

## MY LIFE

### BY SYLVIA MAY MILLER (WRITTEN IN 1994)

Because I made a remark that I thought I have lived during the most exciting time in history, a customer asked me to put it down in writing, so here goes.

I was born in a small village call Carr-Vale. As this implies it was situated at the bottom of the hill from Bolsover. I lived there with my father who was a miner and Mother and several half sisters and one half-brother on my dad's side, one half-sister on my mothers and one proper sister and brother. During my early years I had several illnesses such as permonice. However just across the road lived a lady called Mrs Carrles who was very much a Christian, every morning she would bring across a large jug of steaming hot porridge, then came the 1926 strike, which I remember children under 5 got a free meal in the Village Hall and then there was the day at the top of the street when a flat bottomed cart with 4 men stood on, I do or did not understand what it was all about, but I do know the villagers were very cross with them and pelted them with all kinds of verbal and physical abuse.

We then moved on to a village called Duckmanton with the pit at the bottom of the hill, when it was icy or snowy my dad would tie string round the soles of his boots to stop him going into a skid.

We children would often have to dig our way to school because it was a case of walking the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles no such things as buses, all our houses had running hot and cold water, the hot water came from the pit who generated their own electricity, but all you could have on at any one time was 2 lights, any more and they would blink and blob.

The school I attended and all the other children was the CofE school and every Ash Wednesday we would go into church for a service and then the rest of the day we had a holiday. I think it was after one of these services I was inspired with my deep faith, I remember on my way home I found a halfpenny, I carried it all the way home intending to put it into Dr Barnardo's box at school, but on the way back to school I was running and dropped it so Dr Barnardos was short of a halfpenny.

By now it was the late twenties and my dad along with other miners would go to the pit to see if there was any work, occasionally they would get a days work, consequently out came the soup kitchens. There would be an old lorry come with these big cauldrons of soup and we children would queue up and that would be our dinner for that day.

In the morning a farmer would come round with fresh milk and then in the evening he would come round and call "this morning's milk 1d a pint, tonight's milk  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pence a pint". During these years my mother spent a lot of time in hospitals we would find her collapsed, she also worked when she was at home very hard doing peoples washing and ironing, or papering a large sized room for sixpence. On washdays the coal fired copper would be lit and all the whites washed twice and then boiled. After the washing was done then mum would bake a load of bread, what a treat home baked bread and pork dripping, then for pudding a water whelp which was dough the size of a dumpling cooked in boiling water, then served with treacle.

When we first went to live in the village the only shop was Mrs Bowdens Kitchen where she sold most things. Then the shops were built, the buses which came into the village only came Friday afternoons and Saturday.

Now the things I have seen develop aeroplanes from the bi-plane through to today's Concorde, buses from the boneshakers to today's luxury coaches, radios from the valve and battery to the modern transistor. Also television black and white to today's colour and satellite sets. Then medicine where a few years ago we had people dying from tuberculosis, diphtheria, polio, today we have cures and vaccinations against these things.

Now 40 years ago (1954) if anyone had told me we would have our own house and car I would have thought they were round the bend, if they had added we would have experienced such marvellous holidays as the ones we had in Malta, Cyprus, Austria, Yugoslavia, well then I would not have believed them.

You see when I as 13 years old I used to leave the classroom at 11:30am to go and prepare, cook and serve the Headmaster his dinner for which I was paid the princely sum of one 6d ( $2\frac{1}{2}p$ ) per week which I would give to my mother towards the housekeeping. On leaving school the Headmaster wanted me to cook dinner for all the Teachers and instead of paying me a wage to send me to College. Of course that was out my mother needed the money my wage would help. So the day I was 14 I started work for 5/- ( $25p$ ) a week working as a home help, in those days it was called being a skivvie. It was about 20 miles from home, so I used to have to send the money home by post, however after about three months I was very homesick and by mutual agreement I went where I attended a dole school where we went to cook and clean. However within a few weeks I got another job this time in Chesterfield where I could get home on my half day off and out of my 5/- wage I was given 6d which was 2d bus fare back to work, 2d for my fare back home on my half day and 2d spending.

I stayed in this employment for two years during which time my wage rose to 10/- ( $50p$ ) a week. Then I fell ill and sprained my arm and returned home until I could use it. One morning while on this sick leave the sirens boomed and told the villagers of an explosion, my dad was down there and had not returned from work, so I with hundreds of other people gathered at the pit top, however my dad was the first man to get out alive also he was the person who alerted the manager of the terrible disaster in which 80 men lost their lives. However one of the neighbours lost a husband and two sons so mum went along to help with the funeral. One of the daughters had a job in Skegness and was telling my mother what a good job she had. Of course my mum said "Oh get our Sylvia a job and she will come" that is how I came to live in Skegness.

So very reluctantly I had to accept the job however it was 12/- 6d ( $62\frac{1}{2}p$ ). Another friend said well if you can get me a job I will come so I got her a job with me. What we didn't know was that these jobs were seasonal but we both managed to get another, mine was working for an old lady and her son, I had rather a nice bedroom but it had ivy growing up the wall and I was scared stiff of earwigs. Also I had all the cooking and cleaning to do myself so after a few weeks I found another job this time with a potato merchant and his wife who agreed to pay me 10/- a week. I worked for 10 days when I was given a half day off. Mrs Brown came with a 10/- note in her hand and said to me "This is your pay up to today but you will have to pay your own insurance stamp out of it" Of course I said "Look I am capable of reckoning up and that no way adds up to our agreement no way am I working for that amount". Mrs Brown replied "You will have to see Mr Brown" to which I replied "No matter what Mr Brown says no way am I working for that amount, however we will see".

Eventually we agreed on 6/- (?) out of which I had to buy my own insurance stamp which was  $\frac{1}{2}d$  a week. However after a few weeks Mrs Brown's sister who owned the Tower Café was summonsed and fined heavily for not paying the cook's insurance stamp, so then the Browns paid me another 6d a week. One day I had an argument with Mrs Brown over money during which she said "Oh I pay you 4/-4d ( $24p$ ) a year more than I should" To which I replied "Oh well my stamp is  $\frac{1}{2}d$  a week and you should pay half so I think it is you that under pays me by 4/-4d a year". So after that they gave me another 1d a week.

Shortly after that a lady called Mrs Eiffe came to the door. I said "I am sorry but Mrs Brown is not in" to which she replied "It is you I have come to see not Mrs Brown. I am the Matron of Nott's Boys Home and would like to offer you a job as my Maid. We agreed on 12/- 6d a week and after serving my notice I commenced working at the Boys' Home. What a difference, I loved the job cleaning the quarters of Captain and Mrs Eiffe, and then helping the cook.

By this time it was 1939 (*aged 17*) and I had met a boy on a blind date. Today that boy has been my husband for nearly 48 years. I remember sitting on a wall down Tower Esplanade having a fierce argument about Hitler, he said there would be a war and I said no way would he dare to start a war with us. However I was proved to be wrong and on that Sunday when it was announced on the radio that we had declared war I think that most people thought it would be over very soon. I remember the fun we had building the air raid shelter and then came the news that the military was taking over the home so once again I was looking for work.

My next job was up Shardlos Road working for a Bank Manager, cleaning and looking after his son who was a bit backward. As the war progressed they decided to send him to boarding school, so I tried one more job in an hotel - once again the military took over so then I joined the Army (Auxiliary Territorial Service).

At first we were in private billets on Burton Road Lincoln, by now it was 1940 (*aged 18*) and there were rumours that the Germans were going to invade. I remember standing by for a whole day and night, however we foiled them and we stood down. We were next moved into Burton Cliff House where the Princess Royal visited (*Princess Mary*) and talked with us. Then into barracks we went, the Yanks then came into the war (*1941*) I remember all the cooks having to go to the station to serve them with different beverages.

The war continued and I became pregnant with James Ernest, so in the end I left the ATS and returned home. (*1943 aged 21*). My mother looked after my son while I went to work as an electric welder making Jerry Cans. It was piece work and we had to make 12 an hour, we would often work 12 hour shifts and my wage would often be over £10.00 for the week. I still handed all of my earnings to my mother but what I got back went into the bank ready for the day Tom returned from overseas and we would be married.

Then the war was being won by us and jerry cans no longer required so then I got a job as a signal woman in Hollis Lane Box. It was very interesting and one day a train derailed at Tapton Junction blocking the mail line, I received a message from the controllers to hold all the Gangers at my box, but by the time I had got to the door of my box they had dispersed in all directions, hiding behind wagons in the siding, the Signals Inspector & Station Master heading towards my box, you see it was a Friday afternoon and the men wanted to collect their wages, however they had to come back and clamp the points it was great watching the faces of the passengers when they realised they weren't on the right lines and it was a woman in the signal box.

On another day when it was extremely foggy and when I got to work there was a train stood at the signals although they were set for go, however the driver had worked 12 hours and would not go any further, so I had to ask the Ganger to put the complete train in the siding, the Ganger wasn't very happy about this, you see Guards, Drivers and Gangers spoke through their lamps, of course this Ganger was very cross and waved his lamp very quickly therefore the train drove very quickly there was already a wagon in the sidings, the result was the train jumped the rails, once again 'The Woman' was suspected of pulling the points too soon, everybody came rushing up to the box and of course my points were in place and therefore I could not be blamed. Then there was the night the Inspector was checking I was doing my job correctly when a phone call came wanting the Inspector to hurry to the up down main line box. When he returned he said that the Signalman had noticed something on the line and an express was due very soon, it was a young soldier on embarkation leave and he did not want to go so decided to end it all, he was rescued. Working on the rail we got  $\frac{1}{4}$ lb of tea, 2lb sugar and a tin of milk above our monthly rations.

Then came the morning arriving home after the night shift Tom was stretched out on the settee, he had come home on leave, so I quickly got time off and we were married by special licence 10 days later (*1945 aged 23*). Then the Army started de-mobbing the men, consequently those who had worked in the signal box came back wanting their jobs back, but my husband was still abroad, so one more job, this time only part time delivering post to the outskirts of the village.

My husband was de-mobbed in May 1946. It was hopeless finding accommodation that time of the year in Skegness and although my Mother-in-Law had 11 bedrooms she would not spare one for us, so for the time being it was still separation, my husband sharing his father's bedroom and James and me remaining with my mother.

The end of the season came and we managed to rent one of the bungalows in what we called Garden City. What a winter, the bungalow only had cold water, no bathroom, two bedrooms and a living room with just one fire place which the grate was broken meaning that after lighting the fire it would only burn for about an hour and that was it. Because all during November and December almost every day it was freezing we used to be in bed by 9 o'clock to get warm. After Christmas it was so cold I said to my Mother-in-Law "I think I am going back to mums I can't stand the cold any longer", so she said "Well if you help with the spring cleaning you can stay here until March, because I was pregnant with my second child (*Graham - 1946 aged 25*) we decided to take up the offer. The day we moved in, January 12<sup>th</sup> 1947. It started snowing, it snowed every day from then until the end of February, I don't think Skegness had ever seen so much snow either before or since then. During that period we had lots of things washed up on the beach, grapefruits, two ships lifeboats which my brother in law Fred claimed. One proved to be the Captains because there was all the ships log books, blankets, tins of biscuits and other materials in it, now the customs claimed the log books etc, but Fred was allowed to buy the boat. Then there were a load of tree trunks, of course all the family helped to drag these off the beach but it was again Fred who claimed ownership. They were sold to a wood firm in Spilsby and ended up as doors and window frames in council houses being built in Skegness.

Tom and Jim went coaling on the beach and Jim caught a lobster which we cooked and sent to Granddad Bennett. The end of March came and so Jim and I returned to Duckmanton by train, what a nightmare the snow had started to melt and from Firsby through to Lincoln looking out both sides of the windows all that could be seen was the tops of hedges everything else was water you felt as if you were on the sea.

In the period earlier whilst I was employed making jerry cans, I forgot to say in the November of 1944 my Dad was awarded the British Empire Medal for his services to the Mining Industry, he went to Buckingham Palace to receive it and shook hands with King George VI what a proud moment that was, but he wouldn't take any of his family with him. He took officials from the pit of course the company footed all the bills because in those days the pits were privately owned.

The year of 1947 was wearing on and both my Sister Rhoda and I were expecting the birth of our babies so we went to the clinic together, we were having delivery at home. The last time that we attended the clinic my sister Rhoda had to go for an X ray and when we got home the midwife was waiting to tell her baby would be an extended breach and she had been booked into Jessop's Hospital. My mother and I sat on the wall talking to the Midwife who was also a neighbour and friend while Rhoda went to break the news to her husband. Suddenly Rhoda's mother in law came up and barged in "Nurse Wright I presume, I'm Rhoda's Mother in Law, what's all this nonsense about Rhoda needing to go to Sheffield, I've had extended breach and I didn't need to go". Nurse explained the difference between the first pregnancies and the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>. She turned to my mother and replied "Oh well I will be going with her there will not be any need for anyone else" and then she marched off. Nurse Wright said to mum "I'm glad she's not my Mother in Law" Rhoda came across later and said Mrs Burrows insisted that she would be the only one needed to go with Rhoda, however I persuaded Rhoda and Ellis that it was more important for Ellis to go than his mother. It finished up that Ellis went but Mrs Burrows went as well however when they got to the hospital she was told Ellis was the only one needed and she must wait outside the hospital. Rhoda's daughter was born on the Saturday, the birth being monitored by a group of student Doctors.

Meanwhile back home I was still awaiting the arrival of mine. All during the war my sister Ada had kept mum supplied with her favourite beverage mostly daily often walking the two miles with her two children, however on the Monday 28<sup>th</sup> July by dinner 1 o'clock after having done the washing Graham my second child decides to make himself announced, Jim had been playing happily in the garden, mum is determined to keep him occupied

- in the back she was expecting my sister Ada to come anytime and wanted to be the first to tell her she had another nephew, by this time Jim had joined me in the bedroom to see his new brother. It was a beautiful warm evening and I had all the windows open, Jim heard some familiar sounds and climbed up to the open window and saw auntie coming up the road, before anything could be done he had informed Auntie Ada of the new arrival, poor mum had been outdone once again. A few days later Tom who had managed to come over for a couple of days took Jim along to register the new arrival which meant about a five mile walk to Stavelly. When they eventually got to the office would you believe it Tom had forgotten what we agreed to call the new baby and Tom asked Jim what I had said. Jim's playmate was called Charles so he said Charles, so the baby was registered Charles Thomas. When they returned and told me what they had registered the babies name as I could have wept.

About 10 days later we were informed we had been allocated a house, so at last we could start living as a normal family. We moved into 37 Count Alan Road, we duly moved with the minimum of furniture and not much money to buy more, however during the next few months we were very busy getting things ship shape. The floors fitted with lino, the garden dug and ready for setting in the spring but Tom only got £4.00 a week wages and the money in the bank had got very low. The estate was in the process of being built, however we bought half a dozen chickens and got them settled into a corner of the garden, Lady Matilda's Drive was just a corn field and after the reaping of the corn we were able to go gleaming and gathered enough corn to feed the chickens for a few weeks and along with potato peelings and kitchen waste the chickens grew and started to lay eggs and the extra ones I put into isinglass (?) One morning a form came from the income tax which my husband and I had to fill in. With trepidation we duly completed and returned and much to our surprise we got a cheque for £22.00. It was money I had paid in tax when I was working but paid to Tom, however after a bit of discussion we settled to buy a double bed, mattress and a set of chest of drawers enabling us the following summer to take in a paying guest. Our first guest was an oldish man by the name of Mr Ball a drummer in the orchestra at Butlins, he lived in Balham, London. One morning he came to me and said "Do you know Jim is playing with two girls in a tent". Jim was about six years old, of course I do and you are not afraid of what? Just at that moment Jim came in for some reason Mr Ball said "Hello Jim are you playing Cowboys and Indians" "Oh no" Jim said "Mums and Dads", the look on Mr Balls face told me what he thought far better than words could have. Shortly after this he returned to London.

I then got a Scottish drummer who replaced Mr Ball in the orchestra, he came back for seven or eight seasons and each season his mother would come down for a fortnights holiday and at the end of the season his brother would come for a fortnight, however in 1951 (*Aged 29*) my daughter (*Jennie*) was born but I still continued to cater for guests Arthur and Albert and they were more or less treated as family by this time. They were both very proud to be asked to be Godfathers to Jennifer.

Tom and myself worked hard and in 1950 Tom got a job as an AA (*Automobile Association*) patrol which made the money situation better his weekly income increased to £5.00 a week but the first fortnight he didn't get paid so for one week I had to borrow a small amount, his sister Doris loaned us £5.00, however as soon as his wages came in we repaid it - in his expenses they were given £2.00 to cover the cost of petrol which at that time I think was about 1/- 6d ( $7\frac{1}{2}p$ ) a gallon also if they made a new member they got about 2/- ( $10p$ ) commission - on the receipt of his first lot of commission plus his fortnightly wage plus petrol and expenses. I believe after my housekeeping money was given to me, the rest we split in two, half for him and half for me. He had always wanted a rolls razor which was a very fashionable thing in those days, at last he could now treat himself to one, however his next day at work he came to realize he had forgotten to take his petrol money out before sharing the other, so being as I had not spent my half I returned it to him.

During the whole of our married life we have always shared. I remember once when he worked on the council someone had given him a shilling tip and so I got 6d of it and it enable me to buy a chocolate biscuit for the two boys and some fruit.

Looking back we had to pinch and scrape but we always had plenty of fresh veg and the little bit of money I could make plus an occasional tip and bit of commission we didn't do too bad.

The year 1952 was a very black year. My daughter was coming up to her 1<sup>st</sup> birthday hopefully Graham (*Charles*) would be starting school and I thought things would become easier whilst the school was being built. On wet days Graham would watch the activity of the workmen from our front room and he would say "They are building that school for me mum". A few weeks before Easter I took him along to see Mr Gardner the Headmaster hoping that Graham would be able to start school, however because his birthday wasn't until July 28<sup>th</sup> he couldn't start until the September and his two friends Brian and Susan Davidson were 10 days older and they were starting at Easter and Graham always thought he was older than they were, when we got home he shed a few tears and vowed not to go to school at all.

On the Whit Monday which on them days was always seven weeks after Easter Jim and Graham went to play on the beach, just the two of them because we were going to give them a treat and take them to see Robin Hood being screened at the Central Cinema that evening. When Tom came in for dinner he was surprised the boys were not at home, however a short while later a Constable came to tell us that Graham would not be coming home, in our shock we didn't realise that Jim had not come home, they had kept him in a Police Station without a drink or anything. (*This was when Graham aged four was tragically killed in a car accident coming home from the beach with Jim. They had found a lobster and were so excited they were running back with it*). It took Jim a long time to settle, but we got him a little 57 variety dog called Pat which helped him a lot, a very faithful little thing it was, at 11.55am and 3.55pm she would insist on looking out to school and as soon as she saw Jim come out of the school gates she would make her way to greet him and escort him home.

The following year 1953 came the East coast floods, another terrible night although at the time we didn't know what damage was being done, however when Jim came home from Sunday school he said they were asking for helpers. Most of the people from Mablethorpe, Sutton-On-Sea and Ingoldmells had been given temporary accommodation at the Derbyshire Miners Holiday Centre, we went along to sort out clothing etc. All the sand dunes near the convalescent home had been washed away and half of the gardens of the houses in King's Avenue. In the March we were asked to help to clean some of the houses in Mablethorpe, a bus load of us left early and we helped clean some of the houses in Victoria Road, the sea had washed gas cookers and furniture out of the doors and down the garden.

The Queen was to be Crowned on June 2<sup>nd</sup> Just a year after we had lost Graham, my friend Elsie Mapletoft and myself had planned to take the children on the beach for a picnic however it was cold and wet and certainly not a day for picnics, so we decided we would take them to the amusement park where most of the rides were free that day but everywhere was packed however I think the children had a couple of hours enjoyment.

Life rolled on hard work and scraping but we managed to get by without getting into debt which had always been my fear and in 1956 Jim had managed to get a Saturday job as errand boy to the butchers, Raynors, they thought he was a very good worker and when he hadn't any homework they would ask him to do a bit of delivery at night so he managed to have a bit of spending money. I well remember when he sat the 11+ he was a Cub member and it was their party night. Mr Gardner had told the children who were sitting the exams they must go to bed early, Jim didn't want to miss the party but he also wanted to pass his exams. So I said to him "Now look go to the party enjoy yourself and forget the exams if you have the brains you will pass". The lad needed some enjoyment and he had been working hard. He sat the exams the next day. Now how the system worked in them days was they had to achieve a number of marks if they got that number they went to the first interview, below that number they went to the second interview classed as border line cases.

Jim was amongst the first interviews with very good marks but with his consultation with the Headmaster of the Grammar School he didn't tell him how he spent his leisure hours and therefore the Headmaster requested he should be put to the second interview, Mr Gardner could not understand why the request had been made, however Jim went and when he came home he was very happy because all the tests he was given to he accomplished in half the time they were allowed and he heard one of the examiners say to another they didn't know why he had to do the tests. But it came out that if Jim had told the Head he was a St John Ambulance Cadet, a Cub Scout and member of Seathorne Sunday School he would not have had to take the second interview, however Jim was afraid that if he had told him he might not have been accepted because he would not have time for homework.

Jim did get his place at Grammar School though he was put into the B stream though each open day awards Jim always got a prize for highest marks. Now Jim was wanting a racing bike, I didn't want him to have one, so what the young terror did was to turn his handlebars upside down. One Monday he had been to his St. John class and coming into Church Lane the brakes had slid off the handlebars and into his front wheel and Jim went flying head first into the road and broke his jaw in two places, he had to spend three weeks in a Sheffield hospital. When he returned to school they had a new Headmaster who immediately put Jim in the A stream.

In 1956 (*Aged 34*) Arthur my paying guest for so many years had been given a position in the orchestra down in Wales and Jennifer had started school so I decided to get a part time job. I started work as a chalet cleaner at the Derbyshire Miners Holiday Centre (DMHC), we could take our children with us at the weekends and school holidays, then I let the spare bedroom to George and Gail they catered for themselves so I saved a little each week. However I became pregnant again but by about July of that year we had a disagreement with the Egyptians and as Tom was in the A.E.R (Army Emergency Reserve) he was called to service in the August. Whilst he was away the AA paid part of his pay I also got my allowance from the Army. Mr. Markham, Tom's AA Inspector came on occasions to see how things were progressing. A few weeks before Christmas he had a whip round the patrols and with the money brought us a food hamper and gave me the rest to buy Jim and Jennifer a present.

Tom was posted out to Suez late October, peace was declared in November, however Tom didn't return until early January. The Russians had marched into Hungary August and September of that year, once again the DMHC was host to refugees and Joseph was born in February 1957, but I was asked if I would like to work again for the season so once again I started, taking Joseph with me. It was very hard but we did it, several of the cleaners would take a turn keeping their eye on Joseph and we all helped each other. I started to work there in 1958 but half way through the season my next door neighbour Mary Smith said "Why don't you come and work with us the wage is 2s/6d ( $12\frac{1}{2}p$ ) an hour and you can bring Joseph. So after talking things over with Tom we gave I a go, you see it was 1/- ( $5p$ ) an hour more than the camp paid and most of the time it was evening work so I didn't have to drag the children round the camp. Tom could do his share of looking after them. Tom had always wanted a little car so with the extra wage we managed to save a little bit and bought a 1937 Austin Big Seven. Now I said if we had a car I would learn to drive not Tom's approval, but I didn't see why I should struggle on and off buses with two children and a car stuck in the yard doing nothing. When he used to go to camp for 14 days training with the AER I would go to my mums for that period, it would take me over seven hours to get there, changing buses and waiting in between times.

In 1959 (*37*) Jim went for an interview and was accepted in the Metropolitan Police Force, he did very well, at first he worked in Peel House. I also had driving lessons, I took my first test early 1960 and felt very confident to begin with, then the examiner said "I am going to give you the emergency stop I want you to imagine a child running across the road". That really hurt and upset me almost as much as if it had actually happened and for the rest of the test I was hopeless. It took me a few days to get over it. But then I took hold of myself and decided if I wanted to drive then I must put things behind me and plod on. I passed my test on at the third attempt in July 1960 (*aged 38*) but I didn't drive during the summer.

In October 1960 the time came for Tom to go to his yearly AER training, we decided we would let Jennifer have the afternoon off school and go to Mum's in daylight then Tom would know that we had arrived safely so we had dinner and then I told Jennifer we were going to Mums. We didn't tell her before because if she knew we were doing something special she would be extremely sick. But to start on the journey then tell her we would have an uneventful trip. Going down Burgh Road we saw my friend Elsie who had been learning to drive quite a while before we even had a car so I had to stop and show off a bit, whilst we were talking to her a car with a caravan passed us so after about 10 minutes we decided to carry on. We stopped at Hagworthingham to fill up with petrol, looking over to Horncastle the sky had gone very black, I remarked to the garage man how foreboding it looked, he said "Well if you are frightened pull to the side of the road stay in your car and you will be quite alright because you are on rubber". Of course I wasn't afraid and set off once more. By the time we had travelled  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile the rain came, thunder and lightning, lorries coming in the opposite direction were flashing their lights, of course being a rookie I had no idea of what they were trying to tell me and I continued on my journey, a short distance on and I began to realise it must have been about the roads going down the hill from Scrafield Fork the water was so deep my tyres didn't have any grip on the road surface and then at the bottom of the hill a real stream across the road. Of course not having had any instructions what to do in such circumstances I decided to drop into a low gear and carry on. Having come through the stream and partly up the hill the car came to a spluttering stop. I got out of the car and was ankle deep in water, no other vehicle in sight and water gushing down the hill. I said my prayers more sincerely than ever before and then two headlights coming from Hagworthingham direction so I got out of the car and waved my arms frantically. Thankfully the driver drew up. He said "Well it is hopeless trying to look under the bonnet in this lot have you ever been towed before"? I said "no it's the first time I have driven" "Well" he said "We will have to risk it but don't come down the hill any faster than me and don't be too heavy on the brakes". He only had a 6' sand pipe on the back of his Land Rover. We successfully reached the filling station at High Toyton. No body came to see what I wanted so I decided to go and join the group of men already inside. The conversation was all about Horncastle being cut off the storm as still raging of course, Joseph, Jennifer and Pat was still in the car, my thoughts were what to do next, we couldn't stay there the night, however about 4 O'clock the storm had eased and the man who had towed me said he knew a way around Horncastle if those roads were not flooded. So I said "If I get my car started can I follow you". So it was agreed that those who wished could follow him. So I turned to a man in overalls and asked if he could look at it. "Oh" he said "I don't know anything about engines", so further enquiries revealed it was a 16 year old boy in charge. It turned out the Manager had gone home for dinner and couldn't get back. So the man who had given me a tow said "Get in and try to start her, if nothing happens I'll have a look under the bonnet, but I am no mechanic so I can't promise anything". So I duly obeyed and it started, so I joined the convoy of hopefuls, the way out was by West Ashby, the roads were very narrow, the Police were diverting all the traffic coming from Lincoln down this road so we had another problem, however the leader decided to go partly on the grass verge which was about 6" higher than the road, I was determined to get to Mums so I followed the leader, just imagine the first time driving going up a hill at an angle with great big lorries coming in the opposite direction. However we got to the top and on to the main Lincoln Road, my kind friend stopped to see that I had arrived there. Of course he had to carry on because he still had his pipe to deliver. We arrived at mums just as the calendar news as being screened and would you believe it the car and caravan that had passed us on Burgh Road was floating down the river at Horncastle. Now I have always believed that God moves in mysterious ways and I think that was just one way that strengthened my belief. After that I think Tom had a bit more belief in my driving ability

After that life went on much the same but about late 1962 early 1963 he AA started to change the patrol vehicles from motor bike to small vans. Now we had a garage at the side of the house to put the bike and sidecar in but couldn't get a van down the side of the house, so he started to look for a place either with or room for a garage. After much searching we found the place where we now live, it was not what I would have liked but it had room for a garage and to get the van in so all my earnings that summer went towards the deposit. We were just £50.00 short, however I had not drawn my dividend from the Co-op for a long time so checking up I had this amount to draw and at least we could start to buy our own house. We borrowed some money to pay for the solicitor from my brother Jim, moved all our furniture with a pick up borrowed from Maurice who I worked for.



Tom and I between us erected the garage that we had at Count Alan Road. After another season of working at the Linga-Longa I wasn't happy driving home alone in the early hours of the morning, so I got a job at Rank Bush Murphy. In early 1963 (41) Jim had married Pam and presented us with our first grandchild.....