

Lifetime memories of Harry Moore

A questions and answers interview

By Jim Harding

In 1991, community news columnist Jim Harding interviewed local baker, Harry William Moore. Mr. Moore was born in Fakenham on 5th January 1908 and shares his lifetime memories in this questions and answers interview.

Where were you born?

'In this very house! 3 Nelson Road. It was Hayes Lane when My Grandad came here - changed to Nelson Road this end when they built the Lord Nelson.'

I was it a bakery then?

'Oh yes. We've been here since 1866. I can show you the card my grandfather had printed for the public to read when he first delivered bread in Fakenham - October 16, 1866. My great grandfather had three sons Henry, who came here (my grandfather), John who stopped at Tittleshall and Sam who went to Mileham - the old ovens are still going there.'

Do you remember your grandfather?

'No, he died with typhoid. They were all open drains then. He died here, only 46 years old.'

And Grandmother?

'No. I had a grandfather on my mother's side who came from London. My mother came from the West End.'

What do you remember of your father?

'Oh a lot! My father had the brain of a genius. He could have been anything. He played the trombone in the town band before I did - I joined the band when I was 13½ and at 15 I was the solo trombone player. He had left then but he was still about when I used to play. Harry Friend Moore.'

Harry Friend?

'Yes. My great grandfather's name was Henry Friend Moore – I heard that a traveler said he must have had some connection with the Quakers. I don't know about that.'

What are some other memories of Dad?

'He was a very good violinist. We used to go over to Mileham, my Uncle Sam's - My mother was a good pianist, sister Blanche as well and Mabel (sister) had a lovely voice and - people used to stand out on the green to hear us.'

And your mother?

'My aunt Emma, my father's sister, used to do all the cooking. My mother used to do the books and she'd be up the shop in Market Place. That was a little higher up then - we were next to Utting the ironmonger. In 1920, Jimmy Aldiss extended his shop and he persuaded my father to come down where we are now - that used to be the penny bazaar. Our old shop is now part of Aldiss. Her name was Blanche Lillian and they always called her by her second name. She was known as Lilly.'

When did they die?

'My father dropped down dead with a heart attack in 1932. My mother was buried the very day before my daughter Jane was born.'

Tell me about your sisters?

'Mabel was the oldest, Blanche was second. I'm nearly 84, and in a week's time Blanche will be 85. She's in the next room.'

Did anyone else live with you?

'My Dad's uncle, my great uncle, Uncle Walpole, he came from Tittleshall. He was a very unfortunate person. His father was a solicitor and he was a very smart, intelligent person. If he'd had good eyesight he wouldn't have been working here. But he had bad eyes and that was his limitation. There was Uncle Walter my father's youngest brother. He lived here until he got married.'

Was this house the same then?

'Practically the same. The next room was the bakery when my grandfather started. The old oven is still there. I turned it into a play room for the children.'

Tell me about the bakery?

'I was 6¾ when the First World War broke out and I was delivering bread on the horse and cart. Frank Savory was 2½ years older than me and he came and worked here to feed the horses. We had 6 or 7 horses delivering bread, 4 here and 3 where Ted Harrison lives. My Uncle John - the firm was H and J Moore - lived there, about two houses down in Nelson Road. My sister Blanche came on the horse and cart. Mabel used to go on the van - we had the first Ford van ever to come to Fakenham in 1916. In the morning we did some of Hempton and we used to go to Toftrees and Raynham, as far as Raynham Hall. In the afternoon we'd come back and change the horse and go to Sculthorpe and Cranmer and as far as Compton Hall on the road to Creake.'

Were there other bakeries?

'Oh yes. Mr. Eglin, where Oglesby's was down Bridge Street. There was a Steven Gant right opposite Billy Parker's shop. And right, opposite us was Mr. Tuck - the ovens pulled down now. We were all very friendly. If anything happened to their horses my father used to go and look after them. There were 5 sons (Tucks) George, Jimmy, Fred, Albert - he's still alive, he's 91 and Billy the youngest.'

This town was full of horses then?

'Oh yes. We used to go down to the gasworks to get coke - our oven went on coke then - ¼ton at a time. We had a horse and a tumble to get it with.'

What did you eat for breakfast?

'Frighten you when I tell you. My Aunt Emma was a proper cook, she was. My father was a great believer in good food. You don't run a car with no petrol do you? When I went to school I used to have four rashers of bacon and a fried egg every morning. Aunt Emma cooked it. When I played in the dance band she'd cook you a meal at 2 o'clock in the morning. My dad and the others used to drink cocoa. I think we drank tea. And men always used to have a bigger cup than women at that time of day.'

Lunchtime?

'We had a cooked meal at lunch time. In the evening we'd have a beef pattie finish up with celery or lettuce or something like that. We could have anything we wanted.'

Did being in a bakery make any difference to what you ate?

Once, with my sister Mabel, we ate 18 hot cross buns - each! On Good Friday. We used to bake the buns on the Wednesday night ready for Thursday morning market day and we'd make no end on Thursday. On Good Friday we'd be up early.'

What did you do for entertainment?

'There used to be a picture house up Station Road (Norwich Road) where Aldiss' was. That used to be twopence. I didn't go much - that wasn't quite in my parents thought of entertainment. There was another one up Holt Road. In the band we played big concerts there.'

And the Corn Hall?

'They used to have stalls there and sell seeds to the farmers. Travellers would take orders. When we played concerts there we used to put boards on top to play. I remember a whist drive and I think they had 52 tables, 4 to a table.'

Did you go on holiday?

'I've actually only had one holiday in my life. That was when I got married. We had days out. We used to bike to Wells in time outside work. We were a self-employed family and that came first. I never thought anything about it. I was in Yarmouth with my Dad and Mum the day the First World War broke out - August 4th 1914. With my two sisters, we used to go by train from Hempton on the Midland.'

Did tradesmen call?

'Everybody used to deliver groceries. They'd come round and pick the order up and come and deliver. And the butchers – you didn't have to go to the shop. We used to deliver bread everywhere. When I was a boy at school - My father thought of the idea we used to bike round with hot rolls for breakfast. Milkmen delivered twice a day.'

Who was strictest, out of your parents?

'I don't think my Dad or Mum would be strict. I don't think we were that naughty - we were found jobs to do and we were more grown up then. I used to go on the round delivering bread and when I used to go to school, to me that was too dull. All the women used to make a fuss of me, give me jam tarts and cups of tea. One lady used to make me a shortcake every Saturday to eat while I was going on the Cranmer Road.'

Were you strong as a young man?

'I could lift anything – nothing felt heavy to me. The Moore family did have heart trouble but I think I come from my mother's side. The flour bags used to be ten stone. I could lay down with one of them on my chest, on the floor, and get up and throw that round my back as if it didn't weigh anything.'

Was there anything special about Christmas?

'I'd deliver bread on Christmas Eve. We used to bake about 30 or 40 turkeys in our oven on Christmas Day for customers all round here. We used to deal off Dewing and Kersey, F and G Smith at Ryburgh and Cranfields and I can see in the pantry 3 big turkeys lying there. That was their Christmas present. They couldn't afford to do that today. People used to come here for Christmas - all the relatives. I was in the town band and we used to play carols all round. And on Boxing day we'd play all round the Town and collect money. I always remember Sir George Edwards we'd play something special outside his house. He lived on the Queens Road, the house just this side of Lichfield Street. I played at his funeral.'

What do you remember of the war?

'On August 4th, 1914 I was 6¾. I worked all through the first world war - when we came out of school. I don't think it affected us much. To a child's mind that would only affect if it was somebody in your family. I always remember Freddie Burden, he was in the Norfolk Cyclists - territorials really - they were called up straight away. His job was to throw hand grenades. And the poor soul was only out there about a fortnight - he was only about 18 or 19 - and he was dead. That was my cousin. In the war we baked bread here from six in the morning to six in the evening and the army came in from six in the evening and baked round 'til six in the morning. They did all their baking in our bakehouse. So the oven was going 24 hours a day. The oven was kept going on coke.'

Were there lots of soldiers here?

'Oh yes, stationed all round here. I can remember going across to Tuck's bakery they had a little grocer's shop there. I bought a packet of Woodbines they cost twopence then. There was a sentry marching up and down and where Martin Smith's is now, that was a guard room (it used to be Lewis') for the regiment. He was marching up and down so I gave him a fag and he gave me a light. I'd be eight then, in 1916.'

What do you recall about royalty?

'In 1911, I can remember going with my Mum and my aunt on to the football field for the coronation. I was three then and I can picture that like a photo. I can remember Queen Mary coming to Duffy's - the same as is in Duffy's Yard now. Their grandfather used to buy old iron and sell old things and she definitely came there - up Holt Road on the right hand side.'

What about local disasters?

'We had floods. They came down here about 10 inches high - where Tom Bammant used to keep his buses. That used to be the clay pits. And yet the water used to come down there worse than what that do now. I can remember coming out of school in a terrible thunderstorm in about 1922 and they were standing on wooden boxes getting the bread out of the oven. We were flooded out here. I have seen so Much water that it's come up through where Ted Harrison live, all the way from the river back into Nelson road.'

Do you remember the crash at the Great Eastern?

'Yes. Someone was killed there. She was a lady from Walsingham. Somebody made a mistake and the train hit another one in the siding.'

What was hygiene like?

'They used to collect the toilet every 2 days or so. There was a toilet at the back, outside the house. We had a tin bath in the kitchen. I can remember them hanging on the wall outside people's houses. We had three or four tubs in our yard to collect rainwater. Years ago that was considered proper never to wash your hair in hard water.'

Were you a healthy child?

'I was supposed to be a bit on the tender side when I Was born - but I was healthy. I used to have cod liver oil and malt extract.'

What about doctors?

'I remember when Dr Warner knocked us off in the road when we were in the van. I was delivering bread! I'd be about 14 then, and sitting on the side of the old Model T van. He came round the corner on the wrong side of the road and knocked us clean over. He was on a motorbike. I had the job of running to Fakenham - it was the top of Hempton Green where you turn on to the Swaffham Road to tell Michael Palin's grandfather what had happened. I went back with him in the car. However he existed I don't know. He lay there with his face and head all blood. The van had been in an accident and where Ford's used to put a piece of wood surround that was replaced with metal and inside they'd put a piece to strengthen it. My Dad got a piece of angle iron and cut the slits in where the screws went and pushed it in to make it nice and straight. Dr Warner bent that lot.'

Was there any public transport?

'Mr. Reynolds used to run a horse cab to take people from one station to the other. Midland and Great Northern - London North Eastern.'

Harry recalls the circus coming to town:

'I remember there used to be a circus on Richardson's field by Westmead Road (former coal merchant). I went when I was 5 years old. I always remember that a man stood there to be shaved and an elephant came on and put his trunk in the pail and blew all the soapsuds over the chap's face. I can see it now, like a photo.'

Can you recall your first school?

'Church Hall in Wells Road. That was the National school. The British school was up Station Road (Norwich Road) where Aldiss' was. My school was just before you come to the vets (Vogel's).'

How many were there in your class?

'About 20. There was Lenny Clarke, Harold Barnes, Nipper Heazel and me - we were pals and stayed so all through our lives. I was 4½ when I started. We stayed there until I was 6 and then we went up to the Queens Road School.'

Did you wear any uniform?

'No, but, my dad vas very particular on dress. He wouldn't let us go up there in just anything.'

How did you get to school?

'We went up the lanes. The traffic wasn't like it is today. You could trust a child to cross the road. There'd only be a couple of horses and carts coming down there all day.'

What about your first classroom?

'I could take you to it. I always remember in standard 3 a Miss Lusher. You know how boys react, they could be awkward given half a chance - nobody in that classroom was awkward with that lady. Mr. Wigg was the headmaster. He was called up during the first war and a Mr. Talbot took over.'

How did the teachers dress?

'They were dressed in suits and ties. I think they should be. If you're there to set an example you ought to be dressed accordingly.'

What about lessons?

'I was capable of all the arithmetic. Easy. I was on the round and we had to add up the money. I was quite a capable person. They used to play football and cricket but that didn't appeal to me a lot.'

What punishments were there?

'I had 8 strokes of the stick for swearing in the hall. On the hand. And I had 8 strokes for breaking a gramophone record. I think I was left to put it on and something went wrong. Sometimes the headmaster gave the stick and sometimes the teacher. They needed to because boys were more unruly then than they are now. People were brought up to work from a physical point of view and the children grew up in that environment.'

Did you use slates?

'Yes, at the National. We went on to paper at Queens Road. I always remember me and a boy named Raiseborough going round to fill all the inkwells up.'

Was it warm enough in school?

'Yes. Funny thing, our own oven went with coke then. They got me to make the stoke hole up at the bottom for the central heating of the whole school. I used to look after the fire. The boys used to get me to roast them some 'taters.'

Did you enjoy school?

'I wouldn't say I disliked it but when I was 6½ I was delivering bread I met a lot of people and they all chatted, gave me cups of tea and jam tarts. School seemed so dull. I was glad when I left.'

Were you ill as a child?

'No but my sisters, they had German measles or something during the last week in August, first week in September 1918. They wouldn't allow me to go to school. And that went on until Armistice Day on November 11th. After that all the children had a holiday until about 3 days before Christmas. We went back to school to clear our books. So I never went to school from August right round until the New Year.'

Did you have assemblies?

'Yes. We used to form up in the playground and march in like a regiment. We started the day with prayers and a hymn.'

Were there fights in school?

'Well, you get that in the human race, don't you. Probably 5 or 6 boys would throw their weight about a bit.'

Was smoking common?

'Not amongst the young boys. We used to smoke a bit. You could buy them from a shop then without anybody asking questions. I think they accepted you were getting them for your parents. You could get a packet of Woodbines for 2d.'

I'm interested in your musical ability. When did you first start to learn music?

'My Dad and Mum were musical. My Dad played the trombone in the town band before I did.'

But who taught you?

'I used to go up to where The Bell pub used to be in Norwich Road opposite the Gospel Hall. I started up there. That seemed to come natural. I never seemed to learn it. Mr. Sam White taught me. He was the bandmaster at the time.'

How old were you when you started?

'I was 13½ when I joined the Town Band.'

Did you specifically learn the trombone?

'Well I learnt music and the trombone came in with that. I learnt to read music. There were about 18 boys.'

Those boys would all play in the Town Band?

'Yes, that's right. When I was 15 Tom Ruffles, who's now dead, started up a dance band to earn money to buy uniforms for the younger members 'cos they hadn't got any. I remember we went to Colkirk and played Moonlight and Roses - that was the first tune we ever played in the dance band. At 16 I had an evening dress and everything.'

Did you get lots of engagements?

'Years ago people never had the days off they do today. The average man would have Saturday afternoon off - the shop worker would have Wednesday. We used to have Wednesday afternoon off and we used to play at garden fetes all over the place. The others played Saturday afternoons. Half and half.'

What numbers were there in the band?

'If you're competing in a brass band you're only allowed 26. We did have one or two more. When we went to Crystal Palace some of them had to stand down.'

Why did you go to Crystal Palace?

'The national brass band championships. We weren't in the top section. There'd be about 30 bands there. Terrific place! We had to play one number and they'd judge you on that.'

How old is the Town Band?

'My Dad played in it so it was before 1900. Dick Utting was bandmaster a lovely cornet player when my dad was solo trombonist. Used to keep a bookshop just the other side of the bingo hall. He used to run a little orchestra and we used to go round playing at churches.'

Did you play from music or could you improvise?

'I could do anything!'

Could you play jazz?

'Yes. I played in 5 different dance bands. I could make it up without any music. Our first dance band was named The Snappy Tones.'