

DAPHNE HADLEY'S MEMORIES



Childhood

Daphne was born on 25 April 1929 in Shinfield Road, Reading. She was an only child, but her mum always tried to make sure that Daphne did not feel alone.

Daphne's mum stayed at home to look after the house and her dad worked as a farm labourer. One of Daphne's earliest memories from September 1937 occurred when she was eight years old and walking home from school past the lock gates along the river. One day she decided to try her hand at fishing and whilst doing so she tripped and fell into the river. She remembers thinking: "my new school blazer, mum will be annoyed". Luckily a passer-by pulled her out, leant her his big jacket before taking her home. She said her mum's hair went white overnight from the shock, but she was not annoyed about the blazer!

It appears that playing by the river and falling in was not unheard of in those times. Someone took a photograph and an article appeared in the local newspaper. The newspaper reported three such incidents that year.

Her father worked at Burchett's farm and would milk the cows early in the morning. Daphne would sometimes help her father and she remembers her early life being around sheep and cows. Her father's wages were 8 shillings a week.

The family moved from Reading to Hurley, near Marlow. Daphne thinks she was about 10 years old at this time. At the age of 13 she went to Bisham School and the family were living in a bungalow and she describes it as a very peaceful world, growing up in the leafy Buckinghamshire countryside. They had an old-fashioned caravan which did not move, and she was allowed to have friends back for sleep overs in the caravan as there was not enough room in the bungalow. She has fond memories of this.

They made a final move to Harleyford. The cottage they lived in was at the end of the lane of Weston's biscuit factory. Daphne said "Westons owned it all."

Daphne met three little girls, Wendy, Camilla and Gretchen, who were daughters of Garfield Weston. The family lived in Wittington House a beautiful red brick mansion near Marlow Bucks.

There was a little Sunday school in the Weston home, which Daphne went to.

In the 1930s Garfield Weston had settled in Britain, having established Westons biscuits and later, (whose brands include Primark, Ryvita, Ovaltine and Twinings tea) naming part of his business Wittington Investments, after Wittington House. Later, he would give this to the Salvation Army.

Wendy, Camilla and Gretchen Weston were three of nine children in all. One of Garfield's sons was Garry Weston, who was two years older than Daphne and eventually took on his father's business. He invented the Waggon Wheel and Jammie Dodger biscuits.

In the run up to the Second World War Garfield entered British politics and was elected MP for Macclesfield. When more than a dozen fighter planes were shot down in the Battle of Britain, Garfield gave £100,000 to replace them. During the Blitz, he set up canteens to feed Londoners using underground stations to shelter from the bombs.

Daphne remembers Garfield Weston doing his own gardening wearing a hat with a hole in it with a big baggy jumper!

It was whilst they were living in Harleyford that Daphne's parents divorced, Daphne stayed living with her dad in Harleyford whilst her mum moved to Maidenhead and took work as a bus conductress. At the age of 15 Daphne's dad remarried and Daphne had to move out. She went and lived with a Mr and Mrs Barnes in Marlow, who were lovely. They also had a daughter a couple of years older than Daphne.

Working at Browns

At the age of 14, Daphne left Bisham school and went to work in Browns Grocers on the Marlow high street. "I left school on Friday and started work on the Monday". She knew someone who worked there and so they were able to help Daphne get an interview, at which she was successful. The work was hard in Browns as this was in 1943/44 and most of the men were in the forces, so it was up to the women to carry out the manual work normally done by the men. It was hard physical work in the shop; cleaning, dragging heavy sacks of soya and biscuits, flour and sugar. Daphne weighed only 8 stone and was of a very tiny build. One friend she remembers from this first job was a lady called Jean Cooper. She also remembers Jeff Brown, who was the son of the owner of Browns, who had served in India for the duration of the war but returned to work in the shop afterwards.

Browns Grocers used to sell mainly dry goods such as flour, sugar and tea etc as well as individual cakes and biscuits, although at one end of the shop they also sold bacon, ham and sausages. They had to be "Jack of all Trades" really. One job she remembers with distaste was cleaning the weighing scales, which had to be done once a week and was a very fiddly job. Daphne would also sometimes work on

the till, which involved a Roll Till, this had to be wound up.

Just like today, Browns would take peoples orders and deliver them, although then people would leave a shopping list as opposed to ordering online! She says the Boss was very strict in how the boxes of groceries was packed, you had to ensure that everything was level and neat before it was delivered.

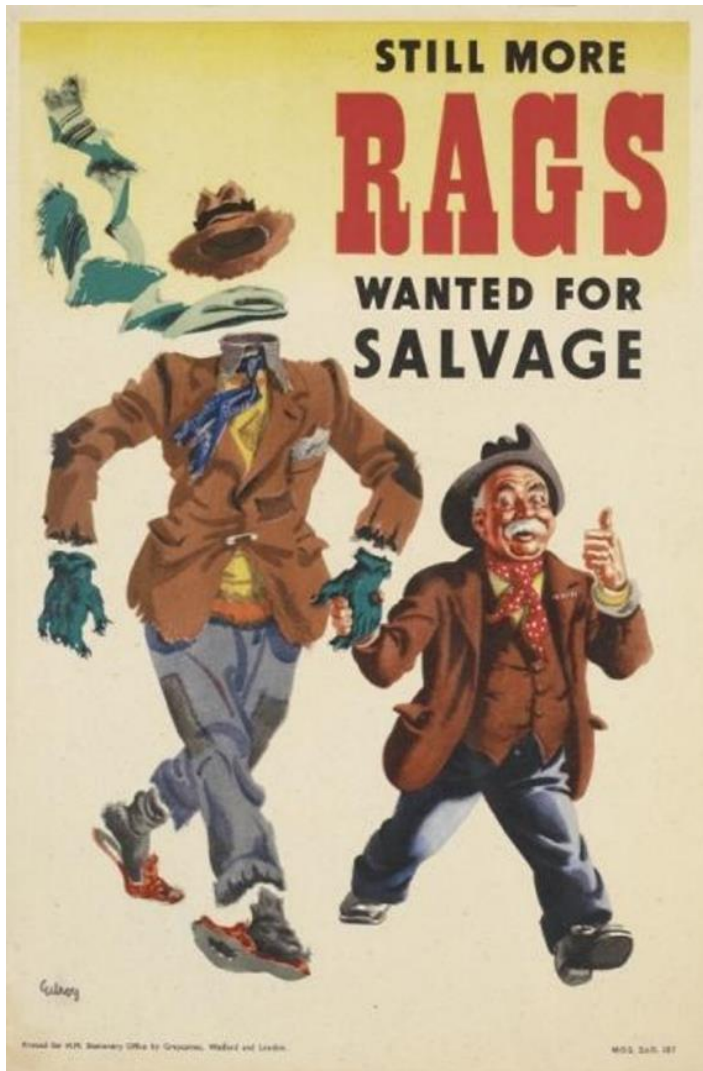
The staff at Browns had to wear twill overalls, which was very stiff material, she felt like an old granny in it. They had to wash their uniforms themselves. Her working day would start at 8.30 in the morning until 5.30 in the afternoon, this was for five days a week. Sometimes she would have to walk the 2.5 mile walk to Marlow from Harleyford as the bus did not always come. This made for a long working day.

Daphne used to carry big sacks of soya flour and would use the sack material, boiling the sacks to make rag rugs of them.

Daphne remarked, "This sack material looked like cotton once you boiled it, dried it and ironed it. I used to embroider this material to make cloths for trays like lace designs. I used to make mats out of sacks to use for the floor in the cottage after we were married."

During and shortly after World War II soy flour is used extensively in Britain as a substitute for meat, milk, eggs, and flour in a vast array of basic foods including sausages, spaghetti, bread, and marzipan. Most of the soy flour was supplied by America under the Lend-Lease Act of March 1941, but some whole (full-fat) soy flour was also produced from imported soybeans by British companies, especially Soya Foods Ltd. They had offices in Boreham Holt, Elstree and a plant at Rickmansworth made Soyolk and other brands of soy flour and, during the 1940s, published several pamphlets describing the products and giving recipes. As meat became scarce in Britain during the war, soy flour started to be overused, especially in sausages and "soylinks," which started out as mostly meat and ended up as mostly soy flour, and largely inedible. Soy developed the image of a bad-tasting ersatz foodstuff and the English came to dislike any food with the name "soy" attached to it, in part because of poor product formulations and the use of low-quality soy flour. The idea of soy as a source of low-cost high-quality protein was set back 2 decades or more (Learmonth 1963; Fischer 1967).

Clothes were also made from recycled sack material. Daphne talks of a coveted summer dress she wore, which was made from recycled rags, and how those made this way never wore out.



A poster used during the war asking for donations of rags

World War 2

As Daphne lived in Buckinghamshire, they did not have too many problems with air raids. Although she does remember one Doodlebug falling but luckily it came down in the middle of a field, so no one was hurt. When she was living with her parents in Harleyford they did take in some evacuees from London, but this stopped when her parents divorced.

She remembers rationing, although she feels it did not affect them too much. She also has memories of the American soldiers being billeted nearby, although she never really met any of them.

People were also asked to turn over to the government items that would prove to be useful in the war effort. These items included products made from rubber and most types of metal, kitchen fat, newspapers, and rags, among other items.

Married Life

Whilst Daphne was living with Mr and Mrs Barnes, she got to know a Mrs Hadley who also lived in Haryleyford. One morning she went along to see her after a night of heavy snow and her son, Len, had arrived home at 2 O'clock in the morning on leave from Australia, where he was serving in the forces. They looked at each other and it was love at first sight. Daphne was 16 and Len was 21 years old.



Len in uniform, WW2

Previously Lens mum had asked Daphne to write to Len whilst he was away, but she had refused!

Daphne's dad would not let them marry until Daphne was 19 years of age in 1948. This they did in June in Marlow Church. Daphne borrowed a dress from a friend, her full bouquet is typical of the style of a cascading bouquet, a large arrangement that tapers near the bottom, carried by brides in the late nineteen forties. Daphne had two bridesmaids. Daphne's husband wore his Royal Marines uniform for his wedding. Daphne was very proud of him. His brother Frank was best man, was home on leave from the army and is standing behind Len in the wedding photograph. Following the Church service, they and their guests went and had a tea at Mr and Mrs Barnes house.

Len served all around the world including Africa Burma and Australia and received many medals during his service. After their honeymoon in Ramsgate, Daphne's husband returned to service abroad for 6 months. After this, Len had completed his contracted term of 6 and a half years of service. For the first 6 months of their married life Len was away. Although only in Portsmouth, the couple had to correspond. Letters came three times a week and they were regularly on the phone to each other.



Daphne and Len on their wedding day

As a married couple their first home was in Stoney Rock Cottage in Wynch Bottom Lane, near Marlow. This was 4.5 miles from Marlow and there was only one other cottage in the Lane. Their life in the cottage was very simple, very quiet, with nobody to talk to but Daphne explains that they had chickens, fruit trees, vegetables and ate off the land so she was kept very busy. The couple had to fetch water from

the well supplied by Wycombe fire brigade, as there was no running water and she remembers a huge mangle in the garden where Daphne washed her blankets. She still worked at Browns and remembers cycling to work whilst seven and a half months pregnant, this meant a 9-mile round trip each day! She does not actually remember thinking much of it at the time! Their first child Tony was born in Wycombe Hospital whilst they lived in the cottage on 1 October 1949.



Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh

Daphne's bouquet may very well have been inspired in part by that carried by trends created by the marriage of a very famous lady a year earlier. This was of course Princess Elizabeth.

The princess's bouquet was designed and created by the late Martin Longman of Longman's florist in London.

Despite being personally delivered to Buckingham Palace to ensure its safe arrival, it would seem that the wedding bouquet was later misplaced sometime between the newlyweds return to the palace and the wedding breakfast, leaving the Queen empty handed for her wedding photos.

Martin Longman's son David said: "It would explain why there is no bouquet in the group picture and why my father had to make a replica."

It is believed that the royal couple later recreated some of the moments from their wedding day in front of the camera, in the middle of their honeymoon; they dressed up again in their wedding clothes and the replica bouquet firmly in the Princess' hands.

Martin Longman created the Queen's original coronation bouquet. His son went on to design and oversee the floral decorations and bridal flowers for Princess Diana, and Sarah Ferguson ensuring both had two identical bouquets for the day to avoid a repetition of this earlier situation.

Due to rationing measures in place following World War 2, Princess Elizabeth had to use clothing ration coupons to pay for her dress. The government allowed the princess 200 extra ration coupons

She was also given hundreds of clothing coupons by brides-to-be from all parts of the country to help her acquire the dress. She had to return these coupons, as it was illegal to give them away in the first place.



Stoney Rock Cottage in a recent photograph

Daphne and Len stayed in the cottage for 15 months and then moved to Hyde Heath. Len had taken on a partnership in the local garage called Bromley's and he worked there until his retirement. Their second child Peter was born on 10 April 1951 in the local cottage hospital in Chalfont St Giles.

They lived in this home in Hyde Heath for four years and then with the help of their local GP managed to get a new council house in Hyde Heath, which they lived in until 2000. They loved this house and enjoyed the fact that they lived near lovely woods, had a huge village green that the children could play on and be able to walk to the local Hyde Heath Primary School. They had a big garden in which they kept chickens and Len used to grow his own vegetables too. In 1965 their daughter Diane was born.



A photo of a mangle like the one Daphne used to have

All the children went to the local primary school and then to The Misbourne School in Great Missenden.



Tony, Diane and Peter (bottom)



Holidays

Daphne and Len would take the family down to Bideford, Westward Ho in Devon for holidays. Len's sister lived in Bideford so they would often see her on these trips. They would stay at a Caravan Park; she remembers fishing with the children amongst the rocks and that there were miles of beaches but often with lots of pebbles! One thing Daphne remembers very vividly is the ice cream they used to get whilst on holiday in Devon, it was the best ever!

As they got older, they would spend time on the Isle of Man, as Daphne's son, Tony moved there with his wife, Janet. Diane also lived there for a time. Daphne and Len celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on the Isle of Man by renewing their wedding vows, they did this jointly with Tony and Janet, who also renewed theirs. It was on this trip that Daphne and Len met Norman Wisdom. Daphne had previously written to Norman Wisdom expressing admiration for his films. So, Diane wrote to Norman telling him that her parents were on the Isle of Man for their Golden Wedding Anniversary and would he mind meeting them. This he kindly agreed to do, and this was the start of a friendship which continued until Norman's death in 2010. Norman lived in a suburb called Ballaugh and he had named his house: Balla Laugh! Daphne remembers that Norman once sang one of his later songs at the piano, which he was going to

do for his film Adam and Eve. The song was never released.



Daphne and Norman Wisdom at his piano in his home Balla Laugh

Daphne talks about wearing this swimming costume when she was on holiday in Woolacombe in Devon in the 1950s. It appeared in a local newspaper article.



DAPHNE HADLEY, 76, a widow with three children and three grandchildren, lives in Amersham, Buckinghamshire.

1950

SHE SAYS: That conical bosom! It did make me laugh when Madonna recreated the look years later because it really was the thing back then. It seems silly to me now but we didn't think anything of it - even in our swimsuits. I was 21 and on holiday in Woolacombe, Devon, when this picture was taken. My costume was in gold-coloured satin and was terribly daring for those times. Costumes used to be made of wool, of all things, and I'm not sure I would have dared wear this if I hadn't already been a married woman. I was 19 on my wedding day and my husband and I were together for 55 years. This would have cost me less than £1, and I kept it for years. I loved 1950s fashions - big full skirts, nipped-in waists and lots of polka dots and stripes. Just like the fashions this spring.

ABOVE: JUICY COUTURE SWIMSUIT, £145. WWW.ASOS.COM

Family

Daphne and Len were devoted to each other and had 55 very happy years together.

Tony married Janet and they had two children: Darren and Gavin. Gavin tragically lost his life when he was only 23 years old when he was involved in a road traffic accident. It was devastating for the family. Tony passed away when he was 65 years of age. Janet continues to live on the Isle of Man, as does Darren. Daphne visited them five years ago but can no longer travel there due to her immobility.

Peter married Jackie and they have two children: Kevin and Clare. Daphne also has a great-grand-son called Ryan who is Kevin's son and he is nearly four years old.

Daphne and Len moved to Daphne's current house which is a bungalow in Amersham in 2000 as they were both having trouble with stairs. Len passed away in 2003 and Daphne now lives with her daughter Diane.



A photo of Len, Daphne and Norman Wisdom
taken on the Isle of Man