

I am writing my memories, while I
can still remember what my life has
been like. I hope it is not too boring
for you to read,

So here goes!

3 Cornforth Hill, Richmond, Yorkshire, England, was where I was born, on the 26th September. The year was 1926. I had an older brother William Robert (Bill) and my name was Margaret Dixon. My sister Beatrice was born 2 1/2 yrs later. Richmond was a pretty market town, and at the bottom of the hill, was a fast flowing river and when my brother was 4 he fell in this river and I ran to my Mam, and told her our Bill was swimming. Needless to say he was fished out of the river, eventually, and finished up in hospital with pneumonia. It was about this time that my father was sent to Darlington, He worked for the Army and so we moved to a village called Cockerton, three miles from Darlington town. We lived at 3 Elvet Place and it was there my younger brother (John) was born. When I was four yrs old, I had to have my tonsils out, and so I went to hospital, but all I remember there, was blowing up a big red balloon, of course it must have been the anaesthetic because I don't remember anything, until it was time to come home, to Mam's lovely rice pudding. Then Bill, Beatrice & I contracted Measles, and we were all 3 in a big bed, and when the doctor came, he said 'let's have a look at your chests' and we said no! During that time John was born, and a lady looked after us, but my Dad wasn't too happy with her, because on returning home from work, she was chasing us around the table with a big knife, because we had been checking her, so she was asked to leave, which she must have been very happy to do so.

2.

Now, I am 4 yrs old, and I can start school. Alan took me along on my first day, and my teacher was Miss Salmon. I was given a brass casket scuttle and inside was all the lovely coloured blocks. I was delighted with these, and could build to my hearts delight, (wonderful). Alan came to collect me at 12 for dinner, & I cried I didn't want to leave, but I was promised I could return in the afternoon, & so I did.

The school was Alderman Leach Council School. It wasn't too far to walk there, it was built three sided, with a lovely playing field of grass. My time there was lovely and in the top class in 1935 we had a little party in honour of the King & Queen's Silver Jubilee, (the ring I still have).

During that time when I was 7 yrs old, we moved into a different house, not far from Chest Place 27 Hunstanworth Rd, and on Sunday, Bill, Beatrice & myself were allowed to visit our Grandma, at Hopetown, Darlington, about 3 miles away. We were able to play her gramophone, and sometimes we had a toffee apple to take home. She was a lovely Grandma called Susan and I loved her.

During the holidays, and week-ends we went to a little park, not too far away, and one day 3 big boys came too. I started to push me on the swing. I asked him his name and he said Guy Gibson, & he was visiting his grandparents after having a holiday in Egypt. The following week he gave a talk at our school, and later on in years he won the V.C. medal for bravery at Cunningsby in Lincolnshire.

At that time I had to have some milk teeth removed, to make way for the second teeth. On the Sunday, my father took me on the tram car to Darlington & then down a long road to show me where the clinic was. The next day I had to go there on my own, I was the first one there and afterwards, the nurse said I'd take you to your mummy, but when she realized I was on my own, she said you poor little when I got off the tram car and while I was walking home I met my Auntie Dot & she said "Why are you crying?" I told her & she took my home to Mam, she was very cross.

When I was eight, my Sister & I started Brownies, and it was great. We learned different things and played some lovely games. My Mam taught me to knit at that age & I thought it was wonderful. I was walking along the road, doing my knitting with big wooden needles and I dropped a stitch. There was a lady nearby, so I asked her to sort it out and she did. She was very kind I thought. We had rabbits in hutches in our garden. They were Angora's, and we had plenty of rabbit pies, and the pelts were sold to people who make gloves etc. About then, we moved to Hickstream Lane ~~and we~~ where there were fields & woods opposite. We all played there and collected fruit from the hedgerow. I thought it a marvellous place, but it wasn't for too long before we were going to be moved again.

3.

I am now 10 yrs old, and my father said he was transferring to Middlesbrough in Yorkshire. We went from a lovely country house, to the middle of town, it was awful, but this time we had a proper bathroom, as before we had a tin bath in the kitchen, which was filled with water on a Friday night, and we took it in turns getting washed, a drop of hot water added each time. The School had no grass just a concrete play ground. The day we arrived, a big silver balloon was flying over the houses. My father said it was a German air ship the 101. It was a wonderful sight, like a big cigar. Living in town must have been wonderful for my Mam, all the shops just a few minutes away, as where we lived before, there was only one corner shop.

At school I enjoyed the sport and when I was eleven, I represented the school at high jumping, at the yearly competition, at the race track at Stockton, but just as we were about to start, down came the rain, so no competition. When I was 11 yrs old I went to the High School, which was over the road to our house. Nice uniform & lovely teachers. We had to learn French & Biology all new to me, it was great. It was a time for roller skates, and bike rides, ~~lovely~~ (lovely time) matinee at the pictures, and we had plenty of picture houses to choose from. The Gaumont, Elite, Odeon, Hippodrome, Regent, Electric & Marlborough. Two live theatres, also!

And now I am twelve yrs old, and able to knit my socks, and jumpers. Mam made me some nice summer dresses, and skirts.

Mam had a nice Harris tweed coat, and when she thought she'd had it long enough, she reversed the buttons, for our Billy to wear it. When he went into the Merchant Navy later on, Mam thought it would be nice for me, but I said no thanks, then it was unpicked and made into a quilt for our bed. (nothing wasted in our house).

At that time one Sat morning, Beatrice and Avril next door, and myself, decided one November morning, as we couldn't go swimming we would go and visit my Grandma in Darlington. It was only sixteen miles.

and so off we started walking at about 10.30am, we did eventually get to my Gran's when it was dark about 5.30pm but she wasn't home.

The lady next door informed us she was nursing an old Gent two streets away, so off we went. Gran was absolutely amazed when she answered the door and asked how we had got there. We were given some bread & cheese and a drink, and then we were put on

the bus for home. Gran only had 1 sh + 7 1/2 p and the fare was 1/9, but a lady paid the difference, and so we arrived home at

9pm. I had a hiding, Beatrice a bath + nice supper, and Avril's Mam said she wasn't allowed to play with us again. I was

not allowed out for a month, just clean my bike + chop sticks after school. We didn't have a lot to spend, but on Sunday we had

a 1 penny each for collection at Sunday night service at church, but we spat 1 penny in tiffes and put the paper wrapper under

The felt seating in the pens, after a few weeks the seats were a bit bumpy, so we found a different one and so it went on, until we were found out. Beatrice & I joined the Girl Guides, and that was great, we went camping in the summer, and we earned some badges, but all that came to an end the following year 1939.

It is now 3rd September 1939. A Sunday we will remember for ever. I was wearing a grey skirt & bolero, and my red & grey jumper & socks. After breakfast of porridge & fried bread, I had to deliver a skirt to a lady not far away, so Beatrice and I found the lady's house and collected it for Mum's sewing. Just then the air raid siren sounded, & we were told, run home quickly the Germans are coming of course it was a false alarm, but very frightening all the same.

The same week, we were told we had to be evacuated, as Middlesbrough was a high industrial town. We had Dorman & Long's steel works, Cargo fleet iron & steel works, and I.C.I. chemical industry, also a big port on the Mvic Tees, very valuable to the Germans.

I was sent to Scally Mills, & Beatrice & John to farms 9 miles from me. I was with Mr & Mrs Trattles, he was a builder, and his hobby was catching rabbits with his ferrets. I used to visit him because we had no school to go to. One day we were walking across a field when I caught my toe in something. Mr Trattles had a look and found a big round lid made of metal. He went back & got something to lift the lid, and what we had found, was an air raid

shelter from the first world war. It had
 a ladder going down, so off ~~we~~ we went down
 into a room, tiled in brown, would hold
 about six people. He didn't know it had
 existed and he had lived there all his life.
 After three weeks I had to return home, as I
 had a skin complaint. I don't think Mam was
 too pleased I was home, however I could go
 back to school, and started to learn typing,
 and shorthand, and at that time the only
 time we had air raids, was when a Convoy of
 Ships came up the river to load up iron &
 steel. I had had my 13th birthday at Scally
 and Grandma had sent me two tray cloths to
 embroider, so that was the start of my embroidery.
 On a Thursday night, I went to a sewing club,
 and learnt many new stitches. We had to
 cut a potato in half and cut out a pattern,
 which was painted & put on material which
 we had to sew. I did a huckeback towel
 for Mam. At that time we had to go
 into the air raid shelter when the siren went
 off, mainly during the night. One night the
 bombing was heavy, and the shelter moved
 about 4 ins. when we came out, when the all
 clear sounded, we saw the high school, across
 the road from our house had been hit & it
 was ablaze, our bedroom ceiling was down,
 of soot everywhere. There were firemen from
 three counties trying to put out the fire,
 but to no avail. We had some of the
 firemen in our house for breakfast. & some
 of them had been to school with my Mam
 in West Hartlepool. (So no school for me)
 I decided to have a paper mound and so
 I started at Woolston's paper shop. I had

7.

To start at 6.30 am and deliver the papers quite a long way away. The milk man always gave me a little bottle of milk every morning. I had to go back to do the evening Gazette deliveries, at 4 pm. and at 6 pm I had to go to my Dad's office to do duplicating, and go to the Post office which was open until 9 pm. I was paid 2/6 for the paper delivery and 3 pence from my Dad each week.

On my 14th Birthday, my parents said I had to get a job, which I did, at a veg & fruit shop, as a delivery girl. The wage was 7/6 per wk Sunday off. and Wed Afternoon wash the shop floor, after two weeks I decided I could do better, an advert in the paper said a girl wanted at the butchers shop in town. So off I went, and the following week started there at 10/- a week. My job was making beef & pork Sausages, black puddings, potted meat, & doing pressed tongues. I enjoyed working there & made a friend called Joyce who served in the shop. She had a pen friend in the navy, & asked if I would like one, I said yes & started to write to Frank Walton. I was also writing to another sailor called Walter Wilkinson, whom I met in the milk bar he came from Lancashire. One day, after working there about 1 year, I had to go and collect some Sausage skins at the Abbotoir, and a gentleman, spoke to me and asked where I worked, I told him and he said would I like a better job in the butchers at 15/- per week. Yes! I said and went back and gave a week's notice. I then started work at Dewhursts near my home.

I was taught how to cut chops, roll beef, and everything to do with butchering. As my Mam was getting her meat rations there, I could manage to get her a bit extra; and sometimes on a Sat I could get her a joint of meat, (she thought that was wonderful.) At the age of 16 yrs, ~~of~~ the District Manager asked if I could manage a shop. I said I could, and I started in the other shop in the lower part of town. Everything went well and on a Sat afternoon some of the old people had a bit extra in their bags. Next I was sent to Darlington, 1 hour ~~by~~ ~~the~~ tide every day. It wasn't very far from my Grandma's house, so the errand boy used to take some meat and collect a cooked dinner every day. When I was sixteen yrs old, I left home and went to work at a factory at Selby, near York. I stayed with Frank Wattons family. The work was shift work 6AM-2pm & 2pm-10pm - (very heavy) lifting 10st bags of cattle food off a machine, stitching up the tops and wheeling on to a railway truck. For that I was paid £3.8 a week. We worked with Italian prisoners of war but we never spoke to them, (it wasn't allowed) except to show them what to do. I worked there until I was 17 yrs old, and decided to join the W.A.F.'s. I had my medical at York, and three weeks later, I had to report to Welmslow in Cheshire. We were issued with our uniforms and had medical & dental checks & all our inoculations. I shared a Nissan Hut, with another nineteen girls. We had to mark all our possessions, & as you can imagine after all our inoculations, we didn't feel all that well.

9.

Next came our square washing, learning how to march, going to school to learn all about all aircraft, German & British. After a month I was sent to Sidmouth in Devon to go to school to learn how to be a nurse. We were billeted in hotels,

meals were in the Woodland Hotel, school in the Knowl Hotel, and I shared a room with two girls from M'bro (Winnie Hodding) and Dorrie Campbell, Foxfield Hotel.

After 6 wks we were sent to various stations. Winnie & I were sent to Halton Hospital at Wendover in Buckinghamshire. It was a very large Air Force hospital, & we were detailed to work in the Orthopedic ward. It was sad to see so many air crew injured, mostly with broken spines, amputations etc. We had to wash them and give them medication.

One night, Winnie & I decided we would go down to the local pub, after a couple of hours enjoying the company of many Air Force men we were walking to the camp, and our police caught us. We were not supposed to be out of camp, so we were marched into the Commanding Officer and given three hours punishment.

We had to clean the Adjutant's office, as he was on leave. I'd we cleaned it with a Strip pump and washed the walls etc. Water everywhere. We knew we were being posted that afternoon. (Never heard any more about that)

And so I arrived at Watlock, in Derbyshire and Winnie was sent to Norfolk.

Wlatlock hospital, was originally a civilian hydro. It had a ward at the bottom + usually small rooms on 3 levels. I had to work in the ward, which was always filled by air crew who had been injured in crashes. One used to sing opera all night, another scrambled under the beds, and another one usually found his way down the village many times the police asked us to collect him from the station. After working there a few months, on coming on night duty, just coming to the door, I had a patient throw himself out the window 3 stories up, and landed at my feet. I don't remember anything more until the next day, when I woke up, I was in a ward, covered in pebbles all over, I was sent home on sick leave, and on returning I asked for a posting. It seems we had to be at least 26 yrs old to work there, and I was only 18. So they stopped a ship sailing with some male orderlies, aged 26 yrs. old.

I was sent to Bowringby in Lincolnshire, with No. 83 + 97 Squadron's of Lancaster bombers. We had to look after patients in the ward and night duty was to wait in the op. theatre in case of any air crew but during bombing sessions, we had a wonderful ambulance driver, and she was always at the landings of the aircrafts, one day she waited for a plane that couldn't jettison a ten ton bomb, she was given a special award for it.

We got to know the Air Crew boys, and went to dancing outside the camp at various towns. The war ended whilst I was there, and a special church service was held.

During my stay there I was asked to join a concert party. We did a show called Raafia, included in the show was the RAF Orchestra making a wonderful show. The band was made up of civilian musicians who had joined the R.A.F. They were allowed 48 hrs off if they were needed in city street to play for a broadcast. I went with a friend, who was friendly with the champion bass player in England, to a broadcast in London at the Aeolian Hall in Bond St. and afterwards went to his home for a lovely tea with his mother (what a treat that was). Whilst I was there I was invited to a flight in a Lancaster Bomber. We flew up the coast to N'bro + then up to Scotland, back down the west coast and over the Penine Range (mountain) and before we landed had to do a few Rolls as they were testing the engines (wonderful flight).

After my stay a long while I was sent to Metheningham, Lincolnshire 617 Squadron which was the damn bastards who finally finished the war when they perfected the bouncing bomb and used it successfully. The Station was put to sleep with a big funeral. Then I was posted to Hednesford where we had to X-Ray the prisoners of war, when they returned to England from Japan. Many of them were sent to various hospitals as they were very ill. It was there we had the heaviest snow storms, and most of the camp was shut

down. All except the sick bay. After 5 days we had no food for the patients & staff, so a sledge was pulled down to the troops in the village for supplies. (hooray) no more sardines)

I spent the rest of my Air-force life there and returned home a month before my 21st birthday. I missed the life I had there, but I started work at a bus company where I was in the office, where the public came in to require bus times & trips around the country. I had two shifts ~~6-2~~ 8-4 & 4-10. They were a good crowd of girls and they came to my 21st birthday party at my home.

See paper.

We were issued with Gas Masks, which we had to carry around every day.

We also had a ration book, identity card, and clothing coupons.

Our rations for food were

1/2 lb meat, 2 lb corned beef per week.

2 ozs butter per week

2 ozs Sugar " "

1 oz lard

1 egg (if we were lucky) per week,

No bananas, pineapples, oranges were only for babies (made into juice)