

Dora Richens reminisces....

as she sits in her pretty flint cottage on the Green. Dora Wingfield was born in 1922 at Green End Farm which dates from the 17th century. In 1643 the Roundheads stopped there. In the attic wooden benches were found built into the wall, thought to be beds for the soldiers. At the age of two, Dora and her parents moved to The Laurels, a smallholding on the Green, an inherited property. The breakfast milk came in a bucket, still warm from the cow. Her father sold milk at the door for tuppence ha'penny a pint. Bathtime was a tub in front of the kitchen range. Coal came by horse and cart in the early days and then by the corn merchant's lorry, when he brought feed for the animals. Fresh bread was delivered and the only morning Dora rose early was on Good Friday, in order to greet the hot cross buns! The rough track through the village was known as Main Road, where Dora and chums played with their tops, whips and hoops and the track in front of The Laurels was called the Side Road. The Green was criss-crossed with paths made by villagers' footprints as they travelled to and fro.

Silfield House was a P.O.Stores run by two sisters, Ethel and Emily Friend. Ethel ran the Post Office and Emily the shop. There was a smithy at each end of the village, now The Forge and Old Forge. Transport was the family pony and trap, which was used to visit Watford's vegetable and cattle markets. Dora had cousins in Watford. Sometimes her mother would put her aboard the Biggerstaffs' bus so she could be met the other end for a trip to the pictures. When the cousins came to Sarratt, they would help make butter and take some home. Entertainment largely came from the radio and adventures with playmates. Dora particularly remembers making rainproof shelters on Dawes Common by weaving fern fronds together.

In 1945, when rationing was still in force, Dora married Daniel Richens and she recalls obtaining a permit from the Citizen's Advice Bureau, in order to buy bedding and curtains. They set up home in Putney, an oar's length from the river, where they enjoyed watching the Boat Race then rushing back indoors to see the finish on TV! Her son, David, was born in Putney and they were happy there but frequently visited The Laurels to see her parents, who saved *Spotlight* which enabled Dora to keep in touch with village life. Dora met Daniel, a London Transport employee, when the war started. He became a full-time soldier in the Home Guard, based in railway carriages in Ricky. Dora was working in a small factory there called The Limit. She made

the motors for the cameras used in aerial photography for reconnaissance purposes. Dora recently learnt that Laurie Reading developed the film from these cameras. She also made bomb-release pushbuttons and was a meticulous tester as men's lives were at risk. To reach the factory, Dora either cycled or caught a bus to Croxley and then walked into Ricky, if the weather was fine. Coming home the bus was often crowded and too overloaded to cope with Scot's Hill. The passengers had to get off and walk, then re-join the bus at the top! When Daniel retired, the couple returned to Sarratt, to Atlantis, the cottage owned by her aunt who had suffered a stroke.

Dora is proud of her Sarratt lineage. A member of her family has lived in the village since the 16th century, as shown by the parish register "Rose Wingfield 20 January 1560". Dora's grandparents were the first couple to be married in Holy Cross after the completion of the restoration work in 1866. Thank you so much Dora for sharing your memories.

Brenda Lines