

Uncle Doug was an amazing man. The difficult bit is knowing where to start to tell you a bit about his life and what made him so amazing. I could start at Woodbridge Care home where we spent many afternoons waiting for the tea trolley, putting the world to rights, discussing the merits of our respective football teams. Auntie Peg and Doug used to keep canaries but I probably shouldn't mention Canaries south of the border! We also used to reminisce about the past and some of the stories you will hear I only found out about recently.

But I will start at the beginning. He was born in 1927 and brought up at Coppice cottage in Kelvedon Hatch in Essex along with his siblings John, Janet, Jean and Margaret and half-brother Reg. They all went to school in the village, the same school that Lesley and I went to many years later.

He was 12 when the war broke out and soon after he started work as an apprentice baker making the bread and going out on the deliveries. That's how he learnt to drive and was very proud to say that he had never taken a driving test. More about driving later. At this time, he also delivered telegrams for the princely sum of sixpence which he assured me was a lot of money in those days.

Connected to baking is a story he told me recently. Every year the village held a show where everyone brought along produce and baking to be judged. Doug's mum had made a fruit cake and put it in a basket with a tea towel over the top. She was half way up the path when she remembered something. Put her basket down and went back indoors. When she got back to the basket she found that the chickens had got to the cake and pecked out the sultanas on the top. She rushed back to the kitchen and poked some fresh sultanas into the cake and entered it in the competition. She won first prize.

After a while he gave up baking and joined the family business in the building trade, working alongside his father. He helped my Mum and Dad build their own house just after the war in the same road as Coppice Cottage. I once said to him that I thought building materials for private homes were in short supply after the war. Let's say he was rather vague in his reply but did admit to several deliveries arriving under the cover of darkness.

He met Auntie Peg at dance classes in Brentwood. They were married for over 50 years and were absolutely devoted to each other. It broke his heart the day she died.

We had many happy Christmases' at the Coppice. As you can imagine it was the highlight of the year for us children. Along with the rest of the family they used to spend the year making toys to be delivered to the local children's home just before the big day.

When they first got married they lived at St David's on Blackmore Road. Their next house was a huge old farmhouse, Lampetts in the village of Fyfield. Recently he told me that Fyfield was once known as Fishead. No idea why. But if you ever drive through and wonder why there is a fish head on the village you'll know why, and you will also know that it was Doug who ensured that the fish head was on there. I used to collect wildflowers and he showed me where the Fyfield pea grew – one of the rarest wild flowers.

The house in Fyfield needed completely renovating and they spent several years doing it up. Lesley Keith and I spent many happy days there playing cricket up the drive until it was dark. If you hit the ball in the moat you were out and yes it did have a moat. He was the only one who ever hit the ball over the cowshed for 6. You had to watch though, because if you didn't he would wet the ball in the moat before bowling it to you soaking you in the process. We also had several bonfire parties there. We would spend the afternoon making the guy to put

on the top of the most enormous bonfire you've ever seen. Once the fire had died down he loved to show off by jumping through the fire with a pitch fork.

Doug & Peg provided our family with a lot of support through Dad's illness. We spent a week every year with them, Peg would take a week off work and we would have days out often to Walton on the Naze if the weather was good. Saturday would be the big day as Doug came too. It would be a surprise. One year we went to Birdland at Bourton on the water.

They moved to Blackmore to Little Lampetts and set about renovating 2 cottages into a wonderful home. Both Peg and Doug loved gardening. He particularly liked roses and was proud of our connection to Gandy's roses. He also grew sweet peas as did Dad and Auntie Margaret. Bit of a family tradition which Lesley and I try to carry on. This year mine were much better thanks to his great advice. He won medals for his sweet peas from the R.H.S.

They also loved animals and always had cats, starting with the farm cats at Fyfield including one named Piccalilli. I must mention Tommy the Bichon Frise. He was a huge part of their family and a totally adorable dog. I mentioned that I would return to the topic of driving. He taught both Lesley and I to drive. Lesley remembers experiencing fear and terror when his little blue van turned up for a lesson. As you can imagine he was not one to mince his words and she can still hear him telling her not to let the steering wheel slide through her fingers although he did it every time. Related to driving is the story about when he gave up smoking. Having smoked roll ups for years, he suddenly abruptly threw his packet out of the car window and never smoked again. An example of what a determined man he was.

We were both proud to have him give us away on our wedding days. Lesley remembers him arriving to take her to church. He was not one to give away too many compliments but he said gruffly that she looked very smart which wasn't quite what she was hoping for but coming from him meant a lot.

They retired to Grundisburgh and made a new life for themselves, getting involved in many aspects of village life. He enjoyed and very much appreciated his wonderful friendship with his neighbours Heather and Iain and their family who gave him so much love and much help and support especially in recent times.

He liked music and enjoyed eating out at various pubs and restaurants. I had my first grown up meal in a restaurant with Doug and Peg when I was about 16. He particularly enjoyed a good red wine though back in the 1970s it was lots of Blue Nun. He always liked to tease the poor waiting staff.

They had many holidays abroad to Madeira, Canary Islands (Canaries again), Switzerland, Norway and Iceland. One thing he said to me recently was he wished he had travelled more while Peg was alive and they had their health and strength.

I intend to remember those words and travel the world while we can, spending our children's' inheritance as we go.

I said at the beginning, Uncle Doug was an amazing man. We all have our memories of him, the kindness he has shown and the laughs shared. We will all miss him but take comfort that he is finally reunited with his beloved Peg.

Doug and Peggy moved to Grundisburgh in the mid-nineties from Essex with the intention of down-sizing. They did this garden-wise but gained one more bedroom in the house. However, they quickly changed this into a shower room to better meet their needs.

They quickly made lots of friends walking their dog Tommy around the village and soon became involved in village life.

On the day, they moved in Heather greeted them with scones, jam and cream, which were very well received and a tradition that continued with lots of cakes for many years - Doug had a very sweet tooth! Iain has a more challenging memory - he said to Doug 'It will be nice to have a neighbour who is more co-operative about access for maintenance, to which Doug replied - you can only come around if I say so!' He was much more amenable in the long term though.

They were instrumental in setting up the 'Gardeners Get Together' group and thoroughly enjoyed visiting nurseries and meeting potential guest speakers.

Doug also was a regular grass cutter for the village bowls club and helped set up the indoor winter bowls club with a previous Essex friend who had moved to Badingham.

Grundisburgh, for many years, had a couple of miniature traction engines that would take people around The Green on trips just before Xmas with Doug often at the front, wearing a bowler hat and waving a red flag to warn any traffic of the oncoming hazard!

Peggy was involved with both Grundisburgh & Culpho churches and Doug would help her out whenever it was needed, running raffles or driving her to various functions.

At Iain's request, Doug took over delivering about 1000 copies of the Grundisburgh & District News local paper to about a dozen distributors which he did for many years. He and Peggy loved this and would make a day of it, stopping at a variety of pubs en-route to have lunch before completing the round.

On the back of the order of service you will see one of many portraits that local artist Reg Snook painted of Doug. Reg is here so if you want to see more hen just ask him.

In his later years, Doug missed Peggy terribly and relied on his local friends to support him. He coped extremely well and did continue meeting with many of them regularly, particularly at the local Luncheon Club and he never missed an opportunity to visit The Dog or any other local inn if the opportunity arose.

His health did deteriorate a couple of years ago when he had to move into Woodbridge Lodge as his home was no longer suitable for his needs. He loved the staff there and was well looked after.

God bless him.