

TO HEMSWELL AND BACK AGAIN

Me: 'What shall we do next week-end'?

Barbara: 'I think we ought to have a get together with some antiques.'

Me: 'You mean we should invite the family over'?

Barbara: 'Well yes, but what I meant was we can all choose to buy something at Hemswell, say for about a fiver, and then meet here and talk about what we bought and why'.

Me: 'Seems a lot of trouble to go to just to get rid of some ham but we'll give it a go'. And so Barbara's idea got off the ground with an open invitation to meet at our house at 7 pm on Saturday 22nd August, for supper and the 'show and tell'.

Hemswell Cliff is name given to this former RAF Camp which operated from 1937 until its closure in 1967. The airfield buildings are now home to an antique centre (said to house Europe's largest selection of dealers) and it was to this huge collection of things old and not so old that we made our way. By the time we arrived, the party from Keelby was already ensconced in the café enjoying lunch. Apparently their antique hunt had been accomplished and they felt they deserved some sustenance.



Taking their lead me and Barbara chose our own repast from the selection on show and enjoyed our own quiet lunch together. At this point I had no idea what it was I was seeking in this cornucopia of collectables but Barbara was looking for something perhaps decorative but certainly practical. So, lunch over it was time to get amongst the objet d'art and to this end we browsed along the corridors and rooms. The building we had selected to begin our search was once an accommodation block for various RAF personnel. It was set out in a veritable rabbit warren of rooms and dormitories and it was difficult to imagine the RAF boys had any of their home comforts available to them. In any case I don't think there were quite as many walnut wardrobes and oak dining tables scattered around as we found today. These pieces of furniture were not on our shopping list as it happened and so we continued our search for something a lot smaller and certainly a great deal cheaper.

I don't know about you but when faced with a large selection of interesting objects I can spend quite a time looking at the first few and a lot less time looking at the rest. I tend to the view that one wash bowl and jug pairing is pretty much like another. This approach works fairly well for me until I'm faced with a selection of books. Now 'it is a truth universally acknowledged', that one book is definitely not very much like another. When faced with several bookcases, I can tell you 'there was no possibility of taking a walk that day' until I had thoroughly examined as many as possible. I can also affirm that, 'it was the best of times, it was the worst of times' for there were so many books I would have liked to own. Would it be this one or perhaps would it be that one. 'To be or not to be, that is the question', I stood asking myself. In the end I chose to go down the historical route. For some time now I have been photographing local buildings and even in the short space of time since taking snapshots a number of these buildings have been demolished. The booklet I eventually purchased was

entitled Memories of Grimsby and Cleethorpes Transport. Strictly speaking of course this was not about buildings but as I have a vague recollection of trolley buses on the streets of Grimsby I thought it would add another layer of interest to my knowledge of our local history.

Meanwhile Barbara was well into her hunt for what she wanted. Being a girl from the City of Steel namely, Sheffield, it was natural for her to gravitate towards table cutlery; something which is always practical and often ornamental. A number of possibilities presented themselves as there were many boxed sets on show but in the end a set was purchased. We also purchased other items which had caught our interest, again Barbara's been practical and mine of local interest. All there remained to do now was to head home and prepare for the evening get-together.



The photo on the left shows Audrey describing her purchase of the horse brass coat hook. This was done by way of a story and though entirely fictional was at the same time entirely plausible. Rachel had purchased a 'wee dram' tot measure intended for portioning whisky. This silver 'cup' harks back to a time when alcohol was measured for drinking in a civilized fashion, rather than the modern day haphazard swig from the bottle culture. Kath had bought a small (bronze?) figure which was intriguing for we all had a guess as to what it might represent. It could have been a chess piece but we may never really know its history. In any case it got us talking which was the point of the exercise. The blue teapot was the item chosen by David and I think it fair to say, was the most decorative item on show. It appeared to be styled in the 1930's, the decade which brought us many things with an angular aspect to them. What a pity David only uses round tea bags otherwise he might have been able to make more use of it.

The bottle was Josie's choice and this was possibly the only item which the strict use of the word 'antique' could apply. So many bottles of this type were broken to obtain the glass bead that it's amazing any survived at all. This particular shape probably was used for soda water which required thicker glass in order to withstand the pressure of carbonation. The 'postcard fan' was shown by Amanda and is redolent of a time when such cards were meant to express somewhat deeper sentiments than the typical seaside offering of today. It certainly brought us a hint of more genteel times. The small tin box once held contents which have now all but passed into history. Debbie had found for us a type- writer ribbon or rather the tin in which it would have been stored. I hate to think what this article would have looked like if I had typed it out rather than use the computer!

Of all the items on display I suspect that it is only the butter knives which will eventually be in everyday use. Barbara had intended to fulfill the 'decorative and useful' criteria for her antiques hunt and these knives fitted the bill admirably. Added to which they were manufactured in Sheffield and this was the icing on the cake so to speak.

Last of all I chose the booklet on transport which has already been mentioned above. The day can be counted as a success, not in that we purchased treasures or anything but rather we enjoyed the expedition and of course the get together in the evening. And thereby lies the treasure.