

W. SPENCER

Walter Sidney (Sid) Rowett

Sid was born on October 23rd 1907 at Potterhanworth, the first of three children to Rose and Herbert Rowett.

His father was a tenant farmer and the family moved around quite a bit. They certainly lived in Brattleby for part of his childhood as he attended Brattleby school, which was the last house on the left, going up the hill. They also lived at Saxilby for a while which was where he finished school at the age of 13. He was a bright lad but hard times made it necessary that he help his father on the farm. Even when he was at school, during certain times of the season, the children were more likely to go out and help in the fields than to go to school; it was expected then.

Memories from earlier years include all the family listening through headphones to the one valve wireless set, made by Les Wiles of Aisthorpe, 'one earpiece each'. Also Sid and his brother Ted both had mouth organs, with which they generated quite a sound on occasions!

After school, he went 'into service' at Dean's farm, working with their horses. He also worked at the Forge in Lincoln for about 18 months but hated being cooped up inside a factory. From there, he returned back to work on his father's farm for a while which was now in Brattleby. Can anyone remember the village shop run by Mrs. Burr?

One of the things Sid talked about was the 'Cammeringham Lights' (or some people thought of it as the 'Will o' the Wisp'). According to local folklore, the 'Cammeringham Lights' were marsh gases that bubbled out in wet seasons and spontaneously ignited, then slowly burnt out. (Or was it imagined on the walk/cycle home after a good night at the local pub in Ingham!)

In January 1938, Sid married his first wife Marjorie and they moved into a house on Back Lane in April that year (where George Brader later lived). He also started to work at the quarry at Ingham in the late summer of 1938. It was hard labour, manually hacking the stone out, but good pay. Initially he worked with Steve Castledine until the latter retired. ← Sammy!

He served in the army for a while during the war but was discharged early when Marjorie became very ill with TB. Sadly, she died from the disease.

During the war, like so many families in the villages, they had someone billeted with them. She was a lady whose husband was in the RAF. She was a very big lady and Sid had to clear the ornaments away from around the house as she used to sweep them off accidentally due to her large size!

Guy Gibson of the Dambusters was almost certainly billeted with the Wright family at Brattleby Hall during the war too, due to some of the descriptions in his book 'Enemy ~~Sides~~ Ahead'. (Sid was fairly sure that he was).

Coast

Sid was on the home guard for a while and would sometimes get called out when planes crashed. Once, he and another chap were flat on their stomachs at a crashed

plane, trying to see if the pilot was still alive when a rat ran over his leg. He said it was a horrible feeling.

He went back to work at the quarry at Ingham and worked there for quite a while. He married Gwen in June 1952, with whom he had three children. Gwen, who came from Leicester, was used to life in the city but soon adapted to country life, making preserves and pickles from the produce of the garden and joining the Mother's Union and the local WI.

Life in Brattleby village in the 50s was quite different then. In those days, most of the houses in the village were still part of the estate, owned by the Wright family of Brattleby Hall. The lady of the Hall was very good though and when anyone in the village had a baby, she would take clothes round for the baby.

It was common to keep a pig in a sty at the bottom of your garden. Sid and some of the villagers had a 'Pig Club'. When a villager decided to kill their pig, it was a big event and lots of people would come to help. They would salt some of the pork, make brawn, pork pies etc. Literally everything was used but the squeak. The members of the Pig Club would all get a share of the pig. It was all a bit of a shock to poor Gwen but her Aunt from Ingham took pity on her and came over to take charge of the proceedings in the kitchen.

There was still no electricity in the village in the early 50s and people would have a range with an open fire to cook on. Even when electricity was put in the village, Nanna Brader, the elderly lady who lived next door still cooked on her old range. She would always eat her pudding first rather than her dinner. It was a habit from when she was younger and times were hard. Meat was expensive and it was cheaper to fill up on pudding first.

The house that the family lived in had an earth and tile floor downstairs. If you went down in the night and lit a lamp, the floor would be alive with beetles scurrying around. The loo was in a hut down the garden. There was a large metal bucket under a wooden seat which had to be emptied every few days by digging a hole in the garden! Sid used to joke that he grew wonderful cabbages!

Although working in the quarry was a job out in the fresh air, Sid knew that the extremely hard physical labour had taken its toll on many of his predecessors in the quarry so he left sometime during the 1950s and went to work for local business man Sid Twell.

Mr. Twell owned a scrap yard at Ingham and Sid helped with work in the scrap yard. Sometimes they would drive long distances to fetch scrap vehicles; even fetching a London bus once. At other times, they would deliver scrap metal to the steel works at Scunthorpe for part of the steel making process. He also did decorating and gardening for the Twells.

As well as the work for Twells, he became relief postman for Scampton, Aisthorpe, Brattleby and Cammeringham when the normal postman became ill. He soon took the job on permanently and carried on doing it for most of the next 20 years! Although he officially retired from the Post Office in 1972 when he was 65, he continued as relief

postman and spent more time doing the rounds than not, finally being forced to retire properly at the age of 79!

Amongst his other roles he was church warden at Brattleby Church for many years and spent many spring and summer evenings mowing the churchyard. He was also grave-digger for the parishes when required, school governor at Scampton school, a member of Brattleby Parish Council and of the Parochial Church Council and a Special Constable. As a Special Constable, amongst other requests, he would always be asked to go out on Mischief Night and Bonfire Night. He was also called out once or twice to watch out for some people who were stealing poultry.

He was on the committee that organised the building of the Village Hall at Aisthorpe and was one of the founder members of the BSA Club at Aisthorpe. For several years, he also organised an annual Whist Drive in aid of the Friends of the Lincoln Hospitals.

In his spare(!) time, he was a keen tennis player when he was younger. Later in life, he became a cricket umpire and then was scorer for the Aisthorpe Cricket team. He was also a keen domino player and was part of the Aisthorpe Club team for many years.

In his eventual retirement, his main interest was his large garden, which he had always somehow managed to keep tidy, even during his busy working life. He always had a beautiful garden of flowers and grew more than enough vegetables to feed the family. Any visitors would go away laden with produce, which included soft fruits in the summer, Bramley Apples in the Autumn or eggs from the chickens he kept. He also kept bees until 2001 and passers by would call in to buy some traditional Lincolnshire honey. (It wasn't quite so popular though the year the honey had a greenish tinge to it – Sid thought that the bees must have been getting their pollen from beans that year!) He was a firm believer that the fact that he'd had so many bee stings over the years kept rheumatism at bay.

Sid's active life finally slowed down in the year 2000 due to the development of bone cancer in his leg and really came to a halt in 2001 when he fell in the garden and broke his leg. It was extremely frustrating for him not to be able to get about and especially not to be able to do his beloved garden.

He was admitted to hospital in the September of 2001 with serious heart problems but celebrated his 94th Birthday in the October at the County Hospital. He used to joke with the nurses that he didn't know what a young man like him was doing there and he was very proud of the fact that he was the oldest person on the ward!

Sadly his health declined steadily during 2002 but he was able to celebrate his Golden Wedding with Gwen on June 21st, a month before he passed away on 22nd July 2002.

Gwen soldiered on without him, despite having suffered two strokes but sadly also died on April 5th 2004.

