

**Interview with Dorothy Cornell
by Derek Lamb
Mosses Farm, August 2010**

When were you born?

29 June 1925

Where exactly were you born?

Sible Hedingham, Alexandra Road

When did you first come to live in Gestingthorpe?

I don't know what year my father came to Rectory Farm. I couldn't have been very old really because my first memory of going to school was going to Halstead Grammar School.

I'll come on to school in a minute...

I don't reckon I could have been about three, four or five; I don't really know....

So late 20s early 30s you are in Rectory Farm

He came out of there in 1931 I think

So you weren't at Rectory Farm for very long that you can remember....so where did you move to after Rectory Farm?

Tudor Lodge. It wasn't Tudor Lodge then, it is now

How long were you there for, roughly?

I don't know, I was only young, time didn't mean anything to me

Did you live there right through and then the war started and then you met Jack?

After Tudor Lodge, we weren't there all that long I think, we went to the Barracks at Gestingthorpe, down the bottom of where Ashley (Cooper) lives...I don't know how long we were there

And then, after that?

After that, we come up Sudbury Road into the Council houses

They are still there today aren't they?

Yes

Is that where you lived during the war?

Yes and that was where I lived until I married Jack

In 1946?

Right

Now school, your first school would have been Gestingthorpe?

No, Halstead Grammar School

Both my brothers went there and we were taken every day by my father or my uncle

I can't remember how long we were there, I couldn't really say, I wouldn't say it was that long. When you are six, seven or eight, time doesn't mean nothing...I don't know

So you went to Grammar School before you were 11, it was your first school

It was my first school

So after that you came to Gestingthorpe (school) where you had that injury that you are still pursuing a claim for (a family joke)...now that was Teacher Bet

Teacher Bet, yes but we didn't call her Teacher Bet to her face. I don't know if her name was Betty

Gill (Lamb) knows of course. And she was a widow, she had only been married a little while and her...

Husband got killed in the First World War

Terrible business; so then you went there, to what is now the village hall in Gestingthorpe and was she your only teacher?

No...she was in the infants' class and Miss Keywood was Head Teacher

Were you there right through until you left school at 14 or 15

15

So that would have been 1940, after the war started?

Yes, about then....

And then, when did you first know of Jack Cornell, that you were going to marry?

When I was young, when I went to school

He was at school with you

No, no he weren't at the same school...he went to Bulmer...I was aware of Jack, Mabel and Evelyn (his sisters)

Yes, I know you told me. You knew Evelyn

Can I talk to you about when you were growing up in the village, what about past times and games and that sort of thing; when you were a child, growing up, what sort of games did you play?

There was no sort of organised games...we only played amusing yourself games, you know hopscotch in the road, hoop and a stick and skipping ropes, that sort of thing. In those days you made all your own amusement

And were they the sort of games you would play in the school playground as well?

Yes and play rounders

If we talk about hobbies, did people collect things? Making things?

No, I don't think so; there was a lady in the village used to take in needlework that was all

Can you remember the first person in the village to have a radio, a wireless?

No...but when we were at Rectory Farm, we were one of the few to have a telephone

So that would have been the late twenties... [Hedingham 61]

There weren't many

What about electricity, did you have electricity at Rectory Farm?

Laughter...Never knew any thing about electricity until 1952

So, there was no electricity in the village until after the war?

No

Goodness

The first electricity we had in Bulmer was 1952 and we never had any running water

No running water either?

No, we got our water from the pump

So, in the village until after the war you've got no mains water, no electricity, there's still no gas and you reckon that Rectory Farm was one of the first to have a telephone?

I don't know about one of the first, one of the very few to have a telephone. The number was Hedingham 61 (These are probably the last two numbers on the current phone number)

So you don't remember having a radio at Rectory Farm but probably by the war you had a radio of some sort, maybe when you were in the council houses in Sudbury Road?

Yes it was a battery one, accumulator

Where did you used to get those charged?

They used to be a firm came round from Sudbury, I don't know how often they came round; they would take an accumulator away and bring a fresh one and I think that Gibson's garage in Sible Hedingham used to do it as well

Presumably you had your name on them

I reckon so, I don't remember; they must have had a number or something on them to identify them

Good that's something I wanted to ask you about...rounds men, people who called regularly in the village, in the 1930s. So they used to come round to collect the accumulators, what was that, every week?

I shouldn't say so...I don't really know

OK, who else would call regularly?

The butcher used to come round, groceries were delivered

Where did the butcher come from?

Best I can remember...Sudbury

Would he be in a van?

Yes, he'd be in a van...mother used to order it

Ordered? So it wasn't like a little shop?

No, that was delivered what you ordered

So how did she order the meat; would she phone them?

I don't know, she might have ordered from week to week. She used to go into town as well

I see; of course there were no fridges in those days

No fridges, no electric and in those times, what very little food went wrong was thrown out

Why was that then; because it was bought week to week, day to day?

It was all cleared up very quickly, nothing was thrown out they couldn't afford to

So you mentioned the accumulator man, you mentioned the butcher that called regularly; you also said the grocer...now where were they delivered from?

They come from Halstead I think, they come from the Coop

And did your mother used to write it in a book?

Yes, she used to have a book and write a list, you know, it used to go week to week.

It was all wrapped up in a brown paper parcel...the cheese, the butter

So who else would call regularly, rounds men or tradesmen?

The coalman, we only used to have it once a year

Oh really, a big delivery

Yes, we always used to have a lot of wood...we burned wood a lot

When would the coal delivery be then?

Sometime in the autumn, I don't know how much she had but they used to have a lot...about a ton

So you used to have somewhere to store it

We had a shed

Where was the coalman from?

Halstead I reckon...Sudbury or Halstead I reckon

There would be a railway line to bring the coal in

There was a railway at Halstead, whether that come from Halstead or Sudbury I don't really know

Who else would call...what about bread, the baker?

I can't remember where we had our bread from

Your mother didn't make it

No, 'cos Dick Felton had the shop, he used to bake but we never had our bread off him, we must have had it off the Coop, in a van. We must have done, we didn't have bread off Dick Felton, I know

What about fish, was that ever available...was there a man?

Yes, it used to be available about once a week. Jack Gilbert, used to live at North End, he used to come round with a trailer behind his motor, like a fruit stall and he used to have some sorts of fish, not all sorts. Like bloaters or kippers or smoked haddock. If he had fresh fish it would be something like mackerel

So it was mostly smoked or whatever

Yes, 'cos that was all out in the open. He used to come round I think that was Saturday mornings. Jack Gilbert's son used to live up in.....we used to reminisce about when they used to come round

Did he work in a fish shop in Sudbury or Halstead?

He must have got it from a fish shop locally or somewhere

What about milk?

No, we never had fresh milk we had tinned milk

Like condensed milk, sweet milk

Not sweetened...evaporated milk. We never had fresh milk till the war, because everything was rationed then, wasn't it

But was there a milk man that came round?

Yes but we never had fresh milk, my father never fancied it

So did you used to have the tin in the table and pour it in your tea and that sort of thing?

You used to open a tin and put it in a jug, never had a tin on the table. We used to put it in our tea and cook with it

So fresh milk was available

Fresh milk come round, it was where I worked in the finish. Everything was rationed and we had fresh milk then

Your family didn't have fresh milk, what about other people, did they have milk off the milkman or did they do what you did?

I've no idea.

Was the milk delivered in bottles or was it ladled out?

It was in bottles

By the 1930s?

From Wilsons they would have been bottled

And where was Wilsons, which town?

Wilsons had a herd of cows up at Hill Farm

So that was a local source

They come round the villages with it

Do you know if it was processed in any way?

It wasn't processed, I worked up there, all that happened was it went through the cooler

Like an old fashioned scrubbing board, it run over that, didn't it?

Yes that was all it went through a cooler thing, when that first come from the cow, but that was all.

So he came round with the delivery and presumably to other villages as well

Belchamp, Gestingthorpe, North End, Belchamp Water

Was there anyone else who came round? When I was growing up in the 50s, we used to have a chap who collected dry cleaning

No

Any one with household products that they would call with?

Occasionally, I think before the war, there used to be black people use to come round with suitcases full of jewellery bead, bits and pieces, foreigners, they'd open the case on the doorstep, flashy stuff

Ties and that sort of thing, I remember

Lovely silky ties, I remember they were often with a turban thing on

I can remember that

I don't think my mother ever bought anything off them, she never purchased anything like that

Did you ever have people call to sharpen knives, did you get that at all?

No, not as I can remember

Now you've got to keep a straight face here...what about the Monday Man, was he coming round before the war?

No that was after the war

Evelyn told you about the Monday Man (yes, yes) laughs (we don't want too much of this being recorded). *[This is a reference to condoms]*

At this point the tape ran out

Derek Lamb March 2013