RK 315 (1-7)
UI SI B10

August 16th 2023 Recording of Lynda Coleman (Lynda Bell)

I'm Lynda, Lynda Bell I was in those days and I was born on 20th September 1943 and I lived at 15 Merrylees Road, The Heath, until I got married on 3rd September 1966. My Dad and Mum were Fred and Fan Bell. I was the youngest of their three children, having a sister June, who was 13 when I was born and a brother Colin, who was 6.

What was life like on Newbold Heath?

Well, I knew everybody on the Heath, we all did. All the children played together, which was lovely with all ages. We were very friendly with Mum and Dad and we were very friendly with most of the people around. I'd got an Aunty, Mum's sister, who lived about three houses away, Aunty Daisy, who used to be the organist at the Methodist Church for years and we were very close to them. On days when they did the washing, which we called Wash Day, which was usually on a Monday, Mum used to get her sandwich ready and perhaps a packet of crisps or something and go round to Aunty Daisy's and have lunch or Aunty Daisy used to come back to Mum – they were very friendly. Yes, we knew most people. Some of them we called Aunty and Uncle whether they were Aunty and Uncle or not. Next door neighbours were Uncle Tom and Aunty Sally. Yes, it was really lovely.
I should say that it was idyllic living on the Heath as a child.
We girls were all friends together really, mostly girls I think who stuck together. One particular lovely memory is at Christmas when we used to get presents in our pillow cases – we all got presents in a pillow case and we used to drag these pillow cases from house to house and show each other what we'd got in the pillow cases. We were all familiar with each other's houses because we were in and out of each other's houses all the time. I've got to say it was like one big family really.

Were some of the houses bigger or smaller than others – was that noticeable?

Yes, some of them were – not many really. We lived in a row of four and they were quite biggish houses really. Then there were two semis opposite where some girl friends lived in both houses. Then the Parker family had quite a big house on Bagworth Road with a lovely garden and swings and things in the garden with a cherry tree and plum tree that we all used to go down and pick and eat when we were down there. That was a nice place to be. And then a lot of the time we played in the street.

Pillow cases at Christmas? What did they contain?
Always a tin of toffees. Probably Birds Toffee and they would have like a cat or a dog – they were sort of small square ones and they had cats or dogs or something like that – always had that.
Always a Rupert book I had. We used to get a bit of fruit and a probably game, a board game. The bigger things did not go in the pillow case. On year I had a little pram and a doll. We were very much into dolls I've got to say! Perhaps get one or two things from Auntys – we didn't get a lot. Mainly got presents from parents and close relatives we didn't usually get presents from neighbours or other children.

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Food at Christmas

Well, we always had a cockerel, a capon you'd call them now, they weren't caponised then but we'd always have a cockerel. With June being married to a farmer (Bernard Bates) as well very often we had cockerels from their farm.

My Mum always used to do a ham and she always used to make her own pork pies – but they weren't pork pies like now – it was jelly, pork bones and things with lovely pastry on the top. I didn't like them but my Dad loved them so we used to have that

Always trifle, and she always made a Christmas cake. Vegetables off the garden

Very often we had a house full at Christmas. There were five of us, Dad's sister who hadn't got any children and her husband and then of course when June got married and had children we had all them in the house as well. One year, I remember when Mr Clinton, the schoolteacher, who many people will know, came to live in the village and to work at the school. Aunty worked at the school too, Mrs Johnston, who used to come to us for Christmas, Dad's sister. She asked if he and his wife could come – and his son could come for their Christmas dinner as well. So they came and it was – oh, well honestly I can't tell you what it was like with Mr Clinton coming – I hardly knew him – he was my teacher and he was there for his Christmas dinner! Anyway we got through.

Mum was like that - anybody and everybody - she cooked a lovely dinner for everybody.

We'd never all got a seat We sat on the arms of the chairs – things like that.

Was Mr Clinton the head?

Mr Cadle was the head – and he was the head there for all of my time at Newbold school.

Is that the Mr Cadle of Cadle Street?

He is the Mr Cadle of Cadle Street. And then he left to go into the ministry, he left to be a Church of England vicar, but he was the headmaster at the school. Most of the youngsters at the Heath, well I should say all of them went to Newbold school at some time or another at varying ages

Can you remember your first day?

Well, I can remember my first morning because Mr Len Wilkinson who kept the coal yard, had got 3 children at the school so he used to take all the Heath children down to the school in his car, he made more than one journey at least two perhaps sometimes three journeys – he used to pack us all in this car and take us down. But I can remember, I don't know if it was the first day or when I realised where I was going, I didn't want to go to school and my Mum had a bit of difficulty getting me into the car. So once or twice she got out her bike and she walked me to school and then rode the bike back. But yes, Mr Wilkinson got most of us to school. There wasn't any transport at those times of day. I don't know when the Browns Blue started coming through the Heath but Browns Blue buses were the buses that came through the Heath and they went to Hinckley.

What was school like?

Oh, school was lovely really. I didn't want to go because I was a bit of a home bird and I didn't want to leave my mum basically. But once I got used to it and got a bit older, I loved it and it was lovely. It was a really lovely school. There weren't all that many, compared with the way the school is now. It was the old buildings – because it's been built onto – you can tell which are the old buildings. There used to be a hall in the middle and then four classrooms around the hall. And I can remember you used to start at one end of the classroom and as we got older and we got assessed and things like that - we moved round the class. There were separate classes – there were about four classes -

different years had different classes. Boys and girls were together. I can remember Mr Cadle of course, and then Mr Clinton came. There was a lady, Miss Wilkins, she lived in Leicester. She took us for netball I remember her. And then a Welsh teacher, Mr Morgan came and his family, they came from Wales.

What did you do in school – how was the day organised?
Well of course you'd be learning the alphabet and how to write. Always the tables, chanting the tables. Learning to read of course.
In the afternoon when Mr Clinton was there, he used to read us part of a book, as a serial. I used to love it, I used to love that time it would probably be about half an hour at the end of the day and he used to sit and read from this book and the we had a prayer. We always had a prayer at the end of the school lesson. He used to dismiss us with a prayer.

School dinners
School dinners were lovely. They'd got a canteen. My Auntie Ellen used to be the head cook and Mrs Baker and Mrs Ramsell used to be the helpers. And when they were either on holiday or ill, my Mum always used to go and stand in. And they used to have joints of meat, whole joints and it used to come into the hall onto a table and we all used to have to stand in a queue with our plates and Mrs Baker, Nellie Baker, she used to carve off the meat and put a slice onto the plate and then we used to go round and get the vegetables. The meals were lovely.
Mr Cadle used to sometimes have special things like rice pudding and things like that - which we didn't get but we did used to get nice puddings – jam tart and custard and sponges and custard and things like that. Yes, we were well looked after.

Was there any punishment for bad behaviour?
I can't remember anything specific
Mr Clinton was very strict with the boys.

Did you have games?
We had a team - we had netball team and a rounders team –and there are photos of these.
Oh football, the boys used to play football. Especially with Mr Clinton because he used to be a footballer. I'm trying to think which team he played for, I think it was a team in the north, I don't know if it was Burnley or somewhere – I can't quite remember but he was an ex- footballer and there was a really good football team at the school. And we used to go and play at other schools, I can remember going into Leicester once with Miss Wilkins. She actually took us to her home. She lived with her Mum and Dad and she took us all back to her home. And we played netball at a school in Leicester. So, we used to go around.
How did you travel into Leicester?
Do you know I can't remember – I think we must have gone in on the bus.
The buses went to Leicester – they went along Barlestone Road, Barlestone to Newbold Road, they didn't come through the Heath so we used to have to walk up to the top for those.So if you wanted to go to Leicester you went there. If you wanted to go to Coalville, Browns Blue came through the village. One way was Coalville – they started in Coalville and ended up in Hinckley. They went through Kirkby Mallory then, Earl Shilton and Barwell to Hinckley. So it was pretty good actually for getting to places.

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Did you have a car as a family?
Yes, when - not until my brother was old enough to drive because my Dad didn't drive.
He got Colin a car to drive the family around in – which when Colin left home went with Colin!
So that was quite nice really because one particular time my sister June was in Nottingham City Hospital with a slipped disc because she was a nurse there and she had fallen and hurt her back, she was in plaster for quite some time so on a Sunday we used to go off to Nottingham in the car to see her, which I used to really get really excited about, I loved it. My Dad used to like fishing and my brother liked fishing and sometimes on a Sunday afternoon we used to go to Market Bosworth canal and fish along the bank and take sandwiches for tea and I was always excited about that as well.

Sunday School Treats
Sunday schools used to have a 'Treats'– go to the Treats.
Those who went to the Methodists went to somewhere like Billing Aquadrome and the Church of England where I went, went to Trentham Gardens and one of the zoos, Dudley Zoo. I always wanted to go with the Methodists – I'd got more friends in the Methodist.I used to like the Treats.

You are musical – how did you learn your music?
Well, I had piano lessons. Mum made sure I had piano lessons because she wanted me to play
Did you have a piano?
Yes, we'd got a piano.
Where would you have gone for your piano lessons?
Well at one time, there were several of us went to Barlestone, Mrs Darby her name was and she was quite a good piano teacher so we used to have lessons with her and do exams, she used to put us in for exams. When she finished there was a lady from the village Ivy ---------, she used to come and give me lessons but by that time I was beginning to get to the stage where I didn't like practicing much – I'd rather be out and you know I didn't really go beyond stage 4 with exams. Much to my mum's disappointment.
Did your Mum play?
No. She sang. She'd got a lovely contralto voice my Mum, and Aunty Daisy used to be a soprano, her sister, and they used to – Mum used to go round there and in fact quite a few people when I was very young so I can't remember who they were - they had sort of like a concert party and they used to practice at Aunty Daisy's and they used to gather round the piano and sing. It was lovely, it was really lovely.

Traffic
Well, there was traffic but it used to – when it did come down our street you'd got quite – it came down the top bend so you'd quite a way to realise – we didn't get many cars we used to get pit lorries, coal lorries. They used to come down Bagworth Road and they used to come down ours.
I mean, because there was a Merrylees Pit so they would come down our road and there was a Bagworth Pit. My Dad worked at Ellistown Pit.

Employment
There were quite a few miners at the Heath. Some worked at the Coal Yard for Wilkinsons, my brother worked in the Garage. There were several pits around there was a pit at Bagworth My Dad worked at Ellistown. There were two at Ellistown, Ellistown South and Ellistown Pit. My Dad worked

at Ellistown Pit for most of his life really. There was a Merrylees Pit and Nailstone Pit, so there were plenty of mines around.

I think the Heath was built as miners' cottages, was it?

Possibly, possibly it was. I don't know really because we've seen the plans of some houses on Merrylees Road before they were built- somebody's got some plans. They belonged actually to a Miss Bell (not a relative) but these houses were built, Miss Bell put those into being but I don't know specifically why they were made. Why they were built. As I say there were quite a few miners they worked at various pits.

How did they travel to the pit?

Well first of all when I was little my Dad used to go on his bike. He'd start work at six get to Ellistown for six, finish at two and bike home again. They didn't have pithead baths in those days and my Dad used to come, well all the miners used to come home in their black. All their clothes and their face, everything was black coal dust and of course we didn't have a bathroom or anything like that so it was washing off the coal dust at the kitchen sink before he had a hot meal that my Mum had cooked for him when he got home. But then when they built the pithead baths of course they all had baths at the pits then and somewhere along the line there was a bus, a pit bus as well so Dad used to catch the pit bus then.

Do you know of any other occupations?

Well, of course there was the coal yard; so my sister before she went to be a nurse worked in the office of the coal yard. It was at the Heath and it was about the first on the right on Bagworth Road when you came from Newbold. It had got the house and a big shed, a garage I suppose, where the lorries were and they used to bag coal and distribute coal. So, I don't know how many of the people at the Heath worked there – I know my sister did but of course there would be people from Newbold coming up and working there. Len Wilkinson ran that, who was Harold Wilkinson's brother. Harold had got the garage further up on Merrylees Road and my brother did part of his apprenticeship there. I think some people may have worked in the factories – there were a lot of boot and shoe factories around in Barwell, Earl Shilton and Hinckley and that sort of thing. One of my best friend's Dad, he worked at Tubes. Yes, there were a various ...

That was work done mainly by men – what about the women?

The women? Well, people in my Mum's age group weren't really – didn't go to work. My Mum did before we were born but when she had the children she didn't go to work especially when I was born because my Mum was 38. So she was, and one or two of the Mums – but those in the younger bracket, say like ten years younger or something – I was the youngest in the family but those whose parents were perhaps ten years younger when they had their children – Mrs Hardy, my friends mum, she used to work up at Market Bosworth I think, at Market Bosworth Hospital as did Mrs Parker. Mrs Parker worked in the laundry up there. Most of my friends, from what I can remember – their Mums didn't go to work. My Mum went to help at the school when anyone was ill – when she was needed

Were all the families – two parent families?

I remember the family next door but one to us – he was a miner and he was killed at the mine and she'd got a daughter and she brought that daughter up. But she was older than me – she was on her own. I don't think I can specifically remember anybody else.

The mention of someone being killed down the mine – was that a concern – were you worried?
Well, I think if you had anybody who worked down the mine there was always an underlying worry. I used to worry about my Dad terribly – I did.

Were there many accidents that you can recall?
I can't recall any that involved the Heath. No I can't recall anybody but I know that there were people who were killed in the mine but it didn't – there was nothing that affected me or affected people at the Heath during my childhood. But I was always worried about it – yes, I was.
Do you know my Dad used to take his sandwiches and of course they were down the mine from 6 o'clock till 2 – they never came up. The odd time – he would get up and make his own sandwiches – I don't know what time in the morning – if he'd got to be there at 6 – on his bike. But he'd get up and he'd make his own sandwiches or perhaps even the night before and if ever he forgot them and left them at home – I couldn't settle all day. It would make me cry because he hadn't got any sandwiches. He didn't do it very often but he did it once or twice that I remember. And I used to be thinking – how can we get me Dad his sandwiches – but of course you couldn't – there was no way. I was a bit of a worrier as a kid!

Bit of chat ..

Did people go to things? Was there a cinema?

Yes, there was a cinema. There were two, one in Barlestone which my Mum took me to. And Newbold, the Newbold one was in the Miners Welfare. A man used to come, I think his name was Samson – he used to come and put on a film and I suppose they had a screen – and he used to bring Wagon Wheels and Vimto. And my brother used to have to take me so he used to go in and sit me down somewhere then he used to go and sit with his friends. This used to be one night in the week. They were the cinemas – Barlestone cinema was like a cinema. (Conversation where it was – near where Sports Hall is now)
There were cinemas in Coalville – there were 2 cinemas in Coalville. The Rex and the Regal.
My Dad trained to be a deputy Shot Firer at the pit – the deputy was sort of like I suppose in charge of the shift and he was also in charge of setting the charges to blow the coal up – all to do with getting the coal up. I think that was a worry. On Saturday nights sometimes, I don't know if it was anything to do with the unions, because they all had to join the union but of course then the unions came in – my Dad started in the mine when he was either 13 or 15 – when the unions came in – it was a good thing – they were needed. My Dad always used to say the unions were a really good thing, absolutely brilliant – we needed them. In those days it was very important.
So, I don't know whether it was a union meeting or whether he used to go as part of his course – so occasionally on a Saturday he'd have to go and do that so we'd all go up, Mum and Dad and me – you can tell I was spoilt can't you! June and Colin were older of course. So, we used to go up to Coalville and we used to go to the cinema. Then when we came out it would be perhaps half and hour or an hour before the last bus came home and we used to go and have a supper somewhere. I think there was a place that did pies and gravy and that sort of thing. We used to go to that and then come home. It wasn't until I got to be a teenager that I got fed up with the Heath because nothing

happened and there was nowhere to go – but like I say it was idyllic. If you were in a happy family -it was idyllic – it really was.

Was the Heath quite distinct from the village? Did you see yourselves as a little community or did you see yourselves as part of the village?

Both. Because, I mean we went to the village school so we had friends in the village. I mean while we were at Newbold school they started building Dragon Lane estate. When we came home from school and all the builders had gone home, we used to go and have a little run through the houses – or through the building site. Then of course all these children started coming into the school then.

Health

There were Newbold doctors of course. I didn't go to the Newbold doctors. Dr Kelly was the main doctor there. The Desford doctor – Dr Thomas. We either went to the surgery at Desford – not very often – but he had a surgery that used to be in the first cottage after the church (St James) and you didn't have to make an appointment – you used to go and sit in this room – and it always had a roaring fire in the winter – you used to sit there – you'd be rosy cheeked when you went in. You used to sit round this room and then he would call you in. He was our family doctor and if I went to the doctor he would want to know how June and Colin were. He knew everybody in the family. Then we'd got the District Nurse of course. She used to come up on her bike to the Heath from Newbold. Well, she came to me once with a septic finger – I don't know if it was a whitlow or what – but I'd got a septic finger and it was all in the end of my finger and she came. She stuck a whatsaname in the kettle – a needle in the kettle- and she pricked it and burst it. I can remember that ever so well. But she would come for things like dressings, dressings for people and things like that.

Childbirth

I was born at Market Bosworth hospital that was in the grounds of Market Bosworth Park – it was Market Bosworth Park hospital. That's where I was born. Babies were born in people's front rooms, like Lynn (Airey) was born. She was born in her Grandma's front room. I remember Lynn being born. I remember my cousin's wife – she had a baby – but she went somewhere to have it. I don't know where she went to have it. I didn't know many children being born in front rooms – we were the younger ones.