

# Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

## The Gertrude Myers Home and The recollections of Betty Jackson



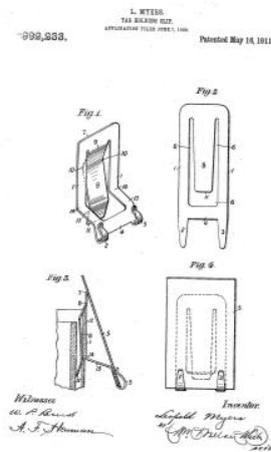
### The Home

In 2011 the villagers of Cleeve Prior repaired the old Memorial arch erected in the memory of Leopold Myers who donated the building as a convalescent home for women.

At the rededication ceremony Bryn Taylor one of the early founders of the Chroniclers and one of the team who restored the memorial gateway, outlined the early history of the home.

Bentley House came in to the possession of the Myers following the death of the previous owners the Grainger's who left it to the Myers. It was a large building with a coach house to the rear for carriages and servants quarters.

Leopold was a wealthy man and in his early life he was shown as a pen manufacturer, later to become a steel manufacturer. He was very resourceful & we have evidence of one of his inventions from 1911



It is believed that the Myers never permanently lived in Cleeve Prior as the three census records from 1891-1911 show them living in Edgbaston, in large houses with servants, and they do not appear in the Cleeve Prior census.

The story starts when Mrs Myers became very ill and was taken to the Birmingham Hospital for women, for a major operation after which she returned to Cleeve Prior for convalescence. Leopold Myers was so grateful for the care his wife received at the hospital, he wanted to do something to show his gratitude, and came up with the idea of giving their home to the hospital for a convalescent home. The first patients arrived in 1912

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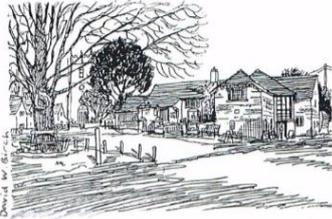
On March 15<sup>th</sup> 1913, The British Journal of Nursing tells us:

*“A convalescent home at Cleeve Prior has been given to the Birmingham and Midland Hospital for Women by Ur. Leopold Myers, in memory of his wife, who was for many years an active member of the Women’s Hospital Committee. The gift consists of a beautiful house with 23 acres of land, and a well-stocked garden. The house is completely furnished, fitted with electric light, and has cost upwards of £3,000. It has been called the ‘Gertrude Myers Home,’ and a committee of eight members has been formed to manage it. It will be used for patients who have been inmates of the Women’s Hospital. Accommodation is provided for twelve patients, and it is estimated that the total annual cost of the upkeep will be under £400. Mr. Myers and his friends have generously contributed in annual subscriptions nearly it £200.”*

After this the Myers moved away from Cleeve Prior, but Mr Myers always remained in touch with the home, following its activities and was a frequent visitor. Each year on his birthday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, Mr Myers received a bunch of primroses from the Home’s gardens and this continued until his death. Mr. Myers died in the early 30’s and to provide a reminder of his generosity and kindness to others it was decided to create a memorial that would also have a benefit for the patients. On April 20<sup>th</sup> 1937, Mrs Gertrude Myers came back to Cleeve Prior to officially open the memorial archway

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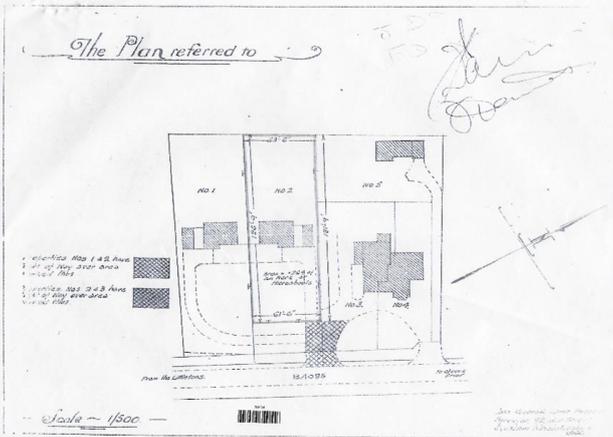
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The adjacent article from the Evesham Journal, 24th April 1937, tells of the erection of the Memorial gateway in memory of Leopold Myers who gave the home in 1912 to the Birmingham Women's Hospital.

*"The gateway was designed & built by Messrs W.A.Cox [Evesham] Ltd and comprised of an archway in mixed Cotswold & blue lias stone two wing walls & a wrought iron gate from the Birmingham Guild. A memorial flagged pathway of local stone 100yd long was laid by the home gardener, and beautifully set out borders of spring flowers presented an attractive appearance....This new pathway will be the greatest boon to the patients who will be able to walk along it instead of going out in to the main road, where there is no footpath and the traffic is dangerous"*

In the early 1960's the home was sold and subsequently bought by DJ Sinclair & sons, builders from Evesham, who split the house in two, to form Cherrywood & Tall Trees, and developed the rest of the gardens and small holding, building the properties we see today.



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### Recollections of the Cook

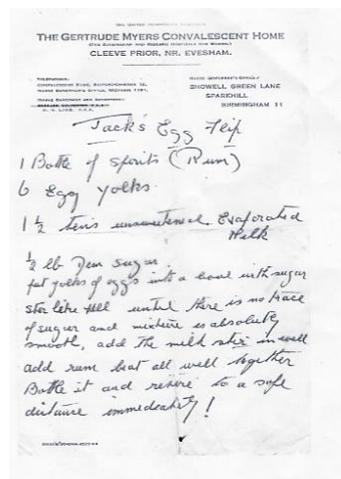
Betty Jackson worked as a cook at the home from 1949 until she married her husband, Dennis Jackson, a Market Gardener from North Littleton in 1956. Betty recounts:

*"I would leave home to catch the bus from North Littleton at 7.00am. Getting off the bus at mill lane I would go to the coach house behind the home to change in to my uniform. Most days I would work till 5.00pm but some days there would be a split shift working to 2.00pm, when I would have to cycle home & then back for 5.00 when I would work through to 8.00. At weekends I would have to cycle both ways as there were no buses. Split duties paid more but I would still have 11s.0d deducted from my wages each week for meals.*

*On my days off matron would prepare the meals*

*There were quite a few staff running the home. There was a Matron, nurse, cook, two domestics and two gardeners.*

*The Matron was originally Miss Ethel Nickson, later Mrs Brown, and she lived in the house, her sitting room was behind the bay window to the right of the front, now occupied by the Murphy's. She had a sister Grace, who is buried in the churchyard. The recipe for 'Jacks Egg Flip' is written in her hand and demonstrates her sense of humour."*



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*“The two gardeners were Mr Valender, who lived in a council house on the Evesham Road, opposite the community orchard, and Mr ‘Nappy’ Dixon who lived on the main street. The Domestic were Daisy Haggett who lived in a cottage on Froglands Lane, together with her sister Madge who cared for their elderly mother; and Flo, I can’t remember her surname, who lived in the flat above the coach house at the back of the home.*

*The Nurse was Beatrice, [again I can’t remember her surname], and she came from Birmingham. She was a mature lady and had a son, and I believe she retired somewhere down south. When she was on duty she lived in an attic flat in the house.*

*I had two weeks paid holiday each year, and at the age of 17, shortly after joining the home, I went to Butlin’s at Skegness for a week’s break. On the return journey, having changed at Lincoln, and standing all the way to Birmingham, I by chance met Denis Howells Sister & her friend Jean.*

*We would get regular visits from the Doctors in Bidford who would do the call outs when required, and occasionally the Governor of the home, Mr Lamb A.H.A. would visit from Birmingham & stay for lunch,*

*We used our own food and never bought anything in unless it could be avoided. The gardens were extensive, including orchards lawns, flower beds and a small market garden or small holding. Chickens were kept for eggs and meat, runner beans & peas were kept to freeze for eating in the winter, potatoes, carrots and beetroots were kept in clamps, and the gardeners also grew parsnips tomatoes and swedes. The gardens also provided fruit for picking such as gooseberries, plums raspberries, strawberries and apples. We used the produce from the garden to make pickles, chutneys, mayonnaise and piccalilli.*

*The chickens were tended by the gardeners and any surplus eggs were preserved using waterglass which meant they could be kept until they were needed*

*The milk was also local and fresh & was delivered in bottles with paper caps by a Mrs Potter from a local farm. We used a lot of milk, there were a lot of milk puddings.*

*All other food that was required to be purchased came from local suppliers. John Hemmings from North Littleton supplied the bread, I was friendly with his granddaughter, Jessie Webb. The fish came from Morrissey’s fish shop in Evesham who*

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*delivered each Thursday, and twice a week we had a meat delivery from Hood's, the butchers in Bidford. For Sunday lunch we would have ribs of beef, roast lamb or pork.*

*When the butcher used to call he would sharpen all my knives which I would lay out ready for him.*

*The Matron and I would jointly prepare the menus.*

*On Mondays we had cold meats and a mash of mixed root vegetables, and through the week I would make steak & kidney puddings & pies.*

*Breakfasts were 8.15 to 8.30 and were porridge or cereals followed by bacon and fried eggs, boiled eggs, fried bread & tomatoes,*

*Lunch/ dinner time was 12.30pm and was the main meal of the day*

*Supper would be at 6.00pm and was a light meal, often soups, home-made with basic ingredients.*

*All these meals would be taken in the dining room, which overlooked the lawn on the southerly side of the house*

*Full occupancy of the house was 18 patients, who would stay at the home for two weeks. There were four bedrooms, accommodating two groups of 6, one of four and another of two ladies.*



*There would be a delivery each Tuesday afternoon of up to 9 Ladies sometimes quite poorly, in the hospital bus.*

*The bus would also bring fresh laundry, sheets and staff uniforms, taking away the soiled washing, along with the ladies who had reached the end of their fortnight. Before sending the uniforms back, we had to remove and keep all the buttons that were secured with a brass clip for the next clean set.*

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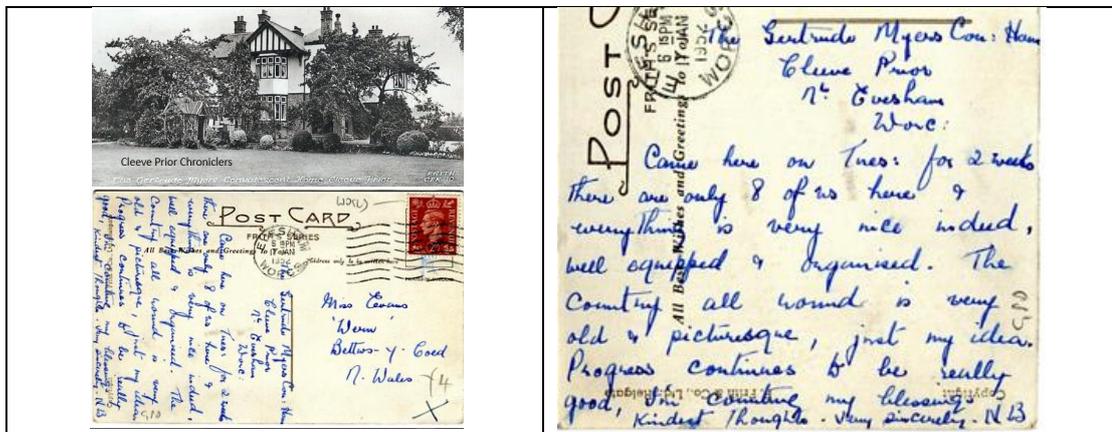
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*The bus would support other homes and also did a similar run to a home in Blackwell, also on a Thursday “*



The Chronicler also tells how there was later a Gertrude Myers Ambulance, It was kept in the Coach House & driven by Mr Wellon who was also a gardener



There were postcards for sale in the village for the residents to send back to their families

*Once the patients were sufficiently recovered they would take morning walks to the Miss Lloyds Tea Rooms at the other end of the village for teas, coffee & cake, the sisters were a lovely couple. This would often be followed by bed rest in the afternoon*

*The tea rooms were also popular on weekend afternoons, when visitors would come to see the patients.*

*My Husband Dennis remembers another Tea Room on Mill lane run by Mrs Cicely Harrison [Aunty Cis], this was in Brian Taylor’s house now part of the Nursery.”*