

Betty Barnfield's memories

This is a compilation of notes written by Betty and some written by friends for her after she lost her sight. Paragraphs from a recording made by Stonehouse History Group on December 1st 2021 have also been added in italics. Copies of the original notes and the transcription from the recording as well as the original recording are held by Stonehouse History Group and Betty's family.

Charles Henry Warner (21/12/1856 – 24/12/1940)

Grampa Warner, knowing of my interest in history, told me that, as a boy, he could remember his uncle William Keys going to America and fighting in the American Civil War (1861-65) as a soldier in the Union Army and later coming back to England and settling at Saul.

Grampa had been a member of the Eastington Brass band, as was his brother James. I believe they both played brass instruments. I have since been in touch with Tony Hulbert, who told me that his grandfather, James, played the trombone and my grandfather the trumpet. Brass bands were a great interest of Grampa's and he delighted in listening to them on the radio (or wireless as they called it) and if we children did not keep quiet he would get quite annoyed and would say, "*I'll shake torments over you young varmints*", though I never knew exactly what this threat was!

Grampa was a regular at Gloucester Cattle market which was at that time situated on the site of the present bus station. He was always well-dressed in breeches and leggings with shining boots.

He was always interested in Parish affairs; he was a Church Warden for many years, a member of the Board of Guardians which controlled the organisation of the Workhouse, and a founder member of the Village Hall Trustees.

When I lived at Frampton, I came to Green Farm to my cousins' birthday parties. Round about 1928 Grampa purchased a car, a Renault Tourer, but he never learned to drive. The registration of the car was AD6. Uncle Harold took charge and the car was very useful for the farm business and social occasions.

Grampa was an avid reader, enjoying adventure books and anything concerning horses, having been a proficient rider in his youth. He was a member of the Berkeley Hunt, who met once a year on the green in front of Green Farm.

I remember one day looking out of the window and seeing my grandfather in conversation with the local butcher and his assistant. Being of an inquisitive nature, I decided to go and find out what they were talking about, so I went prancing across the yard, stepped in a fresh cowpat, slipped and sat down in it! What a mess I was in! Of course the men had a good laugh at my expense.

After Charles and Amelia were married in 1879, they made their home at Putlow Farm. Moreton Valence, where their first five children were born. They then moved to Green Farm, Eastington, which had been purchased for them by his father John Warner. My mother Constance was the first to be born at Green Farm followed by Reginald and Harold.

Grandpa was a stickler for good manners and he kept a firm eye on us, particularly at the table. As long as he lived he was always the one who carved the joint.

Constance Mary Everett (nee Warner) (21/4/1888 – 17/4/1977)

My mother was the sixth child and youngest daughter of Charles and Amelia Warner of Alkerton Green Farm and was the first of their children to be born at that address, the elder children having been born at Putlow Farm, Moreton Valence.

The three Rs were acquired at Miss Powell's school in the village, a private concern, which gave a good grounding and was also concerned with instilling good manners in the pupils. Later my mother attended the Misses French's School for Young Ladies at Gloucester Road in Stonehouse. Miss Lizzie and Miss Ella were the two oldest sisters. They were quite strict but I think they provided a reasonable education. Before school Connie would deliver butter and other dairy products along the way and often had to run to avoid being late. She and her cousin and great friend, Agnes Keys (also a day girl at Misses French's), had a secret signal to save waiting around for each other in the mornings, and this was to leave a small stone in a special place on the canal bridge, to show whether they had already gone past.

As a young girl of about 10 years of age, she could remember travelling to London to stay with her aunt and uncle, George and Maggie Summers, and being taken to a performance of Buffalo Bill's Circus, which she greatly enjoyed.

My grandmother had developed a heart complaint and this necessitated my mother leaving school earlier than planned in order to take over the household duties, the two elder daughters being out at business, one in London and the other at Bristol.

Being devoted to animals, my mother became adept at driving the horse and trap and, on fine afternoons, she and her mother would sally forth to pay their respects to friends and neighbours. My great grandfather, John Warner, always referred to his daughter-in-law (my grandmother) as "The Lady" which, from all I've heard, she truly was.

During her teens, Connie attended dancing classes at Stonehouse Subscription Rooms which were conducted by Mr Phil Townsend, who lived in Regent Street. These classes were of great benefit when she later attended balls and other functions.

The highlight of the social scene was the Annual Yeomanry Ball, held at Berkeley, to which my mother was escorted by her eldest brother, John. They were joined by other farming families and travelled together in a horse-drawn wagonette.

Several people who attended these functions have since remarked to me what a graceful dancer my mother was and never lacking partners. Her last ball gown was palest pink satin and gauze and, after her death, I donated it to the Folk Museum in Westgate Street Gloucester.

Constance Everett was a practising Christian – she said that, "*anyone could give mouth mercy*" but it was important for her to show her faith in practical ways.

Some of my mother's sayings:

If you had done some work but it was not perfect, she would say, "*A blind man would be only too pleased to see it.*"

If a seam on a new garment came apart, she would say, "*I expect it was put together with a red-hot needle and a burning thread.*"

Anything really unusual, "*Neither fish, fowl nor flesh.*"

"*We can't all be beautiful but we can try to look pleasant.*"

"*Never make a promise unless you intend to keep it.*"

"*Good manners cost nothing – you can be as poor as a church mouse but still have good manners.*"

"*An ounce of help is worth more than a pound of pity.*"

John Henry Coleman Everett (22/8/1888 – 12/2/1952)

My father, John Henry Coleman Everett, sometimes known as Jack, was the eldest son of Henry Edward Matthew Everett and his wife Minnie Elizabeth Dauncey (nee Gregory), both of Berkeley families.

He attended Berkeley School and was later apprenticed to engineering and I remember him saying that one of his test pieces was a kettle which had to pour perfectly!

My father's grandfather, Captain Albert Everett, was a Bristol Channel Pilot and Harbour Master at Sharpness, so, the sea being in his blood, my father became a ship's engineer and travelled to many foreign ports.

It was through his interest in things mechanical that he met my mother, and this is how it happened. The Everett girls had met the Warners at the Yeomanry Ball at Berkeley and had become friends, so they were invited to tea at Green Farm, thereby strengthening the links. Eventually, Jack Everett, on shore leave, also paid a visit to Eastington, where at this time Grampa Warner was complaining that his wall-clock was keeping erratic time. Jack offered to have a look at it and earned his host's gratitude for a job well done, at the same time falling in love with daughter Connie, whose heart he won.

Then the war came (1914-18) and though the courtship progressed, Grampa Warner made them promise that they would not marry until the war was over. They married on February 27th 1919.

My father was apprenticed to engineering on leaving school and after progressing through the various stages, finished his apprenticeship. In later years very little was beyond his skill of mending and restoring, such as clock mechanics etc. He also did his own car maintenance, sometimes with a friend's assistance if it was a heavy job.

During the war it was decided by the "powers that be" that his skills would be of greater use in repairing ships for a quick turnaround at Avonmouth Docks. There his "mate" was Marston Gibbs, who owned shops in Bristol, but who had been called up to do work of National Importance. They became life-long friends.

Around 1921 while serving on the SS Chicago City, they were caught in a terrific storm in mid-Atlantic which caused the cargo to shift and make the ship list. All officers and men were called below to try to get the ship back on an even keel and proceed to the home port of Bristol. Following this experience, my father decided to leave the sea. In 1922 he obtained a position as maintenance engineer at Cadbury Bros at Frampton.

My earliest recollection is of going for a ride with my father, sitting on the crossbar of his bicycle to which a cushion had been strapped. In this way we visited various friends of his and of these I particularly remember going to Arlingham to see Mr Maurice Merrett who had been Daddy's best man. This gentleman had two daughters and I can remember crossing a stream by a single plank bridge at their farm.

Another friend was Mr George Holloway who kept the Bell Hotel at Frampton and whose elder daughters Dot and Gwen, made great fuss of me

Among the summer visitors to Frampton was the Hogg family whose young son Quintin is now known as Lord Hailsham.

Betty aged about 2½, with her father John Everett.



Betty Estrelle Barnfield (nee Everett)

Betty was born in York Road, Montpellier, Bristol on 24th January 1920. The first child of her parents John and Constance Everett (nee Warner). Her mother said that it was snowing at the time.

My middle name is Estrelle after my father's eldest sister, Estrelle Everett. My father was born in Newport because his mother had gone to visit a cousin and the baby came before it was expected. His family lived in Berkeley.

When I was born we lived in Bristol. My father was a marine engineer. He sailed out of Bristol as a ship's engineer. But when I was born he preferred to be with his family instead of going to sea. We moved to Frampton when I was two, and my father became a maintenance engineer at Cadbury's. We lived in Whitminster Lane – when you get to the top of the Green you turn right into Whitminster Lane. We lived there for about 7 years.

I went to the council school in Saul because my mother's friends were governors there and they recommended it. The teachers were nice but they insisted on good order. I didn't go to school until I was 6½ because I was a delicate child. I had had diphtheria when I was 2½. My parents taught me at home before I was able to go to school, so I didn't fall behind.

In 1929 we moved back to Bristol for my father's job as maintenance engineer at Hornby's Dairies. We stayed there until 1931, when we moved to Green Farm, Eastington. It was owned by my grandfather, Charles Warner and we moved in with my family. Green Farm is on the road towards the A38 on the left past Broomhall's butcher's. My father had got a job as an engineer at Lister's in Dursley. It was lovely living on the farm. It was a dairy farm. I enjoyed the open farm life.

At about the age of 2½ I was very ill with diphtheria and nearly died. I have been told that my parents sat with me day and night until the crisis passed and I slowly fought my way back to health and strength. Due to my ill health following the diphtheria, I didn't start school until I was 6 years old and until that time I was taught by my parents at home. I was always an avid reader and learner.

At this time my parents lived in Whitminster Lane and our next door neighbours were Harry and Chrissie Nicholson, who were kindness itself. They had a daughter also named Betty, with whom I played and who for some years was my "best friend".

While living at Frampton we would often walk to Eastington to visit my grandfather and my mother's brother Harold and sister-in-law Edith and their two young sons Howard and Rex. Howard's birthday fell in August and I would sometimes be placed in the care of Mr Bettridge, the carrier, so that I could attend the party. Uncle Harold was an ebullient character and always addressed me, when a child, as "Betty Bum" a name that caused me great embarrassment.

Staying at Hill Farm, Edge

Just after my fifth birthday my mother produced a baby brother for me but she made a slow recovery and so it was suggested that I should stay with her sister-in-law, Ella, at Hill Farm, Edge, to give her a chance to gain strength and concentrate on the baby who was not making the progress he should have done.

My aunt was the widow of my mother's dearly loved eldest brother, John, who had died of TB some years before my birth, leaving three young sons, the last only a baby at the time. These lads made much of me, though they were great teasers, and in time I adored them and spent every holiday thereafter at Edge, where it gave me the greatest of pleasure to "help" on the farm, which, until the boys were old enough to take over, was managed by Mr Oscar Bunyan.

I was always anxious to help with all the various jobs on the farm and mixing the pig food gave me great pleasure and I became quite an expert on which mixture of Sharps (pig food), barley-meal or bran should be given to porkers, weaners or sows, though I have now forgotten which was the correct food for each category.

Another job which I took a hand in was to put mangolds into the machine, turn the handle which then sliced them into pieces resembling potato chips which were then fed to the cows to augment their diet

My favourite cow was named "Cowslip" and when I went with Jack to bring the cows in to be milked, I would be given a ride on her back. She had such a gentle disposition that I was allowed to learn to milk her. My cousins at Edge operated a milk round in the village and I loved going out on the milk-float and especially when I was allowed to drive along a safe and quiet part, and make the horse trot. Dick, the horse, was a docile creature and I was sometimes allowed to ride him in the paddock. They also owned three shire horses named "Captain", "Colonel" and "Prince" and, coming home from the fields, where I "supervised" the work, I had many a ride on their broad backs.

Auntie Ella was a Hawkins from Welches Farm, Horsemarling Lane and being the eldest girl of a large family, had had a governess. When she was well-enough educated herself, she then helped to teach the younger children. She was a dignified and kind lady and interested in many things. Whilst staying at Hill Farm I would go with her to meetings of Edge Women's Institute.

My aunt was a great one for visiting her various relatives and would set out after lunch in the governess-cart drawn by the faithful "Dick".

One of those destinations was the home of her sister Kathleen, the wife of Fred Dowdeswell at Waterwells Farm, Quedgeley. I well remember my first time there. In the hall was a glass case containing a stuffed fox which Uncle Fred had shot while it was raiding his chicken house. In the dark it seemed to come alive and I was terrified to go alone into the hall for those gleaming, menacing eyes seemed to be watching me.

We would often return to Hill Farm after dark and the trap would have its two brass lamps lit to show us the way and to let others know we were on the road. Of course there was not much traffic about then, just the odd bus or car.

When staying at Hill Farm I attended evening service at Edge Church with Auntie Ella, and on seeing the surpliced choir, including my cousins, processing into the church, I said in a stage whisper, "*Look Auntie, the boys have got their nighties on!*" Of course I was teased about this and never allowed to forget it!



Life on the farm.

These photos are of Green Farm (the Warner family farm) in August 1933.

Betty and her family moved back there in 1931.

Marston John Everett (Mike) 1925 – 1944

My brother was born on February 4th 1925, in the early hours and I can remember my father taking me into the bedroom to see my mother and the new baby. We had a very happy childhood but we did not always agree, even coming to blows at times. When he had reached his mid-teens we became very good friends and he would take me to the cinema at Stonehouse on his motorcycle which he had built himself. He disliked his name (Marston) and preferred to be called Mike.

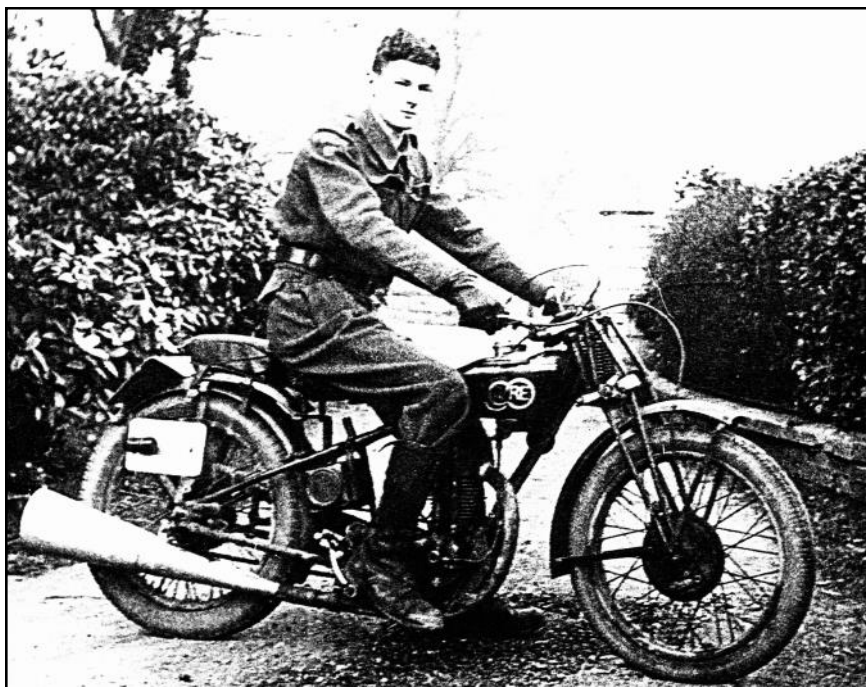
During the time we were both at school, we would roam around the fields and on warm sunny days we would paddle in Wickster's brook which formed the boundary between my grandfather's land and Capehall Farm at Cambridge. We made dams out of stones we had gathered, but when sufficient water built up the dams disintegrated.

Mike had an air gun and became a very good shot. In his teens he would go shooting down the fields with his friends and bring home rabbits which he gave away. He was very friendly with his cousin Henry, who would often ride his motorbike to Green Farm from Bristol, where he lived. If something was not working properly he would remark that "*the steam had got twisted in the pipes*".

With the war in progress and reaching the age of 16 or 17 he joined the Home Guard. He enlisted in the Army as soon as he was 18 and trained at Forest Fach near Swansea, then at Box, near Corsham, Wilts. He became a craftsman in R.E.M.E. and was sent to the South Coast. He was at Southampton, waiting to follow the D Day troops, when he was struck down by polio myelitis. He was sent to an isolation hospital and eventually transferred to Gloucester City General Hospital where he died on July 15th 1944, aged 19.



Mike Everett in 1942 in the Home Guard



He was a truly lovely young man. He was tall (6ft 2in) and good-looking with twinkling blue eyes and lovely wavy hair. He had a good sense of humour and a kind disposition. He also had a good singing voice and would attempt "Largo al Factotum" from "The Barber of Seville" by Rossini. His loss was absolutely devastating.

Saul School

Friends of my family were the Watkins family at Frampton and as Captain Watkins was a school manager at the British School at Saul, I started my education there at the age of six, when my teacher was Mrs Jones whose son Billy was a fellow pupil. Mrs Jones' father Captain Fredericks was a retired sea captain and they lived at Junction House at Saul Junction. I would walk with them as far as Sandfield Bridge on the journey home.

The headmaster was Mr Wade and two other teachers were Miss Iris Dangerfield and Miss Gwyneth Field and both lived in Saul.

At the age of 6 or 7 years, Peggy Westwood and I were chosen to attend the May Queen, Winnie Hogg. Peggy was as dark as I was fair and we wore butterfly wings on our backs. The older children took part in country dancing in honour of the May Queen.

Peggy and her elder sister had a cousin Bill Westwood who lived a couple of doors away from us in Whitminster Lane, Frampton-on-Severn, and he later became Bishop of Ely. Bill's father worked with my father at Cadbury's.

I remained at The British School until July 1929 when my father left Cadbury's Maintenance Department and took a similar position with Hornby's Dairies in City Road, Bristol. When I left the headmaster presented me with the book "A Pilgrim's Progress".

We lived in a flat at Belmont Road, Bishopston, one road away from Auntie Jess, mum's sister. I attended Sefton Park School. While there I had my tonsil removed and missed sitting the "eleven plus" exam.

In 1931 we moved back to Green Farm, the Warner home in Eastington.

In the summer of that year, Uncle Harold, who had farmed with Grandpa at Eastington, decided to branch out on his own and was granted the tenancy of Manor Farm, Hempsted. Therefore Grandpa needed someone to keep house for him and immediately thought of his youngest daughter, my mother Connie. As the "Depression" had by now set in, my father had been put off by his employers, and in spite of constant efforts, was unable to obtain another position. So, in a sense, this was a satisfactory arrangement for all concerned.

Previous to her marriage, my mother had always kept poultry and now that she was back at her old home she set about getting some Light Sussex pullets which would provide eggs for the family, the surplus to be sold. Our cockerel, a fine bird, was named "Old King Cole" – he was very fierce and would fly across the yard at the children and peck our legs.



The Warner family farm.
Green Farm in August 1933

The day my brother and I arrived from Bristol in September 1931, we sallied forth into the fields and met some boys picking blackberries; not stopping to think, I wanted to know if they had asked Grandpa's permission, and getting "cheek" in response, I'm sorry to say I knocked their basket over. One of the boys was Owen Harris who still remembers the episode.

Our "mother's help", inherited from Auntie Edith, was Gladys Longney from Frampton, whose grandmother was Mrs Eliza Shill, who lived in the cottage on the Green and who worked for my grandmother, Amelia. Gladys was a big strong girl with a wonderful temperament and artistic talent, who became like an older sister to my brother and me. We had lots of fun and soon made friends with the daughters of my mother's cousin, Jean and Doreen Warner, who lived almost opposite in one of the Grange cottages. Another friend was Jackie Farrow whose mother was the cook/housekeeper at Alkerton Grange. Jackie and my brother were inseparable until fate parted them when Mrs Farrow's employers moved away.

My grandmother (Minnie Everett), who was a wonderful pianist, died in 1930 and my parents inherited her piano. When we moved to Green Farm we brought the piano with us and I later took piano lessons from Miss Queenie Powell at her house next to Eastington Chapel. The lessons were of great benefit to me when I joined the choir of St Michael and All Angels Church in 1935. I began as a soprano and later took the alto part.

Another family who were friends of ours was the Evans family at Middle Street Farm; Teddy and Rhoda and their daughters – Kath, Edna, Jane and Gillian. Mr Evans used to write plays to be performed at the Village Hall, in which Bob often took part. Mr Evans would often bring anecdotes about people in the village into these plays.

Eastington School

I went to Eastington C of E School. Mr John Rowbotham was the headmaster, and a very good one too – he gave you the ability to learn. He was Fred Rowbotham's father. I knew Fred and his sister, Florence. Fred married Stella Hudson, the sister of Roy Hudson at the dairy in Stonehouse.

Some of the teachers at Eastington School were Miss Benfield, Miss Woolford and Miss Watts. I stayed there until I was 14. I remember the May Queen celebrations. I was one of the dancers – I never got voted to be May Queen although I was runner-up several times. We did maypole dancing and country dancing. Mr Rowbotham started that. Sometimes it was held in the gardens of Alkerton House and also at the school. Alfred Keys lived there (Betty is related to the Keys family)



Betty riding one of the horses at Green Farm in the 1930s.

Lilian Ricketts (nee Taylor) 10/11/1923 - 2018

Lil and I first met when our families lived two doors apart in Whitminster Lane, Frampton. Later they moved to the bottom of the Green where Lil attended Frampton School. Then in 1932 they moved up to Eastington and lived on Eastington Cross next to the King's Head. Lil then went to Eastington School until she passed the 11 plus exam for Stroud High School in 1934. We cycled to school together daily as I was then employed in the offices of Lewis & Godfrey, a large store in Stroud, on a three year apprenticeship in clerical work. At times we cycled up Frocester Hill to have a picnic, taking a bottle of lemonade and a few sandwiches. At other times I would cycle to Frampton or Framilode to the banks of the Severn.

After Lil left school we started to attend dances, previously enjoying Sunday night hops at the village hall. We cycled to various villages to attend their dances as there was little other transport available.

Lil met Dennis Ricketts when they both worked at Sperry Gyroscope during the 1940s. Dennis was "called up" in 1944 and they married in June 1945. After that he set sail for Palestine, continuing his RAF service. After he was demobbed he worked locally for a time, and then moved to Malmesbury to work for E. K. Cole trading as EKCO. A few years later he moved to Calne where he was employed by Westinghouse, Brake and Signal Co. where he remained until his retirement.

Their first child, Philip, was born in December 1949. Lil and I used to take the children out in their prams together and would often walk to Frocester, Claypits or down to the church.

Later, when they moved from Eastington, I would go by bus to visit them and Lil would come to Eastington to visit her parents and us. When I started driving of course I was able to go by car.

I was bridesmaid for Lil when she married Dennis and when I married Bob in 1948 she attended me as Matron of Honour and Dennis was Bob's Best Man. We remained friends for the rest of our lives. In 1966 Lil gave birth to Susan, nearly 17 years after Philip.

Early in 1935 Lil and I were confirmed and we both joined the choir at Eastington Church. The rector at that time was Rev W. R. Williams. His wife held a Sunday School for teenagers at the Rectory (which is now Spring Hill House).

Lil and I both learned to play tennis, but she was a better player than me. We were both members of Eastington Tennis Club which was situated in "The Flat", one of Grandpa Warner's fields. I became secretary and treasurer of the Tennis Club until it eventually folded.

We remained close friends until her death in 2018.



Betty and her best friend Lil taken in the late 1930s.

Owen Edward Harris

One of my boyfriends was Owen Harris. He was living in the farm opposite the entrance to this estate now. His mother and my mother were friends. Owen didn't dance but we went to the Regal Cinema in Stonehouse. It was by the railway bridge where the garage is now (built in 1937). I remember the double seats at the back of the cinema. Before the war started Owen asked me to marry him and go with him to Canada. He wanted to farm in Canada but I felt I was too young to up stakes at that time. So neither of us went to Canada. We still used to meet on a Friday evening after work. He was a farm apprentice at Frampton and used to come over on his bike.

Owen was born in 1919 to George and Flora Harris of Alkerton, Eastington. Our mothers had been friends since childhood, but I don't remember meeting Owen until I came to Eastington in 1931. Our first meeting took place in the Park field where Owen and a friend were picking blackberries. I enquired of them, "Have you had permission to pick blackberries here?" Receiving cheek in response – I knocked their basket over! But obviously Owen took no offence because we remained friends all of his life.

Owen attended Eastington School until 1931 when he passed the scholarship to Marling School. As I was working in Stroud, Owen and I used to cycle together. Owen had always been interested in farming and while still at Marling, he helped Alfred Keys at Alkerton House farm. (This is no longer in existence as it became the site of Swallowcroft Estate.) At 16, on leaving school, he became a farm apprentice with Charlie Williams at Frampton-on-Severn, returning home each Friday evening when we would meet at the Pound Leaze. This continued for several years. In the Spring of 1938, we both had flu, and when we recovered my mother invited Owen to tea. Later that year Owen and I were chatting by the rickyard gate when he asked me to marry him and go to Canada to live. I was not keen to go to Canada because I had always hated the cold and I thought I was much too young.

The following year the war started so Owen didn't go to Canada. He was not called up for war work because work on the land was considered vital to support communities and Owen was farming for Charlie Williams in Frampton. Owen didn't own his own farm at this time. I was at working at Ruberoid and then called up to work at Sperry Gyroscope. We remained friends throughout the war, meeting up on a Friday evening. Then I went to work in London so we didn't see each other much.

Owen continued farming. The farm that his grandfather had owned had been let to tenant farmers. When the tenant retired Owen and his parents went to live at Alkerton Farm – a brick and timber farmhouse with a big barn, both very attractive Grade 2 listed properties. Owen farmed there for the rest of his life. He married late. Shirley Harris was said to have "chased him until he caught her". Her sister had married a cousin of Owen's so they got to know each other. They were in their 60s when they married.

Owen's widow sold the farm and fields for nearly a million pounds so she gave one field to the village and paid for the new village hall – the Owen Harris Memorial Hall. Shirley Harris could be friendly at time but she left the village to live in Sussex near her sister. Her cousin had enabled her to meet Owen – we're not convinced Owen was happily married; he'd never forgotten Betty and always made a fuss of her and the children. He was a popular man in the village, farming until he died in 1987.



Owen (centre) at his farm in the 1980s.

Lewis & Godfrey

When I left school in 1935 I was apprenticed to Book-Keeping. I was employed at Lewis & Godfrey in Stroud as an apprentice in their offices. Lewis & Godfrey was a big department store on the corner of King Street and Russell Street, stretching right along to George Street. I cycled from Eastington to Stroud as the buses were few and far between in those days. The roads were quite quiet then. I started at 9.00 in the morning and finished at 6.00 or on some days at 5.30. I was apprenticed for three years and I didn't get any pay whatsoever for the first year. My parents were supporting me. I did get lunch. In the second year I got 1/6d a week – pathetic isn't it? Then it went up every six months by 2 shillings a week so it was 1/6d, 3/6d, 5/6d and finished up at 7/6d per week. The first person I worked with was very nice but the second one not quite so nice. There was just me in the office but they had other apprentices in the shop.

World War Two

In 1938 I left Lewis & Godfrey and went to work for the Dursley Garage in their offices for a while but I thought I didn't want to cycle to Dursley every day, so in 1939 I moved to the Ruberoid Company. They had brought their offices down from London to Meadow Mill, where they already had a factory. (Meadow Mill is off Spring Hill. Turn right past Millend Lane coming from the A419)

I didn't know anyone there when I got the job. They were mostly people from London who had been evacuated out of the city. Ruberoid had rented The Hill at Merrywalks in Stroud for some of their employees and they used to bring them to work in cars each morning. I cycled to work from Green Farm.

I got called up in 1942 to do work of national importance and I went to Sperry Gyroscope (at Bond's Mill). I was doing engraving. In the instruments they made there were rings that had to be engraved with numbers from 0 up to 33 I think it was. I had never done anything like that before – it took a couple of months to learn how to do it. There were lots of others doing the same. We worked 8 am to 6 pm so there wasn't much time for anything else.

We were on rations but we had a big garden maintained by the farm workers, which kept us in vegetables. We also had the milk from the dairy. We did go to dances at the villages like Whitminster, Eastington, Frampton and Stonehouse. My friend and I went on our bikes together.

Bob Barnfield went into the Army in about 1941. Bob's mother was called up to work at Sperry Gyroscope at the same time as me. We were walking to work one day when I asked after Bob and she said he was all right and had been sent to India and then to Burma. "Oh", I said, "Do you think he would like me to write to him?" "I'm sure he would", she said, so she gave me his address and I wrote to him – as a friend.

After the war, in 1946, I went to High Holborn in London to work for the Ruberoid Company and I stayed there for a year. Bob came back from Burma and his mother invited me to a party to welcome him home but I was still in London so I couldn't attend, but when I came home she invited me to have tea with them. Bob walked me home after tea and that's when our romance started. We knew each other from school – he was a pal of my brother's.



Betty aged about 18



Betty aged about 20

I was living in London at North Harrow with my mother's eldest sister and her husband. I would return to Stonehouse by train (£1 and 1 penny for a return ticket), once a fortnight to stay with my mother at the Hawthorns, Claypits and to see my "dear Daddy". Dad was a quiet, dark man, a trained ship's engineer and one of 12 children. He was the eldest of 4 boys and 8 girls. In later life he became a general engineer, working for R. A. Lister & Co at Dursley. He drove a standard BAD 705 car. Mother did not work. They lived in half of a big house on the A38 – down the hill from the Junction.

I was in my late 20s by now. I travelled on the underground and was friendly with my aunt's friend's daughters, the O'Connors. But I didn't enjoy London much – I missed Eastington and my family. After Christmas 1946 I decided to leave her position in London and returned home in January 1947. When I returned home I lived with my parents at Claypits and worked in the offices at Daniels at Lightpill.

Bob was really my brother's pal, so it was a surprise when we started courting. We went to the cinema in Stonehouse and caught the bus to Stroud. We were members of the Eastington Tennis Club. Bob didn't dance but he was a good musician. We went to Bristol to buy our engagement ring from Kemps, the same firm that my mother's ring came from. I remember going for lunch in Whiteladies Road. We got married in 1948.



Wedding of Betty Everett and Bob Barnfield in 1948.

Robert (Bob) Barnfield born 5th January 1923

Bob was the son of Henry Robert Barnfield and his wife Hilda Mary.

He attended Eastington School, where on one occasion he went too near the stream, fell in and was rescued by one of the older boys – Len Miles. Both were sent home to change into fresh clothes.

He left in 1934 after obtaining a scholarship to Marling School where he stayed for the next 5 years. He was assistant Scout Master of the Eastington Troop, Rev Frank Miles being the Scout Master. In 1939 he took up an apprenticeship with Montague Burton's Tailors in Stroud, where he stayed until 1941 when he was "called up" aged 18. After being turned down twice on health grounds, his initial training was in Surrey. He eventually sailed from Liverpool on the Duchess of Richmond to Cape Town, South Africa. He later travelled to India, Assam and Burma.

While on active service in Burma during World War Two, Bob said that he and his colleagues always banged their boots on the ground and then turned them upside down first thing in the morning as scorpions sometimes crawled inside them during the night and they didn't want to get stung!

During his time in Burma all their supplies were dropped from aircraft. On one occasion, Bob's mum decided to send him a Christmas pudding in a china basin! It was very well padded but even so, dropping from a great height, the basin shattered. The men took a great delight in taking the pieces of china out and thoroughly enjoyed the pudding!

Eventually the Japanese started to retreat with our troops following on their heels. After a long day's trek, they were all dusty and sweaty and decided to freshen up in a nearby lake. The next morning they discovered dead Japanese soldiers in the lake. They continued to pursue the Japanese and stopped overnight near another lake to refresh themselves again – only to discover there were crocodiles in residence! They considered themselves very lucky to have escaped death from illness or crocodiles.

Eventually they reached the banks of the Irrawaddy River, where they came across a ruined temple. Bob decided to have a look inside and in the rubble he found two wooden Buddhas painted red and gold, which he brought home with him. After crossing the river and entering Rangoon, the first person he encountered was Bob Bullock, a neighbour from Eastington. A short while later he met Tom Shill, another village lad. Tom had been in a reserved occupation for most of the war years. The war ended while he was in Burma and on arrival he was told he was to be returned to England forthwith.

Bob returned to England in May 1946 and had leave during which time his mother organised a party to which various friends were invited. I was not able to attend as I was working in London at the time but when I came home the following weekend I was invited to tea at Greenslade. Bob accompanied me home to The Hawthorns and the romance started from there. When Bob returned to duty, he was sent to Catterick in Yorkshire but he came down to London to see me. He stayed over one night at Aunt Mabel's but unfortunately fell asleep en-route to St Pancras Station and missed his connection to the North, but with help managed to reach Catterick on time. During his time there he was an Instructor for Signals

After being demobbed, Bob returned to work at Montague Burton's in Stroud, later being transferred to Gloucester. In 1961 he was appointed manager of Hepworth's in Northgate Street. Hepworth's formed a connection with Hardy Amies and the managers and wives were invited to a Reception at the Savoy Hotel in London, which we attended

In the late 1960s Bob decided to set up his own tailoring and alterations service at 51, Southgate Street, Gloucester. He moved premises to Russell Street, Stroud and also opened a second shop in Parsonage Street, Dursley. He gave that up in 1977 after suffering a blood clot on the lung. He was taken to Gloucester Royal Hospital on the Sunday of the Queen's Silver Jubilee and was in intensive care for 5 days and on a ward for a further 5 days before being allowed home. He retired in January 1988.

Bob was an active member of the Eastington branch of the British legion. He was elected branch secretary, a position he held for 38 years. He also represented the branch as a delegate to the County Conference and the National Conference which was held in a different city each year. He was also a member of the County Committee, a position he held until his death.

With Mr Bill Wathers, he set up the bingo meetings in the village hall, which ran for nearly 40 years. With Mr and Mrs Moss he organised weekly whist drives. Bob also helped Bill Fletcher and Mrs Queenie Jones organise annual flower shows, the children's marching band and the floats for Stroud Show

Bob's Music

From an early age, Bob was always interested in music. At the age of 3 or 4 his parents couldn't keep him away from his father's harmonium, so they arranged for him to have piano lessons, first with Miss Molly Davies and later, Mr William Bird., a well-known musician from Gloucester who came to Stonehouse to give lessons. At the age of 11 he obtained a scholarship to Marling School. He learned to play the organ there. Later on he received organ lessons from Mr Norton Dauncey on the Eastington Methodist Church organ and Mr Joseph Moore on the organ at Eastington Parish Church. After the war he became organist at Eastington Church.

Married life

Bob and I got married in 1948 at Eastington Church. I bought the dress; I've still got my wedding veil – a friend hand-embroidered it. We lived in Stonehouse with a lady named Mrs Saleby, who was Canon Saleby's widow. He had been vicar of Leonard Stanley. The house was at the top of Regent Street next to Polly Owen's shop and called St Leonard's after where they came from. I gave up work when I got married.

I had my son Gregory in 1949. I went to Dudbridge House Nursing Home to have my baby. It was a big private house. I had a private room - I stayed there for about 10 days. By this time we had moved from Regent Street to live with my in-laws at Greenslade, Bath Road, Eastington. My mother was also still living in the village. My friend Lil also had a baby but she moved to Malmesbury. They would come to visit and we never lost touch all our lives. I had three children, Gregory, Elizabeth and Michael.

It's hard to remember what life was like in those days but I know I was very busy with three children. My in-laws gave us the orchard next to their house so we could build our own house on it. There were more shops in Eastington then. There was the Post Office on the road towards Claypits, and the newsagents. I would go shopping in Stonehouse and Stroud but I got most things in the village. I remember Gardiner's Stores in Stonehouse – that was a really good shop – they had all the best quality.

When the children were a bit older I took on some responsibilities in local groups. I was treasurer and secretary of the Royal British Legion Women's section. We used to have competitions and different things like that to entertain us; written competitions like quizzes which I organised. We raised money for the benevolent fund so if anyone was ill we could get them fruit and things like that. I was with the British Legion from 1966 to the 1980s. I was also secretary of the Eastington branch of the Women's Institute. When that closed I joined the Frocester branch and I have been with them ever since. I also helped the WRVS with Meals on Wheels and Bob did too.



Betty in the 1950s

I joined the Church Choir again. Some of the singers were Cheryl Keys, Les Hawkins and Mr Morris the headmaster of Eastington School. I remember good old Floss Davis. The rector also joined in. One evening the rector came to choir practice and said he had taken on six extra churches so he wouldn't have time for choir practice any more. So we had no choir for a while although it did start up again later.

Being in the church choir was the best thing I remember about all the activities I did. I loved that. We sang at Sunday services. Sometimes the rector took the practice and sometimes my husband Bob took it as he was the organist. We sometimes joined up with Frocester for special services. We went to Gloucester Cathedral to sing sometimes.

Once the children were older, Betty returned to the Church Choir, which she had first joined in February 1935 aged 15. The choir carried on during the war when Rev Leonard West was rector. Rev West took their marriage service in 1948 but sadly committed suicide later that year while caring for his sick wife.

In the 1960s the reverend was John Lewis and later John Green, both Choirmasters. Betty would attend choir practice and the Sunday Service. Some of the other choir members were Mrs Clutterbuck, Mrs Paskey, Mrs Ricketts, Mrs Price and Floss Davis, who sang for 50 years. Betty also remembers Elsie Howell, Betty Winfield, Elaine Cheshire, Betty and Margaret Telling and Joan Milton, who worked in the offices at Standish Hospital but sadly died in her 20s. There were Celia Smith and her mother, Dorothy. Betty's friend Lil and her sister Roma also sang until Lil moved to Malmesbury. There were a few youngsters too, including Betty's daughter and Jenny Parry. Everyone in the choir was from Eastington. Frocester had its own choir but occasionally joined together for a festival such as Whitsun, Easter or Christmas – joyous occasions.

The men included Mr Birt (a tenor), Mr Keys (the brother of local historian A. E. Keys), Mr Tudor, Mr Davis, John Shill, Colin Britton and Frank Twiselton. Sometimes Bob Barnfield would join in – men were in short supply! The rectors might sing too, as lead, some having very good voices.

Bob Barnfield became organist in 1948 but we engaged the Stonehouse organist, Mr Gwinnell, for our wedding. His mother lived down Middle Street. Bob was organist for at least ten years until work got too busy. Harry Daniels took over from him.

Betty liked the hymns and anthems for special occasions such as festivals. They also went to other churches for their Saint's Days and would sing at Frocester, Stonehouse, Rodborough and Selsley. They sometimes went to Gloucester Cathedral for the Deanery Service when all the local choirs sang together – there were great acoustics at the Cathedral. They sang Evensong which was very moving.

In 1984 the rector ended the choir. He didn't ask Betty to take over as she had done before and she didn't put herself forward, because the rector had decided it was finished. It was a shame as such good friends sang together in church. There was no choir for some time until eventually it was reformed.

Betty was secretary for the Eastington Women's Institute, taking the minutes for the monthly meetings for many years. That branch closed in 1990 and Betty moved to the Frocester branch with her friend Anne – Betty still attends Frocester W.I. at the age of 101!

Betty was also treasurer for the Women's Royal British Legion from 1966 until 1984. Women did not have to have been actively serving in the war but they had a connection to the services. It involved attending meetings and organising the November Armistice Ceremony. They would march down to the church for the service. In around 1993 Bob and Betty were invited to a Garden Party with Prince Charles at Highgrove. He wanted to meet people who were involved in local community organisations. Highgrove was very nice, they were in a marquee and the food was good!

In the 1980s Betty joined a voluntary group which transported patients to and from the doctor's surgery in Frampton-on-Severn. Patients living in Eastington would contact Mrs Elizabeth Garvey and she would arrange for whoever was available to take them.

Treble Chance Quiz hosted by Des Lynam

Bob and I were always interested in quizzes on the radio and later on television. When the Eastington branch of the RBL formed a quiz team in about 1975, I was asked if I would like to join the team. We took part in County competitions and later represented the County at area level and won on several occasions.

Bob always listened to the radio whilst working in his tailor's shop, and that evening came home to say that the BBC was asking for applicants to represent Stroud in a Quiz they were about to produce. Bob said he had sent off my name for this. Of course I didn't believe him because he was always joking and could keep a straight face! However, a couple of days later a letter arrived from the BBC asking me to attend an audition at the Bear at Rodborough with 25 other applicants. We were given a set of questions to which we had to give written answers. I came third with my answers, the other two chosen being Ian Bailey, a local restaurateur and Peter Quick, a retired headmaster. Another lady was chosen to be a reserve member of the team. Our first recording session was at the Bingham Hall in Cirencester where we played their team and won. In the next round we played Andover, Hampshire and won. Our next team came from Preston in Lancashire and again we were successful. This brought us to the final at Chipping Campden who had also beaten their opponents in various parts of the country. Our match with them was very close and it wasn't until the last question that we got beaten. The last question was – "What is the name of the oldest theatre in the West of England?" We had conferred before answering the previous questions but this time the other two team members got carried away and blurted out - "Theatre Royal, Bath!" I said "No! It's the Theatre Royal, Bristol!" but as we were only allowed one "bite of the cherry" this was not allowed and so we lost the contest. After the Quiz we were invited to dinner at a hotel in the village hosted by the BBC.

Betty's family

The eldest two children were born at Dudbridge House Nursing Home – a private maternity home. They were living at Greenslade – their future home "Sumacs" was still being built.

All three births were fine, the children were all healthy. Fathers were not present at births at that time. Mothers could stay in bed nursing the baby for a week or two and fathers and parents could visit.

Betty was very busy with three children under five. Bob was a tailor at this time and in 1961 branched out on his own so he was working very hard. All three children went to Eastington Primary School and enjoyed it – it had good teachers over the years. Elizabeth passed the 11 plus to attend Stroud High School. Gregory went to the Boys Technical School, later amalgamated with Marling School. Michael also went to Marling.

Later Greg attended Agricultural College at Hartpury as he was interested in farming. Greg had two sons, Anthony and Daniel. He had no prospect of inheriting a farm so he worked for other farmers for a while but eventually went to R.A. Lister and worked in engineering like his grandfather and uncle.

Elizabeth got married to Steve Robinson in 1970 and had three daughters, Joanne, Katie and Suzie – all living in Gloucestershire.

Michael lives locally and is not married.

All the family celebrated Betty's 100th birthday in January 2020 and the Queen sent a card. They had a party at Eastington Village Hall with friends and family. Betty has remained in pretty good health although she now has poor vision and misses being able to read and watch TV.

Betty in December 2021 aged 101

