

DERSINGHAM 2000 HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW 07

Date interview conducted: 11 December 1998

Name: Edith Mabel Gillson (and *friend Maisie*)

When did you first come to Dersingham?

We were born here.

Where do you live now?

Glebe Road

Do other members of your family live in Dersingham?

I have a half cousin. *I have a son and two daughters live in the village.*

What are your earliest memories of the village?

We had a happy childhood, we used to play on the common, on the Shut Up Common. We used to go in the morning with jam sandwiches and cake and we'd play cricket and rounders until it was tea time and then we'd come home. We went in the holidays and on Saturdays and at night sometimes. There was an old tip there and we found the mudguard of a bus and we sat in the mudguard and slid down. We used to call it *The Dump* My mother had a coat made for me and as I got out of this thing I ripped my coat from top to bottom. Dan Grief lived next door to us and he went home and told my mother, she wasn't really very pleased. We did not have a lot of money and it was quite a thing to the coat made for me. Parkers used to sell clothes, they were quite expensive. We never had any school uniform. We just had the ordinary clothes. We had weekday clothes and Sunday clothes. On Sundays we used to go to Chapel. I went to the Wesleyan Chapel. When the Anniversary come we used to have to stand up and say a piece. We had to learn it by heart. It could be about anything - about the birds, nature. *I went to the chapel in Chapel Road, Edie went to the one in Post Office Road. The one in Post Office Road was the Wesleyan, the one in Chapel Road was Methodist.*

We moved from Manor Road and went to live next to Maisie, (*Chapel Road*). There was a big divide from that side of the village to this side. It was like two separate villages. When they used to play football Doddshill would play the village, or Station Road or something. It was all divided up.

My father was a butcher when we lived in Manor Road opposite The Coach and Horses. Then he worked up at the Flax. A lot of Dersingham people worked at the Flax factory. They went on a little bus. There was the Hunstanton Shift and

the Lynn Shift. We'd be on nights one week and days the next. They grew the flax to make linen. The farmers all grew flax.

I used to do errands for an old lady who lived next door. I used to get a penny for going to the Post Office. Sometimes I got tuppence. The Post Office has been changed. It has been built on. The small building at the side where we sort the letters was the Post Office. It was a long, thin, narrow passage. All you bought were postal things.

We used to have some chickens at the top of the garden, that's where I spent a lot of my time.

When I left school I worked for Mr. Playford, the Insurance man. He lived along the Lynn Road. I worked from half past eight in the morning to half past six at night for 2/6 a week looking after his two children. The Insurance went from house to house. It was The Prudential. House insurance, or if you died.

I was about 29 when I became Post Mistress. We started work at 10 past 6. I delivered around Shernborne and The Red Barn for 17 years. I cycled out there. I walked when it was slippery. I used to have to take some matches and pieces of paper with me because my freewheel would freeze when it was cold. I had to thaw it out with the matches. My feet would be so cold I could not feel them on the pedals at all.

I met the Duke Of Edinburgh going up the hill Dersingham way. Wallace Twite stood on the top of the hill and he said be very careful that's slippery. I got to the top and this man stood there and turned round. He said please be careful that's so slippery. I said right thank you. That was the Duke of Edinburgh.

I used to do shopping for some of the old people. They used to put a piece of card in the window at Shernborne then I knew they wanted me to bring something back.

I was born in Dersingham and when I was married my husband worked on Mr. Lewis's farm. First we lived at a place called Lyng House. They have pulled the cottages down now. We lived there four years. Then we lived at Shernborne. Lambert's of Snettisham had a van come round. On the Monday he would take the order and on the Wednesday he would bring the groceries. If we ran out of anything we would cycle down to the village.

There was a bus on the Tuesday into Kings Lynn. It would be a godsend now to have the railway station. We used to take the kids to Hunstanton on the train in the pram. We used to go to London for the day. It was a very dirty journey. If

you had anything nice on you'd be all black by the time you got home because of the smoke from the train.

I used to use it a lot. It didn't cost much to take the prams in the guards van.

Brenda Collison's Nan used to make cakes for the gypsies that used to camp down there. Brenda used to have to deliver the cakes to the gypsies down on the common. She befriended this gypsy boy and Mr. Carr was the headmaster then and took him to school and he learnt to write his own name.

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

I belonged to the guides. We used to use the Vicarage a lot.

What was the worst time you remember?

I don't remember any. During the war everyone was so friendly and there was something going on in the evening for the war effort, dances, concerts, socials. We had soldiers here from the beginning of the war to the end of the war. The Newfoundlanders were here and they were one of the nicest lot. They were really nice. They dropped bombs on the field at the back of the Flax. We did not really suffer. We managed. Our mothers were good cooks and we had vegetables on the garden.

I panicked a bit when we first had to wear the gas masks. I was worried about my mother and father because he said he wasn't going to wear one.

One night my mother heard the church bells and thought it was gas. She got everybody in the road up. It was a false alarm. We had practises to wear the masks.

General Montgomery came to Dersingham when I was a little girl. No one else seem to remember it. It was when his regiment were billeted in Dersingham. The Desert Rats were in the old Hall and at the school as well. He came to inspect his regiment. I can remember standing on the corner by Sugar Lane and we saw him. Mr. Nobes would remember.

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

It is not a village any more. It's not so nice. A lot of the people who have come into the village are nice but not like the ones we knew.

What would you like to see happen in the future?

It is a nice village for elderly people we've got everything. Even the bus service has improved. We have all the shops we need, the Post Office.