

LETTER TO LOCAL PAPER

The following was written by Thomas Heath in 1935 in response to an article about his namesake headed A NEWSTEAD NONAGENARIAN.

Sir - In your issue of the 7th inst. you published a photograph of, and an interview with, Mr Thomas Heath, of 72 Goodhead Street, Wilford Road, Nottingham, who was 11 years old at the time of the Crimean War, and is now 92 years of age. Strange to say my name is Thomas Heath, and I was 92 years of age last birthday. I was born at Hopping Hill Farm, Newstead Colliery, and have lived at the same address ever since. I remember the Crimean War. I was brought up on the land and can well recall how dear everything was. Wheat was up to £4 a quarter, wool 2s 6d per lb., and other things in proportion. I remember Bobby Clifton's "lambs" and Samuel Morley, also a contest between Sir Robert Clifton and a gentleman who sold milk in Nottingham, but whose name I have forgotten. He was nicknamed "Cow Juice".

The first time I had a vote I recorded it at Mansfield. I do not recollect who the candidates were but we stood round the table and recorded our votes to the presiding officer, and the state of the poll was declared every half hour.

As for the theatre and cinema they are places I have never attended. I have seen only two cricket matches and one of them was 80 years ago. It was played at Sutton in Ashfield during the Wakes and was between an All England eleven and 22 of Sutton and district. The match was to have lasted three days, but the Sutton men were too good for the All England side, and they had something to do to make it last two days. The other match was at Scarborough where I was staying with friends.

In my early days Newstead was a very thinly inhabited parish. There were nine farms and about twelve cottages, some of the latter being hewn out of the rock. My grandfather came to Newstead in 1818 and my mother, whose maiden name was Beardall, was born there. The Beardalls were a very old Newstead family. It was believed they had been there 300 years. After my father's death I became tenant of Hopping Hill Farm. In the course of time I held all the offices in the parish, and a neighbour, Mr Smith, and I did most of the business. I was overseer and had charge of the money, and Mr Smith was assistant overseer and kept the books. I was way-warden and constable at different times. I recall the time when there was no church, school, post office, public-house or public railway station. The station we had was Mr Webb's private property and he paid the station master. Tickets were only issued to Nottingham, Mansfield and London. - I am sir,

T. Heath,
Hopping Hill,
Newstead Colliery.