

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE IN PRINT

“Voices of Cottesmore”, a charming new booklet from the Cottesmore History and Archaeology Group, is a jolly read because it quotes past and present villagers verbatim, which just makes their observations even more pertinent and immediate. Thus we have a villager’s (unidentified) memories of Reg Bland, the bus driver, who used to nod off occasionally at the wheel: “I remember coming back from Melton on the late bus, with Reg driving, and you’d be going along nice and steady and all of a sudden you’d get what felt like a bump in the road, and Reg would have dropped off to sleep.”

And: “Oh I do remember Granny Ireland, yes. Bless her. She used to be up there; yes, she was a little blind lady. You could just get in her sweet shop. She used to have the hens running in the shop, one day we went in and this hen came running out cackling its head off and when we looked inside it had only laid its egg in a bag of sugar!”

And: “Oh yes I remember Collard’s shop that was next to where the fish shop is now, and there used to be Ray Elsey’s Butchers shop next door and then that closed and they moved across to Strickland’s shop which is where the Post Office is now. .. and in the wintertime we used to play a game of whip and top and my mate from up the village had been into Mr Collard and bought a little top and we were playing on the asphalt outside his window and the top went through his window and broke a big plane of glass and my mate went up the steps and said: “Please Mr Collard can I have my top back?” and I ran up the lane out of the



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by

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way. I wasn’t going to meet him. My mate went out the shop very quickly!” Wonderful stuff, and there’s lots more inside. You sense the drama of warfare in a purely pastoral setting when “one of those old Dorniers ... dropped a stick of bombs and what we thought was a thunderstorm was (the sound of) a big anti-aircraft gun at Barrow corner firing away.” And then there were the Americans, big friendly aliens with their chewing gum and chocolate, “who flew their Dakotas (on training exercises) over the Catmose valley just this side of

Langham” and you’d just got to know them when they disappeared, rarely to be seen again. This is a marvellous book, priced at £5, beautifully illustrated with old photos, and fittingly dedicated to the memory of Ron Dane who was for many years a pillar of the history group. It is also dedicated to all those who shared their memories – some of them, alas, no longer with us. To think that such a small enclave (where so little seemed to happen) should produce such a gold mine of reminiscences. The voices of the people bring it all to life, and our heartfelt thanks must go to CHAG for painstakingly putting it all together. – **BPM**.