

PART 3: THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1939-45)

Chapter 29: Seven Weddings and a Funeral¹

Grandad's diaries cover each of the years from 1939 to 1945. Again, he used a wide variety of diaries. His 1939 diary was from Prudential and he used some brands he had used before, including Harper and Collins. His 1945 Zodiac diary² is inscribed as a gift from mum who would have been ten years' old at that time.

Grandad's World War 2 diaries



There were a large number of significant family events during this period. In December 1939, Olive Evans, Eva's daughter – so grandad's niece and mum's first cousin – married Alf Holland. Mum was bridesmaid. On the photos, mum has written, “*Me – bridesmaid to cousin Olive (Carole's mum). The dress was blue with tiny flowers embroidered on it. I was 5. I think it was Christmas Eve.*” According to grandad's diary, it was Christmas Day. Mum and grandma went into Nottingham in November to get mum's dress. After they were married, Alf and Olive went to live in Grantham. Mum and grandma visited them there at least twice during this period, in 1940 and 1945.

Olive's brother, Roy Evans, also got married during the war, in the third quarter of 1941 although this is not recorded in grandad's diary. It is not clear whether the Parkins attended but mum had quite a few photos of Roy, including of the wedding so it seems likely they may have. Roy married Kathleen (Kath) Kemp and it appears their wedding was held locally. Roy would have been 20 or 21. In February 1944, they had a daughter, Lynne.

¹ In fact, four funerals are described in this chapter.

² It does not appear that Zodiac was a brand name but also the diary does not seem to make much reference to signs of the zodiac with the possible exception of a logo on one of the first few pages.



Top left – Olive Evans

Top right – mum and Olive Evans

Above – Olive Evans being photographed by mum

Right – Roy and Olive Evans



Olive Evans wedding
Top left – Olive and Alf Holland
Top right – Wedding party – Arthur Evans is beside and behind Alf. Roy and Eva are in line with Olive to her left. Mum is the smaller of the two bridesmaids on the left
Above – mum as bridesmaid with “friends”
Left and Far left – mum as bridesmaid



Roy Evans wedding

Top – Mrs Kemp, Mr Kemp, Alf Holland, Roy Evans, Kath Evans (née Kemp), Olive Holland, Arthur Evans, Eva Evans

Above – Roy Evans

Above right – Roy and Kath Evans

Through chapel, the Parkins were friendly with the Deakins and they feature extensively in mum's and grandad's later diaries. In February 1941, mum went to the wedding of Edna Deakin to Thomas Bust. Two years later, in March 1943, mum attended the wedding of Verlie Deakin, Edna's sister, to Bill Purvis.³ That wedding was taken by Arthur Lofthouse, the Methodist minister at the time.



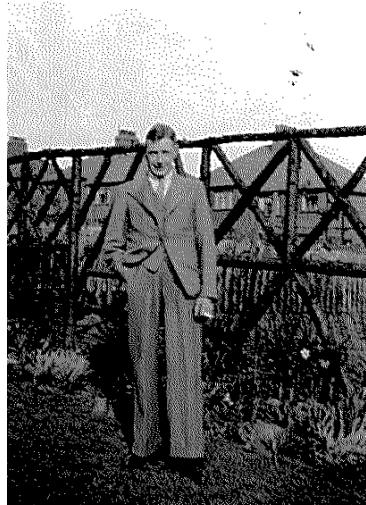
Mum was a bridesmaid again when Frank (Jim) Seville married Ethel Irene (Renie) Heath in June 1942 at Bridge St Church in Mansfield. This couple are of particular interest to me as they were known to me as a child, as Uncle Jim and Auntie Renie. Jim and my grandma were first cousins (i.e. their mothers were sisters).⁴



Jim and Renie's wedding
Back row – Mr Heath, Renie's uncle, and Mrs Heath, Renie's mother (presumably), Auntie Bertha, Uncle Frank
Middle row – Peggy Leeson (perhaps), Jim, Renie, Bert
Front row – Marilyn, mum

³ They got engaged in May 1942 and their engagement was announced in the [Berwickshire News and General Advertiser](#).

⁴ Which made him my first cousin twice removed.



WEDDING.

HEATH — SEVILLE.

The wedding was solemnised at Bridge Street Methodist Church on Wednesday, June 24th, of Miss Irene Heath, daughter of Mrs. Heath, High Street, Lincoln, and Mr. Frank C. Seville, younger son of Mr. and Mrs. F. E. Seville, Beach Hill Drive, Mansfield. The bride, who was given away by her uncle, Mr. G. Heath, of Horn-castle, wore a dusky pink cloque two-piece costume with head-dress to tone and carried a shower bouquet of cream roses. She was attended by three bridesmaids. Miss Peggy Leeson (friend of the bride) who wore a pink two-piece costume and carried a bouquet of red roses. The smaller bridesmaids, Miss Marilyn Ann Seville (niece of the bridegroom) and Miss Sheila Par-kin, of East Kirkby (cousin of the bridegroom) wore dusky pink dresses and wreaths to tone and carried posies of pink and blue cornflowers.

Mr. A. E. Seville (brother) acted as best man. The Rev. T. H. Mallinson, B.A., officiated at the service during which the hymns "Now thank we all our God" and "O Perfect Love" were sung. Mr. F. H. Jessop presided at the organ. A reception was held in the Methodist Schoolroom, Chesterfield Road, following which the couple left for their honeymoon which was spent in Bedfordshire. The bride travelled in a lupin blue georgette dress with navy coat and hat and shoes to match. The couple were the recipients of many useful and valuable presents. Several telegrams of good wishes from friends were received.



Top left — Renie

Top right — Jim

Above — Jim and Renie at their wedding

Left — press report of their wedding

Although I have not found any mention of this wedding in grandad's diary, grandma had a photograph of the wedding of their friends, Arthur and Irene Hill (née Vaughan), in one of her albums. From FreeBMD, it appears that they got married in Basford District in the second quarter of 1942.



Wedding of Irene and Arthur Hill in 1942

There was another family wedding during the war. In February 1942, Cyril's son, Basil, married Hilda Lowe in the district of Bingham to the east of Nottingham. The Parkins may have been unable to attend but grandad noted the wedding in his diary. Basil and Hilda had a son, Simon, in 1943. Grandma and mum visited at the end of 1943 to see the baby. They also visited at other times during the war. For example, in July 1941, mum and her friend, Dorothy Lofthouse, went to stay at Cyril's for a few days' holiday. Another baby was born within the wider family during the war. Len, Olive's son⁵, and his wife Dolly had a son in January 1942, Michael Ian. In grandad's diaries, he is referred to as Michael but, in mum's diaries and other papers, she calls him Ian.

Wartime Weddings

During the second world war, there was an [upsurge in weddings](#) with couples unsure of the future and anxious to formalise their relationships. Weddings were often [simpler and less formal](#) than before and after the war both because of the privations of wartime and the desire to avoid what might be seen as inappropriate ostentation. Weddings often needed to be planned at very short notice to take advantage of a period of leave from the military.

Some brides did manage to wear a traditional white wedding dress, often [reusing](#) one that had been used previously by a relative or friend. However, many did not. They might simply have worn the best dress they had or they may have made something for the wedding with what they had available with the [emphasis on something they could wear again](#). It is interesting to note that three of the brides (Edna, Olive and Irene) in these wartime weddings of family and friends wore traditional white wedding dresses while two (Kath and Renie) did not.

⁵ Grandad's nephew and mum's first cousin

THE typical wartime wedding was planned in a hurry, carried out under difficulties and followed by the briefest honeymoon.

The usual wedding preparations often had to be made at breakneck speed at the last minute. One woman was married in Salford in 1940 while her fiancé's ship was, unexpectedly, in port.

He bought the wedding ring, guessing at its size, and she bought her wedding outfit—a hat, gloves and stockings—on her way to the church, putting them on in the shop. There was no time to notify relatives and friends, so there were "just half a dozen of the ship's company as our guests."

In the early months of the war it was felt to be unpatriotic to have a "showy, white wedding," but later, as rationing and other shortages began to make themselves felt, it became a matter of pride to have a wedding as near to peacetime standards as possible.

This was rarely easy. The church itself might provide reminders of the war, in the shape of boarded-up windows, and, outside, the usual photographer might be lacking, but usually some kind friend managed to record the occasion in amateur snapshots.

As the couple drove away, they would not be pelted with ordinary confetti, as it was illegal to manufacture it, but many offices hoarded the small circles of paper from paper punches for this purpose.

More romantic were real rose petals, and one Surrey woman remembers stripping her rosebeds to give her sister a suitable send-off.

One parish clerk, at Pinner, having warned the wedding guests that to throw rice was now illegal, suggested a practical alternative: let the guests shake hands with the happy pair and give them a whole packet of rice instead!

After the ceremony, the reception. In July, 1940, the long-hallowed tradition of the wedding cake was struck a heavy blow by a ban on making or selling iced cakes.

In many photographs of wartime weddings the cake appears every bit as impressive as in peacetime, a towering, decorated, three-tiered creation. The explanation is simple: that popular wartime device—camouflage—for one could borrow from many bakers a splendid cardboard cover, looking like the most expensive type of traditional iced cake.

Drink was even harder to come by than food, but most people managed to produce a few bottles somehow. This was an occasion when even licensees unbent a little.

Although a wedding dress could often be hired, and girl friends rallied round with loans, many women preferred to be married in their own clothes. No extra coupons were allowed, so the bride often faced an agonising choice: to lavish them on an impressive outfit for the day or keep them for her going-away wardrobe, but most brides managed to look exceedingly smart.

The guests, too, did their best to look smart, though often under difficulties.

Most British brides felt that the wedding ring was still an essential item and even the Government agreed, allowing the manufacture of "utility" nine carat rings, though there were never enough to go round.

*Left – cutting from the work of Norman Longmate "How We Lived Then" giving details of wartime weddings
Below – example of wartime wedding from same cuttings*





There were also a number of deaths of family members and friends during this period although none of them were the direct effects of war. Grandad's diaries often referred to a couple called Tom and Annie. In 1930, they gave grandma and grandad a dinner service as a wedding present and, from 1926, grandma and grandad frequently went to Annie's for tea on a Sunday before going to chapel. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, grandad noted doing many odd jobs for Annie. In 1932, Tom and Annie and grandma's mother and father moved into neighbouring houses in Welbeck Street, numbers 96 and 98.⁶

I confess that initially, I was not completely clear who Tom and Annie were. I had thought for some time that they must be related to grandma and grandad in some way. Anyway, around 3pm on 20 April 1943, Tom was in his garden and suddenly died. I was left with a similar feeling to when I found out that Joe Dovey had died.⁷ Partly, I was sad and, partly, I was frustrated that I did not really know who Tom was and what his connection was to the Parkins. However, following Tom's death, I went through the records of the new Kingsway cemetery and found that he was Thomas Holmes and that he was 64 when he died.

Image Source: [Ashfield District Council](#)

*Extract from new
Kingsway cemetery
register*

I still could not find a record of Tom and Annie getting married but I was continuing to work under the assumption that Annie was related to grandma or grandad in some way, perhaps a Parkin or a Bowler. Reviewing grandad's diaries, I found that, in November 1930, "*Tom, Annie and Mrs Aldridge came for*

⁶ See Chapter 24.

⁷ See [Chapter 10](#).

tea". This made me wonder if Mrs Aldridge was Annie's mother and, armed with this information, I found⁸ that she was Annie E Aldridge and that she and Tom had been married in the second quarter of 1925 in Northampton.⁹

Following Tom's death, it seems that grandma, and possibly grandad, acted as Executor(s) of Tom's will as, only a few days after his death, grandad noted that grandma went to probate concerning Tom's will. In February 1944, grandad noted that they received the deeds of Tom's house from Derby Building Society and, in November 1945, grandad noted buying Tom's house from Annie for £400.¹⁰



Above – Annie, grandma, Tom and mum [woman in deckchair in foreground unknown but mum thought it might be Auntie Rose]
Right – grandma, Tom, mum

Mum's notes with these photos explain that her Auntie Annie and Uncle Tom (who was not a "real" uncle) lived next door to grandma's parents in Welbeck Street, Kirkby in Ashfield.

The Parkins were also friendly with the Greens, who lived next door to them in Station Street.¹¹ It may be that there had been some business arrangement between the families initially as, in June 1919, grandad noted that his father had gone to Hucknall¹² to see "Green" about "Station Street property".¹³

⁸ On [FreeBMD](#).

⁹ I think part of the problem in trying to track them down was that there were two significant Annie's in grandad's diary - this one and grandad's sister-in-law, James' wife, who emigrated to Canada – and I had problems identifying them both! I also had records for two Toms and a Tommy. There was a Tom who worked with grandad from when he started at his father's workshop. There was also a Tommy for whom grandad did various odd jobs in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Also, in June 1925, grandad wrote "went to Tommy's wedding party". I therefore concluded that these were all probably the same Tom, not least because the dates of the wedding party fitted with the dates when Tom and Annie were married. However, I found out later that Tom Holmes had worked with grandma's father Charles Cirket on the railway and that he boarded with them for some time. This means that while some of the references to Tommy in grandad's diary might relate to him it may have been a different Tom working with grandad in the workshop.

¹⁰ Around £12,000 today. In 1960, grandad sold the house for £1,735, around £28,000 today. According to [Zoopla](#), the property is worth around £135,000 today and was last sold in 1998 for £32,500. I do not know why grandad bought the house from Annie. Initially, I thought it was because she moved elsewhere after Tom's death. However, this is not the case as she continued to live at 98 Welbeck Street until 1957 when she moved to a council flat. Perhaps Annie needed the cash following Tom's death. Presumably, Annie then rented the house from grandma and grandad but I don't know how much rent was charged.

¹¹ I thought this was next door to the shop at 72 Station Street. However, in the press notice when Beryl died, their address is given as 17 Station Street. Grandad's diaries refer to a shop in 15 Station Street on which he paid a deposit and then sold to Ray in March 1945. 15 Station Street is now a [kebab shop](#) and 17 is an [opticians](#). But, I also found evidence (see [Chapter 65](#)) that Mrs Green ran a hairdressers at 70 Station Street so perhaps they did live next-door to 72.

¹² This tallies with the notice of Beryl's death where she is described as a native of Hucknall.

¹³ I am not sure what the nature of this visit was. It seems grandad's father bought a property in Station Street in April 1919 for £1,600. I assume this was number 15 that grandad later owned. It appears that grandad's father also rented the property at number 72 from the

Whatever the business arrangements, the families became friends. For example, in 1933, they went away to Skegness together. Also that year, Mrs Green cut grandad's hair managing to cut grandad's ear which he considered a "great joke".¹⁴ As was his habit, grandad did practical jobs for them. It may have been the Greens' son, Cliff(ord)¹⁵ who got grandad interested in birds and aviaries. In 1938, Cliff lent grandad his aviary for as long as he wanted it.

The Greens also had a daughter, Beryl who was around ten years older than mum with whom mum recalled playing. There are photos of them playing together. In May 1938, grandad noted that Beryl had pushed him into a pond! Anyway, in July 1941, Beryl died. Mum was sent to Tom's for a week and, during that time, Beryl was buried. Mum, who was seven at the time, was not involved in the funeral and it appears that no-one explained to her what had happened. It must have seemed to her that one minute her friend was there and the next she was gone. She wrote on the back of one of the photographs, "*Beryl lived next door to us at Station Street. As you can see, she is Mongoloid.*¹⁶ *She died but I have no idea when or how. It wasn't talked about in those days*". Among her papers, there was a newspaper cutting about Beryl's death. This shows that not only did grandma and grandad attend the funeral but so did Eva, Arthur and family (Olive and Roy) and Olive, John and their son Len and his wife Dolly.¹⁷



Above - Mum and Beryl playing together
Right - Press article concerning Beryl's death

Young Girl's Funeral.
 The death occurred on Saturday, after an illness of 18 months, of Miss Beryl May Green, age 16 years, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Green, of 17, Station Street, East Kirkby. Deceased was a native of Hucknall, but had resided at Kirkby for the past 12 years. The interment took place on Monday in the New Cemetery, East Kirkby, prior to which a service conducted by the Rev. L. I. Butler (Vicar of St. John's Church, Annesley Woodhouse), was held in St. Thomas' Church. The mourners were—Mother and Father; Clifford, brother; Mrs. Hawksworth, Mrs. Harris, Miss L. Green, Miss P. Green, Mr. R. Green and Mr. F. Bodle, uncles and aunts; Mrs. Collingwood, Miss D. Gullor, Mrs. M. Wilkinson and Miss M. Stuart, friends. Floral tributes were sent by Mam and Dad; Clifford; Auntie Lottie, Cousin Annie and Family; Auntie Lily, Cousins Jack and Joan; Uncle Reuben, Aunt Polly and Bessie; Uncle John, Aunt Edith and Gladys; Auntie Mabel, Uncle Al, June and Fay; Uncle Frank and Dorothy; Auntie Florrie, Uncle Tom and Gordon; Auntie Lizzie and Uncle Arthur; Cousins Ivy and Valerie; Auntie and Uncle Will Beardall; Auntie Ethel, Uncle Will and Frank; Cousins Denny and Harry; Auntie Lois and Uncle Arthur; Doctor and Mrs. Waller; Mrs. F. T. Durance; Mrs. H. V. Allsop; Mr. and Mrs. R. Collingwood; Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Parkin; Mr. and Mrs. Stirland; Mrs. T. Wightman; Mr. and Mrs. Schofield; Mr. and Mrs. A. Evans and Family; Mr. and Mrs. I. W. Smith; Len and Dolly; Dot, Minnie, Maisie and Nellie; Mrs. Slay; Miss N. Ball; Sheila and Fred; Miriam; Peter Cirkett; Joyce; and Mrs. Rush and Billy Hall.

Greens but this pre-dated the property purchase as grandad was living there in 1914. Perhaps grandad's father wanted to discuss something either about the property next-door to where the Greens lived (#15) or the property he was renting from them (#72).

¹⁴ I confess to being unsure what the joke is here and, from what I recall of grandad, I am not sure he would have found this funny! It is also a little odd as Mrs Green was a practicing hairdresser.

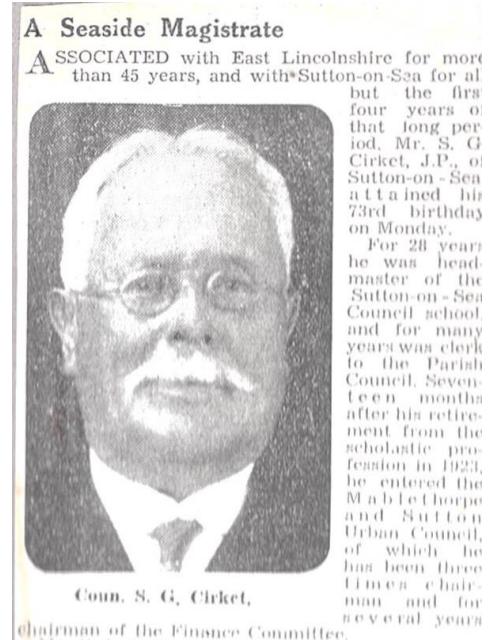
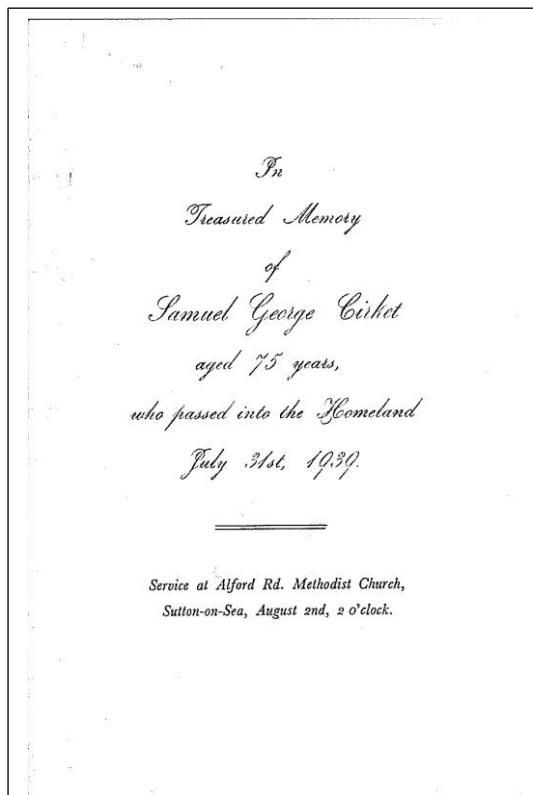
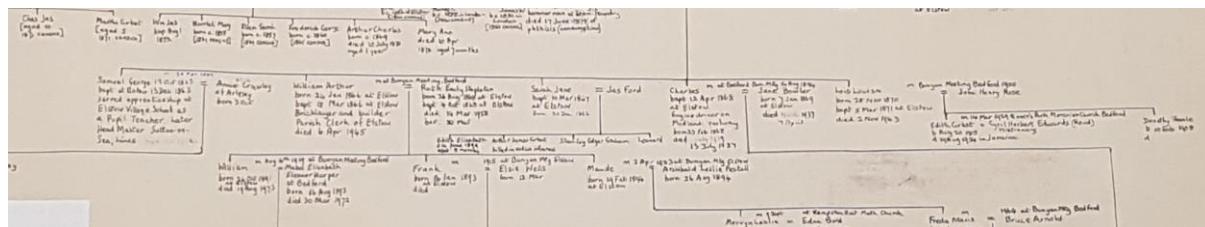
¹⁵ The press notice of Beryl's death names Clifford as her brother.

¹⁶ Mum used this term to refer to what is now called Down syndrome. I have retained the term despite its offensive and misleading nature as this is what she wrote and it was a commonly used term at that time.

¹⁷ Well at least it shows that they gave flowers. I assume they also attended as "friends".

Two of grandma's paternal uncles died during this period. Grandad noted that grandma went to Elstow in April 1945 to attend her "Uncle Will's" funeral. Based on the Cirket family tree (see below), William Arthur Cirket was the second of grandma's father's four siblings. He was born in Elstow in January 1866 so was 79 when he died. He married Ruth Emily Stapleton (grandma's Aunt Ruth). He was a bricklayer and builder, and he was also Elstow Parish Clerk.

I also found among mum's papers a note of a funeral service for Samuel George Cirket following his death on 31 July 1939 aged 75. I did not however find any note of his death in grandad's diaries. The funeral was held at Alford Road Methodist Church in Sutton-on-Sea on 2 August 1939. Reviewing grandad's diary, it seems the family did go to Lincolnshire and Mablethorpe from 6 to 10 August 1939. Given Mablethorpe's proximity to Sutton-on-Sea, it seems likely that this trip was connected to Samuel's death. Samuel was grandma's father's eldest brother having been born in October 1863. He was a teacher and was a headteacher in Sutton-on-Sea.¹⁸ According to a newspaper article among mum's papers, on the occasion of his 73rd birthday, he was also a magistrate and had been both chairman and clerk for the local council. He had been a Methodist local preacher from the age of 22 and had been county president of the Local Preachers' Mutual Aid Society.



Top – extract from Cirket family tree that was given to mum by Alan Cirket in 1999
Above – note of Samuel Cirket's death Above right – newspaper article dated approx. 1937

¹⁸ I confirmed in an online article that he was a teacher and was a headteacher in Sutton-on-Sea although the site is no longer accessible and his name was mis-recorded as Samuel G Cricket!