

## **DOP/01/032**

Mrs Lily Dytham (nee Wildman) born Sept. 1904  
37 Stacey Avenue  
Wolverton

012 In 1913 living in Church Street, Wolverton at time. Had two soldiers billeted with them. Only young soldiers. Came up to see them assembling guns and drilling.

049 Remembers aeroplane coming over. Such an event they went out and shouted "Aeroplane, aeroplane."

066 4<sup>th</sup> August – on holidays in Blackpool. One of her uncles, aged 18, on holiday with them, joined up as soon as he got home as they thought the war would be over by Christmas. Several uncles in War, all came back. Aunt engaged to marry a boy that year, he got killed. Her father never went, on Special Work in the Works. A wood worker, age about 35.

081 Only two in the family elder brother and her.

090 Great feeling of excitement, wanted to go, wanted to do bit. Excitement at that age.

097 Uncle who joined after holiday – went to Salonika – sent embroidered cards to her.

101 At school, asked to send eggs to wounded soldiers, wrote names and addresses on them. Letters came back from soldiers. Mrs. D has some of letters (dated 1916).

134 Impression of war. Bit of adventure, didn't frighten her, until they came home wounded, then worried for uncles. Hated idea of being damp – couldn't stand thought of them in water in trenches.

160 Her uncles told them of the horrors of life at the Front.

170 Kept chickens in back garden – went gleaning. Uncle's kept pigs at Deanshanger – spent summer holidays there.

192 Knitted balaclava helmets, scarves, gloves in school, also took the work home. very patriotic at school. In cigarette packets there were "silk flags of all nations". Can't remember following the war in lessons.

231 Went to Sunday School twice a day and Church at night. started at Wesleyan, then went to C of E after short time. Went to St. George's Sunday School, but went to Holy Trinity Church. Mother not active in Church.

295 Can't remember girls playing games related to the war.

305 Food got short, no rationing. Case of first come, first served. Used to go to Old Market on Friday and queuing for lard and butter. Never missed school to queue. Market stayed open till 6 at night, to allow for men to come out of work. In market there was a Penny Bazaar – everything for a penny.

339 Eggs were scarce unless you had your own hens. Kept tame rabbits, fattened them, dried the skins and turned them into rugs (describes process).

362 Made rugs out of old coats (describes process)

397 "There wasn't a lot of money in those days. There was class distinction". "The firemen were somebody then" – had to wear bowler hat, Doctors' wife and manager, looked up to. Playing tennis down the Park – this was considered exclusive. She played at Westview in Bradwell, adjoining Father Guest's house.

426 Got rabbits from milkman, who came from Old Bradwell. Went out with jug-dipped measure into churn and poured it into jug. Sold wild rabbits for 9d or 1/- never skinned, but cleaned.

442 Man used to come round and shout "rag-a-bone, rabbit skins!". Saved bones – (bought bones for stock) dried the bones off for rag and bone man. Came along back way. Got 1d for rabbit skins and sold bones to them too.

463 Ate a lot of offal – lamb's kidneys, quite cheap meal. Ate hearts, pluck, make faggots. Before war Grandmother bought melts – the carcasses stuffed it with stuffing. Can remember getting 6d of beef and kidney and 1d worth of suet to make steak and kidney pudding. Went blackberrying for blackberry and apple pudding. Man in Deanshanger known as "the Blackberry Man" who bought them for 2d per lb.

514 Remembers coming home from school, mother would have saucepan on cooked "swimmers" – suet and flour, round dropped in saucepan of boiling water for quarter hour. Got them out, put on plate, golden syrup or butter and sugar on them. So cheap and nourishing. For tea only had bread butter and jam. main meal at lunch time. Dad came home when whistle blew. Whistle then blew at 1.20, then 1.25, then 1.30 and if they were not in then they had to have a "quarter" – lose quarter of an hour's pay.

561 Had allotment, dad spent a lot of time there. Always worrying about relations in war, "what were you going to hear". In a small community like this you knew everybody, you knew everyone, so that if anyone did get killed, well, it was almost personal to you, cos you knew them.

586 Lost a lot of young boys, aged about 18. Her husbands; eldest brother joined up under age. Son Neil had German sword and helmet, her brother-in-law's mementoes.

628 Got short of fuel, not much coal. Had blizzard in 1916. Went off and father sawed up fallen tree branches, carried it back in trolley made of old orange box on pram wheels. Never had a lot of toys then. Christmas spent at Deanshanger with Mother's family, until she was 14. Went on tram to Stratford, walked down High Street, through George Yard, where uncle Walt Holland had blacksmiths' shop, across square, down Mill drive, across three fields – over river bridge – where ghost of Bobby Bannister was supposed to be. Over "Long Field", then another field, then after last field came to "Shade Gate".

Went to Grandma's – two roomed cottage. She and brother rushed in. In corner was small Christmas tree – had sugar mice and sugar pigs on them – same each year. Hung up Grandfathers' woollen socks on Christmas Eve. In toe were nuts, an apple, an orange and a new penny, perhaps she'd have a doll and her brother a game. The same every Christmas but they loved it. Had a few presents downstairs and a book and during the war, clothes. Christmas dinner cooked at the Bakers' A joint rather than poultry. Always had Christmas pudding made the year before. On Christmas evening the Carol singers came round. Had mince pie and glass of wine, then chapel singers came, singing in harmony. gave the singers a halfpenny. Her uncle would get shovel, hold it, a halfpenny in fire and get the singer to take a hot halfpenny of the shovel as a joke.

069 Left school in September 1918 aged 14, couldn't get work at first. Always wanted to work in shop, where she could weigh. Eventually got work in July 1919 in the Print. Spent 10 years there until married. Had to leave when married, had to leave. Had £10 marriage bonus – went a long way then. Strike of 1915, one of her friends' sisters came out. Her mother didn't approve of strikes but the girl marched with the others, and Lily remembers seeing the mother slap her face because she did.

112 Father a Tory. "You see in those days that's what you did you see. If your family was Tory, well you were Tory you see. Nobody seemed to well, sort of have a mind of their own then, they followed in, it was like the boys in the Works. They followed their father's trade, majority did. If your father was a woodworker, you went a woodworker.

129 If you were a foreman you worked your son in as a foreman – a lot of nepotism then – died out since.

144 Felt a "cut above" the people who lived in the Little Streets "yes, oh yes there was snobbery, yes, I mean they was quite nice people but you see, if they lived in the Little Streets it was, well, you, as I say you just felt a little bit above them you see".

148 Her husbands' father did the Pleasant Sunday Afternoons in Bradwell I- sister sang and boys played in the orchestra. Father-in Law taught the violin. Husband's family was very religious, mother and father-in-law originally in Salvation Army in Burton-on-Trent. PSA – not hymns, not a church service, but had a religious trend. Sister-in law sand "Angus on my own" and other sentimental ballads. Her husband's father was "a little that way, lived with son Douglas later. Children played shooting each said "Ooh you boys I wish you wouldn't play war, I wish you would play priests".

235 Brother had paper round, when he gave it up she was persuaded to take it on. Paper halfpenny each then. Didn't stick it too o=long – had 1/- a week for six days work. Had 1d pocket money, but sweets were 4oz for 1d. Mother bought them comics – her favourite was "Chips" – brothers; was "Comic Cuts".

290 Lady next door to them became the first woman post lady in Wolverton. Had brothers in the war, a captain. When he came home on leave they (Lily etc) were thrilled to death to see him in Captains; uniform – vastly different to private's uniform – ever so proud when he came on leave.

305 War didn't have much effect of women's position in Wolverton, more changes came about in 2<sup>nd</sup> war.

315 11<sup>th</sup> November. Can't remember what they did too clearly. she was an onlooker rather than joining in.

327 Effect of war – only one zeppelin came near. Doesn't think it affected life too much "Life went on, it all seemed to go on, you see, the same. It was only just that you was always anxious".

345 Life seemed to "slip back into normal routine" after war. 370 Lot of white feathers given out.

374 Men who came back "were heroes", welcomed back and made a great deal of.

396 Father Guest – "very eccentric", Tennis Club adjoining Vicarage gardens often used to come and play. Liked to have the ball played to him. Men put ball beyond his reach and he got so annoyed. When they played matches always had a complaint, always complained when they had visitors.

423 Brother married a girl from Bradwell. Had to see Father Guest to get banns called. He'd gone to bed. Had to go up in bedroom to see him. Had candle in bedroom this was stuck on back of chair with tallow running down the chair.

454 Went to wedding that Father Guest officiated at. Girl from Bradwell, but husband from North, and a different accent. Father G. had almost finished responses and then made them go through them again because he said he couldn't understand the man properly.

470 Walked across the fields a lot.

504 Albert Brown known as "Bolshie" Brown.

537 Took little part in public events – spent a lot of time playing the piano, keeping himself to himself.

568 In severe blizzards in war the canal froze. Walked along canal to Cosgrove, there was a side stretch of water, skated there, children slid there. Went on moonlit nights with old cocoa tin with smouldering rag in it. Tie on piece of string, swing it round and it would burn up – used to keep hands warm.

2276  
No 3 Hospital  
No 6 Ward

Heamitree Road  
Exeter  
Devon

Dear Miss Wildman,

Having had an egg for my breakfast and I may add that I enjoyed it I am very pleased to thank you for sending some for our wounded and sick Tommies and I am sure you will endeavour to continue to send more as I saw several with your name on them. Well, it was one of those eggs you never get in an argument with as it could not speak one a word of any language so it nothing to me and of course, I consumed it on the spot. Well once more I wish you luck and joy in your occupation and should very much like you to send me a special one. Believe me to be yours in anticipation of receiving that special egg.

Trooper Reg Gordon Cox 2286  
First Royal Devon Yeomanry  
Late Deudenilles

26.6.16

My Dear Lily,

Just a line in answer to your kind letter and for your dear gift you send me I am sure I do not know how to thank you for your kindness and your very nice letters you sign from Lily your little friend and must say you are a very dear friend of mine. I expect you will get a shock some day when you see me come up to you and say well, Lilly how are you going on, all right. Well dear Lilly, I very nearly fit for active service again of course I shall get ten days leave first then off I go to do a bit more to keep The Country and you at Ease. So cheer up my little Lilly, how can they shirk it when they see all day long dear one like all our girls trying and doing their utmost for Tommy I got my opinion that there Heart is got a stone in it soon well where ever I go I shall keep in communication with my Little friend so be a Good Little Girl as I shall see you some day. Well dear you must remember me to dad and mam and your Brother may they be kep safe to come back to you so it will not be pain to you as I know I got a friend in my Lilly to think of me sometimes so I am in it with a strong arm and Light Heart. Well be God. Dear Lilly, Your affectionate Friend.

Reg Gordon Trooper Cox.

Don't forget to give dad and mam my respects.

Dear Little Lilly,

Just a line in answer to your very welcome letter which I received this morning I did not get it at my address I gave you as I am going on fine in regards of Health and been Sheffield to a convalescent home at a little place called (Budleigh, Slaterton).

Well, I can tell you I am more than a little pleased to hear from you as I have not many friends left as I had the misfortune to lose both of my best friends when I were 12 years of age so no wonder were glad of some dear little friend to write to, we must thank you for your king offer to send me more of your cigarettes if I refuse you will say that I am nasty one so you can send them little one if you can then you say you got an uncle and friend at Salonika well perhaps soon I shall see them as I shall soon be fit to go back again and do a bit more towards keeping the flag over such dear heads as yours because it makes out Tommy and Hearts jump with pride that no other Nation possesses when we got such as you to look after us in our test that we are going through in the war so I hope to feel fit and well very soon and to be back to my Regiment at Salrucia so cheer up Lily and keep a warm spot in your dear little heart for one who will fight all the Haidu for the simple reason I know you at home are doing your best remember me to your dad and mum. God bless them both for your sake. So good luck Lilly, write soon, believe me, your sincerely, Troop R. Gordon Cox.

Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry  
Beclin Military Convalescent Home  
East Budleigh, Devon.

I shall write to you after I am out there as it were.

No 3 Hospital No 6 Ward  
Heavitree Road, Exeter

My Dear Little Lily,

Just a line in answer to your last letter. I am pleased to say I am feeling fine and that I have returned from the convalescent home after a nice time. I have returned here to be discharged on leave for ten days as you are always to come back to the Hospital after convalescence to let them see how you are or if you are fit for duty or not. So I shall very likely be going out to my home in a few days. So cheer up Lily I now you're glad I am better as well as your dad and mam as I know your feelings and I am proud of the way you all think of our hardships but ours is a very happy lot.

When we know there are such as you looking after us with you cheery smiling faces and what you do for our comfort. So you see we got something to fight for and proud to do it for you so dear Lily you done your bit as well as me and I think no end of it, of you for doing so no doubt you will be still wondering what sort of a is the well tall 5ft 8ins fair blue eyes fair hair 22 years old, strong now, very upright. Now do you feel better, ye, you can laugh, if you like dear little girl well you please remember me to dad and mam and Ext. and Except for your kind letters you have sent me in the past and I shall anticipate more news of you I the near future I will close now wishing you and yours everything you wish yourself and remain your ever true friend.

Trooper Reg. Gordon Cox

2286 Devon Yeomanry

I wish you were twenty two although I never saw you I guess what you are like by your letters and one day you shall see me. But I shall see you first Lilly.

P.S. Write back soon as I may be gone from here by Monday dear Lily.