

DERSSINGHAM 2000 HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW 06

Date interview conducted: 16th January 1998

Name: Mrs. Pat Franklin

When did you first come to Dersingham?

My grandparents and aunt and uncles were already living in Dersingham so I was born into the village so to speak. *Have you lived in the village all your life?* No I married in 1950 and moved to Kent. I spent 36 years in Kent where I had my three boys. We've been back in Dersingham now in retirement for some 13 years I suppose.

Do other members of your family live in Dersingham?

I still have first cousins and second cousins but the younger members have moved away.

What are your earliest memories of the village?

Coming back into the village made me realise although I thought buildings and people were permanent. I came back and found that the various areas in the village the names of them had changed such as Senters Corner, Linford's Corner and I was surprised to find the chapel had closed down. I suppose other people coming back would be surprised to find the Dun Cow replaced by Budgen's Grocery Store.

How old were you when you first left the village?

Well I was 3 years old I think; we moved to March. I can remember the confusion of people to-ing and fro-ing and being placed in my high chair which I hadn't used for several years; that was quite a novelty. I was quite pleased about that. I can remember eating a boiled egg and dipping the soldiers and I can remember arriving at March. I remember my father saying to me much, much later on in life, "Do you remember how you cried? Because we were walking along the station road towards the house we were moving into and we passed the vicar and he said, "Oh dear, oh dear little girl, what's the matter with you?" and you said, "I want to go to March."

The vicar in Dersingham when we left was Crewe-Jones; he married us. Before that as a child it was the Rev. Oliver who we thought was rather severe. We were taught in Sunday School by a Miss Oliver who I always thought was a relative of his but it turned out not to be so.

I lost my mother when I was rising 6 She died and I came back to live with my

paternal grandmother.

So most of your early memories are from when you were six until you married.
Yes, that's right.

I can remember the war time concerts put on by Mrs. Houchen. They were obviously fund raising, there was Dig for Victory or others; they had a title or a theme to them. And there was Old Tyme Dances that George and I went to on a Friday evening. I can remember playing over on the Dersingham Fen or the Common. We were six of us girls that would meet at the stone on the common that housed the old gun that shot down the first Zeppelin. That was our meeting point. We would play in the gorse or whin bush tunnels. As the stems grew so they had a tunnel through them so you could avoid the prickles on the top. They used to be our secret hideaway and den we thought but everybody else did it as well.

What was the money from the concerts raised for?

Well for war weapons, whatever money could be culled so they could send it off to the Ministry of War I suppose.

Do you remember the party at the end of the war?

No, I can't remember anymore about that.

The trains were running then weren't they?

Yes, but we used to go in to Lynn by bus and there would be a main service bus and then there would be seven reliefs and they would ferry us all into Lynn and if they saw you struggling to get to the bus stop they would wait for you.

We went round Castle Rising, the curve that was called Onion Corner; wild garlic I suppose grew in the woods. But one of the buses one morning in May in 1945 overturned; I was a passenger on that. There were three men killed and several of us taken to hospital with various injuries. Fortunately for me Nurse Earl had a locum doctor called Major Macmichael and because of injuries he had attended to on the battlefield saved my leg; I had a leg injury. She tells me I would have lost my leg if it hadn't been good experience on the battlefield.

The village was affected directly by the war was it?

No; we had evacuees in the village, several girls and several boys. One or two of the boys were adopted by the people they were fostered out to. *They were from London?* I don't know where they came from. It didn't occur to me then to query, just took everything as it happened so I didn't really know where they came from. They had obviously been to school where they had uniforms; they were really very very smart. White blouses and navy gym-slips and red sashes. *Did they fit in well at the school?* I assume so, there didn't seem to be any

problems.

So you said you didn't actually make use of the trains.

Only once when there was quite a heavy fog. We were allowed to leave work early to catch the train to come home but that's the only time we used the train.

I was told in the bad weather when people were cut off by snow that was the only way they could get into work.

Yes it probably was.

We left in 1950.

The heavy snow was later.

I was away for some 36 years. Having done that I missed out on my friends children. *So you didn't see your friends' children growing up.*

Have you belonged to any clubs or organisations in the village?

I was in the guides when it was run by Mrs. Stanton, Mary Stanton. Of course when I came back I joined the Women's Institute and the Mother's Union and the Phobbies when that first started. Yes, so I have been involved in village life. I became a member of St. Nicholas Church. I run the rota for the cleaners.

What was the most important day you have ever spent in the village?

There were several but I suppose the main was my wedding day. It was Boxing Day and we had two Christmas trees in the church which were decorated and had lights on; it was quite spectacular.

Probably the day my mother died; that was quite traumatic. I remember being bundled in a blanket and being taken to Peterborough Hospital along with her in the ambulance but she didn't make it. From then on I was passed to various relatives and eventually I came back to live in Dersingham.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in the village?

You have mentioned street names.

Well yes, the shops really. There was Terrington's the butcher on the corner of Heath Road. Also there was their two sisters, also Miss Terrington's, and they kept, not a dispensing chemist, they kept a chemist shop and bric-a-brac store which was opposite Hanover Court and the old Police Station that was. That's something else that's changed, the Police Station and the old Super's house that has become a residential home for the elderly. The chestnut tree in the school had disappeared; we used to fight over who was going to sit on the seat.

You mean the old school, the Community Centre.

Yes the Youth and Community Centre. I shall go full circle if I ever go there.

What other changes ... Hanover Court and the building in the village. There were only 2000 people in Dersingham in 1950; I would imagine there are something like 5000 now. The main shape of the village hasn't altered as far as the roads are concerned, the main roads. The peripheral area has been built upon; areas that were marshland and fields where we went gathering blackberries and mushrooms. And the Fen and the Common are overgrown with saplings. We used to go over there and gather cranberries in the season and walk over the Wolferton hills and down to the rifle butts and pick up the spare shells. You could walk in those days without fear of being molested.

And also The Feathers have taken over the little chapel that we used for our cookery. I don't know what the chapel was, what denomination but where the pulpit or altar would have been our cooking range stood. Miss Pearce used to be in charge. And we would have the surrounding area children in, from Fring and Shernborne, to learn cookery. We would learn to make apple pies or a loaf. The mistress would send us across the pastures to Andrew's shop, which was a little grocery store and greengrocery store in those days buy our provisions and go. I don't know how we managed to get things made in time. That's what happened anyway.

Do you remember Rankin's Shop?

No I don't. It used to be Rayner's and it used to be Dilkes prior to that.

What was the fish shop on the corner?

It was Fisher's in our day.

The one on the corner of Station Road.

Oh that was Linford's, a very high class grocery store. It was built with hand made bricks from Heacham. *So it was a shock when it was painted.* Oh wasn't it just. I suppose it was painted green because a Mr. Green now keeps it. It was such a bright colour wasn't it, couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it and I'm sure Mr. Linford Senior must have been pivoting in his grave.

What would you like to see happen in the future?

Somewhere for the young children to meet, teenage children, to have a chat or a coffee or perhaps snooker or whatever the modern.

Was there not a youth club? There never has been a youth club in my knowledge. *I thought there was one at the Community Centre.* Oh they may well have done; that was still a school when I left. I don't think it's a going concern now.

Because I remember moving back to the village and a young man working in the hairdresser's saying isn't there some sort of organisation that could start up

some sort of evening meeting place for young teenagers. *Why do you think people don't when there is this need?* They are probably frightened of not being able to control them and drugs and after hours drinking as well. You can buy drinks now in the supermarkets and it's becoming a bit of a problem. I think people of my age are frightened of teenagers. You have got to go forward and go on. You can't hark back to the days when I was a child and everything seemed to be under control.

There is such a lot of traffic now in the village. While the By-pass was being built the traffic coming through the village discovered the back roads; they discovered they could go through Ringstead and Sedgford and come out at the other side of old Hunstanton and they are still using that. Chapel Road has become much busier.

And Post Office Road of course which is a nightmare.

I can remember Reynold's, I can't remember what they called themselves now. The Market gardeners or the Nursery people being there and they specialised in hyacinths, and they specialised in chrysanthus. They also grew very nice tomatoes. They were a very kindly family too.

Will you retire in Dersingham?

Well we have, we came back some 13 years ago in retirement. But the people who built the estate, there are some 50 houses on this estate, it was built on a field behind what was then Isherwood's Garage, It's called Red Pumps Garage now, it was grazing land for cattle and horses. Never in our wildest dreams did we think we would come back and live in a house

What does the Millennium mean to you?

Well 2000 years since Jesus was born really.

What would you like to see the village doing to celebrate this? Lots of parties?

No it's a waste But on the other hand it is nice for people to get together and say lots of "Do you remembers". No I'd like to see something more tangible done with the money, I don't quite know what, perhaps this centre for youngsters to meet.