

## My Aunt Ethel's Reminiscences of her early life in Hooe

In May, 1988, my uncle, Donald Herbert Newport, interviewed his sister, Ethel Matilda Pilbeam (née Newport), regarding her early remembrances of her life as a child, both in Pentridge, in Dorset, and in Hooe, in East Sussex. It included her memories as a young woman, living at "Caritas Villa", in Hooe and her early working days.

A year later, on 27th May 1989, he recorded his memories of his days, in Hooe, as a child and young man.

These two "interviews" were recorded by my uncle on standard audio cassette tapes but the quality, unfortunately, varies a great deal throughout the interview - at times the words cannot really be understood.

In May 2012, I produced a transcription of both "interviews", missing out much of the hesitation, the sudden correction and re-correction of errors, and those areas that I just could not hear or understand. I have put several question marks where there are words I, just, couldn't understand.

There are, in fact, three tape cassettes, each with Uncle Don's memories on side "A" and the Aunt Ethel interview on side "B" and each, unfortunately, with the same poor quality of sound.

It begins with my uncle giving an introduction to the interview but, unfortunately, the opening words are cut off. It's obvious, however, that he was going to identify himself, by name, which is the bit that's missing but he does go on to give his and the interviewee's relationship to each other and to John James Newport, my grandfather.

I've identified who is speaking by using 'Don' for Donald and 'Ethel' for Ethel - there are no flies on me!

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Don "I am the ???).....youngest son of John James Newport, of Hooe, and I'm talking to my sister, Mrs. Pilbeam, er.... her name is Ethel,..... um when were you born Ethel?

Ethel January 26, 1893

Don Would you have any memories of your early childhood, at home?

Ethel Well, all I remember is we went to Pentridge. We went to a house with a lot of plums that's when Grace was born, the other sister

Don That wasn't...

Ethel Didn't have any other memories; not then

Don Well, what about memories of your early life at Hooe?

Ethel Well, it's rather a mixture, I'm afraid, because it seemed to be all brothers and sisters as you can imagine, there were twelve of us and there seemed to be a lot of work always to do although I was very young but, um., I don't remember enjoying myself only when we came to Mayday and then Club day ...Club day we had lovely, well we had lovely dinners - not that I remember eating one. I went to Hooe school, it was, my father was headmaster, my mother was headmistress and she had this class, as I say, with the seats, all, like a lot of seats - they were going up to the ceiling - you had to go up steps, you see, to get to them and, er, sit there, and that was very nice, it was a lovely classroom, and, er, she used to take all of us - I think she had a bit of help.

Don What subjects did you teach?

Ethel I didn't teach

Don Oh, what did your mother teach?

Ethel Oh, just the three "R"s, chiefly, there wasn't much else there - I think we had a bit of nature - nature study - used to bring in different things for the children to look at - you know, like green stuff and all that sort of thing but I don't remember us doing ..... we had sewing - oh yes, we did some sewing.- we had drills, a bit of drill, I don't think we did anything else much.

Don What about Sunday School?

Ethel Um..... well, Sunday School was at Hooe Church as far as I can remember - I don't remember having Sunday School in the School ... no, you had to go down to the Hooe Church, first thing Sunday morning - that's the most as I can remember of Sunday School.

Don Did you have many congregation?

Ethel Oh, yes. Quite a few in the congregation. Yes, and of course when I got a little bit older, I went into the choir, I was a chorister. A nice choir, my father used to take - he was choirmaster

Don What entertainment did you have at home?

Ethel Well, we used to do all sorts of funny things - make houses, doll's things, dress up, make hats, paper hats - used to get this pretty pink paper and make paper hats.

Don What about musical entertainment?

Ethel Musical entertainment? Well, we had a piano ... we none of us could play properly ... we all used to have a turn - to see who could make the most noise.

Don Did mother play the violin?

Ethel Yes, mother used to play the violin, yes, it was very nice. I don't know who played the piano, I suspect I had a go; several of us.

Don Did father play the flute?

Ethel No, he hadn't got a flute.....no, father hadn't got a flute. Er, I don't know of anything else we did when we were little.

Don Now, later on you went to teach in the school, now, how did you get your training?

Ethel How did I get my training? When I was teaching? When I was only a bit teacher, you mean? Well, a correspondence college. I had to write, you see, to this correspondence college in London, and sat..... all I had, because there was nowhere else to go .... weren't any colleges about anything like that then anyway we couldn't afford it.

Don Where did you have your first school?

Ethel Arlington, near Berwick in Sussex.

Don And how did you get there?

Ethel I had to cycle. I bought a cycle - that was 10s that time of day and that lasted me all my life. All the time I was teaching. Then I went ... it was rather a nice school, really.

Don What sort of pay would you have had then?

- Ethel Now you ask me - I had nine shillings a week. Mind you. I went there when I was seventeen; the age was really eighteen but they so badly wanted a teacher they let me carry on at seventeen, so I only had nine shillings a week instead of ten. I gave the landlady nine shillings a week when I got on a bit farther , you see, and got the ten shillings which it was then. I was at that school about a year and a half, I think, then I went to Firle, which was another school in Sussex - that was very nice - I had a little room to myself, there – tookbody --- a ?? the little children, the infants, which was quite nice - they left me alone - I carried on - very nice. The only thing was they hadn't got a piano in that school
- Don Would you have any funny stories, connected with the school?
- Ethel Not at that school, I don't think - one other school I was at, Brightling, that was rather funny because, you see, winter-time, instead of doing work, we had .. I had to dry the students clothes all off by the stove - we couldn't have them sitting in wet clothes so off came their shoes, and stockings, and coats and dry them off and let the students just do - game on their known but, um, that was quite nice - I don't think we had anything very funny.
- Don Talking of the village again, what about special days in the village - fêtes and market days, and that sort of thing?
- Ethel Well, I don't think that came into my line at all - had market days - well, I was teaching, I don't remember - it took me all my time to do my studies, you see.
- Don Any particular interest - interesting points about the church? 'Course, I know there was a hop-garden there - did you remember much about that?
- Ethel Hooe - in Hooe that was wasn't it? Yes, yes, er, well I don't think I went hop-picking but one of my sisters did, and I think my mother went down - 'course a lot of people used to go there - a lovely hop-garden, it was, and you had to go through the churchyard to get to it - I don't know what they did with their hops, I'm sure, I suppose they had a place there to take them, to take them in.
- Don Shall we come back to the village life a bit more, about the home life? Erm, we used to have a lot of people call, erm, bakers, and fishmongers, and people, and egglers. Can you, do you know .. remember anything about those?
- Ethel There was some old lady who used to come every week for rags and used to give you pegs in return, for the rags, and she used to call out, "have you got any rags?" Um, I don't remember any ????? - - - a baker used to come, a milkman used to come er, water was a problem ..er...
- Don The well used to dry up, didn't it?
- Ethel Used dry up every .. every summer and we had to go and get water if... we didn't have a lot of rain water. we didn't have a very big rainwater butt, so we used to have to go up to the nearest cottages which was about ten minutes, get buckets of water, came down, that's what we used to have for a bath, when we finished our rainwater, we had to go to and fro for buckets of water.
- Don What about the spring?
- Ethel Ah, the spring was about two fields over, over from us - if you wanted to get spring water you had to take a can, a milk can, that's all we could carry - to get water from that spring - you never took a bucket. The same with the milk, you used to take a milk can, it always goes in milk cans, we never had it in anything else, not bottles.
- Don Do you remember the fishman coming round?
- Ethel Yes, he used to come on a Sunday morning, with shrimps. I don't know whether he brought anything else, I don't remember.

Don (it's very faint but I think he asks)

Do you want a rest?

***[The tape recorder was switched off at this point but, then, the interview continues with an answer to a question that must have been asked just before the machine was switched back on.]***

Ethel Well, it has hot water to the stove, you see, the range - used to have nice ranges out in the country in the hot water systems - Apart from that, we'd got the hot water in the kitch... in the scullery, put saucepans on the ??? but when we wanted hot water for baths, we had to ... not for washing, we'd got someone who did the washing, we didn't do all that much at home, but we had a copper going, we had to fill that up with water and put logs, and had a lovely fire, you see, and get the hot water like that, and, erm, we had to keep refilling the copper and use galvanised baths and a big screen round, so the first one who had a bath was lucky, they had nice water, I'm afraid we didn't all get that, some of them had to have hot water put in with the rinse - it was a bit of a game - but it was rather nice because we used to have candles, candles to light up at night, you see, yes.

What else?

Don You had oil lamps, as well.

Ethel Yes, but that was in the lounge .... mainly in the dining room, what we called our kitchen.

Don What sort of meals did mother cook? She used to get .. Smith's, the butcher used to come up.

Ethel She cooked lovely meals and she's always got enough for another person. I never knew my mother to run short of anything, though she'd got all us lot to feed - anybody came in they could always have a meal. She had beautiful meat, beautiful roast beef we used to get. Vegetables and things Father had a garden, I think ... I don't know when he had it but he had an allotment. Plenty of peas, beans, and suchlike

Don Do you remember Sunday evenings, all gathered round the piano, singing hymns?

Ethel No I don't remember that much. No, I don't remember us doing that. You probably did that when I wasn't there. I'm trying to think of something else.

Don What did you do on your holiday from teaching?

Ethel Well, I usually went home and most of the times, I kept the place clean, the house neat, and in the summer time I washed blankets, did all Spring-cleaning and then I had two sisters to look after with rheumatic fever. Sometimes, we had a friend come to stay - a desperate friend used to look after him and it was really hard work. I didn't get much chance of a holiday. I didn't get a holiday at all until after I was married - so, that was that.

Don Do you remember when I was born, Ethel?

Ethel Yes, I remember when you were born and I remember I wanted you named Donald because I had a young man; he was killed in the - that must have been the first world war, would it be? Yea, his name was Donald, you see? So, that's how it is you got that name.

Anything else you'd like to know?

Don (A question is, obviously, asked that is too faint to hear)

Ethel Well, whenever we wanted a doctor, we had to go over to Boreham Street, across the marshes, over planks of wood and all sorts - didn't matter how we got there as long as we got there and that's how we saw our doctor - and to get back we either came back that way, or walked back all round

Ninfield and home - and, sometimes the doctor would come on a horseback, riding on horseback, and sometimes he didn't.

Don What were the roads like?

Ethel Oh, they weren't too bad, they were a bit rough, rather flinty but, then, they weren't too bad, the roads, not after all. They were on the rough side, you see, they weren't smooth like we get them now.

Don (Too faint to hear)

Ethel Yes, well, part of the time, my grandmother, she used to live in London, then her granddad died and she came down to Hooe to live and she used to do a lot of sewing, crocheting, all sorts of things, but she made us some lovely dresses. We used to have that velvet, real velvet, real velvet dresses we used to wear, and, er, and underclothes and things - she used to make a lot, so we really - although there were a lot of us we were well looked after.

The boys had most of their clothes bought at Ward's in Devonshire Road, Bexhill, and they were well looked after, too

Don How did you get to Bexhill, Ethel?

Ethel Well, we usually went by a milk cart - somebody from the farm up the road use to go in in the afternoon and we have a ride in with the milk cart other than that we'd have to walk, walk to Bexhill and walk back, I always remember going in when mum came home from school about half-past three to four, start walking into Bexhill, get there before the shops closed and walk back home again - one of the other sisters came with me you see, and buy all we wanted to.

Don What sort of shops did you have in Hooe?

Ethel Hooe? A grocer's shop and a draper's shop and I think we had the post office, then, because that was on the go a good many years. Yes, we had a post office, yes, because I remember every Christmas Eve, we used to go down expecting a tin of cream from Devonshire, and we used to keep going down to the shop until we got this tin of cream, sent up by an uncle, down there, so there must have been a post office, mustn't there?

*[What follows is very faint and almost impossible to understand because of the background noise. The next words that are clear, are in an answer, given by Aunt Ethel to a question that I can't hear.]*

Ethel We used to walk over to Norman's Bay, "sluice" we used to call it "sluice", then, and spent the day down there - there was a little shop - we used to get all sorts of things to eat and have a nice long day by the sea, and of course, grandma had to fall in one of the rivers but then, you see, there were only planks to get across, wasn't nice bridges or anything, and, as a rule, there were plenty of cows out in the fields, rather frightened us, but we spent our days in and walked, walked back home it was a good day's outing.