

The 1940s

My employment at the Nottingham Co-operative Wholesale Society Bakery started in the new year. Once again I was the office junior, but now I was handling cash, checking the roundsmen's books, and typing the weekly balance sheets. This report required six copies, so the paper and the interleaving carbon paper were extremely thin and difficult to handle.

The manager of the bakery was Mr Meldrum and his deputy was Mr James. The chief clerk was Tom Murdock and the other clerks were Dave, Lil and Margaret. Ron was another junior clerk on the staff while he waited for his call-up into the RAF. One of my duties was answering the telephone and operating the switchboard. I had never used the telephone before but I learned quickly once I was given some friendly instruction. This was an example of how everyone worked together in the whole bakery.

A year later the office staff would be joined by Gladys who was a shorthand typist employed to assist Mr Meldrum because he now had additional work, having been made Nottingham and District Area Manager for the Ministry of Food.



Me and Gladys on a horse drawn van on the NCS Bakery forecourt. 1941

The bakery was in Meadow Lane, Nottingham, and the office was on the first floor above the loading bay where the delivery carts were lined up. The horses were kept in the stables further up Meadow Lane. The machines for making the bread, the confectionery department, and the canteen were on the ground floor. The canteen was very good and provided hot or cold meals throughout the day and night. The canteen was a very large room with a balcony and a huge bay window overlooking the River Trent.

I was happy working there and time sped by. So far the war had very little impact on my life except that many of the young men were being called-up. Some of the roundsmen were replaced by women. Women were being called up too, but I was exempt because I was in a reserved occupation being in a food supply company.

My cousin Eileen, (Eileen May Justice, m:Dransfield) who was 11 months older

than me, was working in the general office of the Co-operative Society in Upper Parliament Street Nottingham. She registered for service with the Wrens (WRNS - Women's Royal Naval Service) and was quite upset when she failed the medical. Like so many people in the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire area she had a goitre, a swelling of the thyroid gland, because of the lack of iodine in the local environment.

By now bacon, butter and sugar were rationed but other than that the war seemed to make no difference to us. The threat to us, now that Germany had invaded Holland,

Belgium, and France was very real, and the British troops were evacuated from Dunkirk in May. In preparation for the invasion of England, the German Air Force bombed British airfields, but many of their planes were shot down by the R.A.F. This became known as the 'Battle of Britain'. In August 1940 the bombing of British cities, including Nottingham, started and the 'Blitz' carried on for several months.

War really became a reality to me when one night Nottingham was bombed. The next morning I went to work on my bicycle as usual but when I got to West Bridgeford some of the buildings bordering the River Trent had been destroyed or damaged. Meadow Lane was a shocking scene with fire hoses criss-crossing the road and fire engines and crews controlling the fires. The bakery had been hit by a high explosive bomb, and quite a number of men on the night shift were killed. The man in charge of the bread making machines was not on duty that night, but there had been a problem and so he was called to the bakery by his deputy. Both were killed.



Tom Murdock, Margaret Watts, Norah, Harold Bonser, Ron, Lil (? Woodings) and Gladys on the NCS Bakery forecourt with some of the horse drawn vans. 1941.

To my surprise the office was undamaged, even the glass in the windows had not been broken. The office staff were kept busy for several months arranging delivery of bread from other Co-op Bakeries, many of which were quite far away. The bread was delivered from the early hours of the morning. It came in huge vans, some delivered directly to the bakery shops, while other vans were unloaded directly on to our local delivery vans, which were undamaged. The horses had been safe in their stables.

The day after the bombing, Ron and I went down the metal stairway from the back of the office into the area where the bomb fell. To be honest we were curious to see what the explosion had done. It was in fact very difficult to get anywhere near the worse wreckage. We had heard that there was one night worker unaccounted for. We made our way to the door which led into the side yard where the new electric bread vans were garaged. We saw, coming towards us, two miners dressed for the pit with their helmets and lamps and equipment. One was my uncle Frank Widdowson, Auntie Doris's husband. The other was my uncle Arthur Worthington, Auntie Ella's husband. They asked me if I was OK, and we talked for a short while, and then they went off to tunnel their way into the collapsed building looking for survivors or bodies.

Eileen's home was hit by an incendiary bomb in the same raid which went through the roof and into her bedroom. It was brought under control, by Uncle Alf, before it could do any serious damage.

There were other air raids on Nottingham but none that remained in my memory like the first. I can remember that one working day, at lunch time I walked along Meadow Lane with Margaret Watts when we heard an aircraft engine which had the deep throbbing sound that German aircraft made. The noise came louder and we saw a plane flying very low. It was out of sight before the warning sirens started to wail.

On moonlit nights, when people said we had a "Bomber's Moon", a smoke screen was lit which was intended to obscure the light reflecting from the River Trent. In Wilford Lane there were smoke generators at regular intervals. They were about 5 feet tall and cylindrical in shape with a cowled top. The oil in them had to be regularly topped up and this was done by a team of men who were also responsible for lighting them. The men were always smothered in smutty oil and their baggy working uniforms soon changed from khaki to black. Even when the burners were not lit there was a reek of burned oil everywhere. When the burners were lit on misty winter nights the smoke hung low and the air was almost unbreathable. It was impossible to keep it out of the houses and one morning when we took the cloth cover off our pet green budgerigar's cage he was dead - tears were shed.

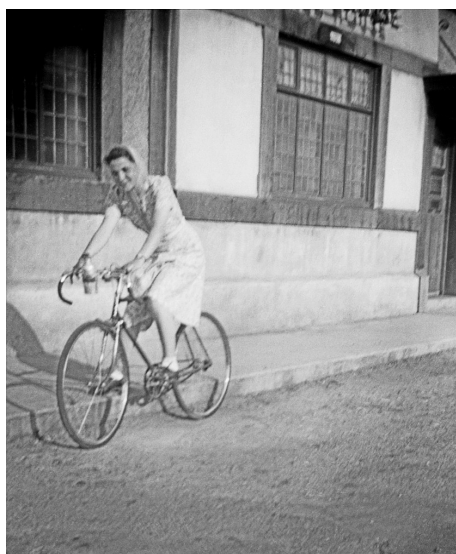
By 1941 both my brothers-in-law were called up for military service. Jack (John Charles Lewis), Edna's husband, went into the Sherwood Foresters. Leonard Stones, Eva's husband, went into the Royal Artillery.

There was lots of entertainment in the war years so I had plenty to do in my spare time. At the Palaise de Dance there were 'tea dances' where tea and biscuits were served by waitresses. In the other dance hall they held 'modern dances' and I would go there with Eileen. American ideas were all the rage and Eileen used to jitterbug but I preferred the quickstep. Very often I would see some of the young roundsmen from the bakery at these dances. On other nights there was 'old time dances' and I would go with my sister Edna. More and more dance bands were now introducing singers.

I loved swimming, and the Nottingham Swimming Baths were open throughout the year. Often I would go there with Gladys. With Eileen, or maybe Gladys, and sometimes my cousin Maurice Green I would go cycling. We travelled long distances and all without the help of signposts, village names or railway station signs, because these had all been removed when invasion was threatened.



Eileen on a cycle ride. 1941.



Me on a cycle ride. 1941.



Maurice on a cycle ride. 1941.



Eileen and Maurice after the cycle ride in the back garden of 12 Roland Avenue, Wilford. 1941.

The staff at the bakery planned evening visits to the Theatre Royal to see opera, ballet, and plays. If we wished we could pay two shillings and six pence a week to cover the cost of tickets etc. I would often prepare a buffet meal for everyone to eat before we left for the theatre.

We reached our third wartime Christmas in December 1941, and on Christmas Eve Mum and Dad were at the bus-stop at the Wilford cross roads. Dad decided to go across to Wilford House which was now an army headquarters. He spoke to the sentry and invited him to come to us for Christmas Day and to bring a comrade.

Not two but three soldiers arrived at our house the next day. They introduced themselves as Charlie Jones, Fred Gibson and Bob Jones, and explained they all had been on guard duty together so choosing two was impossible. There were nine of us around the table for Christmas dinner and at teatime. Fred told us about his wife and young son. Charlie talked a lot: he had, he said, been in France soon after war was declared and had escaped from the beach at Dunkirk. I thought he was a handsome rogue.

After Christmas I was on the upper-deck of a bus returning to Wilford. Charlie Jones saw me and although there were other vacant seats he politely asked passengers who were sitting next to me to move so that he could talk to me. I was amused because most of the people knew me and I thought they were going to think I had a soldier friend. In fact Charlie talked mostly about Eileen and he wanted to know where she worked and how he could get to know her.

In 1942 my brother-in-law Jack was in Singapore when the Japanese attacked. The British garrison surrendered and there was no news of what had happened to Jack. It would be a long time before we knew but Edna said she had "inner knowledge" that he was alive.

Since Christmas, Bob had regularly kept in touch with my family and me. He had been invited to come for an evening meal whenever he was off duty. He continued to visit us after he had been moved to Magdala Road, Nottingham, and also later when he had been moved to Derby he would journey over on the bus.

Bob and I would sometimes arrange to meet in Nottingham or Derby and visit a cinema or the theatre. I remember that we saw the play "The House on the Bridge" on one occasion. Bob and a number of the members of his unit won tickets to the Christmas pantomime at the Theatre Royal. One of the ATS girls could not go so Bob bought her ticket so that I could see the panto with Bob and all his friends. However, it was Christmas Day and I was working, so I had to rush home to change before leaving to meet Bob at the theatre.

On May 31st 1943 Eva gave birth to Roger (Roger Gordon Patrick Stones), her first child, in a nursing home in West Bridgeford. I cycled there from work to see the baby and to take some chocolates for Eva. Later, when Eva had returned to their home in Wollaton, I was able to visit and take Roger out in his pram. One of my favourite walks was to the canal where I could see the boats pass by. Paths led through a marshy area and I remember seeing masses of tall reeds.

I spent little time at home and I wonder if I should have kept Mum company more. But I had become rather independent and this may have been because of my schooldays at West Bridgeford and I was what was later called a 'latchkey kid'.

In early spring 1944 Bob arrived at 12 Roland Avenue dressed in his shabby work uniform. His hand was bandaged from an accident and his face had patches of blue antiseptic dye because he had caught impetigo. The car that had taken him to Ruddington Army Medical Unit had broken down and he was making his way back to Magdala Road. He was given leave and went home to his parents at Watford to recover. While he was there a medical officer wrongly diagnosed diphtheria and put him in an isolation hospital! It was three weeks before I next saw him and he was fit again. The isolation was very strict, even our letters were 'ovened'.

On Mothering Sunday 1944 I helped prepare bunches of flowers for the children to give to their mums at the church service. One of the little girls there had German measles and soon most of the children and some of the adults also had it - I caught it too! This was scary because Eva was expecting her second child, and she had never had German measles. Eva did not catch it and her second son Martin was safely born on the 21st May 1944. By then I was declared free of infection and I was able to help look after Roger for her.

I always liked Eva's company, and I spent lots of time at her home in Woollaton. It was fun to wash, dress and play with the children. We all enjoyed it when Bob, who had by now moved to Derby, came to Woollaton on the Derby to Nottingham bus to join us. In June 1944 Bob and I were with Eva and the boys, when Leonard came home on leave. He was with an Anti Aircraft Battery in Southern England and he told us that he had seen flying bombs and had fired their guns at them. These were the first of the V-1 'doodlebugs'.

The D-Day landings were in July 1944 and the invasion of Europe had started. Casualties were high and reinforcements were demanded. Bob told me in November that he had to report for infantry training at Haywards Heath in Sussex. We could not meet again until he was given embarkation leave in February 1945.

I travelled down from Nottingham to Luton and Bob met me there. We planned to spend some time at Watford and then go to Wilford. On February 17th, in Watford, Bob asked me if I would marry him. He didn't go down on his knees! I said "Yes!". Bob says that with hindsight he should have asked my Dad's permission before he proposed to me.

I was pleased that Bob had not yet bought a ring so I was able to go with him to a jeweller's shop in Watford High Street to select an engagement ring of my choice. I wanted a dainty ring, unlike Eva's solitaire or Edna's bar (3 or 4 diamonds in a line). I chose a thin band of gold with a 'daisy' of seven small diamonds. I still think I made a good choice.

We spent the second part of Bob's leave in Wilford, but on the 24th February Bob had to leave me and return to Watford so that he could say goodbye to his Mum and Dad, and brother Dennis, before returning the next day to Haywards Heath. On the 26th February Bob, who was now a reinforcement for the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI), went to France and for six months we could only keep in touch by post. Sadly neither of us kept any of our letters.

The war in Europe ended on 8th May 1945 - people called it VE-Day. I have no recollection of any celebrations in Wilford but I do remember the Church bells ringing out joyfully. I had not heard them since they were silenced, as they were to be used to give warning of an invasion. My brother-in-law Jack had been taken prisoner by the Japanese and he did not return until late in 1945. He had been working underground in a coalmine near Nagasaki when the atomic bomb was dropped on that city and did not know about it until the end of his shift. After the bombing he was cared for by a friendly local Japanese family until it was time for his repatriation. When I knew he was on his way I sent some artificial flowers in a pot to his house to be there when he arrived home.

Bob came home on leave from Hannover on 5th September and we were able to spend some time together again. We talked of the future and of our marriage which would be after he was demobbed. Three months passed before Bob was home again and I had hoped to be free of work to be with him, but Mr James had recently died and a new deputy manager had taken over at the bakery. He was not liked by most of the staff, and I didn't like him because he refused to give me any time off. I had worked there for six years, and if Mr Meldrum, the manager, had not been away the outcome might have been different.

Bob and I knew that most firms would allow women to be away from work when their men returned from overseas. Bob thought that if he spoke to the new deputy manager and said that he had been serving overseas and how important our leaves were to us that he would respond. He did! - he told Bob that I would be dismissed if I took any time off!

We walked home to Roland Avenue from the telephone box and told my Mum and Dad, and Eva who was visiting them, what had happened. I said I did not intend to go to work while Bob was on leave, so I went to the bakery office and emptied my locker, and said a sad goodbye to the friends I had worked with for so long.

Bob still had a year to wait until he was demobbed, and he said that if we married, the army marriage allowance would help replace my lost wages. I think Eva must have thought that this was a good idea, but she said that as I was under the age of consent we had to ask my Mum and Dad to give us permission to marry - which they did. We were advised to go to see the Rev Elwell, the vicar of St. Wilfrid's Church, and he said

he would gladly perform the ceremony. He made an appointment for us to see the Bishop and told us to take a letter of consent signed by my Mum and Dad, and witnessed by Eva.

The local Bishop lived in West Bridgford. Our appointment was for four o'clock, and we were invited to have tea and biscuits with him while we talked. He was nice and agreed to allow us a church wedding by special licence.

We phoned Bob's mum and dad and said we were coming to Watford. We told them on the phone we were getting married the following week. We had given them very little time to make their plans, and there was still a lot for us to arrange so we had to return to Wilford.

Jack, my sister Edna's husband, agreed to be Bob's best man, and Eileen, my cousin, would be my bridesmaid. There were flowers to arrange and I had to have my hair done. We went to see Mr Harris the church organist, who I had known since my Church School days, and he said he would play for us and that there would be no fee because it would be his wedding present to us.

The wedding cake could have been a problem because at that time most food was rationed. My Mum raided her store cupboard to get flour, sugar, dried fruit, eggs and margarine. George, a long time family friend, who made wedding cakes professionally, produced a splendid two-tier cake with silver decorations on the white icing.

Thursday January 3rd 1946 was a beautiful winter day with a blue sky and a light scattering of snow on the ground. Bob and I had breakfast together, which was not considered the correct thing to do on one's wedding day. My sisters were not conventional on their wedding day either - Edna was married on Christmas day and Eva was married in a green dress (which was considered unlucky).



*Where we married.
St Wilfrid's Church,
Wilford, Nottingham
pictured in the
1940s.*

When I went to the church with my Dad the day was freezing cold. I was glad I was not wearing a thin bridal gown. I wore a light blue moygashel (Irish linen) two piece suit with short sleeves and a burgundy collar. My leather gloves and the trim on my black suede shoes was also burgundy. I wore black suede shoes with burgundy trim and I had a small black hat with a little veil. My corsage was three pink carnations.

My bridesmaid, Eileen, had a dusty pink two piece suit with dark brown trim, dark brown shoes, gloves and a small hat. She wore a corsage of two pink carnations. Eileen and I both carried a hymn book. Bob and Jack were both in uniform.

In the church I remember seeing Bob's Mum and Dad, his brother Dennis, my Mum and my sister Edna, Mrs Elwell the Vicar's wife, and Mrs Bailey the mother of Sheila my friend from Wilford School. There were others in the congregation but I had little time to look around. Eva was not there because she stayed at Roland Avenue with her two boys, and she was putting the finishing touches to the wedding reception.

I can remember very little of the ceremony except that Rev Elwell was thoughtful and friendly. I cannot recall the hymn that Mr Harris played or the singing of the congregation. After signing the register we went out into the bitter cold and photographs were taken just outside the church porch.



*Eileen my bridesmaid,
Bob, me and Jack the
best man outside
Wilford Church after our
wedding. 3rd January
1946*

There were thirteen at the reception and, apart from Mrs Elwell, they were all our close relatives. In the evening we left with Bob's Mum, Dad and Dennis. We travelled together by train to St Pancras in London. We walked to Euston station on one of the coldest nights of the winter and we all marvelled at the way the pavements sparkled in the frost. Then on to Watford, and Bob's family home at 74 Bushey Mill Crescent.

We spent the rest of Bob's leave in Watford. We were both happy and thankful at the way everyone had been so helpful and had done so much in so little time. It soon became time for us to return to Wilford and for Bob to take a train to Hull and to the ship that would get him back to Cuxhaven. I spent a few days helping Mum, and then I started to search for a job which would keep me occupied, and give me an income until Bob was demobbed.

On the off chance that there would be vacancies at Boots area offices, I called and asked if I could apply. I was interviewed by a woman who asked me to give her details of my past employment and why I was unemployed. I am sure that she did not believe anything I said, and I did not like her attitude. I left there knowing that I had failed.

I decided that I would now seek advice from the Labour Exchange. Unlike the Job Centres of later years, these were formidable places where the unemployed formed large queues until they reached a booth, where a clerk would take details, and with luck give details of work available. After queuing for some time I was told that I was in the wrong queue. I was so tired and hungry so I made my way home.

Three days later I saw an advertisement in the Nottingham Evening Post. It was a vacancy for an office worker at Bitterlings, a company which dealt in animal by-products. I went for an interview at their offices in Meadow Lane. The chief clerk said I had the job and I could start the next working day.

At Bitterlings I had a room to myself. I was warned that I might hear strange noises from behind the wood panelling that covered two walls of the room. While I quietly worked, checking invoices against the ledgers, I could hear paper rustling and squeaks but I never saw the rats or mice that shared the room with me! I never went into the main factory which handled the carcasses. This was between the offices and the River Trent. Some of the offal, tripe, pig's trotters and cow heel was 'pickled' in a number of large vats in the corridor between my room and the other offices. The smell when one passed them was very, very unpleasant.

Most days, at midmorning, I would cross the road to the firm's canteen and order my lunch. My choice was always eggs, chips, bread and butter. I would collect my lunch at one o'clock and carry it back to my room. In the draw of my desk I had serviettes, salt, pepper, and a small bottle of brown sauce. Occasionally I was able to take home tripe for my Mum and Dad and they loved it, but I loathed it!



Me in a punt being ferried down Roland Avenue, Wilford. February 1946.



The view from my bedroom of a DUKW amphibious vehicle delivering milk, food and letters in Roland Avenue. The high water stains can be seen on the houses opposite. February 1946.

In early February 1946 the River Trent flooded. My parent's house in Roland Avenue, Wilford, where I was living, was badly affected. Mum was at home alone when the waters rose and I rushed home from work when I heard the news. Some of the way home I had to wade through the water but the last part of the journey down Roland Avenue was in a punt. When I got home I helped to move upstairs food, pots and pans, and buckets of coal. The two large bedrooms had fireplaces. We ate, lived and slept together in Mum's south facing bedroom at the back of the house. In my little bedroom at the front we stored the food and everything else went into the large bedroom at the front. We had to leave the large furniture downstairs and I can

remember the sounds of some items scraping against the walls as they slipped below the water. We listened to hear the clock on the wall strike each half-hour. The water rose six feet in the downstairs living room. That room itself was above a seven foot high basement which opened out at ground level into our rear garden.



*George and Elsie Briggs, my parents, in Skegness.
April 1946*



*My mother Elsie and Mrs
Draper, a dear Wilford friend.
Mablethorpe c1949.*



Bob with me in the back garden of 74 Bushey Mill Crescent, Watford. 1946.



Bob came home on leave in April 1946. Eva, Leonard and the boys were in Skegness for a long holiday, now that Leonard had been demobbed, and Bob and I were able to join them. Bob's next leave was in July and we spent it in Wilford and Watford.

In September 1946 Bob finally left the Army. As planned, we would live with Bob's Mum and Dad, at 74 Bushey Mill Crescent in Watford, until we got a house for ourselves. Lots of other couples were in the same situation because of the acute shortage of accommodation. Very little building was done in the war years, and many houses had been destroyed in the air raids.

Bob returned to work at Beecher Stow Studios where he had worked before the war. He was quite well paid but he had to work long hours in London from Monday to Friday. He said he was happy, but I was missing my friends. Bob had the old fashioned idea that he should support me, and so I did not look for a job. In winter time it was worse because I could not get out of the house very often.

In the spring of 1947 Bob and I went, with Bob's Mum and brother Den to the Ideal Home Exhibition at Olympia in London. While we were there I fainted and when I had recovered we made our way home. It was a very cold day. The next day I went to see Dr Wood at his surgery in North Watford. I thought I might be expecting a baby. He did some tests and confirmed that I was pregnant, and he suggested I should book a bed at the Stanborough Private Nursing Home in Garston. He said the baby would probably arrive in September. Bob and I were happy, but I was rather worried because we had not yet got a home of our own.



Me on the Isle of Wight Ferry. Summer 1947.

The weather in the first months of 1947 was cold. There was a heavy fall of snow in March. A shortage of coal and coke made heating houses difficult. It was reported that people were cutting down and burning trees from their gardens. There was still snow on the ground in April.

One morning when I woke up I felt unwell. After Bob had gone to work I decided I must get medical advice. It meant a walk of half a mile along snow covered streets to get to Dr Wood's surgery, and when I saw him he was quite cross that I had been allowed to come alone. He told me to go home and get to bed as quick as I could. He came to examine me after his surgery hours. The next morning at about 3.0'clock I had a miscarriage. An ambulance was called and I was wrapped up and strapped to a stretcher. I was carried down stairs and into the ambulance in the early light of dawn and was taken to Shrodells Hospital (on the site of the present Watford General Hospital). I was there for about ten days, and then I

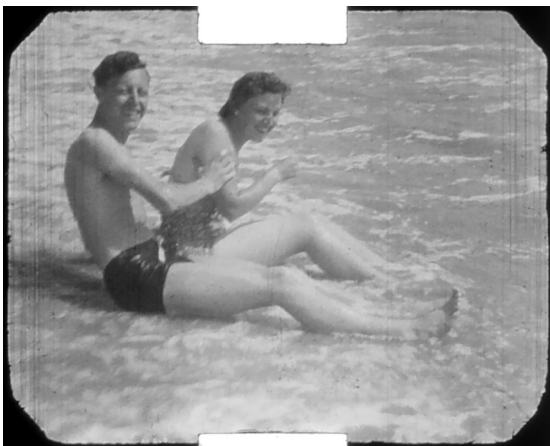
returned home to 74 Bushey Mill Crescent. Bob and I were both sad at what had happened to us. There was one sad task I now had to do - I phoned the Nursing Home

and cancelled my booking. They were very sympathetic and to my surprise said they would return my deposit.

I was quite fit again by August 1947 and we took a holiday on the Isle of Wight. Dennis came with us, and we took our bicycles. Bob says that we took the train to Euston and cycled to Waterloo Station. I can't remember this but I know that at Portsmouth an old paddle steamer for Ryde was lifting up and down on the swell, so that we had to time the moment to jump onto the moving ramp while holding up our cycles



Me on the beach at Shanklin, Isle of Wight. 1947.



Bob and I having fun in the surf on an Isle of Wight beach. 1947.



Dennis and I on an Isle of Wight beach. 1947.

Having our bicycles enabled us to see remote parts of the island. We frequently had beaches to ourselves, and I remember that some of the beaches still had concrete and metal wartime defences. There were few cars on the roads. When we visited small villages we could find a teashop where there were few other holidaymakers. We were

staying at 109 Hunney Hill in Newport as guests of Bob's Aunt Mabel and Uncle Joe Cooper. Their son Harold had a small boat on the River Medina, and we were able to use it to go shrimping. There was an old mill across the river and we took the boat right inside, but once, while we were there, part of the roof fell in with a violent splash and so we kept away after that.

Bob and I went to my cousin Eileen's wedding, she married Arthur Dransfield on October 3rd 1947, in Nottingham. Arthur had been a roundsman at the bakery and had been going out with Gladys when I worked there. When he saw me he said "You didn't expect I would be Eileen's Groom, did you?". Aunt Ella and Aunt Doris came up to Bob and me while the wedding photographs were being taken and said how sorry they were that we had lost the baby.

Nottingham Goose Fair is held on the first weekend in October. It was originally a livestock market held in the Market Square, but in 1928 it moved to Forest Recreation Ground and became a huge funfair. After we left Eileen's wedding reception it was a good time for us to visit the Fair. I had happy memories of the times I had been there in the past. I can still recall all the noise and the reek of the engines that drove the rides and generated the power for all the bright lights. The smell from the food stalls I remember very well, and there was always an excited crowd milling around. I had been to the Goose Fair before but Bob had not. Our visit started well and Bob tried his hand on the rifle range but could not knock down enough target ducks to win a prize. We did not spend long at the fair because Bob began to feel unwell.

The next day, Sunday, we took the train to Watford and Bob looked very ill on the journey. He should not have gone to work the next day, but he did. That evening, when he returned home, he was in pain and very white. I wanted to get him into bed immediately but he insisted he needed food and so he had a bowl of soup before he would go to bed. He became delirious that night and he was soaked in sweat. Dr Wood said it was most likely that he had pneumonia. He left tablets and instructed me to record Bob's temperature twice a day. I made Bob a 'pneumonia jacket' to keep him warm in bed. This was a padded jacket common in the Midlands and in the North of England. It may seem strange now but you must remember that at this time hardly any houses had central heating and bedrooms were very cold.

October went by and Bob showed only slight improvement. His temperature was normal in the morning but high in the evening. Dr Wood said he was not happy and he arranged for Bob to go into Shrodells Hospital in Watford. I went in the ambulance with Bob. The driver and male nurse knew Bob's Aunt Em and they said they would play a trick on her, so they stopped the ambulance at the clinic where she worked as a Red Cross Nurse. They went inside and told her that they needed help with a difficult patient. When she saw him she said "Oh Bob!". It was November the 5th 1947 - a date to remember!

Penicillin was not yet available in tablet form but it could be injected. Bob had injections every four hours for a number of days. He said that he was getting tired of nurses arriving day and night to stick a needle in his bottom! Bob was kept in hospital because the doctors thought he might have Tuberculosis (TB) which was rife just after the war, but all the tests they did were negative. He was visited by a specialist from Ware Park Sanatorium who said he wanted Bob to go there. Bob decided he did not want to go there and he left Shrodells Hospital but agreed on 'bed rest' for three months at home. We arranged for him to have a single bed in the front room downstairs and this helped, but even so I was kept very busy as 'his nurse'.

In March we had a visit from Dr Dommon from Ware Park who persuaded Bob he needed to go into the sanatorium. By now Bob had made a good recovery and he was told he could get up. It was a wonderful summer and he spent most of the next three months in the garden at Bushey Mill Crescent. Life was easier for us both. Dr Wood visited us every Sunday morning at the end of his rounds and stayed until lunch time. Bob's Mum and Dad cut flowers from the garden for him to take to his wife.

While he had been very ill Bob had lost a lot of his hair and I was recommended to use a preparation called Silvikrin Lotion. I had to put a teaspoonful of the liquid into a saucer, then dabble my fingertips into it and massage his scalp every morning. His hair grew back and we were all amused because he now had a little fringe over his forehead.

Bob went into Ware Park Sanatorium in July 1948, and while he was away his Mum, Dad and I visited him on Saturday or Sunday mornings. There was a special double-decker bus from Watford to Hertford Market Place. We caught it outside the Odeon Cinema in North Watford and we always tried to get a seat upstairs - preferably at the front. We walked the last part of the journey and crossed the footbridge over the River Rib near the entrance to Ware Park. Bob was living in a long wooden chalet and just in front of it was a huge Cedar of Lebanon tree. There were lots of other interesting specimen trees and Bob showed me a Tulip Tree and a Strawberry Tree.

Bob's Mum had unhappy memories of Ware Park. Her young brother, Bert, who had spent time there, had died in the 1920's. She could not have made her first visit to Bob on a worse day because a patient had just died. This was a very rare occurrence and everyone there was very sad.

Bob seemed happy enough. He was there only for observation, so he did not have surgical treatment. He had regular tests, all of which were negative. I took him a drawing board and materials so that he could design and build a model sailplane. He soon had other patients cutting parts, and when it was finished it flew well. The weather was hot and they were all reprimanded the first time it flew because they spent too long in the sun!

At this time I was able to visit my Mum and Dad for a week, and to see Margaret Watts her husband Clarence and their new baby. I had worked with both Margaret and Clarence in the NCS Bakery office. I also went for a week's holiday on the Isle of Wight with Bob's Mum and Dad. While I was away Bob would still have visits from friends, neighbours and his Aunt Vi.

We had little income for the fifteen months of January 1948 to March 1949 while Bob was ill. He had no pay from the studio but the Hertfordshire County Council gave us a grant until that was replaced when the National Health Service started. Bob's medical insurance gave us a small sum and we had help from the Red Cross. Thanks to Bob's Mum and Dad we had no rent to pay. Help came in many ways - Bob's Mum and I bought groceries from the same store and we were both usually served by a man who knew that Bob had been in the army and was ill. Perhaps he was sympathetic because he had served in World War I and had a pension for disablement - he made sure that when he weighed our purchases the scales were in our favour!

Bob was discharged from Ware Park in October 1948 but he was advised to get really fit before returning to work. He still hoped to start again in January 1949. We went to see Dr Wood, who said that we should first go for a holiday for at least a month. We said we had little money left but he insisted we should spend it all!

We hoped we would be able to get accommodation in Devon and we got help from the neighbours in Bushey Mill Crescent when Mrs. Saunders, whose cousin was a children's nanny in Devon, told us of a family who had a guesthouse in Torquay. We booked to stay there for a month from mid February 1949. They were Mr and Mrs Durden and a lady they introduced to us as 'Aunty'. They had a lovely Alsatian dog and a smaller dog. Sometimes we took the dogs when we went out. From the house we went through municipal gardens to the beach. The dogs enjoyed running free on the sands. Their home was a three story Victorian house on a corner. One of the things I noticed in the house was a display case which had sections of cable. Mrs Durden told us that her father had been responsible for cables that were laid under the oceans. Spring starts early in Devon and daffodils were in full bloom. The holiday season had only just begun but there were already a few coach trips available. One was to Cockington Village with its blacksmith's forge where I bought a little horse shoe which I still have. Several others on the coaches seemed to be honeymoon couples and no doubt they believed we were. Well perhaps we did too!

We had found a nice little cafe in the town of Torquay, and most days we went there in the mornings for coffee and cakes. The waitress would keep our coffee cups filled and it was a pleasant way to spend time. At the local cinema we saw the latest film which was "Scott of the Antarctic". In the municipal gardens a film crew were shooting scenes for the film "Last Holiday" starring Alec Guinness (when we were writing these memoirs, sixty years later in 2008, our son Mark rented a copy of this film for us).

The weather in Torquay was good most of the time but a few of the days were quite chilly and sometimes wet. One day, towards the end of our stay, it started to rain heavily. We sheltered in the doorway of a shop that had a display of umbrellas and we had to decide if we could afford to buy one to protect us. We bought one and could laugh because we had already paid in advance for our accommodation and we had return railway tickets. We then had very little money left but we laughed at that too!

We had enjoyed a wonderful month and it was time to return home. Back in Watford the weather had been cold so that we were able to watch the arrival of spring for a second time. Bob returned to work and soon got into the swing of things.

We did go back to Torquay in the late summer but it was not a memorable time because the experiences we had there in the spring couldn't happen twice.

During 1948 and 1949 in their spare time Dennis and Bob were building model aircraft. Little diesel engines were now available and so powered models were being flown as well as gliders. Dennis was a member of a club whose members called themselves 'Wayfarers'. Bob now joined but there were only about 15 members and it was more a team than a club. However, entering competitions was not enough for them they had to win!

I usually went with them when they test flew. This was often at West Hyde but sometimes at Leavesden Airfield, or in fields near the Kings Langley sewerage works. One glider that was launched from West Hyde caught a thermal and flew off. It carried a reward message and we heard that it had been recovered; Bob's Mum and I went by bus to the address and met the householder and her young daughter, who had been allowed to stay home from school specially - she had found our glider and wanted to collect the reward in person.

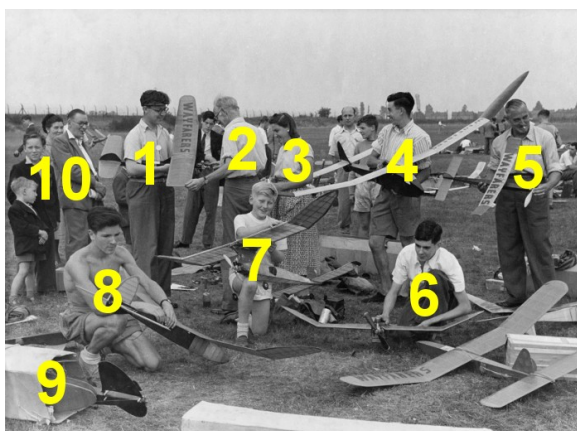
When the Wayfarers went to competitions this meant spending a day in a field. It was good for me to be out of the house and in the open air. Only one other of the team was married, this was Bill Nicholls, who's wife Marjory usually came with him in their

motorcycle and sidecar. Marjory was a sailing enthusiast and not interested in model aircraft flying at all. We both had one problem and that was the fact that there was seldom any women's toilet facilities.

I didn't think I played any useful part, but Bob says that because the competitions required three flights the models often needed repair work between flights, and I was able to help with this. Most importantly, Bob says, I could guard the team's coats, wallets, models, and the motorcycles that some of the team came on. This meant that all of the small team could be flying, or retrieving models without the worry of anything being damaged or stolen.



Some of the Wayfarers model aircraft team at a competition on Radlett Aerodrome. 28th August 1949. (photo Watford Observer)



- 1 Bob
- 2 Bob's father, Lewis Jones
- 3 me
- 4 Pat Ward
- 5 Pat Ward's father
- 6 Peter Floyd
- 7 Roger King
- 8 Bill Farrow
- 9 Pat Ward's 10 foot sailplane in its 'coffin' box
- 10 Fleet family - our neighbours in Watford.

In spite of their success the Wayfarers came to an end during 1950. Most of the members were in their teens and so National Service, careers, and homemaking was take priority over everything.

For us the 1940s were coming to an end and our main effort now had to be the search for a house and plan our future.

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