



# FRIENDS OF LITTLE GIDDING NEWSLETTER

**Autumn 2020**



*September Harvest in Sawtry 1951* by Harry Milford

Work on St John's Church roof is now complete and the scaffolding removed. The next phase is to reinstall the bell which is at the foundry.

The Friends of Little Gidding website has been updated and the newsletter can be downloaded: [www.littlegidding.org.uk](http://www.littlegidding.org.uk) Watch this space and the Friends' Facebook page for further details of a "virtual pilgrimage" as part of our Quiet Day on Saturday September 26<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

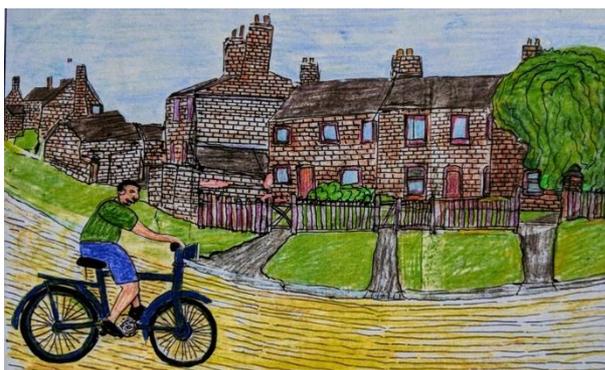
## Harry's Story: Life in the Giddings 1950 – 1957 (Part 1)



Harry Milford has recently sent the Friends his recollections of life in Great Gidding and Steeple Gidding. His first book, **Harry's Story**, has been donated to Ferrar House Library.

The Milford family arrived in Great Gidding in 1950, when Harry was fourteen; he is the eldest of five children. *"We came from Hagley near Bromsgrove. Our Dad worked at Hagley Hall as a chef."* Lord Cobham of Hagley Hall had paid to transport their belongings in a horse box to Harry's Grandmother's small cottage. Her name was Sarah Box.

*"I liked Gran and felt sorry for her as suddenly she had her daughter and five children to live with her in her small cottage. She had to move into her front room to live and sleep in, to make room for us upstairs. There was no electricity, only oil lamps and candles for light. In the living room there was a black range in the fire place to cook on. There was a wireless run by batteries with an accumulator to light up the valves. Each week a man with a fully charged accumulator and he took the other one to be charged up."*

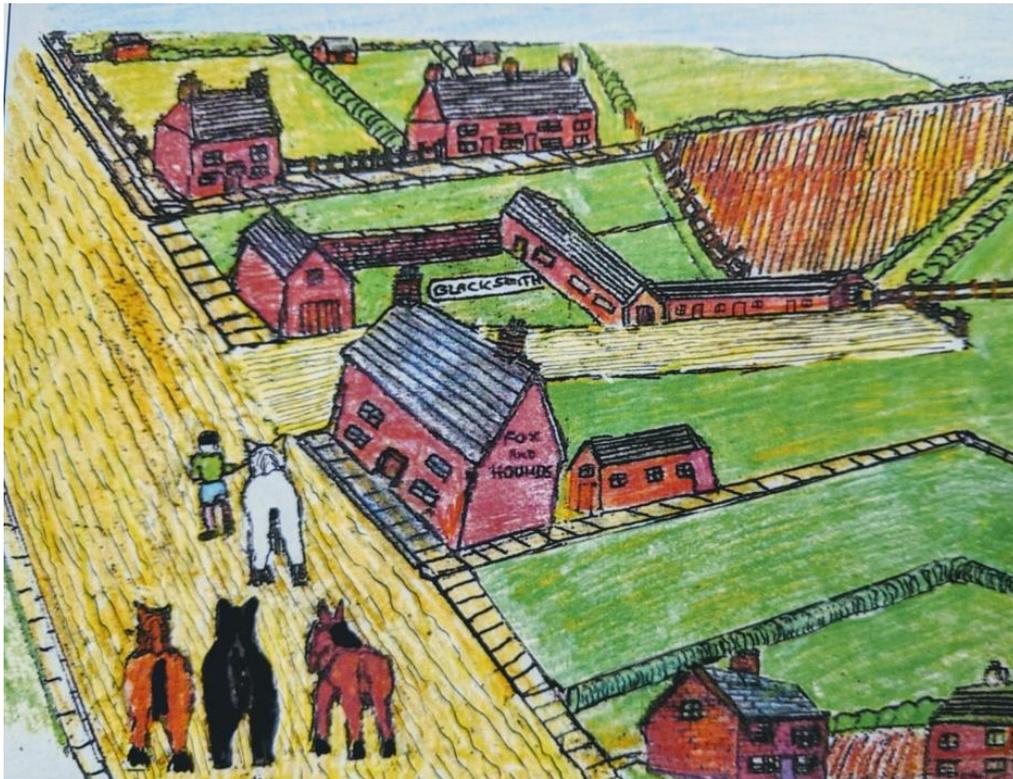


Harry worked before school at a farm owned by Mr and Mrs Bletsoe. *"In the mornings I left Gran's house at about 6.15am. I walked briskly down the High Street then out of the village, across a field, then over what was a football field, into a long field that lead to Gidding Grove Farm."* He helped with milking the

cows and tending the horses. His first job was to *"exercise Paddy, a nice big sandy coloured hunter. I rode him through the next village of Winwick and along country lanes for about an hour. Either Mrs Bletsoe, the farmer's wife or Margaret, the land army girl, accompanied me."*

Harry's payment of £1 per week helped to support his family. Eventually his Mother bought him a bike on hire purchase and it *"was a great help to get to work and back to school on time."* Mr Bletsoe wanted Harry to train as a jockey, as he was a small lad for his age. *"However, my mother didn't agree to that, neither did I."*

He did get in a scrape when he took four carthorses to Bruce, the blacksmith in Great Gidding. With harvest approaching, the horses had to be reshod and he was given strict instructions *not* to ride the horses.



However, after a mile and a half walk to the blacksmith and a three hour wait there, Harry decided to ride one of the horses, Gypsy, bareback, the rest following on leads. *"We walked down Main Street and went past the baker's shop, Smith's one petrol pump garage, my Granny Box's house and the church and school."*

All was well until two of the horses bolted, frightening the third, who bit the horse Harry was riding. Rounding Willow Tree corner, the horses decided to jump the hedge, which had a small dyke alongside it. Although they all returned safely, Harry got a scolding from Mr Bletsoe who had seen everything.

*Illustrations and words reproduced by kind permission of Harry Milford.*

## News from the Garden

I am so pleased with all the colour, the benches, new compost bins (discreetly hidden) and now the 'shady garden' in front of the fence. Serendipity at work: the messy Hazels came out, the decaying apple then came down, the messy patch round the stone turned into a round bed for roses, so then it needed balancing with a second.

Then new Birch trees from Richard and from Susan, then Ian and Verity gave us an Acer outgrowing its pot (Sue Capp has wanted a red Acer for a long time) and there was only one place sufficiently protected from the wind. Gentle (nagging from others), inspiration from my own garden lead to answering the problem of the fence. Stephen's statuesque hollyhocks look terrific the car park side, but need to be continued to the end (and culled when over!) The actual fence will soon be clothed with honeysuckles for staggered flowering and scenting.



Then the lawn side has been planted up with regular groups of shrubs (all of which can be cut back) to give leaf texture, colour and scent. Many thanks to Ron Christie for watering in the hot spells and keeping the weed growth back with the new strimmer.

Organic growth is often better than idealistic planning! In the heat Ron moved a table and chairs in the shade under the Bullace trees in front of the fence: perfect place for picnic lunch; Sue had sat the Trustees there the week before. SO my next plan is to look out for similar metal table and chairs to leave up there. Would need to be similar to blend into the background, too much heavy wood would look intrusive. Maybe wishful thinking; can anyone help with this...

And Covid has given Sue, Mandy and Jason the time to do things in the house: Sue and Mandy have beavered away amazingly, tidying (don't recognise the coal shed!), bashed and fought and painted and... the 'plant' is becoming much more solid.

Susan, Caroline, Robert, Ron have all joined me on an ad hoc, distancing basis and cleaned up various beds and areas. Still a lot to do but it all begins to feel more 'established' and 'functional': inviting, peacefully 'atmospheric': "please sit down and enjoy and contemplate". SO another bench soon to arrive in celebration of Nigel and Sally's Silver Wedding Anniversary will really ADD. Splendid.

The Walled Garden is beginning to make 'sense' but more to think about and to do : edging, maybe raise the strawberry patch and replant, sort out the wandering raspberries, more flowers for cutting. There are now lots of pots in there, some from Margaret's garden, then I found 3 simple big ones to place in front of the bins and now growing 'enthusiastic' tomatoes. And I hope you all might be amused by the plastic grass and its surrounding tomato trees. So progress despite COVID!

Head Gardener Jane

From **The Ferrar Papers** Edited by B. Blackstone:

### Letter from Nicholas Ferrar to his mother

*My moste deare mother*

*Your good arrivall at Gidding I doubt not, which I humbly beseech Almighty God may bee continued wth all manner of prosperity this prayer all our freindes heere make with mee and remember there best loues respectiuely unto your selfe and all yours – and this is all yt I haue occasion to you sauing farther to lett you know yt none of the Oundell Waggoners are yet com to townor nor is it certaine when they will being at Beuersly fayre yett there is some Expectation of thim this present day. And soe agayne wth my most humblest prayers to Almighty god for yr happines I rest*

*Your most bounden and obedient son*  
*Iune viij – 1626*                      *NICHOLAS FARRAR*

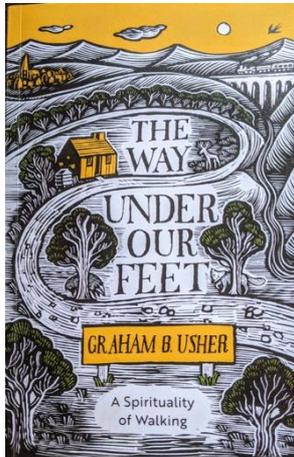
*I beseech yu remember my deare loue to my sister farrar and tell her though I could not speake wth mrs Goddard being abroad e yett I lefte her messadge wth the head man of the shop whoe promised to tell her – and to satisfy her as well as if I had com agayne*

*I now send downe a stone botle of white Wyne for my Cosen mary praying her to attend the perfect recouery of her health by all the good meanes prescribed & advysed unto her. Yt being well she may wth her owne and her freinds comfort better performe the dutys belonging to herselfe & others which god grant*

**Blackstone notes:** A document drawn up by Nicholas in 1637, "Declaration How the Groundes of GIDDING are Disposed", gives the following list: Ram's Close, Hangrel Hill, Old Park, Church Close, Middle Ground, Bell Meadow, Spinny Close, New Park, Parson's Close, New Meadow.

Ram's Close and Hangrel Hill were rented together in 1637 for £27. 6s. 0d.

## Book review: **The Way Under Our Feet** – Graham B. Usher



Subtitled *A Spirituality of Walking*, the book opens:

*Traveller, there is no road;  
only a ship's wake on the sea. (Antonio Machado)*

The author is the Bishop of Norwich; the "book kind of walked itself into being during a three-month sabbatical as I walked on the Mount Athos peninsula, in the Troodos Mountains in Cyprus and in the Judean desert."

Usher writes to encourage a sense of a "three-mile-an-hour-God" who walks with us at whatever pace we can manage through life. Although the book is carefully organised, it feels like a companionable stroll with a humorous and insightful guide. It is a compelling mix of personal anecdote, description of place, Biblical teaching, with a bit of etymology thrown in. (Who knew the root of the word *humility* is *humus*, meaning soil or earth.) Through them all we learn how good walking is for us – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

I appreciate how Usher generously signposts the reader to other fellow travellers and writers, such as Nan Shepherd (1893-1981) who would traverse thousands of miles around the Cairngorms until '*I have walked out of the body and into the mountain.*'

I found I was taking notes to look things up later; for example, the icon found near the checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem: *Our Lady who brings down walls* and the Martin Sheen film **The Way** set on the Camino de Santiago.

This book has been enthusiastically reviewed in The Church Times: *Holiness and shoe-leather*, (17 July 2020).

Susan Waters

## Notes on a Pandemic

What stories shall we tell  
past knotted fear:

Of touching without flesh  
of Winter-seeded faith  
of viral music trumpeting  
*imagine all the people*  
of hands sounding gratitude  
of words looped over metered space  
threading a collective  
of parked tyres, dusty tarmac;

the exhaling earth  
the constancy of sun  
a pink crescent moon  
the usual light on  
all our faces

<https://youtu.be/oswFhkvhrRY>

Susan Waters



## Dates for your diary:

In the current circumstances all dates are provisional following Government advice. At the present time all Church services have been suspended. Ferrar House is closed, but this has given an opportunity for work on the flooring to remove damp.

A recorded service from Little Gidding is available from noon each Friday via links from the North Leightonstone Benefice website under YouTube videos; Friends of Little Gidding Facebook page; North Leightonstone Benefice Facebook Group or just click on this YouTube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWZUrcG9C0s&t=33s>

Saturday 26 September **Quiet Day** 11am – 12noon

Although we have had to cancel the Little Gidding Pilgrimage this year we will be broadcasting an online pilgrimage. The exact format is still being worked on, but this will include: pre-recorded segments at each of the usual pilgrimage stations (Leighton Bromswold, Salome Wood, Hamerton, Steeple Gidding and Little Gidding), readings from the Bible and elsewhere, with short reflections and prayers.

It's worth remembering that the immediate spur that caused the Ferrars to leave London for their new home at Little Gidding was the prevalence of the plague in the capital in 1625.

This online event will be about an hour in length and then available for subsequent viewing. Please join us. To do this you will need to have access to a computer or tablet that runs the video conferencing system Zoom. If you haven't yet used Zoom, then it is simple and free to install. To access the pilgrimage broadcast you will need to register in advance by following the Zoom link at

<http://littlegidding.org.uk/join-pilgrimage-2020>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Saturday 5 December: **Nicholas Ferrar Day** and **AGM** of the Friends of Little Gidding.

Saturday 15 May 2021 **Annual Pilgrimage** from Leighton Bromswold to Little Gidding led by the Revd Malcolm Guite.

[malcolmguite.wordpress.com](http://malcolmguite.wordpress.com)

For further information, please contact the Hospitality Manager, Mrs. Sue Capp, at Ferrar House, telephone:01832 293 383; email [info@ferrarhouse.co.uk](mailto:info@ferrarhouse.co.uk)

For an updated calendar and diary of events, see [www.littlegidding.org.uk](http://www.littlegidding.org.uk) and [www.ferrarhouse.co.uk](http://www.ferrarhouse.co.uk) Information is also shared on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/littlegidding](http://www.facebook.com/littlegidding) - 'like' this page to receive updates. For further event details or to arrange your own event, please contact the Hospitality Manager, Mrs. Sue Capp, at Ferrar House, telephone:01832 293 383; email [info@ferrarhouse.co.uk](mailto:info@ferrarhouse.co.uk)

## **Membership**

A big thank-you to everyone who has renewed their subscriptions for 2020. May we encourage you to support the work of the Friends of Little Gidding by remaining a paid-up member: Individual: £20; Household: £30; Patron: £70.

A cheque made out to 'The Friends of Little Gidding' can be sent to Sally Seaman: 12 Bayswater Avenue Bristol BS6 7NS or for Standing Orders and online banking information to [membership@littlegidding.org.uk](mailto:membership@littlegidding.org.uk).

This Newsletter has been compiled by Susan Waters, who would be pleased to receive your stories about your experience of Little Gidding – what brought you there, your impressions of the place... Please email contributions and suggestions to [susanwaters144@gmail.com](mailto:susanwaters144@gmail.com) or by post to: NL Editor, FOLG, c/o Ferrar House, Little Gidding, Huntingdon PE28 5RJ.

This email has been sent from [newsletter@littlegidding.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@littlegidding.org.uk) to people on the contact list of the Friends of Little Gidding. If you would like to be removed from our list please email [chair@littlegidding.org.uk](mailto:chair@littlegidding.org.uk)

The Society of the Friends of Little Gidding is a registered charity, number 1102857