

DOP/01/016

Alice Gear
Born 1902

003 Grandfather thought the world of him.

010 You lose them the longer you live the more trouble you see.

015 Died when AG was about 13 years old.

021 Funerals – set pieces. A code, a proper and improper way to do things. Begin with line-up, husband and wife, children, uncles and aunts, etc. Had to be worked out who was most entitled to be up front. People berated themselves for the next two or three years in getting black. Often hadn't got the money, borrowed or had things on book, penalised themselves terribly =so that they were put down in the right manner. Not paid for beforehand in insurance a few did.

041 Men didn't earn £5 per week until second World War.

051 Had to choose coffin, hurdles, what on inscription. Horse drawn carts. The Victoria pub did have broughams – carriage with closed in tops.

060 Women did laying out. Came to nurse people in their final illness. Women always laid out in white nightdress.

070 Her mother-in-law lost first baby aged 3 months with convulsions. Had baby within year of marriage. You had what came in those days, people thought it was their lot. Had allotment, had groceries for week but had only 1s. left in the world when baby died suddenly on Sunday morning. Had wedding gown dyed black. were two or three years getting over that. Approx. 1885. That tradition didn't change. But then had spate of women not attending funerals.

097 Just wants to be reunited again with husband after death. Married 49 and a half years six years courting.

112 Mrs. Tarbox used to say to her, Now Alice you be a good girl you sing the Glory Song and I'll give you a penny. Sankey and Moodie hymn, When by his grace I shall look at his face that will be glory, Yes glory for me. she came to deliver children at time of illness and also laid out. three others like her. Mrs.Goss, Mrs. William, and Mrs. Henson. Tradition was that body was laid out, washed and cleaned and put in white shirt before being put in shroud. Shroud usually built into coffin.

149 Mr. Gurney and other undertakers were friends. always came after tea at about 6 o'clock. In those days body kept in house on trestle that undertaker would provide. No chapels of rest.

160 When child birth sex swept under carpet. Made a lot of funerals. people came from away to it. Now death swept under the carpet and have dragged sex into limelight. they were

never told anything about it four girls and not one of them had to be married or got into trouble. Wasn't warnings, wasn't what mum and dad taught as that was non-existent. If your instincts are right I think you'll get through father said, I never had to go looking for a husband for none of my daughters.

175 Were as green as grass. some natural instinct held you back. boys no different in attitude to today. Double standards some lose girls, but girls they married had to be like Caesars wife.

187 Learnt it from older girls. Very, very green, had to feel your way At Girls School there was gardening hut, conversations round the back. miss Townsend, the head teacher staff room looked out, and if they were there too long she'd go or send teacher to break it up.

200 First period, take no notice of that, that's alright, that's just an instance that you're growing up properly. Your body's working as it should do, that's a sign of it. That's part of being a woman. She thought she was dying. Learnt it from older girls. getting a good man made things more comfortable.

240 Six years courting, 17 when started going out together. Started in 1917. Met at dance. He came sidling over and said he was not a good dancer, but give me one. Thought he was smashing. Didn't know him before, he lived in Bradwell – like two separate places. Lot of Bradwell fellows came to Wolverton courting, on foot, girls went to Bradwell. Husband came up with Harold Letts. Knew it would be long courtship, because had so little money. Had to save like mad. Very few had H.P. that was a wicked wrong thing to do. How would you manage if the bad times came and they took it all back.

280 Pawnbrokers at Stony and Northampton. Wolverton supposed to be a stuck up place.

290 Many men came from large towns to Wolverton, thought they were coming to end of world. Grandfather came from Birmingham via Andover. Sign writer– also worked part time at Hayes Boatyard.

320 Discusses Piano & Herrings phrases. days of book time inn people buying houses. Idea was you went up in world when came to Wolverton. Had toffee-nosed aunt in Peel Road. Husband's grandparents came form Yardley Gobion. when started going out aunt came round and protested to her father not allowing her to go out with him. Father didn't object. Aunt Polly thought the family was farm jobs.

674 Met a dance at Science and Arts Institute Had 6d. hop on Friday evening. Type of dancing class in which you could learn steps. No refreshments. Lasted about two hours. Bert Watson played piano.

418 One person taught steps. If person stood on corner he'd whip them up. Went after night school in winter. Night classes in book-keeping or whatever pertaining to job, men did classes relating to job.

450 Called Bert Watson hop. It was well run, there was no goings-on. Had been going some years.

475 After dance, Can I see you home. Gas lights in street. electric light installed and turned on the day 2nd World War broke out, everybody out to see them. Went on once, then blackout and didn't come on til after the war.

502 Walked home to door. No kissing first time. We were choosy you see. You mustn't commit yourself. You might not like him very much. You'd better find out first before you got too thick.

512 Remembers asking mother question, she said oh well you'll find out later they're bedroom secrets.

522 After showing home, shall you be at class on Monday or Tuesday cos I've got a class then you see. I said Yes, Can I see you. So I said Yes if you like, I don't mind.

528 The MC was Jimmy Funge lived in Anson Road. Went with two friends. when Bert asked to see her home went to cloakrooms. Girls upstairs. Boys downstairs. He was waiting and so were her two friends. Bert good looking I think I'd scored one off them, not for his personality, but because they all wanted to know who he was and I'd sort of found out as it were. Got down steps. well, you've come out with us and you'll come back with us or else – bit bitchy like – well you see the position I'm in. Never mind let it go till Tuesday then doesn't give them anything to hand on to.

563 Been going out for a couple of years before parents asked them over. Christmas – market on Friday nights. Walking along Church Street and Bert said, Come across the road, there's someone I want you to meet. Not your mum and dad is it. Yes it is. Asked whether her father would let her spend Christmas Day afternoon in Bradwell. From that time onwards her mother and father asked him in.

600 He came to door, but not invited in till then. Not till it was official, after his people had recognised her. Mustn't be first one, it would be out of turn. Had to come from the fellow that was proper. Girl wasn't allowed to say, How about it.

630 Alice brought family up after mother's health broke down. Initiation was half-way step to being engaged.

665 Bert didn't go to war. Apprentice. Not keen to go an only son. Not very robust. After four years of war everybody had had enough of it – went when called and not before. Those who'd gone out early, majority of them were killed.

697 Before went to France many fellows were engaged or nearly so, wanted to get married before going overseas. Not allowed to leave because afraid of desertions. Church Chelmsford-Springfield Park Church – arranged mass wedding ceremony. Done in first few months. Bucks Territorials. They were there visiting Alf.

Side Two

000 Quarter fare privileged ticket. Mr. and Mrs. Cockerill's (ex wood work teacher at Radcliffe) wife's mother and father married there.

015 Married for the allowance perhaps. start of women staying on at work after being married – normally sacked on marriage.

021 "Allotment" money – Railway made army allowance that wives were paid up to a percentage of their husband's wages – had they been at work. Drew it once a fortnight – paid in dining hall. Not just married men, single men's family paid too.

044 Doesn't know the French. 054 Flushes on outside loos in little streets always went off automatically at the same time. Little street kids – looked down on by rest of Wolverton – yet some of posh families of Wolverton came from Drivers Row – road that went down to the stables, used ex-station buffet as stable. Born in one of these six houses. The laundry was there for towels, etc. from the trains. the house she was born in, looked out of the drying ground – the washing saw out by breakfast time. Houses kept for men not in Works, but on permanent way. Father's mother a widow, allowed to stay there, lived with her for a couple of years before moving to Cambridge Street. Grandfather was a signalman.

104 Didn't have a charwoman, only well-off did. Major Mason lived in two western Road, he was semi-invalid. Wife had money. Had cook, housemaid, parlour maid and gardener. Gardener also blacked grates and cleaned boots.

126 Suicides used "Suicide Bridge" – nowhere else – no overdoses of tablets, a few cut throats. Can't remember any more suicides in war, War made little difference. Dad just had armband and truncheon.

158 McCorquodales 1915. Remember strikers escorting two men home to Bradwell every day who insisted on working. Thought it needed a great deal of self possession to march with crowd of several hundred escorting you home twice a day to front door. Wife was there and when heard them coming (had drums and mouth organs) would whip him in quick and shut the door on them. Strikers had concerts in the Picture Palace in the afternoon to give men and women something to do.

179 Felt they were rather stupid as even then there were a lot of young people who couldn't get jobs when leaving school. Big upheaval and upset – but not same as General Strike.

195 After General strike anyone involved actively in strike was last to be re-employed. Happened to her father.

214 Recalls John Scurr at Buckingham Town Hall, host but he and Labour supporters were stoned. AG's father was there.

248 Didn't feel war had effect on role of women, thought suffragettes went too far – too violent.

258 Didn't feel resentful about position in society – a man's world, but still is. No ripples of suffragette movement in Wolverton, They were a disgrace to womankind they were.

279 Women held back by facts of life. coming of pill had made difference. When she was young, How shall I put it your life was only over month to month, you see, you could build your castles this high, but they could drop like that through something outside your wishes or

anything like that. Nature's put a big brake on women. They're the casket for the next generation.

313 Only called doctor when desperate as you had to pay. Had a dispensary where paid so much per month. Dr. Harvey and Dr. Simmons in Wolverton. They had Dr. Bull from Stratford, and son very autocratic.

345 Cricket Club, Tennis Club and dinners for the professional class in Wolverton. Perhaps had good holiday, or went up to London theatre with a pass.

361 No rationing, prices rationed things. Eggs were 2s. each. Vegetable from allotment. Mother got sheep's head or pig's pluck – all the intestines and the chitlings. My brother, right to the day he died, he used to go to bed and dream about his mother's pluck pie. Whole of intestines of pig – half into faggot, half into pluck pie, with baked suet crust round the edge of the dish put in about an hour before you dished it. Real good food. If it wasn't fancy it was a lot of trouble. Sheep's heads made lovely stews got one for 5 or 6d – two good dinners. Also brawn. Had a lot of meatless days in the war, had Yorkshire puddings with powdered eggs. suet puddings with scampering of meat or bacon and herbs – A clanger – a bacon and onion suet pudding Bucks Dumplings were jam at one end, meat at the other. Before she went to work, money was short and feeding the family was difficult. People used to say Stock was a good as money, ridiculous because you had to get them to the wage-earning stage.

448 Nobody's Christmas Dinner was very good. never had an outfit – only a bit at a time – only people who had more were the foremen's children. Foremen were paid for holidays other men weren't called a march past so called because instead of getting pay packet you marched past the wages office.

490 Every Sunday could take roast down to bakers.

509 Had a range, then when growing up had a hired black gas stove from Gas Co., did away with drudgery of stove, then had "New World Cookers – you bought those.

532 Hankies – cheap present, neckerchiefs popular too. Chocolate when ill – halfpenny bought an everlasting strip. When 15 or 16 spent money mostly on clothes – could go to Northampton, but on Stratford Road was Braggins and Atkins. Nin Church Street there was Pidgeons – woman ran a clothing club there. Or the Co-op. Shops didn't have much to sell in war.

592 Picture Palace used to be Tilley's Wood shop. Used to g 2d.halfpenny – 1d for children's matinee. Continued during war.

665 After soldiers went life was very humdrum. Big holiday was always Whitsun. Used to turn one of the shops into a ballroom. Used to have Anybody who was anybody came from York, Derby to spend those two previous days because that was the only time when there was anything going on. Whit Monday and Tuesday. Didn't really carry on after the war.

698 At last ball, not dancing, being nuisances up and down steps to band stand getting round other people's feet. came home at 2 o'clock in the morning across places where they took the engines, making sure you didn't get your feet caught in the rails. Had bar there and if

your dad was a bit easy going he'd get you some lemonade and things – came in a cod's bottle with marble in it, or a Stone Ginger in stone jar. No ice cream, no crisps. One band, played down Park in afternoon. All family went. Her father was Chairman of Athletic Club, great source of worry to him as her brother had two left feet. Alf was a good runner and going to have trial with Northampton.