Interview 16 took place at 67 High Street, Roade on Tuesday March 8th, 2011 at 2-00pm

Interviewee - Elizabeth Dyke (nee Hawkins) who was born in Syresham on 11th June 1942.

Interviewers – Carol Denton and Sheila Fitchett

Explanation about why she was called “Bet”.

Father one of 14 children and mother one of 10. Many relatives whom they do not know

Visited Syresham couple of years ago. Saw photos of the house E lived until she was 2. Also able to visualize where photo of the three sisters was taken. Jessie 13 months older and Julia 4 years older than Elizabeth. John was 18 months younger than E..

Left Syresham in 1944 when employer Mr Thompson moved to Hyde Farm. Hawkins family moved into The Old Forge in High Street, Roade. Mr and Mrs Thompson moved same day into Hyde Farm. Elizabeth and family joined them shortly afterwards.

Father was a farm worker employed by Mr Thompson from aged 12.

Elizabeth remembers Hyde Farm very cold in winter, freedom playing in fields, played in dovecote, not many toys, but real frogs and toads, ghastly outside loo, pumped water, black range,oven, kettle always on top, lovely toast and dripping, lots of bread and milk sometimes sweetened with honey. Winters very cold – warmed bricks in oven, wrapped them in brown paper then a cloth and put in bed. Each child claimed their own brick. Did not want anyone else to have “their’s”.

Father kept four pigs to supplement his wage, Mr Thompson let him have a pig sty. Two pigs to market, two to eat. Jack Goode the butcher slaughtered them. Elizabeth hid under table when he came. Father explained that the pigs were going to be killed. Children sat in huge window and watched. Pigs shot. Strung up, Gutted. Fire lit. Pigs singed. Does not know how they were cured. Kept in father’s workshop then later taken into house. The Milking Parlour had meat hanging in it.

Elizabeth gives a very interesting description of the milking parlour and Mrs Thompson’s procedure. Mr Hawkins milked cows twice a day. Thinks there were two cows. .Does not think milk was sold. Thinks with Hawkins family of six plus Mr and Mrs Thompson that there was none spare to sell. Milk puddings, egg custards, bread and milk. Father busy looking after cows, pigs and the farm horses which worked in the fields – haymaking etc..

Can remember the fantastic threshing tackle arriving - big red threshing machine - very exciting. Other farmers and lots of people came to help. Mother helped but not Mrs Thompson. Rats ran out. They were hit over the head. They had Jack Russell dogs as well for the job. Mr Thompson had two sheep dogs. He adored them. He hated his wife’s cats. They were wild. She especially loved Pinkie who sat on her lap. Mr T teased his wife about her cats. Mrs T also had a parrot called Polly.

The Hawkins family moved to Grafton Road during a bad winter, possibly in 1947 although Mr Hawkins continued to work on the farm. They moved their belongings in the farm cart. Father turned the cart upside down and the horse(s) pulled it along the road thus clearing away the snow.

Elizabeth longed to have a horse ride but only John was allowed this privilege. The sisters sometimes pushed baby John round the garden in his big pram and tipped him out.. The dovecote was their play house. They did not realise that it was probably unsafe. Father worked hard. 24/7 plus he dug the Thompson’s garden. Understood that the wall round the garden was the wall of the monastery – may or may not be true. The wall is still there. Remembers going into the garden with Mrs T. Lovely autumn crocuses. Plum trees, pear and apple tree. Pond at bottom of hill (now enlarged. Very shallow then. Could paddle in it. Collected water cress along the stream. Pretty flowers along the side of the stream. A man in a wheelchair came to see them. He gave them a sweetie. Thinks it was Mr Pinkard who incidentally lived here in the house where the interview is taking place.

The village grocer from Syresham came in his van to the farm. It was like being visited by old friends. There were no washing facilities on the van and the same knife was used for the butter, cheese or whatever. Just a wipe down on a sleeve between uses. Broken biscuits in tin. Mrs Hawkins bought some of them.

During the last year before the Thompson’s moved to 71 High Street (next to the George) Mr Hawkins often had to wait for his wages. Elizabeth believes that Mr Thompson had not made much money farming that year. She remembers raised voices when Mrs Thompson’s brother William visited.

Hyde Farm was sold and in 1956, she was 14 at the time, the Thompson’s moved to 71 High Street, next to the George. Elizabeth moved with them because, as they had no phone, she was needed to summon help should the need arise.

The Thompson’s were old for their age although Elizabeth thinks that Duncan was only seventy or younger at that time. It was quite an experience for Elizabeth. She had her own room for the first time. The house was very quiet in contrast to a family home of six. Routine carried on from Hyde Farm days to have tea, sit down and listen to the Archers. Mrs T also listened to religious programmes and wrote a lot. Elizabeth went to school from their house.

Elizabeth says she was still an inexperienced child when Duncan Thompson died. Mrs Thompson was screaming from the stairs, Elizabeth told to fetch the doctor. Dr Clements arrived. E was then ordered to fetch her mother so she ran off to do this. Mrs T could not accept that Duncan was dead and Elizabeth could not understand it either. The adults were saying “he had gone” but she knew that he was still upstairs and had not yet gone in the ambulance ordered to take him to a hospital appointment. Mrs T devastated at Duncan’s death. They were very close. Elizabeth returned to her family home when Mrs Stockford, an old friend, shortly afterwards moved in with Mrs T .

At 15, E left school and home to start work - living in at a house in Yardley Gobion. She then lost close touch with Mrs T. However, lots of people visited Mrs T including Mrs Reg Webster, Mrs Denny senior and the vicar Norman Husbands. Best china and starched linen cloths came out for his regular visits.

E remembers moving when she was four and a half from Hyde farm to Grafton Road. They moved by horse and cart. The shire horse used was very patient and gentle. Father too busy to put Jessie and E’s easel on the cart. He could not mess about with that rubbish. Mother said Okay - told them to leave it with her and she tucked it onto the cart when the opportunity arose.

After Mr Thompson’s retirement, father stayed on with Don York the new owner to show him the ropes. Gradually father did more and more work for other farmers including sheep shearing, fencing until he decided to go independent. E’s brother John was by then able to help. Mother and father had a caravan in which they both lived in when father went off lambing. Mother helped looking after the hand reared lambs.

Father and two of his brothers won many hedging competitions. One year they swept the board at the All England Championship coming 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Father’s family very close, a gentle, warm family. They did not have much to do with mother’s side, although an 81 year old sister has recently been contacted. E’s elder son has researched the Hawkins and Dyke family histories and is now looking at his maternal grandmother’s Adams line.

E’s sister Julia worked in Northampton as a home help, looking after the children. E decided to have a similar job. Went for three interviews and, aged 15, took a job at Yardley Gobion. Mrs Skinner was a Domestic Science teacher at Deanshanger. Mr Skinner an auctioneer at Newport Pagnell. E thinks he also did some Estate Agency work selling houses.

E lived in, worked six days a week with Sunday off after she had prepared Sunday lunch. She then ran to catch bus to Roade (fare 6d) and father took her home at 10-00pm to save her the bus fare. She earned £1 per week which she was told was considered a good wage because she lived in. E had few clothes, although sister Jessie who worked at the factory earned far more money and had a lot of clothes. Every so often E returned to Yardley with Jessie’s cast offs.

E stayed with them for 18 months. The boys were tinkers. There were 2 Aberdeen Angus cows in the field with a few sheep, chickens and E thinks a pony. Monday was Mr Skinkers’s market day. E was up at 6-30 to polish his boots and gaiters then she took a pot of tea upstairs to him and his wife. At 7-00 cooked their breakfast. Mr S left house a 7-30 Mondays. 8-30 in week. Lovely couple but E worked hard. E is still in contact with the family. E had to take two boys and baby in pram to school half a mile away for 9-00. Had to dress baby although E thinks Mrs S must have helped before she left for Deanshanger. E looked after baby, got lunch for children mid day. She made 4 journeys each day between house and school- making a total of 4 miles).

While working there, baby Jane had a cold. E still very innocent. Mother worried. E told to nurse Jane and read to her. Doctor came – serious – very sick – must get baby to Brackley . double pneumonia – baby may die. E upset – another death? Baby survived but both parents away for 24 hours. Baby’s lungs damaged. Soon after E decided to move on and work with younger children. Later when baby was 3.1/2 she went to Switzerland for 3 years and this did help her health.

E moved on to Rutland. Lived in Old Hall in Hambleton. Resevoir sunk around it. Hall on hill. Worked for Sir John Conant, son of Sir Roger Conant MP for Rutland at one time.. Two children Baby Simon and Fiona. Prior to E’s appointment, the young son and heir Edward had been killed in a freak accident. The wall of a piggery, in the process of being built, had collapsed and killed him. Mother had been pregnant at the time with Simon. It was a lovely farm and E stayed for 3 years. Simon had medical problems. Mother and E on 24 hours shifts each, so that Simon was continually watced. Baby not allowed to cry until surgery for hernia performed which helped problem.

During her time with family, E learnt a lot about life. She had 2 days off a month (accumulated 4 weekly half days off) Employer allowed E. to return home monthly in Austin 40 van. Employer had put her through driving lessons and test so that she could drive children as necessary.

She did not work such long hours as at Yardley. Up at 7-00. Looked after children all day. Hour off in afternoon when children were taken to Oak Room for one hour with parents. Evening meal taken with kitchen staff. Harry was batman from employer’s army days. Nora came in to clean and cook daily. It was a smart place to live. No central heating. E had tiny room on 4th floor. Very cold but Ok with small electric fire and warm under blankets.

E had great fun while there, she was involved in local activities. Tea dances – danced o records –others made tea and sandwiches – probably cost a shilling to attend. Learnt to dance. Lovely country people – still only 17 going on 18 – did not think about having a permanent boy friend. Went to Hunt Balls – Young Farmers – entered YF competitions – great fun – float. Made own clothes – had time off in day. Eventually got engaged. Realised not what she wanted – too restricting – left when nearly 21, came home and left the fellow up there.

Brother John learning to drive so E went in car with him so that he could practice. Rarely got beyond Stoke Bruerne and the Boat. There she met her future husband Richard. Played skittles and darts with a group including Maurice and Eric Smith and Roy Inward. Engaged in 1963 went on holiday to Lake District – visited Beatrix Potter house. Returned 10 years to the day, to same hotel, with their two boys. (had married in 1964) 30 years after first visit, Richard and E went back to hotel yet again.

Met Richard 1963. Married March 64. Howard born 1965. Harvey 1966. Richard 17 yrs older than E. They fostered 2 children for 18 months from the village after their mother died until father re-married 18 months later. They continued to foster children for 7 yrs. E then ran a pre-school group in the ramshackle old football hut. Once snowed in and parents had to dig them out.

Red Cross involvement started because son Harvey heard about it at school. Meeting in chapel. Film shown. Lorna Hooper and Dorothy Oakey also there. Before long E was given books and told she could run it.

E met Carol who was also involved in Red Cross and lived at Blisworth. Carol mentioned a future coach holiday in Normandy and the Dykes booked up to go on it. E never been abroad before, or had a passport. .Going along a costal road, Richard suddenly stood up and said “that’s the beaches”. E had no idea whatsoever until that time of Richard’s involvement in the D.Day landing. **Refer to tape for full details**) VERY INTERESTING. Richard was in the first glider which landed to take Pegasus Bridge on D.Day.

E said Richard involved in British Legion, her Red Cross work, an allotment, long working hours at PSL. He was always busy so that is perhaps why she did not get round to asking him about his army days. He liked long distance walking. Together with Julia and her husband they climbed Helvelyan, the fog came down quickly so they sat down until it cleared. She said she had no legs the following day.

E’s elder son Howard has written his father’s life story, from birth to death - .he too is surprised to learn that Richard was a D.Day veteran but that he had never told anyone in the family about this. The book is 250 printed pages A5 size. Pictures will be added. It is soon to be in print.

Richard’s job working on the land meant that he was exempt from war service but nonetheless he decided to enlist. Richard’s family knew when Richard was expected home but no one was at home when R arrived back in Stoke Bruerne – so R went to the pub, the Boat but was disappointed that no one was there either. He was told to go to the village hall for a presentation by the villagers. He was presented with a wallet containing three pound notes - quite a sum in those days. E still has the wallet.

Richard’s mother saw grandson Howard the afternoon before she died in 1965. She was thrilled to hold him. She was a lovely lady. She was widowed in WW1, just a week before her baby Mary died. She later married again – to Richard’s father

E describes how Richard’s niece Hazel traced Richard by contacting Roade Vicar -Mike Burton.