gualala
December 3 1881*

Dear Sister

I received your kind leter yesterday and was very glad to hear that you are all well as I am at this time. I am glad to hear that times is a little beter with you all and I hope you will be able to stay in your old home. I have not got any likness to send you just now as you wish (five words not readable) one times is very good in California now. Tell Brother William I cannot spare im any money for some time to come, not before next summer. Give best love to Father and Mother, I was glad to get

the names of your childrens. Doant send any more of those black envalops for when I receive one it makes me feel very bad at the sight of them I begin to think somebody els is gon. Let me know what Brother William is doing for a living. I would liked very much to have came home home this winter but I cannot get of but I think will be able to come another winter. This leter will reach you about Chrissmas time and I wish you all a Merry Chrissmas. I am very sorry that I cannot be with you all to spend a Merry Chrissmas.

Good by dear dear sister

From your Brother Joseph Tongue, Gualala, Mendocino County, California, America

I have not corrected the mis-spelt words but the writing is in lovely copper plate script!

16 January 1985

My Grandmother Mrs Robert Tonge always had her sleeves rolled up – except on a Sunday when she wore a silk dress. She went to bed at 8pm and got up at 5am and had a breakfast of fat bacon with mustard and dry bread and plenty of hot strong tea. I lived with her for six months when I was about 5 ½ years of age and I never saw her cut a round of bread, only half rounds and at mealtimes she would say “Wilt thou have a morsel more movey?”

She loved Bro Jack and he was her favourite grandchild. When he was about 5 years of age she sold a pig to buy him a new green bicycle which he learned to ride around the kitchen table in the big kitchen at the “Twentyfoot”. When Jack left school he went to work for Grandmother with another lad called Fred Stokes and she kept them in order!

One night after tea Jack said to Fred “Lets go and get drunk at the Oat Sheaf next door”. They had only 10 pence which brought them several bottles of “pop” and when they got out they pretended to be drunk. Grandmother saw them coming and when they got into the yard she met them with a thatch peg and began using it. They were soon undrunk!

The green bicycle already referred to was given to Bro Tom when he 10 years of age and eventually passed on to Bro Jack's sons. It was a good little bike!

For the last few years of her life she lived at the little Chapel house, near the big Chapel and living with her were "Scotland" Tom and Joy, two of Uncle Tom Tonge's many children. "Scotland" Tom so called because at that time there were 5 Toms in the family and was Bro Tom and I's constant companion.

Just before Christmas Tom and I would take her a little present and then we would wait hopefully. We had to have a cheesecake and some cold peppermint drink. I never knew her to be without some cheesecakes! By and by she would get her purse out and give us some money. The time I remember best she had given me two half-crowns and Bro Tom one half-crown and she was mumbling into her purse "That's not fair, that's not right" so she gave Bro Tom another half-crown. Life for her was one hard struggle and she worked and worked for her family. Eventually the other half of the farm was handed back to her to farm and for many years Dad was responsible for the rent whoever farmed it. She died when she was 75 years of age, totally and completely worn out. There were three widows side by side, Mrs Lill, Grandmother and Mrs Mabbot, living in part of the "Oat Sheaf" public house.

Mrs Mabbot owned the Oat Sheaf and when she had paid the mortgage on it she had about 10 shillings a week to live on. She had two sons who were school teachers who used to come and spend the long summer holidays fishing in the River Witham and they used to bring her a year's supply of dry goods such as sugar, tea, dried fruits etc to last her a year. There was no old age pension in those days!

Now let me tell you about Mr John Tonge's family. His eldest son Jack William was born at Chapel Farm next door to both of the Methodist Chapels, one built in 1810 and the new one in 1899. The little one cost £120 and the bigger one £800. Jack was their first born and completely spoilt and at one time he would only eat "jelly babies" and something else the name of which I cannot remember. When he was about six years of age he got whooping cough which left him with asthma which remained with him the remainder of his life. He once told me that he had tried 64 different remedies and they were only palliatives, never a cure. He was a good worker and energetic. On Sunday mornings on a big 500 acre farm next door he used to get a big

unused tractor going and run his pals around the farm yard which covered about 5 acres of field.

When he was 22 years of age he married Doris Whitworth a bonnie fine lass and they had a family of seven boys and two girls in a period of 12 years and all healthy and well. He farmed Tonge's Farm for 8 years until 1932 and he farmed it well. Then he took the tenancy of a 120 acre farm which had been badly farmed and he soon got it in order at North Kyme Fen, eventually buying it owning 400 acres of good fen land. In the war years there were as many as 17 persons living in the lovely big fine farm house. Twice a week he baker used to deliver 38 half quarter loaves of bread. It was like delivering to a shop he said!

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He was a good living man, regular at worship at the Methodist Chapel at North Kyme as was his wife and the children when young went there to Sunday School and Chapel. He was a very generous man and for many years gave Cliff College a 5 year ton load of potatoes and he loved to help good causes and old people in need.

Joe (Thomas William) lived with his grand parents until he was seven years of age. I never saw Bro, Jack nurse any of his children or ever play a game with them and in later years, although he did so much for them, they did not love and respect him. Also he had an ungoventable temper. He was one of the best farmers in the area and was for many years a member of the "War-ag" which was a committee of farmers who knew how to farm to advise and help those who could be better at the job with a little tuition. Although he had very little schooling in wartime, he built two farmhouses and two sets of farm buildings and left all his children well off, as regards to houses, land and money.

His wife was a "tower of strength" to him. She regularly hand milked up to twelve cows until he got a machine milker and then the son's did the milking. I just don't know how she did what she did! She was, as I have written previously, a bonnie fine built woman and the last few years of her life she suffered from diabetes. She died when she was 61 years of age and was greatly missed. Bro Jack lived to be 75 years of age, but he was lost without his wife. He also built a private house in North Kyme village.

Jack William Tonge married Doris Whitworth in 1922 and they had 9 children born over a period of 12 years, 7 boys and 2 girls.

- (1) Thomas William (Joe) Tonge married Ruth Sharman and they had 7 children (3 dead). Some few years ago he left her and now lives with his "common -law" wife, Stella Bee. They have 3 grown up sons (and one dead).

For some years Joe farmed at "Double Bay" Farm, near Kyme Lock about 180 acres and then he moved to the 240 acre Vacherie Farm near North Kyme, which he bought for a reasonable sum and some time later he got hard up and sold it to the Church Commissioners, who were not slow to increase the rent. Its present value is about 500,000 pounds.

When Joe left his wife, she and two or three sons took the farm over and Joe now drives a lorry for a local firm. He was a good farmer and got good crops, but was not a good business man. I will say no more!

- (2) Daisy Tonge married Mr. Henry Chamberlain, (the machinery officer from Billingham) her brothers quipped about her husband and they have a grown up daughter who has a degree and is married and is a school teacher. The son helps his father who is an "odd job" man who farms 40 acres of land which Bro Jack left to Daisy.

Daisy was a real good help to her mother and was assessed at 120 percent for the work she did in wartime. Nevertheless Jack had a job to prevent her from being called up for war work.

- (3) Stanley Tonge married a girl from Billingham and they have 3 grown up children. Stan, is never short of a word to say! For several years he had his own lorry business, did a bit of potato buying etc and then sold out and for many years has been a lorry driver for Ross Poultry Products. He is a regular attender at Billingham ex. P.M. Chapel.

- (4) Robert Tonge married Miss Benton from Tattershall Bridge and they have one grown up daughter also married. For a few years he kept poultry and pigs and farmed a bit of land. And then he sold out and has done several laboring jobs and is now redundant. He is very strong and was Dad's favourite grand child as he left him his silver watch and gold chain.

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- (5) Hylton Tonge married a girl from Chapel Hill and they have four boys and one daughter, all grown up and working. All the sons are motor engineers and the eldest son is a mechanic for Barrie Sheene, the world famous motorcycle rider.

For some years Hylton farmed next door to his brother Joe and then near Lincoln, but for many years he has been a sort of farm foreman in another shire. His wife worked in a nearby factory packing parachutes.

- (6) Ray Tonge married Miss Blackbourne from near Sleaford and they have a grown up family of three children, some of them married. He farms 80 acres of land, with a new house and farm buildings left to him by his father, who charged him 100 pounds per acre and is now worth 2,000 pounds per acre. He is outspoken and a good farmer.

- (7) Vick Tonge married a girl from Chapel Hill and they have four sons and a daughter. He inherited "Willows" Farm, 120 acres and has just built an enormous house with three garages! His children are all grown up and following different occupations and like the rest of the Tonge family he is an efficient farmer.

- (8) Edwin Tonge married Miss Woolerton from Walcott and have a son and daughter. He was the only one who won a scholarship and for some years he attended Carre's Grammar School at Sleaford. Like his brother Ray he also farms 80 acres at North Kyme Fen on the same terms as his brother Ray. He is a nice lad and his wife is a very well accepted soloist at local Chapels and Churches etc. His children are both grown up and working.

- (9) Mary Tonge is married to Mr Tomlinson and they live in a County Farm House and farm about 70 acres of land in Walcott Dales. Mary is a bonnie lass and a good worker and is never short of a word to say. They have a boy and girl, both grown up and at work.

Dinah Violet Tonge was born in 1906 and although Dad said she was a gentle child and he never heard her cry, when she got older she could use a broom sick to keep Tom and I order! She was friends with Sarah Rustin from the next door farm and they have been friends all their

lives. As soon as Violet left school she became a "Land girl" working most of the time outdoors and it was wartime. (First World War, 1914-1918).

In 1927 she married George Henry Wilson, the eldest son of a local skilled farm worker. The other 5 children were apprenticed to different trades, but George, who wanted to be a carpenter, had to have a job to bring in some ready money, to help bring the family up, so he became a farm worker. In 1929 they went to live at Anchor Farm and farmed there till 1975 and then retired to a bungalow at Tattershall. George was a tidy farmer and Violet loved working among the poultry. They had 3 sons, two born in the first year of their marriage. In the latter years of her life, Mother spent long periods with Violet and she looked after Mother who was ill in mind and body, really well. They had three children, all boys who were born eleven months apart.

- (1) George, their eldest son was a bachelor and loved and worked for his parents all of his life, except when his parents retired from farming. He was 55 years of age when he died and he knew every tractor and car registration number in the area where he lived.

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- (2) Richard, for much of his life has worked (and still works) for his neighbours the Pick Bros and although he lives at Horncastle which is ten miles away from his work they provide him with a motor vehicle to get him there and back. He married a Miss Fidling of Horncastle, who for several years worked at The Eagle Lodge Old Peoples Home at Woodhall Spa and they have one daughter, Anita. Who married her lifelong boyfriend, but after a few years of marriage, have separated.
- (3) Anthony (Tony) worked for his father for a time and then has worked as a tractor driver for Means Bros, for many years. He married a Miss Mary Samyman from Chapel Hill and they have one son, just left school. Mrs Tonge works for Mr. Robinson Saddlers of Billingham and she ferries goods etc. to their four saddler and sports goods shops at Lincoln, Boston, Spilsby and Billingham.

Tony is a quiet sort of a lad and his wife is an accomplished pianist and they still live in a bungalow which I understand was given to them when they got married, by relatives at Chapel Hill.

Mr and Mrs John Tonge's third child named William Enoch Tonge was a twin. Dad used to tell me I was the "wrecklin" and I lived and my twin brother (unnamed) was normal, but was "stockened" at birth. I attended Tattershall Bridge School for six months, starting when I was five years of age. Then I had six months with my grandmother at Timberland Dales and then back to the "20 foot" for a time and then we all flitted to Tonge's Farm, Timberland Dales in 1917. So, I had a broken start at school. At eight years of age I would have loved to play the piano but had to settle to be a reader instead and have been reading ever since!

Our school at Timberland Dales was a cold, austere and overcrowded place. I had a slate and pencil until I was nine years of age. I liked school work and jumped a standard and was in Standard 6 when I was eleven years of age. Our headmaster was Mr. Richard Prime, of whom the least said the better.

The sun began to shine for us when Mr. Bromley Bonell came to teach us. He came from a 500 head boy's school in Manchester and he loved us and we loved him. He could get us to do anything he wanted us to do. He was a lovely man. He soon got us a piano and at a Christmas party he taught us how to make and play "Beanbags" and other games. I learned more in that one year under his teaching, than in any year of my life.

Mr. Bonell went as headmaster to Tattershall School and shortly after his wife died and was buried in the churchyard there and about thirty years later he was buried by her side. I shall always have happy memories of Mr. Bromley Bonell.

I won a good County Junior Scholarship for four years to the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School at Horncastle. We had 8 teachers for 160 pupils and 7 of the teachers taught there all their teaching life. For the first year I was in an ex Army hut and which some years later was removed to Timberland and now refurbished is Timberland Village Hall where Mum and I go to our "Darby and Joan" junketings!

On my first term at H.G.S I was duly "bumped" on the First World war cannon, christened with water from the toilet tap and nicknamed "OXO".

After about three weeks attendance Tom and I got "whooping cough" and so I had to remain at home for the rest of the term and this created difficulties with some of the subjects, as I had missed the ground work, especially French, and I was never good at French.

Mr. Leech, the French teacher mostly used to put on my report "He tries hard!", "Who wants to learn french anyhow?"

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The first of my eleven reports show that I was 17th out of about twenty five and my last report shows that I was second in my form. I could have won a yearly Foundation Scholarship, but Dad said "You must leave school and earn a pound a week instead of costing one pound a week!" And that was final! I left school very reluctantly.

The country was passing through a great Depression after the First World War. There were 3,000,000 unemployed out of a total population of 33,000,000. There were no Children's Allowances, no dole for Agricultural Workers until 1947 and no DHSS help, but there was the dreaded "Means Test" which split up many homes. I would have liked to have been a school teacher but became an agricultural worker instead. I worked for my brother Jack, but Dad paid me, because Jack did Dads horsework. I well remember what Dad said to me on my first pay day. "Here you are Bill. There is ten shillings. You will give your mother five shillings for your board and lodge and the other five shillings is for clothes, books, bike and holidays and if you throw your money about and spend it foolishly, I shan't give you any!"

The greatest thing and the best thing that ever happened to me was when I was 19 years of age and became a Christian. For many months I had been under a strong conviction of sin and a bus load of us went to a Mission held at the Boston Centenary Methodist Chapel conducted by the eloquent Gypsy Smith. My mother was ill and staying at Boston with her sister Lizzie but she was praying for us. Gypsy Smith's text was "Don't you know I must be about My Fathers' business?" and one thing he said which I have never forgotten "Get right with God!" and His presence has never left me. Some little time later I was off work for six weeks with "House maids" knee and I had a wonderful sense of the nearness of God. Soon afterwards I became a preacher "on trial" and two years afterwards, after a course of study and Trial Sermons etc. I became a Fully Accredited Methodist Local Preacher and for 52 years I have had the privilege and pleasure of preaching the "Good News".

When Bro Jack left Tonges' Farm to take a bigger farm down North Kyme Fen, Bro Jack and I took over the tenancy of Tonges' Farm. He was 20 years of age and I was 22. We had 367 pounds between us to buy implements, stock and furniture. Bro Jack generously gave us the "inventory" but we paid him in various ways afterwards. We paid him back 100 pounds for 3 horses and their gears and a ton of Scotch New Seed Potatoes (20 pound per Ton). We got a good housekeeper called Mrs. White from Wrangle. She was a bonny fine built woman, a widow with one son called Teddy, 4 years old, who worshipped Bro Tom and would sleep with him. Mrs. White papered nearly 3 bedrooms in one day.

Bro Tom and I often "agreed to differ" but we tried to farm well and tread all the straw down for crew yard manure to keep our land in a high state of productivity and by the time the Second World War started we had already limed the farm three times over. During the war we were short of many things and could sell at a profit everything we grew. We joined the "Home Guard" and worked hard and paid for the farms. As time went on we bought a New Fordson Tractor on Pneumatics costing 220 pounds and then one after the other, over several years, we sold our horses, cows, pigs and finally poultry and became a fully arable farm without any stock at all. During these years Tom had bought Oatsheaf Farm, consisting of 17 acres at 1,800 pounds and on the death of my Father, I bought Chapel Farm, consisting of 26 acres and costing 2,000 pounds, so that for quite a time Tom and I were farming 90 acres. I retired from farming in 1975 and David took over Chapel Farm and Anchor Farm.

For many years I knew Mr. George Dowes. He was a carpenter and died in 1944. He was our Sunday School Superintendent and Class Leader, and he and his family runned our Methodist Chapel. He had a brusque manner, but he was a good man. He was a lovely singer and could sing any hymn in the Methodist Hymn Book, except one, "O the bitter shame and sorrow that a time could ever be". One of his sayings was "I' am well sausage fried (satisfied)". Our Class Meetings were usually held without a pianist.

Mr. Joseph Taylor was one of our Sunday School teachers and a sturdy singer and in his short addresses at Sunday School he would invariably say "God will never be in debt to any man!".

John Thomas Boyce was a little stout, fiery and eloquent preacher, who said what he had got to say and then sat down. He used to fling

himself at the pulpit railings and we younger ones always lived in the hope that one night he would tittle over the railings! But he never did!

23 Jan 1985

When I was 25 years of age I was an unsuccessful candidate for the Methodist Ministry, 450 men offered and 150 were accepted. I was never given any percentage marks of the different examinations I had to undertake and later received rather a curt letter of rejection.

It was an exceedingly hot day when a friend and I travelled together to Kings Cross Railway Station, then on a bus for 17 miles, all built up to the lovely Richmond College. The next day we had a few hours to spare and we had midday dinner at a milk drivers' canteen, consisting of beef, potatoes, Yorkshire pudding and two vegetables and it cost us just ten pence! It was a very hot day and we drank several bottles of "pop" while we waited and I remember that the ginger beer tasted real good!

I started courting Edna May Coupland, the middle daughter of Mr. James Coupland, a farmer from Tattershall Thorpe and we got married at Tattershall Thorpe Chapel when I was 29 years of age. Edna was not very strong and often ill, but when she was well she was full of "beans" and a worker. A gland in her throat, which should have disappeared at puberty, gradually grew and eventually became malignant and she died when she was 27 years of age at Scunthorpe Hospital. We were married for 3 years.

Some years later Ida Woodhead and I were married at Waterside Methodist Chapel and it was the beginning of many happy years of marriage. Ida was 37 years of age and I was 35. She came fishing and caught me. For many years Mrs. George Daubney (nee Shaw) used to fetch eggs from us to sell in Lincoln Butter Market every Friday. Her daughter used to fetch the eggs and when Ida was staying there on holiday, she came too and that is how we became acquainted. We have been blessed with two strong, healthy and intelligent sons.

David Tonge was born in 1947, a blue eyed, wide awake baby with blond hair. He had several different teachers at our local Timberland Dales School and did not do very well at school, nor did he shine when he attended Ruskington Secondary Modern School for five years. But since then he has become a voracious reader and is now progressing with his education.

He became a Christian in his early teens and is an active worker in our Methodist Church. He is Sunday School Superintendant at our Waterside Chapel, Circuit steward and is an acceptable Local Preacher, although he has not taken any form of formal examinations.

Six years ago, he married Lucy Steinmetz, whose parents came to England from Germany just after the war. Lucy is one of a family of four and she spent three years in training at the magnificent new Pilgrim Hospital at Boston. The hospital has 910 beds. They have three blond children, Wesley, the eldest and twin daughters Dawn and Charity and they are a joy to us and they really love Ida and she loves them!

David farms Anchor and chapel Farms and also ten acres of grass down Roughton Moor Lane, beyond Woodhall Spa.

Our second son John was born in 1950 and he is of a dark complexion, having black hair and he takes after the Woodhead side of the family in looks. He was a big baby and he weighed 25 pounds at three months of age and the same weight at one year of age. We had quite a job with him when he was young. He attended our local School from which he won a Scholarship to Carres' Grammar School. It was long, hard days for him and sometimes he used to cry doing his homework and all I used to say was "Stick your heels in John" and he did! He did 8 'O' Levels not too brilliantly, but when it came to his 'A' Levels it was a different story. He passed 3 'A' Levels at 'A' Level performance, two with distinctions and he received five prizes. At the Prizegiving, Mum clapped heartily at the presentation, but I was too full of emotion. He could have gone to Oxford or Cambridge with those qualifications but after quite a tussle with UCCA he finally attended Sheffield University where he won four awards.

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John also became a Christian in his teens and when he went to Sheffield he went to twelve different places of worship, before he found one he liked and it was from that Chapel, he found his wife Hannah Buckley, who worked for the Halifax Building Society at Sheffield. Her father is a Pentecostal Pastor and a man of Sterling Christian character. He has made three separate trips to India and one to Africa, each of three months duration paying all his own expenses. He cannot manage Indian food, so he lives chiefly on nuts and raisins and sometimes loses two stone in weight in one visit. I will never forget the prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving he made at John's house in Lound on the day of his dear wife's burial. Such men as him are few.

Hannah is a fine looking girl and both she and John are active in Pentecostal work at Mattersey Pentecostal College, where about 100 men and women of many different races are trained to be better men and women and more efficient workers for God. Hannah helps with the "Tuesday" Club and John is a Deacon and Treasurer and sometimes preaches for them.

They are blessed with two fine children, Nathaniel a big, healthy boisterous boy and Bryony, a petite blonde and a tomboy and recently a new son, Luke John.

After his marriage, John worked in many different hospitals in Sheffield. He had one year as "errand" boy in an Alford practice and is now in a three man practice at Retford and enjoying it. He has plenty of work and a full panel list.

Now, let me tell you about Ida. Her father was a steel warehouse man and her mother was cook to the Johnson family, the originators of Bassetts Licquorice All-Sorts. At six weeks of age they moved from Manchester to Sheffield. Ida did not have as much tuition as some children. She spent quite a lot of time sewing for the teachers. When she left school she started to work for Bassetts and it was her proud boast that she was never "half-houred" once. She was interested in her work and eventually became a supervisor. During the war years the factory turned over to war work, canning vegetables and making "Trimmer" boxes containing 120 parts for Bleinheim bomber areoplanes and Ida had to "vet" the individual 120 parts.

When Ida was in her twenties her fathers knees gave way and she had to take responsibility for running the home. She was a lieutenant in the "Home Guard" and did two periods of four hours each voluntary nursing – one period among the babies and one period among the OAP's. She lived near the Royal Infirmary Hospital and often took injured people there for treatment. She was a member of the Red Cross organization. On the day she should have taken an examination for a gold medallion she married me instead and I gave her a 22 carat gold wedding ring instead, which has since worn out, but has been renewed.

We have always made Ida's relations very welcome and for many years it was "open house" for them. Jim Leek Junior, lived with us several years until he got married and settled down. None of my many Tonge relations ever visit us and most of them have motor cars and are well off financially. When I was young and relatives visited my parents home they usually wanted to borrow money or goods.

For seven years Ida visited and helped our neighbor, Fred Ogden Senior, a tall gaunt man who was house bound and latterly bed bound and she visited him daily. He used to have a little cry when Mum and I went on holiday.

Then there were Mr and Mrs Horton who came from Sheffield to keep the Oatsheaf Public House. Both were in bed with double pneumonia and too ill to be moved. Mr Horton died soon afterwards and we kept an eye on his widow who went to live at Churchhill Drive. When I used to go and attend to her garden I always had to stay and have tea with her.

Later Mr and Mrs Swindin moved from "Beehive" Public House in Sheffield and came to live in a bungalow nearby. Mrs Swindin was an alcoholic and Mum used to go to the doctors surgery with her. Relatives came and upset them and they both died within six weeks of one another.

Ida is affectionately known as "Aunt Ida" and for many years has looked after the "nippers" at Sunday School and in our home. Ida keeps the Sunday School and Chapel clean and tidy and is regular worshipper there. She is now "Grandma" to our six grandchildren. **(30 Jan 1988)**

Mr and Mrs John Tonges' fourth child was a bonnie son called Thomas Abraham and he was strong and of a "ruddy countenance" and was born in the year of 1912. He did not shine at school and was more for playing games and fishing. Until we left school we had a fight every day and when we wanted a change e had two fights. He was well built and well muscled and he was Dad's favourite son. When he was in his early twenties, he married Evelyn Douse, a bonny fine Christian girl. They had been pals all their lives. Two years later they were blessed with a son called Peter. Unfortunately Evelyn died of cancer two years later. It was a great loss to us all. For some years Evelyns' sister, Phyllis kept house for Bro Tom and then Tom married Ruth Hackett, a girl from next door who was one of old Mrs Hacketts' great grand daughters and they have four children. They are now retired and enjoying it!

Peter John Tonge was Bro Toms' son by his first marriage. He had a very lonely childhood and went to the Timberland Dales School. He worked for Tonge Bros. until he married Christine from Billingham and they farmed Walton Farm (25acres) for a time. He was all for driving a lorry and eventually had two lorries, but an 'A' license was hard to get and he could only do short journeys around home. He sold out and has

worked for several different lorry firms since and he quite often goes to the Continent with a load.

Peter and his wife have a bonnie daughter, who is a skilled pianist, Jayne Amanda by name. She is in the R.A.F training to be an air traffic controller. Their son Jason is a big lad, 6 foot+ and looks down on his parents. He works for Padley's Chicken Industry.

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Paul John Tonge is the eldest son of Tom and Ruth's marriage. He has always been an outdoor lad and could have been a good runner if he had wanted. When he left school he worked for Tonge Bros. and in his early twenties he married Jannice Kennedy, a typist from Billingham and now they have three school age daughters, fast growing up.

Paul is a keen and dedicated farmer, farming Tonges' Farm, 50 acres, Oatsheaf Farm, 17 acres and Walton farm, 25 acres and he got some outstanding yields of produce. His mother says that he is a good father to his daughters. His wife Jannice is a good help to him, especially in the bookkeeping side of the business.

James Tonge is Tom and Ruth's second son and the only one who was not "pally" with me. He went to a local school and then he worked for Tonge Bros. In his early teens he became a Christian and a great change for the better took place. In his early twenties he married Christine from up north, a very talented girl, an S.E.N and S.R.N and for some years she worked at Kings Lynn General Hospital. But now, after a years attendance at Nottingham University she is now an health visitor. For some years James worked at Campbells canning factory at Kings Lynn. Both James and Christine are ardent Pentecostals and for some years now, James has been pastor in full charge of the Pentecostal Assembly at Kings Lynn and they are prospering in more ways then one. I kept trying to persuade James to take a course in elocution. It would be a great help to him in his work. They have a son called James, who likes horse riding and a daughter called Rebecca whom I hardly know.

Ann Tonge was Tom and Rut's third child. She attended the local schools and also did a course at Lincoln Technical College to be a Nursery Nurse but unfortunately she was unable to find a job in that profession and for several years she has worked in an Insurance Office in Boston. I once asked her if she had a "chip on her shoulder" in not

being able to do the job she had trained up for and she replied that she was quite happy in her present job.

About three years ago she married David Scarbro, a local lad from Tumby Woodside and who is a skilled motor engineer and who has his own business at Tattershall Bridge and they live nearby at Dogdyke. As yet they have no children.

Now they have a bonny son called Matthew, 1 and half years of age.
(14 Jan 1988)

Andrew William is Tom and Ruth's fourth child. He went to local schools and then had two years at Boston College of further education to get an 'A' Level or two. For some years he did quite a bit of cross country running and was quite successful at it. He has had many different jobs since he left college and has yet not found one he likes. When he was younger he used to help me to make my toy barrows and we were pals.

Some Sayings of John Tonge

"I've never made a mucky ha'penny in my life."

"Marry in haste, repent at leisure."

"A bird in hand is worth two in a bush."

"I'd sooner have a sure ha'penny than an unsure ha'penny."

"I think I paid my mother back for all she did for me."

"If I had known what was going to happen to me, I could not have faced it."

"One must adapt to one's circumstances."

"Difficulties were made to overcome (my youthful opinion)."

"You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

"Slow at eating, slow at work."

"You can set potatoes whenever you will, they'll never grow until April."

"Money got badly, will go badly."

"It's as sure as death and rent days!"

"If someone would tell me what to plant and when to sell, I would only need to farm for five years!" (fifty years ago.)

"There is coal under my feet" (at Timberland Dales, Lincolnshire.)

"Waste not – want not."

"Merry nights make dull days."

"June puts all things in tune."

A favourite expression of my Father was "By Crud!" I have no idea at all what it means!

More about my father John Tonge

Dad had about twenty stories which he often told to Ida and I and he told us them as often, that I could repeat them as well as Dad could say them. I have forgotten them all but one.

When Dad worked at Mr. John Smeaths and was in his early twenties, I had just been paid his wages, he pulled a handful of silver on the bin top and said to his friend "There you are Jimmy, if you can guess how much money there is there I will give it to you." Jimmy looked closely at it and replied "Seven and twenty bob". Dad began to quake and when they counted it the amount was sixpence more! (The waggoners name was James Metheringham shortened to Jimmy Meggs. I knew him well for he lived next door to us for forty years).

Scores of years later I brought a basket full off hen eggs into the kitchen and I said to our nephew Rory Leek who was present, "There Roy, I will give you them if you can guess how many eggs there are in that basket and he replied "123" and he was exactly right.

He was unmarried then and said "What am I going to do with all these eggs?" so I gave him ten shillings for them, which was the market value then – one penny per egg.

Dad and Uncle Tom Holmes had a high opinion of Mr. Thomas Scholey, Farmer and popular Preacher of Dalderby, near Horncastle. He could fill any Chapel in the District when he gave a lecture. Once only did I hear him lecture and that was at Chapel Hill Chapel and it was full to overflowing and he lectured on "The Book of Ruth." I was 17 years of age and I have never forgotten that lecture. The Book of Ruth is still precious to me.

He had 5 sons, all farmers and they shared one banking account for more than twenty years until the Income Tax People made them have separate accounts. What trust they must have had in their brother's honesty!

At the end of the First World War there was a big celebration at Tom Scholey's little village for it had sent more soldiers to fight in the war than any other village of comparable size. Two big government officials came down for the ceremony and one of them said to Tom "I don't suppose you know what to say so I have written a speech which you can read at the ceremony" and he handed over a sheet of paper and Tom thanked him for it. When the ceremony came, Tom was on the platform and was the first speaker and he acquitted himself well and

finished his speech by saying "It was very good of this gentleman to write a speech for me, but I can make one of my own and I have pleasure in handing to him the speech he had written for me – and he is going to read it to you!"

I don't know what happened afterwards but I think the gentleman from London would have liked to have hid himself in a mouse hole!

Tom Scholey's Father was walking across a deep muddy farmyard and Tom, five years of age, was following him trying to put his feet into his fathers' footsteps, "Take shorter footsteps Dad, remember I' am trying to follow you" said Tom – and he did.

When Tom Scholey was in his teens he was learning to ride a bicycle and was meeting a man who was walking towards and he ran full "plop" into the man who angrily exploded, "Why don't you look where you are going and keep on the right side of the road?" Tom quietly asked "Are you on the right side of the road?" and the man answered "Of course I' am!" and Tom replied "Well I' am on the same side of the road as you are!"

One Sunday morning Mr. Scholey was preaching at a Chapel where a prominent member was long overdue in paying him for a batch of pigs and when the steward afterwards asked him if he had enjoyed the service he replied "The pigs kept squealing!"

2 Feb 1985

One Wednesday evening when I was eighteen years of age, Tom and I went to the Kinema in the Woods, at Woodhall Spa to see Harold Lloyd in "Speedy". We had been to the Kinema on the previous Saturday night and each visit cost us one shilling, out of our weekly pay of ten shillings. When we came home on the Wednesday night, Dad was sitting on the house end and he asked us where we had been and we told him and his only comment was "Big spenders have to be big getters!" I have never forgotten that bit of business acumen! And the film also!

I' am continually grateful to my Father for teaching me the proper value of money and how to use it.

30 Jan 1988

I want to end these Chronicles on a happy note. Many years ago when Hilton Tonge was 21 years of age, his parents gave him, as they did all

of their nine children a 21st Birthday Party and they were three "sitting downs" of forty persons each. Hilton was shy then and I heard his friend say three time over "My friend Hilton, thanks you all from the bottom of his heart for coming to his party" which we all greatly enjoyed!

Some time later, I was talking to his mother, whom we call Aunty Doris and I complimented her on the "spread" she had prepared for us. She began laughing and said "We had a much meal afterwards". I enquired why? And she replied "We boiled together twelve fat hens, a stone of beef and a big ham in the copper and when we looked in the copper on Monday morning it was full of jelly and made the best soup I have ever tasted in my life!!!

I like a story with a happy ending!

22 Feb 1989

Dad's mother, Rebecca Higgins was the illegitimate child of a lady who had? one other daughter. Her father lived at Chapel Farm and had the Chapel range, allotments and another field 2 miles down Timberland Fen. He kept his house on the crossbanks and could pull the cart himself down to the crossbanks, if he wanted to work down the fen. He would yoke himself by the side of his horse for 2 horse harrowing. He used a small tree trunk as a pitch fork handle – ordinary ones broke because of his strength. (This excerpt was written by Dr. John Tonge).

Dad often spoke about some relatives of the Tonge family who I think were Great Grandads' brothers or his Great Uncles, who emigrated to Canada and had a market garden/truck farm very close to the Niagara Falls and one of the things they grew was a 9 acre bed of parsley. I think this was in 1920. Checking on the Canada telephone directory there is a clusture of people called TONGE in this area, 27 in Ontario and odd ones scattered around Canada. Are these descendants of our Great Great Uncles, Dad seemed to think they set off to make their fortune in the Klondyke? Which was 1896-1899?

Did they get there? Made there fortune or not and could only get back as far as Ontario or did they meet Canadian girls and marry and settle down?

My Grandad Tonge wanted to go to the Klondyke but his Mum would not let him go.

In the Second World War, Britain was short of labour on the farms. Able bodied men were sent to the front. On the local farms we had Land Army girls and Canadian lads, who had come over to help the war effort, who worked on the farms till they were sent off to Catrick Camp in Yorkshire.

The lad we had was a member of "The Church of the Nazarene". Unfortunately after he was sent to the front, we never heard of him again. (This excerpt was written by Mr. David Tonge).

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