

Dorothy King 2

It's February 17th 2020. We had a chat about two years ago I think, but you've got lots more to tell me because you've been here in Bridge a long time. I think you're in your hundredth year so would you like to say when that is going to be?

I am a hundred in September of this year.

That's absolutely marvellous. I know you've had one or two setbacks with falls and a little bit of immobility but here you are back home patched up after your last little adventure, it's really nice to be speaking to you again. Perhaps we could go back. You actually arrived in Bridge in 1986? What made you choose Bridge?

I wanted to come and live near my son who lives in Deal and I wanted somewhere get at able. I was living 220 miles away.

So you chose Bridge because there were shops and good bus service?

We had a list of good and bad things about it. We found that Bridge had most of the things we were looking for with a view to getting older. There was a bus service, it was fairly flat and there were lots of advantages.

Were there more shops then than there are now?

It was quite a village with shops all the way along the High Street. You could go into Canterbury but you could actually live and shop in the village then. There was a butcher, a bakery, two grocery shops, quite a lot of village shops. Three hairdressers.

You were telling me about a shop selling wool and sewing things.

Yes, that was not open for very long. When I came it closed down almost immediately. It sold wool and embroidery silks, needles, things like that.

Then there was a garage in the village with one petrol pump. The garage lasted a very long time and has only just in the 2020s been demolished to make way for houses.

Yes, it was very useful because he did all sorts of small repairs and you had someone on the spot if you broke down.

You talked about the doctor in the village. Was that Dr Russell when you first came here?

Yes, there was one doctor who held his surgeries in a private bungalow in the village just past the shops.

He came just after Dr Hunter who was in the village for many years, I think.

Yes, I didn't know Dr Hunter but of course I've heard of him. I think he was very popular with everyone.

And the school wasn't where it is now in Conyngham Lane. Where did that used to be?

I think it had just opened. The old school was in Patricbourne Road. Many years ago, it was called a Dame School with perhaps a couple of teachers. But they built this lovely new school up the hill.

Then of course there was the Reading Room in the middle of the village, which we now know as the Village Hall.

Yes, I think it had probably been left under someone's will to say that it was to be used for a private reading room for people who liked to go in there and sit quietly and read a book.

Then it turned more into a Village Hall for other activities.

Yes, it eventually devolved into a place where everything went on, various committee meeting, lectures, all sorts of things.

Then the WI was quite prominent was it when you came to the village?

It was active, yes, I would think there were 25 plus members, I couldn't tell you exactly.

Were you involved in any way? Were you on the committee?

I was on the committee. I was more or less involved with anything that were going on.

I know you played the piano. You must have played Jerusalem.

I played Jerusalem at the beginning of every WI meeting.

You are still a member?

Yes, I'm afraid I can't get to meetings now, but I still take an active interest in it and I have the Minutes sent to me. I'm still very interested in it.

Not only are you in your hundredth year but of course the WI celebrated its centenary and last year you came to the service which was a special service in Bridge church and they had a lot of archive.

Yes, we had quite a lot of celebrations for the hundredth year.

You looked at lots of albums with many happy memories.

Until recently you came to the Fish Scheme coffee mornings.

Yes, I joined the Fish Scheme and used to take people to hospital and things like that.

You were a driver. It's a much-appreciated service that the Fish Scheme does.

Moving on, I'd like to talk a bit about the church and your involvement. Tell me how you became involved.

I had been in the church in Worcestershire where I came from, so I promptly joined the choir and went to the church services. It just happened that they had lost their organist and the then vicar (**Raymond Gilbert**) asked if I would make an attempt to play the organ to give the congregation some music.

You told me that he announced that there would be no more music and he asked you to play.

I told him I was a pianist and I didn't know how to play the organ and he said "Will you give it a try?"

I did and I stayed playing the organ for a number of years.

That's quite a transition I would think. So really, you were self-taught.

Yes, I didn't play it properly, there are lots of things that I didn't do as I should have done, but I got by.

Then you sang with the choir for a long time I think you joined in 1987.

Yes, with Betty Walker and her daughter Bettina from 1987.

Yes, Bettina still sings now, though sadly we've lost Betty. That goes back a long way. You must have sung under different choir masters. I think Stanley Gray was one perhaps?

Yes, we were more joined to Patixbourne and Bekesbourne then. We used to go around the different churches, not specifically Bridge. So, I guess we shared some choirs.

Where did you practise?

In someone's home, Stanley Gray, Bill Rose. Stanley was a great exponent of homemade wine which he shared with the choir and we all had to taste it.

Bill Rose would have been there then perhaps. Sadly, he isn't with us any longer, but he has always been involved. He would remind everybody of the service and what we were singing. We have a photograph going back to 1975 and the choir is amazingly large. There were 25 then. There were adults and a lot of children.

We had a cluster of boys once, but no other children as a rule. We wondered why they didn't come down from the school, but they didn't. We were beginning to lose the children before Dr Giles left.

I think things were changing with families, there was more sport and other things. Do you remember other things that have gone on there? Flower festivals and so on.

Yes, I remember two flower festivals in my time and also the ones at Bekesbourne. I remember decorating the church.

I think at one it was your ninetieth birthday and I remember having cakes with all the lovely flower arrangements around us.

Yes, well I had to help with that because years back I'd helped someone decorate Worcester Cathedral.

It certainly brought a lot of people into the church. I think at one there was a little railway outside in the churchyard. I've got a picture of Bill Rose and myself sitting astride it.

He did work so hard. There was Michael Stewart up the hill who had a railway. He invited the WI to go round and round his garden. I went in the little train.

The Coffee, Concert and Cake that we have now in the church is good to get people to come along to the church.

It's been good to talk to you Dorothy, we do wish you all the best for this year that your health is restored and you make it in September to your centenary. Thank you very much for talking to us.

