

My Early Life by Bob Lusty

I can claim to be half Brummie, due to the fact that although my Father, Cliff Lusty, was born and bred in The Street, Leonard Stanley, Gloucestershire, my Mother, Mabel Grice, was born in King's Heath, Birmingham and lived at 19 Avenue Road. They met when my Mother was 17 years old when she went to Leonard Stanley on a holiday with a friend who had relations in Seven Waters. I am not sure how they first met - all I know is they went for a walk down by the River Frome near the French Gardens.



Cliff Lusty



Mabel Grice



My Mum and Dad in 1937, by the weir near the Midland Railway viaduct.

The romance blossomed and my Dad would travel by train up to King's Heath to see my mum most weekends. They got married in Birmingham, on October 24th, 1940. The witnesses were Mum's Dad, William Butler Grice, and Aunty May, my Mum's mother's sister.

Their marriage certificate states my Dad's army number in the Gloucester Regiment and his occupation - wood sawyer. It does not mention Mum's occupation - however I know she was working for Cadbury's at Bournville until she got married. I have a certificate that was presented to her on 21st October 1940 for 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ years loyal service.

Three days later they came back to live at No1, The Street, Leonard Stanley. It must have been very strange for Mum coming from a terraced house in a busy city like Birmingham to a sleepy country village like Leonard Stanley, in a small cottage with no running water and an outside toilet two gardens away.



On October 27th they had a photograph taken of them; I presume dressed as they were on their wedding day. It was taken by local photographer Mr. Harry Lockyer who lived up Gypsy Lane in a small copse just under the hill known as the Knoll.

This was during the Second World War and Dad was called up into the Army. He joined The Gloucestershire Regiment and did his training in a camp in Shropshire and was able to come home on leave a few times. In late 1941 Dad's regiment was sent by ship to India where he served as a Chef. After a few months he was sent to Burma to fight the Japanese; this he did until 1945 when the Far East hostilities came to an end.

At first Mum had to get a job and she worked at the Bristol Road railway station as a porter until I was born on 17th June 1942. Mum knew very few people in Leonard Stanley. She did not get on with her mother in law although she did get on with her father in law. He would come down The Street to make sure my Mum and I were all right and bring vegetables for us.



My grandmother Susanna Lusty



My grandfather, Gilbert Lusty

Mum, being a city woman, was not made very welcome by some village residents, although lifelong friends with some. They thought her accent was funny. When she first came to live in Leonard Stanley there was a lady - Miss Jones - who lived in a big house on the main road. When she walked up The Street people would bow and say good morning Ma'am. My mum had never heard of such a thing and refused to do it; it did not go down very well with some people. Of course as time went on, others stopped doing it. They used to do the same to the local squire; those were the days!

Mum decided to go back home to King's Heath, for short visits. We would both go by bus to Gloucester and change there to catch a Midland Red bus from Worcester Street and travel via Worcester and Bromsgrove to Birmingham City Centre and catch a bus to King's Heath. Or we would go by Mr Allen's taxi from King's Stanley to Bristol Road railway station. There we caught the train to Birmingham via Worcester to New Street Station.

During the war many of the trains were limited to travel at no more than 25 mph so it took about four hours to get there with all the stops at local stations. Then we caught a bus or tram from the City Centre to King's Heath. During the latter years of the War, when there were still air raids; we had to go into the Anderson Shelter in my Grandparents' garden.



Aunty Eva Lusty (later Savoury) with Gilbert and Susanna

When the War in the Far East finished, my Dad came back home. As I had never seen him before I did not make him feel very welcome and I would say things like "that's my Mum's things". Although he understood it must have upset him. So, being good at woodwork, he made me a lovely big Red Railway Engine and Tender which I loved, of course he was my friend for life from then on.

When Dad had settled back to his civilian life we went up to Birmingham for a holiday staying at my Gran's house. I was about five or six years of age by that time.



My younger brother David and I in the back yard.



My cousin Janet Savoury and I outside the house.



My grandfather, William Butler Grice

I do not remember much about my Grandfather other than he was very Victorian and I was expected to be quiet in his presence. He smoked a pipe and where he sat there were horse brasses hanging off a hook attached to the mantelpiece above the fireplace. He also kept a pot of pipe cleaners by him on the shelf.

My Gran was altogether different; she loved me and always made a fuss of me. She would take me shopping with her up the village, as it was called, to buy fresh vegetables and other groceries which I would help her carry back home. I always loved being with her, she taught me how to shell peas, cut up carrots etc.



My great-grandmother, Mary White



My grandmother, Selina Grice

When I was a bit older, on visits I went to Saturday morning pictures in the Kingsway Cinema and also to the Summer Shows in large tents in the Park opposite my Gran's house. There were all kinds of entertainments from Punch & Judy to clowns, acrobats and dancers. They were wonderful times to be young.

My friend Robert Low's gran lived next door to my gran. She was a sweet old lady who always wore a wrap around white apron with her hair done up in a bun. Neighbours on the other side were the Cottrell family; their children were John and June. June would often be in the back yard singing old songs like "*My old man said follow the van*".

On wet days Robert and I would be put on the No.11 bus, known as the Outer Circle because its route was a large circle all round Birmingham taking about three hours. When we got back to Vicarage Road in King's Heath we would ask the conductor for all the used tickets in the bin and we would put them in a bag and take them back to my Gran's and sort them all out into their different colours.

We also would go by bus to visit the homes of Aunty Florrie and Aunty Jessie. In those days children were seen and not heard, so I was always sent out into the garden to play by myself until brother David arrived. My favourite trips out were to Cannon Hill and Swanhurst Parks to go on the boating lakes and have a picnic. Sometimes we would go much further to Sutton Coldfield Park.



Another of my favourites when I was very young was to ride on the Tram from King's Heath via Balsall Heath to the City Centre. We would walk round the Old Bull Ring and see and take in its colourful atmosphere and listen to all the barrow boys shouting out what they were selling.



When I reached my teens I got into trainspotting and started watching them go past the King's Heath Park and then later caught the bus with Robert to King's Norton Station or into the City Centre and spent the day on New Street Station watching all the trains come and go and collecting their numbers.



In those days you could go off for the day with some sandwiches and a drink for the day. Great days. Parents did not need to worry back then. In Leonard Stanley the local shops were on the corner of the road and I remember Mr Turner's shop where I would go and buy my favourite comic The Dandy. Mr Turner was bald with a round face; he always had a smile and made you feel welcome. At the other end of the road was an Off Licence where I was sent occasionally to buy some White's Lemonade and Smith's Crisps.

My Gran's sister, known to me as Aunty May, lived in the same road in one room rented from a Miss Green, and sometimes I would go and stay with her. I remember she had a wireless (radio) which was powered by a thing known as an accumulator. When the power ran out I used to carry it to a man in the next road where he would give me another one that he had charged up to take back to my Aunty. I remember they were heavy, made of glass with a carrying handle. Aunty May worked very hard in service all of her working life in rich people's big houses. She was always very humble and a delight to be with.

Although I go back to King's Heath occasionally, it will never be the same as it used to be when I was a boy.

Bob's daughter Andrea remembers:

I remember Nan telling me about her wedding and lots of tales about Granddad's parents, but she never said they didn't attend, so that's interesting. She said that she met Granddad when she came to Leonard Stanley with her friend for a holiday. He and his friend followed them on their bikes and were more than happy to show them the sights! Later Granddad cycled to meet her off the train from Birmingham

She did say that Granddad's mother was always saying it would never work because she was a city girl whereas Granddad was a true country boy! Nan said the locals used to stare at her 'city' fashionable clothes and shoes saying they were most unsuitable for Leonard Stanley. Nan said she never minded because Granddad loved her for it. Granddad definitely had adventure for more life outside the village, probably until war service in Burma changed all that and he was appreciative of a quieter local life again.

Nan told me different stories about Great Nan with her big black hat and always grumpy and moaning about everything. Luckily Nan obviously rose above it and proved them wrong.