

The COCHRANE family of Lemsford have had connections with Brocket Hall and Gardens in various ways over the years. In 1899 my grandparents, John and Lucy Cochrane, were living in a cottage on the Great North Road just above Lemsford. My grandfather was a waggoner and made regular trips to the London residence of the Brocket family with produce from Brocket gardens, flour from Lemsford Mill, fodder for their horses, etc. It was here that my grandmother, Lucy, nursed the brother of Lord Northcliffe for six months after a serious motor car accident in 1906. A gold watch and chain was presented to her afterwards for her services and care by Lord Northcliffe.

John and Lucy later moved to a Brocket cottage on Church Hill and later still to the 400 year old cottage at Cromer Hyde. From the 1920's to the mid 1950's they came into their own as market gardeners. At the Brocket Estate Shows they won many cups and trophies for their fruit, vegetables and flowers. In the late 1930's and 1940's they supplied produce to Welwyn Department Store and nearby markets always using the pony and trap pulled by Sandy, their pony. Lord Brocket owned the old cottage and pulled it down soon after they died in the 1950's.

My father, James Cochrane, worked in Brocket Gardens under Mr Kent before he went into the 1st World War. I seem to remember him telling me that his uncle Joe Halsey was head gardener there for several years also.

My mother, Betty Beech, worked for a time at Brocket Hall in the early 1920,s. She enjoyed staff outings on many occasions and accompanied members of the Brocket family on holidays to Scotland.

David Cochrane, my father's youngest brother, worked as a footman for Lady Mount Stephens at Carlton House Terrace in London until leaving for Canada in 1919.

My youngest sister, Lesley, was born in May 1949 - one of the 'Brocket babies'. I remember well the bold flowering of the rhododendron bushes along the drive as my father took us to visit my mother. Unfortunately, children were not allowed in the maternity area so my sister and I had to be content with looking through the window and waving to our mother with the new baby. They were in a large room to the left of the entrance of Brocket Hall.

Much of the above has been passed down by word of mouth to members of our family so I am hoping that it is mostly accurate. It has certainly brought back some happy memories for me.

Shirley Knapp (nee Cochrane). February 2016