

## *Progress – a Keysoe family story*

### **Alan Woodward**

At the beginning of the last century my grandfather, Bernard Charles Woodward, married Kate Elizabeth Stevens from Kempston and they set up home in a small cottage at the foot of Wybridge Hill in Keysoe.

After a couple of years, Kate became pregnant. Late one night she said, "Bernard, I think the baby is coming. You must fetch the doctor". So Grandad got out his bike, cycled through the darkness over Mill Hill, through Pertenhall, and down Park Lane to Kimbolton. The doctor lived over his surgery on the left side of Kimbolton High Street. Grandad parked his bike and walked down the path at the side of the surgery, picked up a long cane left outside for the purpose, and tapped on the doctor's bedroom window. A moment later the window opened and the doctor looked out. "Who's there?" "It's Bernard Woodward from Keysoe. I think our baby is on the way!" "Alright, Mr Woodward, I'll come". So Bernard got on his bike and cycled back out of Kimbolton, and up the long drag to Pertenhall. By this time, the doctor had overtaken him in his horse and trap (a light two-wheeled cart). Just as Grandad arrived home, the doctor came out, "Congratulations, Mr Woodward, you have a son, and all's well". That was my father, Leslie Bernard Woodward.

Five years later a similar thing happened. Kate was pregnant and late one night, "Bernard, I think you should get the doctor". So Grandad got his bike out. By this time, however, the Woodwards had moved to a thatched cottage in Keysoe Row (East) – now called Yeomans Farm – and this made his journey a mile longer, So through Pertenhall to Kimbolton High Street. Find the cane, tap the window – "Hello, who's there?" "It's Bernard Woodward from Keysoe. I think our baby is on the way". "Alright, Mr Woodward. I'll come". By the time Bernard reached home the doctor was about to leave – "Congratulations, Mr Woodward. You have a daughter and all's well". That was Auntie Olive Marjorie.

We are a very well-organised family, and five years later the same thing happened again. In the middle of the night "Bernard, I think you should get the doctor!" So once again Grandad got his bike out, no doubt complaining about having to make the same journey every five years. He arrived at the doctor's surgery but – progress! – no longer was the cane left out. Now he had to pull on a cord beside the front door, a bell rang inside and the window opened. "Hello, who's there?" "Bernard Woodward from Keysoe". "Alright, Mr Woodward, I'll come". Grandad got back on his bike, but he had hardly left Kimbolton when the doctor overtook him in his Ford car. When Grandad arrived home the Doctor was waiting for him. "Congratulations, Mr Woodward, you have a son. There were two babies but I was only able to save one". Grandad hesitated for a moment and then said, "That is probably just as well". He was no doubt concerned about the cost of two extra mouths to feed. The baby which survived was Laurence Joseph. And Grandad did not have to cycle to Kimbolton again.

My father died in 1983 and Uncle Laurie about a decade later. Auntie Olive died on Sunday, 3rd October, 2010, aged 99 years. In 1939 she had married Arthur Albert Stapleton, second son of Mr and Mrs A Stapleton of Keysoe Post Office. The Post Office was then on Mill Hill – the house now called Church View.