

DOP/01/018

Mrs. Mabel Brown (nee Archer),
Born 5th April 1894
Living at the Green, Newport Pagnell

007 Lived at 66 Cambridge Street. Father died February 1914. Mother and older brother (6 years older).

015 Heard war broke out when on holiday at Yeovil. Had been bridesmaid at friend's wedding. Came home during week. Walking through town, notice in Post Office window, people gathering round it. Everybody felt dreadful. When came home on train there were boys being said farewell to by parents going to join up.

036 Everybody there seemed very calm. "Knew we had to face up to things. That was the British spirit, you see".

042 Nobody in family in England went to war. Six cousins for New Zealand in army; made home their HQ for leave. One killed, one badly wounded, brought friends home on leave. Worked for dances and anything else that raised funds for Christmas gifts and food parcels.

059 Those who came back didn't talk about experience. After war worked next too somebody in Medical Corps some men talked to him, got glimpses of what went on. Didn't want to forget it, rather didn't want them to know horrors of it.

074 Would have thought from way some of them talked it was a joy ride and you knew jolly well it wasn't. Men really wonderful about it. Protection of women or too horrible to remember. A bit of both. She could imagine what happened, didn't have to ask.

087 Brother making propellers for airplanes in Woverhampton – had had to leave Wolverton at 21.

095 Went on living as normal as could during war. When father died MB at work and took in boarders. Sometimes mum took laundry work in – especially young men's fancy shirts. Two of men who boarded went to war – Bill Lee and his brother George came after Bill had left, both came back. Came from away to work.

128 Not romantically attached to anyone in war.

134 Boys went from Print, but large female staff anyway printing trade not like an engineering factory.

146 Strike was in May 1915, working normally and heard office staff had got two bob rise. Asked for rise too, didn't get it so somebody started storming round place, doesn't know who, you know how you get into groups quickly – all going a bit mad and running a bit riot. Sis Axby got up and spoke to everybody. went down to warehouse entrance. Sis Axby got up on box and started talking. While going on, not sure but thinks they blew whistle, anyway they sent us home. We called it a lock-out and not a strike. Thinks strike lasted a fortnight.

169 Sis became secretary of branch of T.U. and from that we went on. Went back – thinks got 6d extra only. We got a trifle for our efforts. Became good union branch from then on.

180 Not sure who made original approach for rise, might have been Sis. No organisation at all. week's delay before reply.

195 Thinks whilst Sis was talking they opened doors and said, Well you'd better go home, or something like that. Everybody went home then, but some went in the next day. Tommy Roberts, a typographical Association organiser for Northampton, came and talked to them and he got in touch with Paperwork's' Union. MB was one of crowd. All felt should be treated differently. Had meetings, Mr. Roberts got organisers of one of printing unions. Alf Evans was National General Secretary. Mrs Bridges was one of organisers. They led everything.

245 Back at work some time afterwards. Approached by Committee Member and asked to serve. Come on, Mabel you can talk. And that's how got on committee.

250 Realised had to do something to get organised. Had day when everybody went to Science and Arts Institute did negotiations. Everybody in it together, none doing anything in particular except few that were doing negotiations.

265 Mother in favour, got strike pay from Union.

280 Men involved too, agrees 75 came out, agrees those who stayed in got extra shilling per week.

295 Everything went on all right with management afterwards. No bad feeling – can't remember any. A bit nerked with those who stayed in. naturally. No long-lasting effect. MB worked in little department where everybody was pally. went on normally, occasionally would come out with something nasty.

320 Went on committee until became local branch secretary in 1918-19.

340 Those not involved, some for, some against. A bit mixed up whether doing right or wrong. Never any bitterness in later negotiations with management.

360 Father a Liberal, Never had any reasons to be Labour. Became involved in politics because she decided to fight for what she thought was right. can't remember any specific influences, just the nature of the beast.

382 Sis Axby, very energetic, but very nice. Memories of it all, a very pleasant going on. Sis had no experience of union activity before, just force of circumstances. Nothing like it had happened before. isolated incident, no historical reason for it.

414 Union took them over. Very proud of union work in printing. First union to get paid holidays. Nothing like it had happened before. Isolated incident, no historical reason for it. Union took them over. Very proud of union work in printing. First union to get paid holidays. National decisions agreed by local management.

430 Can't remember when joined Labour party, probably at time she got involved in Union. Johnny Curr, first parliamentary candidate – about 1919. Rose of Labour party after war.

478 Armistice – we went mad, that's the only word you can express for it. Flag put up outside Cranford. Fire escape door at end of room where worked. Knew going to put flag up. Every little while someone detailed to look out door from time to time. In end it was there – 11.00.a.m. – went mad, banged about, using spanners and hammers, biffing and banging about. She was on opposite side of room, didn't get up on table to look out of room, some did. Boys came rolling out of LMS Works. Somebody shouted down from room Come and fetch us out.

Side Two

000 All came out, festivities all over the place. MB went home to see mum. She was larking about in the garden with the next door neighbour, Auntie Liz, Mrs. Gregory – singing and dancing about in the garden. Wandered all over town. Sister-in-law living at house with some of her children. Mother went with them and pram. MB went with gang of girls, going to everybody's house. Didn't say much sensible, just larking about so glad it was all over, shouting hooray, waving arms about. feels had united gatherings in local buildings – confused with World War II. Went around in crowds, drifting from one lot to another, "Really let fly". Had to consider people's feelings who'd lost people. One or two girls in department had lost brothers. Had to be sort of first one way then the other.

015 But they too rejoiced to think it was over, and joined in with everything. We thought they were wonderful. Just general feeling of madness.

042 Something happened along railway line, but can't remember what. Long time before men came back, came back in patches.

062 Life had to go on normally after war. Can't remember people speaking against war. To be quite honest we all tried to go on living as naturally as we could, facing up to all the horrors. I can't think that we did anything different. Doesn't remember anybody being bitter or nasty, but all thought What's it worth? What's going to come of it all? What good is it going to do? We were in it and we knew we'd got to face it. – The general attitude.

080 Can't remember girls going away as VAD's,. Etc. More in Second War.

100 Lived quietly more so than in Second War.

105 Men must have been affected, but life goes on altering all the time. can't think of anything particular it altered, just went on living.

120 Worked either 6-5.30. Can't remember when hours changed. possible after strike. In evenings spent time at home, or went to dances, lovely dances at Science & Arts, in Reading Room at McCorqs.

170 Liked dancing. Soldiers came from local billets (or was it World War II). Social evenings run by chapels and churches. Games, singing, dancing. Attached to Congregational Church.

247 Trying to live as normally and cheerfully as could. A bit of faith came into it.

257 Knitted socks and anything else needed for army. People took knitting to church (couldn't remember which war though).