

WRITTEN BY HERBERT COLEMAN BORN 1898 DIED 1976

FATHER OF HAROLD & EDNA.

GRANDFATHER OF PHILIP ALAN & BRYAN.

GREAT GRANDFATHER OF ANTHONY, KIM, IAN, AMAN

JAMES & STUART.

STEP-FATHER OF TED ARTHUR & CYRIL.

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FOOLSCAP												

(1)

How many of us as we go about our daily tasks, meeting all kinds of people, at work and play and in all different places, wonder what other people are thinking about.

We cannot tell what other people are thinking about, nor can they tell our own thoughts, which is perhaps just as well.

We have pleasant thoughts about different things, but most people have serious thoughts as well, at some time or another.

At times we think about things that have happened in the past, at other times the past is best forgotten.

I will try in a small way to try and think of a few things that have happened during my life time.

Some of these things concern me and some do not. Some are humorous and some are serious.

I am just an ordinary person, often bad but never good.

I remember a good friend of mine, the late Mr Fred Drews telling the following story.

It concerned two farmers.

One farmer had a horse he wished to sell.

The other farmer wishing to do a deal, asked if the horse had any faults.

The farmer trying to sell the horse, being a good Christian could but only tell the truth.

He said as far as I know the horse is in good condition and sound in wind and limb, but he said it had two faults. What are they ask the farmer wishing to buy.

Well said the first farmer. He's a bad one to catch.

We can soon get over that said the intended buyer.

What is the other fault.

Well said the first farmer he's not any good after you have caught him.

That just about put me in the class as the horse.

I am a bad one to start and am no good after I have started

But I will try and record a few things which are true as far as I can remember them.

There may be a word or two missed out or one or two added but what I write is true, as near as I can recollect.

One of the very first things I can remember is nearly cutting the end off my thumb when I was three years old.

I was born in the house that is ~~not~~ now John Black's shop.

There used to be two houses there and I was born in the one nearest to the house where Mr + Mrs Hunter lives.

There used to be a chemist live there then; by the name of Polson. I remember going there after some ointment to put on my thumb when it started to heal.

One of the first things that comes to my mind happened about 1909 or 1910.

I remember going to a Sunday ~~at~~ School Anniversary at the Independent Chapel.

The speaker for the evening was a minister. The Rev Wilson

During the service he talked to the children about the Bible

He went on to say, that reading three chapters every week day and five chapters every Sunday it takes one year to read it from the beginning to the end.

At the end of his talk he gave out the number of the hymn, but he gave out the wrong number. He apologized for his mistake saying it was not the first, mistake he had made during his life and it would not be the last.

There is a sad ending to this story. On his journey home

he crossed the line at a Railway Station and was hit by a train and killed instantly.

That was the last mistake he made. Crossing the line without looking.

One thing that comes to my mind is when I first started work during the summer holidays. I would be about 10 or 11 years old.

I was what they used to call Hold ye Boy, which was leading the horse from shock to shock during the harvest period of corn carting.

Perhaps at dinner time I would lead the horse from the field to the stack. I remember one man that was working on the stack. (I worked

with him and knew him well in later years.) If a sheaf of corn came up onto the stack full of thistles or rubbish, he would hold it up to the sky and curse and say "God Almighty ain't you ashamed of yourself for growing such rubbish. I used to be afraid of my life to go anywhere near him.

That man spent years in a Mental Home, and that is where he died.

I was always afraid to be in his company.

The next thing that comes to my mind is the formation of the Drum and Fife Band I think it was first formed by the Band of Hope

As children, when anyone said the band is coming out tonight, we would get really excited and follow it up or down the street. I can ~~still~~ remember the names of most of the original members.

The only time I can remember them playing was the following.

Hold the fort for I am coming
Jesus signal still

Wave the answer back to Heaven

By thy grace I will.

More about the band later.

On Nov 5th 1914, I had an accident. I was 16 at the time and was working for Chivers and Sons at Station Farm Shippea Hill. I was pulling Brussel

Sprouts at the time.

The foreman the late Mr ~~George~~ George Seager was with us at the time.

He had a gun with him, for scaring birds off corn recently drilled.

Going home to dinner, he left the gun with another boy and myself to use if we saw any birds on the corn.

The other boy was a boy from Beck Row named Robert Brightwell, (who died from Bright's Disease in his early twenties)

Being boys we were at the height of our glory to be left with a gun. Seeing some birds on a gate, I said to him. Have a go at them Bob.

He put a cartridge in the gun, but by that time they had flown away.

He lowered the gun to take the cartridge out, but instead of opening the gun, he pulled the trigger by mistake.

I was only about a yard away from the gun, and I got the full charge in my left foot, blowing the ends of two of my toes and smashing my big toe.

I was brought home in a horse and cart and taken to Dr Pickworths.

I saw him cut the ends of the bone of my toes and stick the flesh on what was left.

No numbing or anything, but it did not hurt too much.

There are still some shot in my foot

after 56 years. But they have not troubled me too much.

My mother died in 1915. You hear people to-day talking about telling children the facts of life.

Well my mother was very religious but I remember her talking to me when I was 16. She said I was old enough to know, and she told me she was going to have a baby. She had already had 10 children and said she was expecting her eleventh. She said she dreaded having it, but said she hoped she would be alright.

I am not really sure but I think she died in childbirth age 38 and she had 11 children.

Out of the eleven children my mother had only five lived to grow up. Two or three lived for about three years and the rest died when only a few months old.

If we tell our children how we used to be brought up those days they hardly believe it.

For Sunday morning ^{breakfast} perhaps we would have an egg between two, and if you had a half a sausage with it as well you'd be lucky. We mainly lived on bread and lard and potatoes.

I do not know how they used to manage. They used to have a baby about every twelve or eighteen

months they used to have to pay the doctor fee, which in those days was a guinea (which was nearly two weeks work).

My father used to have an allotment up the Blayfitts and he used to grow a lot of potatoes. I have known him to take a sack of potatoes up to Dr Pickworths to be taken off the bill, to help to pay for mothers confinement. I used to think if all the other people in Lakenheath that had big families took as many sacks of potatoes up to Dr Pickworths as my father did, I don't know how he eat them all. I expect a lot of us were brought into this world for nothing.

1916 My father married again
His second wife had 5 children by
him. So that made him father of
16 children.

Started courting when I was about 18
Had not been courting long before
I was called up for my medical for
the army when having my medical
the Doctor ask me what happened
to my foot, and when I told him
he said you can go and help shoot
the Germans to make up for it.
I did my training at Sittingbourne
in Kent. I went to France landing
there New Years Day 1918.

I only had about 10½ months in France
One or two things that I remember.

happened I would like to make a note of. Anyone who has read the history of the war will remember reading how the Germans made their big push on March 21st 1918.

I well remember it, we were being pushed back all the time

The thing I remember most was when we were once told to take up a fresh position. We had to pass a road junction, and at this junction were two of our boys lying dead.

It was the first dead I had seen.

I think I had ^{wings} for I absolutely flew past that road, expecting every minute to get killed at the same spot.

I remember we had just been issued with

our bread rations, one loaf of bread between three or four persons. I had put my bread in my mess tin and fastened it on to my belt at the back.

Just as I came level by where the two boys were lying dead, the lid came off my mess tin and my bread went flying, and so did your tumbler, I did not stop to pick up my bread or anything else. I was scared stiff, I was 19 at the time, I think boys today are as much grown up at 17 as we were then at 19.

One other thing that comes to my mind two or three days after the Germans started their advance. I ~~can't~~ remember we occupied a trench about 50 to 75 yards from a trench they occupied

As soon as anyone showed a movement of any sort there would be bullets flying around.

During this occasion we had our bayonets fixed to our rifles. a bullet hit my bayonet and cut it clean in halves.

I carried it about with me all the rest of the time I was in France and intended to bring it home and keep as a souvenir.

But when I got wounded later, I dumped everything except my water bottle.

The trench we occupied led into what is called a sunken road. At this time nearly everyone started to

panic. Some started to leave the trench, going ~~to~~ into the sunken road.

After three or four had left the trench. Our adjutant went and stood at the end of the trench and drew his revolver. and pointed it at the next man about to leave, and said, the next man that leaves this trench unless told to do so, I will put a bullet through his head.

And he would have done.

It was not very long though before we had the order to leave, and take up a fresh position. In the army you never retire. You always take up a fresh position.

Just before the German attack started

our battalion had been made up to full strength of 1000 men, consisting of 4 Companies, 250 to a Company.

I was in A company and when we remustered about 12 to 14 days after the first attack, and roll call was taken, there were only 29 men.

I was one of the lucky ones.

Mind you, they were not all killed. Some were killed, some were taken prisoners, some were wounded and some had got mixed up with other regiments.

I was wounded on Oct 13th 1918. Crossed from Calais to Dover on 17th Oct 1918. On arrival at Dover (a stretcher case,) I was asked the nearest

hospital to my home. Of course I gave Cambridge or Bury-St-Edmunds. Sent up to Newcastle on Tyne. I should has said Newcastle then probably I should have been sent to Cambridge.

One consolation at Newcastle I had a lovely blonde nurse about 20 years old looking after me.

I was and am no oil painting but I think she spent more time squaring my bed up than anyone else in the ward. I remember one day when I was going to have an operation, she came to the side of my bed and said to me. I am going to be near your bed when you come round, and then I shall hear if you give any secrets away.

Sure enough when I opened my eyes, she was there by the bed, I gave her a smile and she said that's how I like to see anyone come round, not cursing and swearing like some of them do.

She was a real smasher.

But I was already booked Hook Line and sinker, but I thought ~~seriously~~ seriously about changing trains. It took a lot of will power to say "Get the behind me Salan" I was demobbed in Feb 1919.

By this time I was courting strong but most of our courting was done by letter. From the time I went into the army, until the time I came out

I only had one 24 hour leave and a 14 day embarkation leave.

My girl friend was May Brown.

I cannot ever remember asking her to marry me. We did not get engaged or anything like that.

From the time we first started going out together I expect we both just thought we should get married and that's just how it happened.

I think when we first started going out together, May told her father about it, and he said he did not mind as long as she kept to one chap, but he did not want her to go with two or three different ones.

We got married in 1920. We walked from the church after we got married. Hardly anyone had a car for the wedding those days, but some did have a horse and cart to take them backwards or forwards to the church.)

First baby born 1921 a son Harold Victor.

I remember going for Dr Pickworth the morning Harold was born.

It was about 3.30 early morning. Dr Pickworth used to live on Mill Road opposite the Plough corner. Just before I reached the corner to go up the Plough Lane, I saw something in white moving and splashing about in the pond, (now the green).

When I saw and heard this object moving and splashing about in the pond I think I broke all records going up the Plough Lane

It turned out to be a grey horse belonging to Mr George Fincham. It had broken out and was walking up and down in the pond.

I think for a few minutes I probably felt worse than my wife who was expecting the baby.

I mentioned earlier about the Drum and Fife Band. Well later (I think it was just after world war I) a Brass band was formed.

I myself joined in 1921 and was a member until 1956

I never was much good as a player but I enjoyed every moment of it. One incident that happened before I joined, I was told this by the late Mr Joseph Morley.

Mr Harry Mackender and Mr Morley were the leading cornet players at the time.

They both felt that they were not getting full support from some of the other members of the band when they were playing.

I think they were on a parade at Mildenhall, so these two made a bargain to stop playing when they reached a certain note in the music. When they reached the prearranged

note, they both stopped playing
Guess what happened. Silence

Band broke down.

Nearly all the Sunday School Treats
used to be headed by a band.

The Wesleyans used to have the Thetford
Salvation Band, while the Church and
Independent Sunday Schools used to
have the Feltwell Brass Band.

This was before the Lakenheath Band
got going.

The Baptist Sunday School never had
a band for their Treats.

The Rev Cooper did not hold with bands
I mention this point, because you can
see how people change their point of view
Some few years before the Rev Cooper

died, we stopped with the band outside his house one Christmas to play a few carols. We played "How Beautiful upon the mountains, and one or two other well known carols. Mr Cooper seemed to really enjoy the music.

He stood at the door and said to the Bandmaster Charles Coleman, where is the box Charles. He was handed the box, and he put a 10/- note in it.

Speaking to the Bandmaster. He said Charles I think now it is better for lads to be in the band, and go out playing, than sitting in the pub all night.

Charles said our boys do not go and sit in the pub all night.

Well the next stop was at the Fox and I expect half of the band went in and had a drink I probably did myself I can't remember, but it's more than likely.

There were still one or two members that used to belong to the original Band of Hope Band. And I have never known them to drink

Of course all the money that we collected used to go to the Band Fund or whatever we was collecting for. We never had any of the money for ourselves.

The following story is in no way connected with me, but I wonder if those who read this feel the same as I did when it was told to me. I shall have to go rather a long

way round to explain it as as I can convince you of its truth.

It was told to me by my father.

An aunt of his by marriage lived next door to the two people it concerns.

It was told to my father by her.

and knowing my father I am sure

I can say it is true.

The people were living next door to her during World War I.

The husband went into the army.

He was posted to the Middle East, Gallipoli and out that area.

All the troops that were posted out there, were there for 2 or 3 years without leave, (unless special was granted)

Many did not get home until the war ended.

Well to cut my story a bit short and call a spade a spade.

The man's wife, whilst he was away got herself into trouble, and had a child by another man.

She wrote and told her husband.

The war finished the child was then about six months old.

He wrote to tell his wife he would soon be home.

The day came the day on which she knew he was coming home.

She was overjoyed to know he would soon be home safe and well, and at the same time dreading what would happen.

The moment had come. She saw him

coming down the garden path.

Opening the door for him, he stepped inside and just gave her a kiss

He looked round the room and said to her
Where is the baby.

His wife answered, upstairs on the bed.

He said let's go upstairs

She led the way upstairs wondering what was going to happen.

When they got into the bedroom he looked at the baby on the bed.

He picked the baby up, gave it a kiss and gently laid it down on the bed again

He turned to his wife put his arms around her, hugged her and gave her a kiss, and said to her

I forgive you. I have done wrong myself
When I was told about this I thought
It was one of the most touching stories
I have ever heard.

What ever must that woman have
felt like, and what a man to admit
something that his wife would never
have known.

My father told me the name of these
people and where they lived (not in
Lakenheath,) I have never told their
names to anyone and I never shall.
As far as I know they have lived a normal
married life.

1924 Second child born (Girl Edna Joyce
I cannot recall much excitement I think
things just went normally. I expect

I was getting more used to things and was getting past the panic stage. 1924 Left Chivers and Sons where I had been working since I left school a few years after the war wages had dropped from 28/- a week to 25/- a week in about 18 months

I often used to have to lose one day a week through wet weather

Several weeks I only took about 21/- home We had the 2 children to keep and it was a bit of a struggle.

I had been made a shareholder in the firm in 1921

I had just over £50 in shares in the firm. So I thought I've had enough of taking home about 21/- so I'll give

my notice in and draw my shares out

I gave a weeks notice and drew out

my shares I drew out £56-4.

I felt like a millionaire

But the money did not last long,

what with bills we had already ran

up and lots of things we really

needed the money soon went but we

squared our bills and we had the

pleasure of spending it

We'd been hard up long enough,

After I left Chivers I went to work

on the water works department,

I helped to lay the main pipes in.

I started in Beck Row and helped

to lay the main through Kenny Hill

Shippea Hill all up Littleport Road

right up to Ely Road in Littleport
used to cycle to Littleport every day

No transport to work those days.

Anyway I used to take home about
33/- a week instead of 21/- to 25/- a
week. After that for several years

I used to try a get a job ~~was~~
where to most money was to be had.

I have so many different jobs and
different masters in my life time.

I hardly know where to begin next

I think I will begin about one

farmer I used to work for. (I will
mention no names) He was a very
good friend to me.

I worked on the White House Farm
for the late Mr Rickwood for several

years, hoeing sugar beet in the spring and then taking it up in the autumn, earning good money. When we had finished taking up beet we would be stood off until the spring.

) Well for 5 or 6 years I went to work for this farmer just after Christmas and would work for him until the beet season started again.

I was an arrangement we had between us. So you can see how he was a good friend to me. I was earning good money during the spring and summer and he always gave me a job when there was not much work about. His farm used to be next to another farm, whose owner was a

very religious man. He used to attend chapel 2 or 3 times every Sunday and also in the middle of the week.

While we were at work one Monday morning he said to me

What do you think happened yesterday
I said I do not know.

He said my neighbour came across to see me and said will you do me a favour. He said I have got some men ditching for me tomorrow and I want a dam put in so as they can start work first thing Monday morning. He said I do not do any work on Sunday, but I thought perhaps you would do it for me.

He said to me; What do you think of

that. I can go and do his work for him on Sunday and go to Hell. He can go to Chapel on Sunday while I am doing his work, and go to heaven. I only record this as I could see his point of view.

The same man (The one I was working for) said to me one morning when I got to work. We had Miss Moore to visit us last night. I said Oh. Miss Moore ~~was~~ went down to see his two daughters, who were going to be confirmed by the Rev Isaac Morris. Evidently he had been talking to Miss Moore, for he said to me Do you ~~have~~ believe in the Resurrection. I said do you.

He said. There won't be any Resurrection when you get six feet of clay on top of you.

I should like to know what his thoughts were in later years. Whatever they were I do not know. But from my point of view, I considered him to be a good man. He was as straight as a gun barrel.

He would not rob anyone of one halfpenny.

I cannot judge any man, but from what I knew of the two men I would rather work for him than for his neighbours.

I hope I am not making this too boring for anyone who reads this. I am afraid I shall miss a lot out that I could have put in, because as you write one thing down, you think of something else you could put in, but you think it is not interesting enough.

But if I think of anything that I think would interest anyone I shall put it in later.

I now come to the early 1930s.

My wife contracted T.B.

She had already lost her mother (1915) and two sisters with T.B.

My wife dreaded it, and she always used to worry about catching it.

At that time thirty odd years ago if

you caught it you nearly knew it was the end.

Today it is altogether different, as long as it is caught in time there is a cure for it.

I do not ~~not~~ wish to appear all moans and groans, but I wish to tell of the struggle we had at the time, and the things I tried to do that very few people knew of.

Before my wife was really ill I was talking to a man who had lost his mother-in-law and later a brother-in-law and two sister-in-laws with T.B.

He told me that when his mother-in-law was really ill, that some of her

children used to go on the bed and hug and kiss her, and he told me he thought that was the way they caught the complaint.

He told his wife she could do all she could to help her mother but never to hug and kiss around her. He told me that and his wife had a few angry words about it.

She said he was hard hearted.

But he insisted on it.

His wife lived to be 74 or 75 so

I think he did the right thing. Well keeping this in mind I resolved if my wife became really ill I should do the same.

The rather ~~strange~~ strange thing

about this is, that only a few weeks before writing this, my daughter Edna said to me one day. I cannot remember my mother hugging and kissing me like mothers do. So I told her the reason. She said to me, "that was a hard thing to have to do wasn't it. Believe me, it was one of the hardest things I ever had to do."

I also tried to keep my son Harold from his mother as much as I could. He is three years older than Edna, but I never told him about it.

About the last month before my wife died, Dr O'Leary said to me, on one of his visits, I want you to keep your children from their mother if you

possibly can, because they can easily catch the complaint from her.

He told me to do the very thing I had been trying to do for months.

My wife lingered on for a couple of years, from the time she was really ill, and died in March 1934.

I was 35 and left with 5 children. One under 13 and one under 10.

They were both very good and never gave me any trouble or worry.

The only thing that worried me was wondering if they were going to keep all right in health.

Well life had to carry on I had been happily married for over 13 years I did all I could. After you lose a

loved one, you often sit and wonder: Could I have done more. You know yourself you could not. But you still have the feeling you could have done more. People say, especially when a man is left with two children. Poor man left with two children. Well I was in that position, but from my own experience I think I should have been worse off if I had not had the children.

When you have children, you have got something to strive for, something to work for and knowing you are not going home to an empty house.

And what a blessing they can be later on in life, as I know myself.

I hope to dwell on this subject later

although in a little different light
The next few weeks was a busy time
for me. I had to start being father
and mother as well.

I had to start fumigating the bedroom
I stripped every bit of paper off the wall
and I went to Mr Flatts and borrowed
a spray gun off him, and I saturated
the walls, ceiling and every crack
with Jeyes Fluid. I shut and locked
the bedroom door, and never let anyone
enter the room.

I left the room locked for three weeks.
then papered it myself.

I do not think there was another person
entered that room until after I had
finished it. Thank God we none of us

took any harm, but you realize the precaution I tried to take.

I did not wish for another living soul to risk their health.

The hardest part, or which seemed the hardest, was having to go to work and leave the children to get their own breakfast and get themselves ready for school. They both said to me, "we'll help you all we can Dad" although they might not even remember saying it.

I had some very good neighbours. The late Mrs H Fincham and Mrs Emma Flack used to often do a bit of cooking for us, for which I was very grateful. What with their help, and the help from the children themselves we got along reasonably well,

Harold and Edna settled down fairly well, made their own friends and carried on quite well. They played their little jokes just like other people.

I had better tell a little joke they played on me, or perhaps when they read this they will say, you might have wrote about the mustard.

Anyway your humble sits in the chair asleep one evening, I expect I had my mouth wide open. The tea table was not cleared, and the mustard pot stood on the table, Edna whispered to Harold. Put some mustard on his tongue.

Harold gets the mustard spoon and shoves it in my mouth. Father woke up spitting and spluttering. The culprits flew out the

door. Roger Banister the first four minute miler would not have caught them. I had been keeping a few hens on an allotment down the sandpits field.

The year my wife died I did not rear any chickens, what with cleaning and all the other little jobs I had to do. I had not the time.

So about June or July I sent away for about 40 month old pullets.

Mr Flatt used to do a lot of taxi work at that time.

He was down at the station one day and he saw a crate or two of chickens with my name on the crates.

He brought them up from the station on the luggage carrier on his car.

He came down to see ~~see~~ me after I had got home from work. He asked me if I had sent away for any chickens.

I told him I had sent after some 2 month old pullets. He said I have brought them up from the station for you. He said I have let them out in a small hut I have empty, but he said you had better come and have a look at them. They are all young cockerels he said and a rotten lot at that. He said they real stink and there are three or four dead.

I goes with him to have a look at them and I dont think there was one pullet in the lot.

They were young cockerels just beginning to show their combs.

I don't know how much I paid for them about 3/- each I believe. There were hundreds of cockerels being sold like them for 1d or 2d each. I said to Mr Flatt. What have I got to do. I cannot afford to lose about £6 I think on the invoice it said if they were not satisfactory they were to be returned within 48 hours.

This was on a Friday night at 6 o'clock. so what with the week end near there did not seem a hope of returning them. Mr Flatt said I will give you a rough idea how to write a letter. You go home and write a letter, and we will crate them up, and I will rush them down to the station and put them on the 8 o'clock passenger

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train and they should arrive at
Stratford on Saturday morning.

Well that is what we did, I wrote a
letter, with the help of Mr Flatt.

saying if my money was not returned
within three days, they would hear
further about it. Who did they think
they were dealing with

Did they think they were dealing with
someone who did not know cockerels
from pullets.

Thanks to the help of Mr Flatt I got
my money back. No note no apology
or anything but it was a near thing.

If Mr Flatt had not helped me, and if
he had not put himself out to catch that train
I should have lost my money, which I could

ill afford to lose.

The summer holidays 1935: Harold left school being 14.

Mr Flatt came to see me and said he would give Harold a job on his poultry farm, for which I was very thankful indeed.

I thought it was kind of him, and I thought it would be a lot better for Harold than going down the fen to work. It was nice and close to home and he did not have to get to work before 8 o'clock, whereas down the fen they used to have to get to work at 7 which meant leaving home at 6.30. He stayed at Mrs Flatt's two or three years. Then he said he wanted to go to work with the other boys down on Chivers.

I did not attempt to stop him. When you reach 16 or 17 you can start to think for yourself.

We come to the year 1936 The children are now two years older than they were when their mother died, with all their help we have managed fairly well. We have not had any big problems. Perhaps there a few more things I could dot down but I do not want to become too boring.

We enter what I would call the second phase of my life.

I shall have to write a lot of lines to get to the point, but if I miss half of it out there would be nothing to write about and nothing to read.

The story leading up to what I am going to write about now, starts while I was at work for the Electric Company, laying electric light cables at Freckenham.

I was working with a man from Lakenheath. We were in normal conversation, weather, politics, everything in general.

During the conversation he said to me, How are you managing at home.

I said we are getting^{on} fairly well.

He said how long has your wife been dead

I said two years. He said have you ever thought about getting married again.

I said well not really. He said I wonder you don't have a look around

Mrs Matthews. I said what Mrs Matthews

He said HAR what live down Half Moon Lane.

I said you must be joking she has got three children and I have got two.

He said I thought she only had two.

I said no she has got three.

He stood a little while then he said,

You might do a lot worse.

(This man is still alive and lives in Lakembaath. He probably does not even remember the conversation?)

I just treated it as normal conversation

a week or two later I thought about what he said, you might do a lot worse.

I thought he could be right.

But I thought, how have I got to start. I have never spoken to the woman in my life, unless it was to say good morning in the street,

or something like ~~that~~ that,
and I had never been in her company
I can't go and knock at her door
and say "Please will you marry me."
I thought if she went to dances or
anything like that I might go, or
if she went to the pictures I might
go and manage to get a seat
behind her, but I knew she did neither.
Well I knew she attended the
Wesleyan Chapel, so I thought
there is no more harm in going to
Chapel to try and make contact
than anywhere else. Result start
going to chapel. I did not mind
~~to~~ going to chapel. When we were
children we had to go three times

every Sunday and once or twice during the week. I sometimes wonder if we were pushed too much.

I did not make much progress the first few times I went to chapel. Mrs Matthews mostly had a friend with her, but one Sunday night she was alone. When we came out of chapel I walked down the road with her as far as the top of Anchor Lane, where I used to live. We stood talking for a few minutes and as she left to go home I asked her for a date on the following Sunday.

She said she would go for a walk with me on the following Sunday.

as long as her children were all right,
and as long as she knew where they were.

I met her the following Sunday night
after we came out of chapel.

We went for a walk down the
Station road. We talked about
our children and anything in
general. Although this was the
first time I had ever been in her
company really, she was very easy to
talk to.

We met perhaps four or five
Sundays. On leaving her one
Sunday night, I told her I should
like to meet her again the next
Sunday as ~~there~~ there was something
I wanted to ask her.

She agreed to meet me the next Sunday.
We met after we came out of Chapel.
We went for a walk down the Station
Road. Just after we got round
sandpits corner, she said to me,
What did you want to ask me
about. If you have anything to
ask me we might as well get it
over and done with. Just like
that. Straight to the point.
I then ask her if she had ever
thought about getting married
again, If so I would like to marry
you if you will have me.
Her answer was, that she had said
she would never get married again
until her children were grown up.

But she said she would like to have time to think about it.

We carried on with our walk talking about anything in general as if we had known each other for years, instead of about six weeks.

We met again the next Sunday. I ask her if she had had enough time to consider my proposal.

She said she had given it much thought, and she had been up to see her sister (Mrs Leader).

She told her sister what had happened and ask her for her advice. Her sister said to her. He seems to be a decent sort of a fellow. but I don't feel I can advise you.

The decision ~~must~~ must be yours and yours alone.

I said. What decision have you come to. She said. Yes I will marry you.

I said. I hope will never regret the day.

I never regretted the day myself and

I don't think she ever did, because

I have in my possession the last letter she ever wrote (which was to her sister) to prove it.

We carried on our usual routine

after ~~we~~ we had planned to marry

We knew we could not get married as quick as we should have liked to.

In fact it was eighteen months before we got married

We both lived in a small house.

and ~~neigh~~ neither house would have been large enough for our two families. At the time we had agreed to get married her oldest Son (Ted was 15 - Arthur was 12 and Cyril 8) and my oldest Son (Harold was 15) and Daughter Edna was 12).

I have put their names down as in future when mentioning them I shall just say Ted, Harold, Arthur, Cyril, & Edna whichever the case may be. In the meantime we discussed all the kind of problems we might run up against.

How our two families would blend together, and anything else we might come up against.

We both knew we had undertaken a task which might not be all sunshine, but we were both determined to try and make a success of it.

During the period of waiting I used to go to her house to tea most

Sundays and my children used to go as well, so we got to know each others family fairly well.

I was living in a house which was condemned under the slum clearance act, so we waited eighteen months before I got moved into a four bedroom council house.

I moved into the new house on the 22nd of Nov 1937 and we were married 27th Nov 1937.

Well we start off from here a big family Ted 16 Arthur 13 Cyril 9 Harold 16 Edna 13.

From the start every thing went very smoothly. The two families hit it off together well. There may have been little petty differences but never any very serious problems. In fact I should say there would be more squabbles between five brothers and sisters than there was between our two families. I had been a widower for three years and eight months and Alice (first time I have mentioned her name) had been a widow for seven years and four months.

I think she had the biggest struggle of the two of us, as she was left with three boys under 9 years of age and she had to bring them up on 2/- a week whereas I was earning about 5/- a week.

We had been married about two weeks, and when I came home from work I thought she looked worried. After tea she called me into the front room. She said to me I am worried. I said tell me what you are worried about. She said I am worried about how I am going to manage. She said look at the meat bill the bread bill and all the other things. I said to her, do not worry.

about it. I said to her, you have had such a small amount of money to spend. Now you have three extra in family which is going to cost more money. But remember you are going to have more money to spend.

I was earning a fair wage, and Harold and Ted were both at work, so what they paid for their board helped a lot.

It was the sudden change of circumstances that worried her. We sit down and had a talk.

I said to her, I am glad you told me, don't ever be afraid to tell me anything and don't ever be afraid to tell me if you are short of

money or anything. Never keep your worries to yourself, I do not suppose we had everything that we wanted. After our little talk she had no further problems. She was marvellous. She was a very good manager indeed. She would never owe anyone a penny if she could help it.

I was very thankful she came straight to me with her troubles. I do not wish to boast, but if every husband and wife started off being frank with each other about everything, trusting each other and not being afraid to tell each other their worries I think it brings them closer together than ever.

We discussed anything and everything
We never kept our problems to ourselves.

1938 Arthur leaves school

He started work down on Chivers & Son.

One more for mother to pack up for.

I do not know how she managed

to pack ~~up~~ up for four of us

going out to work. But she does

and does not seem to make any

trouble of it.

Edna leaves school same year.

I cannot remember how long she

was at home after she left school

but later she went to stay with

her aunt (mother's sister) at Luton

She went in service for the Chief

Constable of Bedfordshire and his wife

I think the following incident occurred in 1937. We had high water and floods that year. We were patrolling the banks (scrudging we used to call it).

~~The~~ Reg Webb and myself was patrolling the Lakenheath fen side and Bob Brown was patrolling the Hockwold side. At that time the late Duchess of Bedford had taken off in a plane. She disappeared and was lost somewhere. Planes from different areas were out searching for her. Wellingtons based at Mildenhall joined in the search for her.

Bob Brown came over from the Hockwold side to have a few words with Reg Webb and myself.

There was an old raft on the river and it was covered with reeds and rubbish. There was a Wellington searching along the river bank, and Bob Brown said. See me make that old plane come down.

He stood on the bank waving a sack ~~of~~ and pointed to the raft on the river. Well that plane came down to look at this raft. It was not much more than about 50 ft up. It circled around once or twice and we was afraid it was going to land in a grass field.

Brown was not long before he was off to his own side of the river. We got the wind up and thought

we should hear further about it.

but we did not. We talk about what young people do these days.

What about us Three grown up men with children, doing a thing

like that. I do not think the

Duchess of Bedford was ever found.

1939 I join The Royal Observer Corps

When it was first formed it used

to come under the same category

as Special Constable so had to be

sworn in as a Special Constable.

War was declared on Sept 3rd 1939

I did part time duty on Observer

Corps Post from the beginning to

the end of the war.

Aug 4th 1940. Started to learn to

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drive. Started on coal lorry for the Coop. Had one year driving coal lorry, the dirtiest job I ever had in my life. Left after one year and then went driving for Bert Black until the end of the war.

Harold joins the Royal Air Force late 1940. Did duty in West Africa
Ted joins the Royal Air Force early 1941. Did duty in the Middle East
1941 Cyril leaves school last one to leave. I cannot remember his first job but I know later he worked for some firm at Weeting assembling hubs.

nothing much that I can think of

during the next year or two
1945 Cyril joins the army. The
Suffolk Regt. I remember seeing a
letter that he wrote to his Mother.

In it he said. Mum I do not like the
army and I never shall, but while
I am in it I am going to get all
I can out of it. He was a Sargeant
in eighteen months, so I think he
kept to his word. He did duty in
the Middle East.

1946 I am afraid that the following
event which I am about to record is
one of the bad ones, but I do not
consider it would be fair if I did
not record it, and I do not expect
it will make me a worse man as a

result of recording it
After leaving Bert Flacks I went to
work for The War Agricultural
Committee. March 1946 ~~I was~~ Thrashing
wheat. Coming home from work.
Near Undly Corner, was stopped by
the police. There was three of us.
~~The~~ Police ask us if we would empty
our bags, as they had had an
anonymous letter saying that people
working for the W.A.C were taking
corn home. We emptied our bags
and each of us had a small quantity
of corn in them. Of course we had
to give our names and addresses.
As a result I received a summons to
appear at the magistrates court at

Mildenhall charged with stealing 1/3 worth of corn, The other two were charged, one with stealing 1/-0 worth of corn and the other one with 1/6 worth. We eventually appeared before the court, The Chairman of the Bench read out the charge and said Do you plead guilty or not guilty

Guilty Sir. We all replied.

The Magistrates retired.

We stood in the dock waiting for the verdict. We could hear them talking but we could not hear what they were saying. We heard one of them laugh about something

One of the others whispered to me and said "De ye reckon we shall

git hung. I whispered back.

I should not be surprised.

The magistrates came back. Gave us a strict lecture. How we ought to be ashamed of ourselves, stealing corn while in some ~~out~~ countries women and children were starving.

Fined 10/- each.

There were some people in court that day that were more worried than we was. There were some there that had better jobs than we had, and some of them had more stones of corn than we had ounces. I have ~~for~~ known them to have a sack at a time, both before and after the case.

We did not get the sack
 Strictly speaking we should all
 have felt guilty. I know and we
 all know stealing is stealing.
 whatever you take that does not belong
 to you. I know I should not have
 done it and I was always sorry I did.
 but there was not many at that
 time that did not do the same
 We could have made it bad for
 some people, but I would not have
 done us any good, We did it,
 and we did not wish to hurt anyone
 else.

July 2nd 1946. ~~It~~ We had a
 freak storm. There were hailstones
 nearly as big as golf balls

Two of us was hoeing round sugar beet up Lindly Delft.

We could hear the storm approaching but there was nowhere for us to shelter, so we got into a ditch that had no water in it.

A young lad was harrowing beet on the same field, and when we heard this storm approaching, we told him to unhook the horse off the harrow. He did that and came with us in the ditch leaving the horse standing, about 20 yards away.

When the storm was at its worst, the horse also roan and laid down in the ditch on its own.

When the storm was over there was

about 15 to 18 inches of water in the ditch. We wondered what had happened to the horse, we thought it would have been drowned. But after it had left of hailing and raining it just simply raised itself and scuffed out of the ditch and shook itself as if nothing had happened.

3rd or 4th July 1946 Ted and Harold both ~~demobbed~~ demobbed from the Royal Air Force. Still hailstones on the garden from storm on the 2nd. I have rather jumped the gun a bit. I should have reported oflthrs wedding. He was married to Miss Joan Dorby of Criswell on Dec 22nd 1945. They were married at Criswell Church.

They have one daughter, and now have one granddaughter. How time flies. The first bird has flown after only eight years.

They celebrated their silver wedding last year 1970.

Aug 1946 My father died. He had been ill, suffering from cancer only a few months.

I had one or two little worries during his illness and at the time of his death. I will tell one or two of the little problems that worried me. My father knew he was going to die. A few weeks before his death he said to me, I have got just a little money about £300. He said what have I got

to do with it, I said to him, I don't care what you do with it.

He said, I should still like to know what you think I should do with it.

I said if you are worried about it why not make a will.

He said who shall I leave it too.

I told him what I thought he should do. I said to him you have been married twice and you have got 4 children alive by each wife, why not leave it to the eldest of each family, on the understanding that it is equally divided between the eight of us.

He said I will do that but he said I do not want Ethel to have

any of it (Ethel by the way is my oldest sister). I said to him

Father she is your daughter and whatever wrong she has done you ought not to cut her out.

He said If you say so then let it be so. But he said I want you to promise me one thing.

I do not want you to let her know when I am dead, because I do not want her to come to my funeral.

I ought to explain his reason for this. My sister Ethel had four or five children by different men and she was never married.

Father ^{never} forgave her. He said If she had one or even two he might have forgiven her.

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I was very worried about this I am afraid I lost a few hours sleep over it Mrs Sargeant visited my father several times during the latter part of his illness (and later buried him) I told her of my worry and I told her I still ought to let my sister know I told her the whole position She was very helpful to me, and told me she thought I should do as my father had requested, which I eventually did, but I made sure that she ~~had~~ had her share of what money was to come. Having dealt with my troubles for 1946 We come to 1947. Surprise Surprise, Ted and Edna get married

to each other. March 15th 1947. I cannot seem to remember much about anything. I cannot even remember them getting engaged or anything. I know one thing when I married Ted's mother in 1937, I did not ever think about Ted marrying my daughter in 1947. One thing that Alice and I knew in 1947. We knew we had done the right thing.

Edna and Ted are very happy. They have three grown up sons the youngest is 14 and is about 5-ft-7.

They had their first grandson this year 1971. Their Silver Wedding will be in 1972.

That's two more of the birds flown

although they lived with us for a couple of years

July 10th 1947 Another Surprise

We strike off on one weeks holiday at Clacton on sea. I suppose it was the first real holiday either of us had ever had. It was a glorious summer and the week we had was sunshine all the time. We had a lovely time, Alice was 52 that year and I was 49. I bought Alice a bathing costume, and I think we went in the sea twice every day. We enjoyed ourselves like a couple of teenagers. Most years after that I think Alice was more eager to go in the sea than I was myself.

We enjoyed ourselves so much, that after we got home we started a holiday box, we used to put 5/- in each, every week, to help to pay for a holiday the next year.

I think we did this for over 12 years, and we used to go to Clacton every year. We used to love it.

Aug 23rd 1947 Harold married

He married Miss Joy Rutterford

After they married they lived with her parents, Mr + Mrs S Rutterford at Avenue Road Lakenheath for a few years later moving to Littleport where they have been living for 17 years at the time of writing. They have no children
 a bit more about them later, Silver Wedding
 1972

Four married now, only one left (Cyril)
1948 Cyril demobbed from the army
I am not sure of the date.

I cannot recall anything particular
happening during 1948

Aug 6th 1949 Cyril Married. He married
Miss Betty Jackson of Carr Vale near
Bolsover, Derbyshire. She was a member
of the Women's Land Army stationed at
Lakenheath. They were married at the
church of St Michael and St Mary
at Bolsover. They have four lovely
children. ~~Four~~ Three sons and one
daughter. The eldest son and daughter
(second eldest) are both in the florist
trade and the other two boys are
still at school.

1950. August. My wifes ~~sister~~ sister died (Mrs Leader) the one I wrote about earlier, whose advice she asked for when we first started seeing each other.

Dec 1950. I left the farm I had been working on for the past three and a half years. I started ~~to~~ driving for the ~~an~~ United States Air Force.

While working for them I drove for several different organizations including The American Post Office, The Commissary, and for a while for the Control Tower on the Flight Line.

I had about five years driving a bus, from the Mess Hall to different units on the Flight Line and ~~at~~ other places on the base.

It used to be called "The Base Shuttle Bus" Some days I have driven as much as 130 miles, just going nowhere else, but just around the base. I was driving for the USAF for just on 10 years.

During that 10 years I made a lot of friends amongst the Americans. Some of these I have known to have done 4 and 5 different tours of duty on the base, while I was working there. Several incidents happened during the time I was there, but nothing that I will say anything about. We were sworn to secrecy and not allowed to talk about happenings on the base, so I never took too much

notice. Just a case of hear all see all and say nothing.

After 10 years and at the age of 62. and have driven on the bar for 10 years without an accident I thought it was about time to pack up driving as a full time job.

I had got to work another 3 years before retirement, and I thought if I kept driving every day for the next three years without an accident of some sort I should have to have a lot of luck. I applied for a transfer and later got transferred to the Air Ministry as a fitters mate. I remained in that job until I retired in Jan 1964.

I had only been transferred to the Air Ministry about 3 months when my wife had a serious heart attack. Cyril came and fetched me from work. When I got home the doctor had already been. He had given my wife an injection to rest her. She did not wake up for about seven hours. She was very ill. She had five weeks in bed, and then was only allowed to get up for a quarter of an hour, and then increase it for a quarter of an hour each day, until she could have five or six hours up. I have lost count of the number of times she collapsed or was taken ill during the next nine and a half years. We had got an old car not a very good one, but I used to

take her out for a ride whenever possible. She could not walk very far.

She was always very cheerful.

I shall have to write a bit more about her later.

1962 Harold went into Ely Hospital for trouble with his eyes. He had nine weeks in there and then he went to Cambridge Hospital and later to Morefields Hospital in London.

He lost the sight of one eye, and the other one is partially blind.

He had to give up his work and was registered blind in June 1963.

He was going to Torquay for training but eventually got a job at Pye of Cambridge at the time of writing. He has been there

seven and a half years. It worried his wife very much and it worried all of us. I think for a month I never had a proper night's sleep. I would dose off and then wake up, and would lay hours wondering what they were going to do. How they were going to manage. You cannot explain your feelings in circumstances like that. I felt bad enough so did mother, so I know how Joy must have felt. You feel so helpless. Her wife Joy ~~had~~ learned to drive a car after he could not see to drive himself. We were all thankful and happy when she passed her test. I shall always be grateful for all she has done. She is a great help and a blessing to him.

It was a great shock as it all happened so sudden. But I thank God he can see enough to get about and do a few little jobs. His one disappointment was he had to give up playing in the band as he can not see to read music.

But he has a part time hobby.

He plays the drums for a Group from Littleport called "The Buskers"

We always seem so helpless when things like these happen. but I hope and pray that the future for them will improve. We never know, miracles do happen.

I pray that if things alie it will be for the better for them both

During the next few years my wife had several heart attacks some severe.

and some slight. The number of tablets she has to take seems unbelievable.

She often said she takes so many that if anyone picked her up and shook her she would rattle. But she always took all she was told too.

I retired from work in Jan 1964.

I did a few odd jobs for a year or two.

In 1967 I started suffering from arthritis

It caught me fairly sudden. I had a spell of heat treatment and physiotherapy at Downy Hospital, But it has troubled me ever since, some days it is a lot worse than others, you get used to these little aches and pains, you just have to live with it.

Dec 1968 My wife had to be rushed off to hospital (B-way at Edmunds).

She lay between ~~the~~ life and death for three or four days in the Intensive Care Unit. She spent Christmas in Hospital, But thanks to the Doctors and nurses and we hope with the help of our prayers she recovered. After a five week stay in hospital she was well enough to come home. During the next twelve months she was reasonably well. I used to take her out for a little ride when the weather was nice, and for about nine months she seemed better than she had done for the last few years.

Christmas 1969. We generally had Christmas dinner with Ted and Edna, but I cannot remember if we did this year or not.

My wife was beginning to lose weight and her legs and ankles used to swell up. I could see her losing weight every day.

She still tried to put on a brave front. One day about the middle of January, she said to me, I should like to go away somewhere for a real long rest, then that would give you a rest. (She used to worry about my arthritis) I said to her, do not worry about me I'm all right. She said, I am a lot of trouble, I said you're no trouble at all. I never got tired of looking after her, but it used to hurt me to see her in pain. However bad she

was, she used to worry about me.
 a few days later she said to me
 I wish I could die out of it.

I said to her don't talk like that-

I want you a lot more years yet

I went to the bedside and stooped down
 and gave her a kiss. She kissed me and
 said, I know I did not ought to say that,
 but that's how I feel. We both had a
 good cry. We could not help it.

a week or two before that she was sitting
 in the chair. I sit on the arm of the
 chair and bent down and kissed her.

She said to me. I wish your kisses
 could cure my pain, then I should not
 have any pain.

Feb 1970 My wife had to go into

hospital again. I visited her every day. One day after she had been in about two weeks, she told me she was coming home the following Monday. She was really looking forward to coming home. The next evening when I visited her, the doctor met me and led at the door and told us she had just had a relapse. That is how it went on for about five weeks.

The Doctors and Nurses did all they could but it was all in vain, she passed away on Sunday March 22nd 1970.

I prayed every night for her recovery, but I have a feeling, while I was praying for her recovery, she herself was praying to be eased from her pain. If so her prayers, not mine were answered.

The one or two things she had said to me during the last few weeks gives me this impression.

I not only lost a Wife I lost a Pal a Helpmate a Councillor a Friend and everything else.

A Wonderful Wife A Lovely Person.

25th April 1971 Today I went and stood in front of the ~~monument~~ Memorial, erected to the memory of those who lost their lives in the 1914-1918 war, and later the names of those who lost their lives in the 1939-1945 were added.

There are 65 names on there from the 1914-1918 war, ^{and} 11 names of those killed in the 1939-1945 war. Of those 65 that were killed in World War I. I ^{counted} counted

over 20 that went to school at the same time as I did, and perhaps more than half of those twenty did not live to reach the age of manhood.

Of all the 65, I should not think there was hardly any of them reached the age of 40. Of the 11 that were killed during World War II, I do not think there were many over 23 or 24. All were young men. Which brings the thought to my mind, when I look back, and try to remember them, I have had a few ups and downs during my life, but ^{what} chance had they. When I think about them, I realize I have got a lot to be thankful for. They were taken when young men. Whilst I have reached the three

score and ten. I have had two happy marriages. I have two children of my own, I have three stepsons, but having been married to their mother for over 32 years, I have always looked on them as my own sons, and I know their mother used to look on my children as her own. We have both tried to do our best, but if there is anything we have failed in I hope we shall be forgiven.

I am now alone, but I am not alone; I have all the family around me some their wives grand children.

I go to a midday meal one day to Ted and Edna's one day to Cyril & Betty's. Some Sundays I go to dinner at

Harold and Joys at Littleport and some Sundays I ~~go~~ go to dinner at Arthur and Joan's at Eriswell for which I am very thankful.

I know there is not one of them would see me to come to any harm.

When they read this (which I hope they all do) I want them to know how much I appreciate all they have all done for us over the years, and for all they are still doing for me now. I hope they will all be rewarded some day.

I could go on page after page but should only keep on repeating myself. Mother and myself were

always pleased and grateful for the way our families hit it off together. When I say families I include sons, wives and every one of the family. I thank every one from the bottom of my heart. What we should have done without all your help I do not know.

Well there is a lot more I could write about. Perhaps some things I should like to write about, and some I dare not write about. Whoever reads this (and I am not afraid of anyone reading it) perhaps they could sit down and write about their own ups and downs and it might make better reading.

If during the next few years, if I think of anything that I think would be of interest I will add further pages.

I have no O levels or A levels so if I have made a few blotches hope I shall be forgiven

I would like to finish this with a poem I saw in a book some time ago
H Coleridge

Please don't find fault with the man who limps,
And stumbles along the road.

Unless you've worn the shoes that he wears,

Or struggled beneath his load.

There may be tacks in his shoes that ^{hurt} hurt.

Though hidden away from view.

And the burden he bears placed on your back.

Might cause you to stumble too.

Don't be harsh with the man who sins
Or felt him with word, or stone.
Unless you're sure, aye doubly sure,
You have no sins of your own,
Who knows perhaps of the tempter's voice,
I should speak so soft to you,
As it did to him, when he went astray.
I would cause you to stagger too.
Don't sneer at the man who's down today
Unless you've felt the blow
That caused his fall & he felt the shame,
That only the fallen know.
You may be strong, but still the blows
That were his, if dealt to you
In the self same way, at the self same time
Might cause you to fall too.