

Escrick Park Gardens by Joan Reid



Much of my childhood was spent living in Escrick Park Gardens which, had been the old walled kitchen garden of Escrick Park estate, before my Dad, Gordon Sarginson, took it on to run as a market garden in 1964. I remember the day we moved in, my parents Gordon and Violet and my brother Tim, as Mum spent most of the day scrubbing the kitchen floor. The following day my sister Barbara was born.

In the early days my Dad spent time clearing the old heated walls and the land itself before he was able to plant crops. There were parts of the garden we were told not to investigate, including the old ice house, the entrance of which was partially covered with rubble. That didn't stop my brother Tim falling in, and nearly drowning, in one of the deep sinks in the old vinery though. It was an old glasshouse which had probably once housed grape vines to supply the big house.

The garden itself also came with a range of outbuildings including a potting shed. We used to have great fun using the old telephone plan 4 to call the house and when a call came in the big bell on the outside of the shed could be heard all over the garden. I don't think we used it to order food or other things from our Mum. She wouldn't have appreciated that.

Having all the outbuildings did come in handy when we added some rabbits to our collection of pets. However we did end up with rather a lot of them and they were mostly given away. At one time I counted them up and they totalled 12: two dogs, one cat, two ducks, a goat, a hamster and five rabbits. We also had hens and pigs for a while.

The garden was used mainly to grow lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers in the summer and leeks and other winter vegetables were planted out in the autumn. Runner beans were grown out in the garden one year, although the experiment was not repeated after a group of wild rabbits decimated the crop one night. They were then grown in the vinery which could be closed up at night. Dad did like to try new things though and I remember him once carefully wiping a crop of peppers and aubergines before he boxed them up to take them to Leeds market.

Mum was a vital part of the garden. She often spent time cutting lettuce and picking tomatoes as well as selling produce at the door. We also helped although the only tomatoes we were allowed to eat were those that had fallen onto the greenhouse floor. I also assisted my Dad when he had a stall in York market for a few years in the 1970s.

Other people from the village worked for my Dad over the years, including Ken Calvert, Arthur Usher and Jim Burton. My parents left the market garden when the land was sold as part of a revision of the Escrick Park estate in the late 1980s. I do hope the houses which are now on the site benefit from the soil my Dad worked over the years.