

Chapter 94: Practical Tasks

Grandad continued to actively do a range of practical tasks during this period. Indeed, perhaps because he was now retired and his health was relatively stable, he seemed particularly active in this area. On the other hand, relatively little is available about practical tasks carried out by mum during this period and I suspect this reflects that she was not keeping her diary for much of the time.¹

Grandad repaired and maintained things that they owned including fitting a spring on the flush chamber of the toilet to lift the handle back into position; repairing a wooden wheelbarrow; refitting the bookcase door after it had been re-glazed; repairing their vacuum cleaner²; clearing out the sewer pipe from the toilet³ and trying to fix the fluorescent tube in their lounge.⁴

Grandad also modified and improved some things. He was often on the lookout for old wooden items that he could pull to pieces to use the wood for other things. In November 1967, he came to ours to pull an old desk to pieces and mum also brought him another one for him to repair. Also that month, he pulled a combination desk and seat to pieces and rebuilt it as a desk and stool.⁵ Dad and Alan brought grandad another desk to pull to pieces in March 1969. Other places he got wood from included old cupboards and wooden partitions from Drayton Methodist Church, a wooden fire surround he got from Ken Bell and a chest of drawers from Barbara Carpenter. He often used the wood to make scooters etc. for us. This meant he was also always on the lookout for wheels he could use, particularly from old prams.⁶ He also used reclaimed wood to make [duckboards](#) which he used on the cabin floor.



Old school desk which belonged to mum and which passed to me when she died

While fitted kitchens began to be introduced [from the 1950s](#), I don't think we or grandma and grandad had these until much later. Instead to provide more work space, grandad made a variety of tops and covers which could be fitted to appliances, such as fridges, washers, cookers or over sinks.⁷ In November 1965, grandma and grandad fixed Formica-like sheets on their washer and cooker tops. In January 1967, grandad made a working top for the new washer⁸ and he and grandma fitted Formica-

¹ See [Chapter 87](#).

² In November 1969, he cleaned the vacuum cleaner. That same day grandma had brought two new carpet brushes and a new belt for the hoover. The brushes cost 7/- and the belt 2/-. The following day, grandad finished the hoover and fixed the brushes and new belt.

³ In December 1969, he and grandma tried to clear the sewer pipe from the inside toilet. He said they made it much better. I vaguely recall grandad being somewhat obsessive about how well a toilet should flush. I recall mum telling me that he tested this by seeing if the toilet would successfully flush a matchstick away!

⁴ In 10 December 1969, the fluorescent tube in the lounge (see [Chapter 93](#)) failed and he went to get a new one from the electric shop on Reepham Road but they said it was the starter not the tube. So he bought a starter for 2/9 and fixed it but it still did not work. He said he would need to make further enquiries. On the 19th, he fixed a 150 watt lamp in place where the fluorescent light was as the tube had not yet arrived,

⁵ I think this might have been for Liz. He also did something similar for Eileen, a friend of mum's. I am not sure which the one in the photograph was but mum kept it and it passed to me when she died.

⁶ In August 1968, he noted getting some good wheels from an old pram from David Bell and he used these in scooters he made.

⁷ See [Chapter 85](#). I recall mum using such a cooker cover much later in life when she did have a fitted kitchen. But, this protected the hob and provided more work space.

⁸ See [Chapter 93](#).

like sheets to it. In December 1968, he made a new cover for the cooker as, apparently, grandma had put the old cover on while the burner was still on.

In November 1965, grandad tried fixing two wooden keys on his tenor recorder to make fingering easier but this was not a success so he took them off. However, on 29 January 1966, grandma bought him a pair of ½ inch hinges to improve the keys on his C recorder with screws and, on the 31st, he made two new keys for it. In December 1965/January 1966, grandad repaired the “*Elstow*” sign⁹ for their house and fixed the letters on with bolts and nuts.

Other things grandad modified or improved included the following. He converted two chairs that had belonged to grandma’s mother into garden chairs; he fitted knobs on their sliding doors; he fitted a set of Shepherd’s castors¹⁰ to their settee; he made old washer tops into tables¹¹; he added two shelves to their bathroom cabinet; he made a wire frame to catch letters; he made a cupboard to cover their washer; he made grandma six wooden forks from six wooden spoons; he put some doors and a shelf over their fridge¹²; he made half a roller skate to create a pair¹³; he made two wire frames and fitted them to the wardrobe door to hang his ties and collars on; he put some electric plugs on the television table; he put two pieces of corrugated iron in the incinerator to make it burn better; he made wooden covers for the kitchen and bathroom outlet grates; he raised the blanket box 6” higher; he added a new knob and bolt to the bookcase; he fitted a new shelf in the central heating cupboard; and he made a cabinet¹⁴ out of a box that Ken Bell gave him;



Advert for Duralay

Grandad also did quite a lot of what would now be called DIY activities around their house including decorating¹⁵, general maintenance¹⁶, repairs¹⁷, odd jobs¹⁸ and problem-solving.¹⁹

Grandad also made things they needed or wanted from scratch, particularly out of wood. Such items included a small table for the airing cupboard, a seat for the bottom of the garden, a box for his tape recorder²⁰, a case for his organ and transformer²¹, an eleven foot ladder, a bird table, a nest box for birds, a box for their bowls, a small blanket chest, a ten inch stand for the slide projector, a whip and top and various scooters. He also made items out of materials other than wood. For

⁹ See [Chapter 85](#).

¹⁰ See [Chapter 93](#).

¹¹ He did this for an old washer top of mum’s and for the cover for their Thor washing machine when they replaced it in 1967 – see [Chapter 93](#).

¹² He remade the shelf in January 1969 so that it did not rest on the fridge.

¹³ From a pair that Betty (Douglas) had given him. He noted that they were for me or Alan.

¹⁴ I presume by this he meant a small cabinet and not a [small cabin!](#)

¹⁵ For example, in February 1969, they decorated their lounge. Mum helped with painting and wallpapering. Grandad painted the lounge pelmet and also repositioned the light in the lounge near the piano. John Douglas and his partner put down new underlay ([Duralay](#)) and relaid the carpet for which they paid £18. Grandad also made an electric extension on the skirting board. In March 1969, grandma and grandad painted and decorated their back bedroom.

¹⁶ Including, cleaning out guttering and launders and oiling the clock in the cabin. In June 1968, as well as cleaning out their own gutters, he cleaned out the ones for Mr Carpenter next door. He noted he got more from Mr Carpenter’s one gutter than from their two.

¹⁷ Including putting a new nut and bolt on the long shears and repairing the hammock that they got in Kirkby (see [Chapter 40](#)).

¹⁸ Including fixing a piece of metal over the hall, lounge and front bedroom carpets. I recall these at grandma and grandad’s house as a child. In addition, he pulled up the iron frame off the soakaway, fixed up shelves in the shed including one for the incinerator to go underneath and made a wooden gate cover to go over the cesspool. He also fixed mirrors in the lounge and hall and the gas fire in the hall (although I am not sure, particularly in this context, whether by fixed he meant attached or repaired).

¹⁹ In March 1966, he and grandma pulled up the carpet in the front bedroom as they thought it was causing a smell. A few days later, they relaid the carpet. In April 1967, grandad tried to make the chiming clock go but was only partially successful. He had another go the next day but the chimes would not stop once they were switched on so he had to run the clock without the chimes. He and grandma had another go at the clock a few days later. If this refers to the long case Westminster chiming clock (see [Chapter 31](#)) that we now have, we also run it without chimes as they still don’t seem to work!

²⁰ See [Chapter 96](#).

²¹ Which he and grandma covered in Fablon.

example, he made a rug with wool that they had bought in Kirkby. On 20 October 1969, he made a 10" stand for his projector. He also liked making electrical gadgets including a transformer for his organ which allowed it to be run from the mains.

In June 1965, grandad started clearing land to build a small [lean-to](#) shed and he worked on building this until 10 July. His brother Cyril and friend from Kirkby, Arthur Booth, helped him with some of the hardboarding and grandma did some of the painting. Grandad made a soakaway for the shed which he filled with garden rubbish. Although the work on the shed was finished by 10 July, work on the shed floor and step had to be delayed because of a national shortage of cement.²² He used the shed to store his moped.²³ In April and May 1966, grandad worked on altering the shed roof.

Two of the most distinctive things he made in this period were a pair of large windmills for the garden. These are some of the things I remember most clearly from grandma and grandad's house and they feature prominently in photographs of that period. Indeed, there is a windmill still in existence in the front garden of 166 Drayton High Road.²⁴



166 Drayton High Road in December 2021 showing the windmill in the front garden

The two windmills were of [different design](#). Grandad described them as a [tower](#) and [post](#) windmill respectively. The first windmill he built was the tower one and he started this in October 1966. On 5 November, he made the four sails and, on the 8th, he started making the tower, He continued working on it in January 1967 and finished it on the 31st. In February, he painted it and made some corrections. In March 1967, he fixed it in place at the bottom of the back garden. In November 1967, he started to make a second windmill and, this time, it was of post type. He first made the sails and then the frame for the top section. In December, he made the round house and mill section a little lower and

²² On 12 July, Mr Beckett gave grandad ¾ bag of cement but some of it had gone lumpy. Nevertheless, he did manage to concrete the shed floor and step on the 13th and he finished this off on the 14th.

²³ See [Chapter 95](#).

²⁴ Although I think this may be the later smock mill, see [Chapter 109](#). Currently, the windmill is [lacking its sails](#) but these were in place until 2021.

ordered some green PVC sheeting for the windmill. By the 15th, he had finished the woodwork on the windmill. On the 18th, he bought some iron tubing for the windmill from Boddy's as he found that the 1½" dowelling that he had would not be strong enough. He also decided to paint the interior wood green as the white wood showed through the PVC sheeting. From January to March 1968, he painted the windmill and he put down a concrete base for it. He fixed it in place on 9 April 1968 and dismantled the tower mill to repaint it black. On 24 April 1968, he got a slab²⁵ from Curtis to stand the tower mill in the front garden. He carried out various repairs and improvements to the windmills subsequently.²⁶



Grandad's first tower mill
Left – the new mill circa March 1967 with me, Alan and Tricia at the back and Liz wandering off!
Below – the windmill in place in the back garden with Liz, Tricia, Alan and me in the foreground
Bottom – the windmill in the back garden showing mum, dad, Alan, Liz, grandma, Auntie Dolly, Tricia, Renie, Jim and me at Easter 1967
Below left – initially, I thought this was also the tower mill but I think it is the later smock mill (see [Chapter 109](#))



²⁵ The cost of this slab was 4/11.

²⁶ For example, in June 1968, Mr Beckett brought grandad two pieces of hardwood for him to turn a new centre piece for his post mill.



Grandad's second post mill
Top left – circa April 1968 showing the windmill in place on the concrete slab that grandad made
Top right – Liz and Alan with the new windmill
Above – Tricia, me, Alan and Liz on our bikes in grandma and grandad's back garden with the windmill visible behind Tricia



Top – Boxing Day 1968 featuring Tricia, Liz, Caroline Douglas, dad, Alan and me in front of the windmill
Above – Amy and grandma (back row), Tom and grandad (seated) and me, Liz, Caroline Douglas and Alan (kneeling or sitting on the floor)

In June 1967, granddad made a cabinet for dad's coin collection for his 35th birthday. After dad died, I took his coin collection to an expert to be valued. While much of it was of little real value, as they were coins dad had collected from circulation over time, the expert did comment positively on the box explaining that it was well-made and such boxes were sought after meaning that there was considerable value in that. The most valuable item in dad's collection was a set of specimen coins from 1937 in their leather case. I am also reminded of a story from when dad lived in Birmingham. He was burgled and thought his coin collection had been stolen. He claimed from the insurance but later found the collection in the loft or wall space where presumably he had hidden it!



Top – specimen coins from 1937 including leather case and Maundy coins
Above – coin box that granddad made for dad's 35th birthday in 1967 with coin trays shown (right)

In October 1967, grandad made a wooden tricycle from an old scooter. On the 28th, he improved the tricycle's pedals. In April 1968, he made a trailer for this tricycle. In August 1968, he made another trailer for the tricycle.



Mum with Alan, on the wooden tricycle grandad made, in grandma and grandad's front garden

In December 1967, grandad made a screw-in legs stool for me to stand on when going to football. I still have this stool and use it as a small table in my study. It was, and still is, painted yellow and green. Originally, it had the names of team members written on top but these have worn off over time. I have strong memories of it. It was extremely useful for me as a child to be able to see the game in a stadium that was mainly standing only at that time. The legs could be unscrewed to make it easier to carry.



Stool that grandad made in 1967 for me to stand on at football (left) and with legs removed (above)

On 22 December 1969, grandad started making an anemometer. He did more work on it from 27 to 31 December and finished it in January 1970. He noted that the anemometer he had made "does not measure wind speed only the cups revolve".

Grandad made or repaired a lot of things for other people including mum²⁷, Tricia²⁸, me²⁹, Alan³⁰, me and Alan together³¹, Liz³², the four of us³³, Tom³⁴, Tom and Amy³⁵, Amy³⁶, Ron Douglas³⁷, Betty Douglas³⁸, John Douglas³⁹, Caroline Douglas⁴⁰, Irene Bell⁴¹, Ken Bell⁴², Linda Bell⁴³, Barbara

I think this is the slide grandad made for the four of us in 1966. The photo shows Alan and me and is taken in the back garden of our house in Hellesdon



²⁷ Including a table for her typewriter reconstructed from an old table and a bracket table. He borrowed Ron Douglas' electric drill to fit the bracket table to the wall. He added Formica to a kitchen table he had previously made for her. He also altered the linen box that grandma and grandad had bought mum from Toby's (see [Chapter 93](#)). He also made her a shelf for the telephone.

²⁸ Including a flower press, a small weaving frame for school, a bookcase and a table.

²⁹ Including a bike from one that Ron Douglas had given him. He bought a new brake for it from Halfords in King's Lynn – see [Chapter 95](#). He also repaired my aquarium and made me a nest box and bird table.

³⁰ Including a box to put his plastic building set in and mending two toys. He also made him two pairs of wooden wheels for a trailer he bought at Butlins and a wooden sword as he was dressing up as a pirate at school. He also repaired a scooter for him that Alan had found on a scrapheap.

³¹ Including a car port and motor runways.

³² He made her a doll's crib and he also put two new springs on her pram.

³³ In 1966, he made us a slide as a birthday present to all of us. In October 1967, we took him a scooter to repair that he had made in Kirkby in 1962. He also put a pair of pedals on the trolley that he had made for us to ride on the paths.

³⁴ Including a wooden cap for his car radiator, as he had lost the proper one, and a reel to wind electric cable. He also made a tray for his car to use when they went picnicking and a long key to turn off the water mains.

³⁵ Two boards to fix letters on.

³⁶ He made a case for her tape recorder and a stand for her sink unit like the one grandma and grandad had.

³⁷ Grandad repaired a seat for him that he had got from Drayton Methodist Church and he also made him a board to fasten to the wall for coat hooks.

³⁸ This included a wall table to cover her washer. Betty bought him a $\frac{7}{32}$ masonry drill for doing this. Grandad also made her a top to cover her fridge. In October 1966, grandad pulled an old bed frame to pieces and gave Betty the mattress and the spring.

³⁹ He repaired a bed for him. He also made him a shield on which to mount a pair of horns.

⁴⁰ A doll's cot.

⁴¹ He repaired an ironing board for her, looked at her vacuum cleaner, put a knob on a teapot, sanded a table for her to paint, laid a carpet strip and put a piece of Armaboard on a small table for her. I have struggled to find details of Armaboard. I did find a product by this name used for making signs but it seems to be relatively new and fairly limited to Australia.

⁴² Including drilling six holes in a street nameplate for him and repairing a scythette that dad had broken. .

⁴³ He put a plug on a health lamp for her. I confess I was not sure what these were but it seems they were either infra-red or ultraviolet lamps which were [marketed](#) as having health benefits.

Carpenter⁴⁴, Geoffrey Carpenter⁴⁵, Andrew Hodges⁴⁶, Clarence Reeve⁴⁷, Auntie Dolly⁴⁸, Florrie Booth's sister⁴⁹, Miss Garrod⁵⁰, Rev Warren's son⁵¹, Mrs Warren⁴⁷, Eileen⁵², Mrs Cooper⁵³ and Mrs Smith⁵⁴. He did various jobs for Drayton Methodist Church⁵⁵ and also for Mile Cross playgroup.⁵⁶



Examples of Infraphil and Ultraphil health lamps. These were lamps produced by Philips that produced infrared and ultraviolet light respectively

⁴⁴ In March 1968, grandad cut pieces off two doors for her as they would not open and close properly since they had had fitted carpets. He did the same for her in June 1968 for the same reason. In April 1969, grandad pulled up a piece of concrete that Dennis had put in to hold a revolving clothes line for Barbara. He later concreted it in place using concrete which Ken and David Bell mixed in their mixer. I confess I am not entirely sure who Dennis was in regard to this incident but, in October and November 1969, he and grandad put in a new fence for Barbara. In May 1969, grandad repaired her rubber dustbin lid, cleaned out two coal bunkers and cleared her drainpipe and soakaway. He and grandma painted a seat for Barbara that had come from Drayton Methodist Church. In August and September 1969, he put up a shed for Barbara on a base of slabs that he laid. Grandma and Barbara helped him with the larger sections. He also put new knobs on her greenhouse door. On 25 September 1969 he bought a hatchet shaft at Dixon's and put it onto a head for Barbara. He noted that a wedge he bought with the shaft should have cost 3½d but he paid 4d as the halfpenny was [no longer legal tender](#) from the end of July 1969 (see [Chapter 97](#)).

⁴⁵ In March 1968, grandad made a runway for Geoffrey Carpenter so that he could run his wheelchair from the yard to the lawn. He made another similar ramp for him in April 1968 and he adjusted it so that it could be used at either the front or back door.

⁴⁶ In August 1966, he noted repairing a wheel on Andrew's tractor. I have assumed that this was for Andrew Hodges and that it was a toy tractor.

⁴⁷ He made him a top for his fridge from a piece of Wearite that he got from Dixon's. I had some trouble finding out what Wearite was but it seems it was a [laminated](#) that included an aluminium foil layer. He also used Wearite to cover a paste board and cutting board for Mrs Warren.

⁴⁸ Grandad made her two supports to put under her bed to tip it forward.

⁴⁹ Grandad made a reading lamp from an old wooden candlestick for her.

⁵⁰ A gas metre cupboard.

⁵¹ A car port.

⁵² A friend of mum's. Grandad made her a seesaw and table. Eileen paid 50/- for this and paid by [postal order](#). Grandad also made her a trestle table.

⁵³ In November 1968, grandad collected a lid from her and fitted it to a piano stool. I am not sure if it was for her or someone else.

⁵⁴ He painted a bird table for her and fixed it in place. It was a Christmas present for her daughter and she had bought it from Edwards DIY (see [Chapter 85](#)) in Norwich for 62/-.

⁵⁵ Including making a sink unit and planing/shaving bits off chapel doors to make them close more easily. In March 1967, after the church floor had been sanded, grandma went with other ladies to scrub and dust. Grandad went with her after tea to fasten the carpet down. In April 1968, grandma and Irene Bell went to the church to put some stuff on the floor to brighten it and preserve it. Grandad did various repairs at the church including repairing a fence and work on the guttering and drainpipes. In November 1967, he fixed a plastic drainpipe at the church that grandma had ordered from Marleys (see [Chapter 84](#)). In March 1968, he and Mr Hodgson put up a new drainpipe and made a soakaway at the church. In October 1968, he repaired the lock on the old coalhouse at the church and, in December 1968, he put a new plug on their electric fire. In May 1969, he repaired a table for the church. In October 1969, Tom and grandad got a tap from Dixon's to fit on the tea urn for the church. In November 1969, grandad repaired the Yale pattern lock at the church and, in December 1969, he collected the boiler from the church. One element was broken and he got a new one from a Burco maintenance man in Costessey. That month, he also collected the lock from the church's back door and drilled a hole in it to hold back the bolt. He noted that it was a Yale pattern. Grandad also made various things for Mr and Mrs Warren's playgroup including a slide, tables, a wooden doll's pram, some trestles, some playthings, a Wendy house, a climbing frame and a car port. He also repaired some blackboards for Mrs Warren. I have assumed these items were all for the playgroup. While some are explicitly specified as for that group, others are not so they could have been for the Warrens personally.

⁵⁶ In January 1968, grandad put two pieces of wood on a table he had previously made for them to strengthen it.



Vintage Tarpen hedge trimmer

Unsurprisingly, to carry out all these tasks, grandad had a well-equipped workshop in what he described as his “cabin” behind the house. He spent considerable time and effort during this period adding to⁵⁷, maintaining, modifying and improving his tools. Tools and accessories he made included bobbin sanders⁵⁸, a belt sander, a spring sander, a planer, a stand for his vice, a small table for tilting as an extra to his circular saw, a small circular saw with a tilting table, a large circular saw with a tilting table⁵⁹, a saw bench⁶⁰, a case for his old drill, a case to hold his brace bits, a box for the [Tarpen](#) hedge trimmer, a frame to house his motor and planer⁶¹, a frame to hold the speed controller and electric plugs, an 8½” pulley for his lathe, a working table the same height as his trestle, a wooden key to turn off the main water lock, a four foot wooden crank⁶² and a wooden [G cramp](#).

In November 1967, John Douglas gave grandad a speed controller⁶³ from Jim Collins, Betty’s brother. Grandad noted that he needed to make a case for it. He did this the next day but could not get it working and noted that he “*had the misfortune to spoil it*”. He said it worked but would not reduce. This meant he had to send to London for another type but, when it came, he sent it back as the instructions said it was only suited for [brush motors and he wanted it for an induction motor](#). I am not quite sure what happened after that but, in November 1968, he sent to Arthur Hardie⁶⁶ in London for a speed control for his electric drill and this came in early December. In December 1968, grandad tried to get a battery charger working, that Ron had given him, but he was not successful.

Modifications and repairs he made to his tools included painting, fixing a sheet of metal on and putting a new switch on his circular saw, putting a drawer under the vice and replacing the castors on his planer with a pair of wheels at the back as he had for his saw. He also spent time cleaning the cabin, particularly after he had been sanding. He also sometimes sent his saws for sharpening⁶⁴ but, in December 1969, he bought a file so that he could do it himself.⁶⁵

In October 1965, when he took his Black and Decker drill to pieces to clean it, he noted that it was showing signs of wear and this led him to buy a new drill⁶⁶ particularly when it tripped the electricity and he had to borrow a drill from Ron Douglas. In December 1965, he modified his old drill so that it “*worked as a small motor*”. He sometimes sold tools he no longer needed. For example, in December

⁵⁷ For details of tools he purchased during this period, see [Chapter 93](#).

⁵⁸ I found a useful [article](#) about different types of sanders but it does not mention spring sanders. I am not entirely sure what grandad meant by this. It could have been a [type of belt sander](#).

⁵⁹ On 11 January 1969, he was so absorbed in making this that he missed the afternoon wrestling on television. Later that month, grandma bought grandad a piece of galvanised iron from Boddys in Norwich (see [Chapter 93](#)) to finish the top of his saw. It was 29” x 6” and cost 4/-.

⁶⁰ To fit on his big one for mitre cutting.

⁶¹ He also fixed iron plating to his planer.

⁶² To work with the iron one Tommy had bought him in 1930.

⁶³ I am not exactly sure what this was for, perhaps his drill or perhaps another electrical tool.

⁶⁴ Sometimes grandma took these and, on at least one occasion, Irene Bell did.

⁶⁵ See [Chapter 93](#).

⁶⁶ See [Chapter 93](#).

1965, he sold his old jigsaw to Ron Douglas.⁶⁷ In November 1968, he pulled his brace to pieces to see if he could get the ratchet working. He found the trouble but noted that he needed to get a new spring and he bought this from Dixons for 3d.

So, it is clear that grandad was in his cabin a lot as he did a great deal of work there. In October 1965, he noted that he “*started with the heater in my cabin.*” Initially, I thought this meant he started some work on it but I think it means that it had turned cold and he started to use it. In May 1968, he cleaned and packed away the Paul Warma stove⁶⁸ that he used in the cabin and he only started using it again that October. It did get very cold in the cabin. For example, from 13 to 20 January 1968, he was unable to work in his cabin as it was too cold and, in December 1969, he noted that the temperature there was down to freezing. He did do work to improve the facilities in the cabin. In November 1965, he pulled the cabin wardrobe to pieces and put shelves in its place. In December 1968, he bought an electric ring for cooking chips in his cabin⁶⁹ instead of the kitchen and he also made a box to hold that ring. In September 1969, he fitted a chest of drawers in the cabin.

Grandad had some mishaps and accidents while doing DIY. In November 1965, while using his electric drill, it went “*wonky*” and blew the electric trip. In getting the metre cover down, he broke one of the window panes in the lobby. In September 1969, he had quite a serious accident when a wheel broke and a piece hit him in the face, shattering his glasses and sending pieces of glass into his eye.⁷⁰

Grandad was also extremely active in the garden probably again reflecting the time he had now that he was retired and that he was in relatively good health. He and grandma often worked in the garden together. Various other people helped in the garden from time to time including John Douglas⁷¹, Auntie Dolly⁷², Clarence Reeve and Arthur Booth. During this period, grandma and grandad set the lawn in their back garden⁷³ and grandad laid slabs⁷⁴ for paths to connect the back with the front and along the front of the bungalow.⁷⁵ He also took up the crazy paving he had made in 1964⁷⁶ and replaced that with slabs. Grandma and grandad planted various things including roses⁷⁷, two trees⁷⁸ at the bottom of the



Grandad and grandma in their back garden in Drayton. Quite a number of other photos in this chapter are set in either their front or back garden. This photo clearly shows the veranda, a bird table and grandad's cabin

⁶⁷ For 25/- He also noted that he had bought it from Nuttalls of Mansfield (see [Chapter 43](#)) for 46/0 and that the price “today” was 62/6.

⁶⁸ See [Chapter 67](#).

⁶⁹ See [Chapter 93](#).

⁷⁰ See [Chapter 88](#).

⁷¹ In February 1965, he and grandad cemented between the posts of the gate between the Parkins and the Douglasses gardens.

⁷² For example, in August 1965, she helped grandma and grandad sow the grass seeds for their back lawn.

⁷³ Having previously set the front in 1964 – see [Chapter 85](#).

⁷⁴ Most of which he had bought from Curtis – see [Chapter 93](#).

⁷⁵ He had previously laid slabs for the path in the back garden (see [Chapter 85](#)) but, in September 1965, he lifted the path, an inch at the yard end and six inches at the bottom of the garden.

⁷⁶ See [Chapter 85](#).

⁷⁷ In December 1968, grandad noted receiving a voucher for 10/6 to buy a rose tree from A Reeve and Co in Catton. He noted that they had bought the tickets on about October 5 for 2/- from a Garden Party although this event is not recorded in his diary. He refers to it as an APC (or possibly AFC) Garden Party with the word RAF crossed out. I am not exactly sure what this means, perhaps something to do with RAF Air Cadets? I found adverts for A Reeve & Co from the sixties relating to roses, fruit and ornamental trees, shrubs and hedging plants which indicate that they were located in Spixworth Road.

⁷⁸ Which they got from Woodward's in Taverham – see [Chapter 93](#).

garden and a cherry seedling that they had grown from a stone. They also did work on the boundaries of the garden including making a gate⁷⁹ between their garden and the Douglasses, painting the front gate, resetting the front gate stop and repairing the front wall.⁸⁰ In March 1966, grandad also painted the weather vane⁸¹ and, in May 1967, he painted three garden seats. In May 1966, he cut down two tree stumps in the front garden.⁸² In July 1968, he made a wooden compost frame for the bottom of the garden. Once the garden was established, grandma and grandad did a lot to maintain it including pruning roses and small trees, weeding⁸³, cutting down nettles⁸⁴ and collecting pine needles and cones⁸⁵ which blew from the trees onto the lawns⁸⁶ particularly when the winds had been strong. Grandad also had a collection of various garden tools which he maintained and repaired. For example, in September 1969, he noted repairing the box handle on the garden fork.

Sometimes, the weather prevented grandad from working in the garden. He noted that, at times, it was too cold and, at others, too hot. For example, on 10 March 1969, he noted that he did not do much in the garden as the wind was so cold and, on 30 June 1969, he did not work in the garden after dinner as it was too hot. Again, on 4 July 1969, it was too hot for him to finish mowing the front lawn. Sometimes, the weather created work in the garden, not least when the wind blew cones, needles and small twigs from the pine trees onto the lawns. On 6 December 1969, grandad noted that four inches of snow fell in the early morning and that *"it found me a job moving it"*.



Lawns were a very prominent feature of grandma and grandad's gardens in Drayton and they required cutting almost every week

Because of the design of the garden, with two large lawns, cutting the grass was an almost constant exercise, requiring doing roughly once per week between March/April and November. I recall doing this sometimes as a teenager and it was a big job, not least because you had to remove cones and needles from the lawns before you could cut them, and the lawn edges had to be trimmed by hand.⁸⁷ Grandma and grandad sometimes helped Ron to cut his lawns⁸⁸ and sometimes other people cut the grass for grandma and grandad. Such people include Paul Douglas, Clarence Reeve and Tom Wilson. In April 1965, grandad used his new Atco mower⁸⁹ for the first time and was pleased with it but, by February 1966, he was having problems with it.⁹⁰ In 1969, he bought a new Qualcast mower and he used it for the first time in April that year. Sometimes, the lawns needed attention other than just mowing, particularly when the weather had been hot and dry. For example, in July 1967 and July 1969, grandad borrowed Ron's hosepipe to water the lawns as they had turned brown in places.

⁷⁹ Grandad also repaired this gate in October 1968.

⁸⁰ In 1968 and when it was damaged by a motorist in 1969.

⁸¹ That he had got from Hubbards in 1964 – see [Chapter 84](#).

⁸² He noted that the first one took him four hours on each of two consecutive days.

⁸³ On occasions, he counted how many weeds each of them pulled up. For example, in October 1965, he noted that, on one occasion, grandma had gathered 300 weeds while he had gathered 2,100 and on another she gathered 120 and he gathered 1,000.

⁸⁴ Which he considered to be coming from the field behind their house. He noted that he did not want them to spread to the lawn.

⁸⁵ He disposed of these by burning. From November 1967, he used the incinerator he had bought for this purpose from Bonds – see [Chapter 93](#).

⁸⁶ And the veranda roof. In February 1969, grandad cleared the veranda roof of about three inches of snow.

⁸⁷ At least that is what I recall but grandad's diaries refer to an Atco edge trimmer which I presume was electric,

⁸⁸ Grandad also sometimes lent Ron his mower.

⁸⁹ See [Chapter 93](#).

⁹⁰ On 15 February 1966, grandad tried to get the lawn mower engine going but he could not. He bought a new plug but it still would not go. He tried again to get the mower going on the 16th but again failed. He contacted [Snelling](#) who said he would come Tuesday morning next week. He came on 24 February 1966 and got it going for which grandad paid 7/6. However, on the 28th, they had problems again. Someone from Atco in Norwich was passing and he stopped and fixed it.

Grandma also did practical DIY-type jobs. For example, in January 1965, she painted the electric and gas cabinets and the covers over the gas cooker and fridge. In July 1968, she painted the side and yard doors. In January 1969, grandad noted that she finished “colouring” the walls of the front bedroom and, in June 1969, she painted the inside of a large cupboard. While grandma perhaps seemed to do most of the painting, grandad did sometimes do some. For example, in May 1965, he gave the weather vane a final coat of cream paint and, in July 1968, he painted the front gates. Mum also did DIY. For example, in January 1965, she decorated our front room and, in March 1966, she decorated and wallpapered our dining room. Sometimes, we children “helped” grandad with DIY jobs. For example, in July 1968, Tricia, Alan and Liz helped grandad to clear some boards of nails.⁹¹

Grandad often helped mum by doing DIY tasks for her (and dad). For example, he pulled down some picture rails, hardboarded some doors, fixed a hook to hang a mirror on, put up a coat hanger in our hall, fitted a hook for holding back the garage door, fixed a wire for a clock in the back bedroom, planed the garage and back doors, fixed a fuse in the back bedroom, pulled a desk to pieces, repaired the electric light in the living room⁹², put in a new lamp holder for the landing light, fixed Tricia’s clock, put up a wire netting fence at the bottom of the garden, made a gate for that fence⁹³, repaired a door on the sideboard, put a pair of [rising hinges](#) on the lounge doors, tightened a handle on the kitchen door, repaired our front door bell, made a working top for mum’s washer, fixed a



Above – example of a rising hinge that can be used to raise a door when open, for example, to enable it to pass over a thick carpet
Below left – Alan at the beach circa 1980s. Note the prominent windbreaks

new lamp holder in the back bedroom, made a tie frame for mum’s wardrobe, fitted a carpet bar in the lounge, measured some pipes in the bathroom ahead of housing them in, fixed a toothbrush holder in the bathroom, repaired the flex for our kettle, knocked some concrete off the garage floor⁹⁴,



fixed some hardboard on the front bedroom door, put a new flex on our front bedroom light, put a drainpipe on the former coalhouse, fitted a new lampholder in the hall, fitted a 15 amp fuse on the cooker socket, fastened pipes in our garage, assembled a fluorescent tube and installed it in our kitchen⁹⁵ and checked our Christmas tree lights using a gadget he had made. In August 1966, he pointed/ sharpened some stakes on mum’s windshield/windbreak and he also made a mallet to knock them into the ground. He also did DIY tasks at our caravan in Sea Palling. For example, in August 1966, he replaced a window there.

⁹¹ I had gone to hospital with mum about my leg – see [Chapter 88](#).

⁹² Tom brought grandad to do that.

⁹³ He had to repair this in October 1968 as a boy had pulled part of it to pieces.

⁹⁴ As the new car’s silencer was catching on it when driven in,

⁹⁵ According to grandad, mum gave him a “good hand” with this.

This is a pretty impressive list and makes me realise just how much grandad did for mum and how much she relied on him for practical help around the house. It helps me to understand some of her expectations and “demands” in later life although I suspect no-one quite lived up to grandad in this regard⁹⁶ and mum also learned to do a lot of these kind of things herself.

Grandad also sometimes hired people for specific jobs. For example, in January 1965, he paid Mr Read to cut down three of the big trees at the back.⁹⁷ In May 1965, grandad and Tom took a mirror to A E Ross to be re-silvered and to have two holes drilled.⁹⁸ In February 1969, mum took grandad to A E Ross to have a new pane of glass fitted to the bookcase door and, in September 1969, someone from A E Ross also came to replace a pane of glass in the back door that had been broken when the door was blown shut by the wind. In February 1968, grandad called the Gas Board about a problem with the central heating and they sent someone to fix it.⁹⁷ In October 1968, grandad took their electric kettle to have a new element put in⁹⁹ and, in September 1969, he took mum’s iron to the electrician on Reepham Road for a new flex.¹⁰⁰ In October 1969, he took his projector to Colemans to have the magazine slide adjusted. Sometimes, things could not be fixed. For example, in January 1967, the washer went “wonky” so they ordered a new one, a Servis Supertwin Mark 3.¹⁰¹

Grandad also helped other people with DIY-like tasks including Betty Douglas¹⁰², Ron Douglas¹⁰³, John Douglas¹⁰⁴, Geoffrey Carpenter¹⁰⁵, Irene Bell¹⁰⁶, Ken Bell¹⁰⁷, David Bell¹⁰⁸, Mr Beckett¹⁰⁹ and Miss Cooke.¹¹⁰ In September 1969, grandad’s barber visited him to see how grandad had made his circular saw.

Grandad also turned his hand to repairing and maintaining bikes. In February 1966, he fixed a cyclometer on a bike. Grandma had got this from Currys¹¹¹. Grandad also fixed various punctures including for us and for Paul Douglas. He also carried out repairs to bikes and tricycles for me, Alan and Liz. He also did work to repair and maintain clocks. In March 1969, grandad noted that the chiming clock in the hall needed attention. He tried to fix it but without success. But, he got it working the next

⁹⁶ I know I certainly did not!

⁹⁷ See [Chapter 91](#).

⁹⁸ For which he paid 50/6.

⁹⁹ At a cost of 35/-.

¹⁰⁰ This cost 15/- and grandad thought he made a good job of it.

¹⁰¹ See [Chapter 93](#).

¹⁰² In May 1967, he put a board over Betty’s French window in order for John to fix her a pelmet.

¹⁰³ In July 1965, he helped Ron change the fascia boards on the garage and, on the 31st, he and Ron pulled the cowl off the mower to get the automatic controls working. In October 1965, he helped Ron put up a piece of launder (guttering) on his garage and, in March 1966, grandad made a hole in an air grate for Ron to get some electric piping through. In July 1969, grandad helped Ron with a cover for his kitchen.

¹⁰⁴ In May 1967, grandad cut out a three foot circle out of a three foot square of blackboard for John

¹⁰⁵ In July 1967, grandad lent Geoffrey Carpenter his roll of electric cable so that he could charge his mower battery.

¹⁰⁶ In July 1966, Mrs Bell had a water overflow. Grandma and grandad stopped the water until Mr Bell arrived. Apparently, it was the cold tank overflowing into the bathroom.

¹⁰⁷ In 1968, grandad helped Ken Bell to put a tow bar on his car but they had to stop as it started to rain. In November 1968, he lent Ken Bell his electric drill to drill some holes in an electric girder but the drill “conked out” just when he had finished. He went on the bus to take it to Express Rewinds but found that they had moved from Sussex St to Whiffler Rd. He came home by bus then he and Ken took it, in Ken’s lorry, to Express Rewinds on Whiffler Rd. They quoted grandad £4 19 8 for the repair which he thought was too much. He decided to buy a new Black and Decker drill from [Selds Tool Co.](#) which was located in Pottergate where ModOne is [now](#). There is a [photo](#) of this on the Norwich Remembers Facebook Group. (Interestingly, 12-16 Pottergate still bear the name [Seld House](#). A blue plaque states “*Worsted Seld. 1397-1550. On this site stood a market for Englishmen to sell the cloth of Worsted. In 1550 it was moved to the Guildhall.*” [Apparently](#) “seld” means a building to sell merchandise.) This should have been £8 19 6 but the price was reduced to £6 19 6. Ken gave him £3 towards it. He had some issues with it initially finding the chuck hard to turn by hand. He made a case for it. There is a current company by the name of Express Rewinds but their [website](#) states that they have been in business for 27 years. I found out that Express Rewinds were based at 41 Sussex Street but this [now](#) seems to be relatively modern housing//flats..

¹⁰⁸ In February 1967, grandad smoothed a piece of wood for David Bell, who was making a boat. In April 1967, grandad tried to help David to get an outboard motor working but without success.

¹⁰⁹ In June 1968, grandad did a little job on the gate for Mr Beckett re-setting the front gate stop.

¹¹⁰ In November 1969, grandad cut up some wood for Miss Cooke that had come from Ken Bell.

¹¹¹ See [Chapter 93](#).

day but it went wrong again. Grandad put a drop of oil on the bearings and it seemed to work after that.¹¹² Grandad also, from time to time, used his shoemaking and repairing skills, for example, to fit soles and heels to his boots in May 1967 and November 1969.

Grandma did a lot of practical and domestic tasks. Sometimes she came to ours to cook meals or to clean. She did washing for us at various times including when mum's machine was not working, when mum was ill or when we were on holiday. She sometimes baked things for us, particularly for birthday parties. She sewed and, in February 1968, made new curtains for their front bedroom. In January 1969, grandma spent about two hours repairing a shirt of grandad's. In May 1969, grandad noted that grandma and Auntie Dolly stayed in the kitchen "*playing about with some dress material*". Very occasionally, grandad helped grandma with domestic tasks. For example, in March 1968, after grandma had been unwell, grandad helped her with the housework. In April that year, they cleaned the gas cooker together.

Mum also sewed. For example, she noted in March 1965 that Carole dropped material and I presume this was for the wedding. In June 1968, grandad collected a dress mum had made for grandma.

¹¹² Also see footnote 19.