

Remembering
Norman Edward Alexander Mazasitisz Bird
04.06.1913 to 26.06.1983

Norman was born at 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road London, the third child of Harry Bird. Presumably above his father's Pastry and Confectioners shop.



215 Vauxhall Bridge Road today

The family were in London during the first world war years, his father during that time and until around 1920 used the name William Wallace. They left permanently and were no longer registered as resident in Westminster after 1919.

They settled in Torquay Devon for many years, Norman moving around from time to time to find work. He didn't marry whilst a young man and spent a lot of time with his family.



His brothers and sisters had various bands and his sister Pansy ran a dancing school in Torquay.



Details of Norman's house occupancy Torquay

1923 aged 10yrs with Harry Gertrude Dorothy and all the family
Haytor Vane Hill Road

1926 – 1932 Newholm



Newholm today

1932 Adyar Hotel



1936 Adyar with Harry Dorothy Gertrude and Florence

1937 to 1939 - 16, Third Ave Daison Heights

Norman was in the army during the war



When he was on leave he visited his sister Pansy and John Watson in Grantham, Norman always affectionately called Pansy 'Blossom'



When he was discharged from the forces after the war he called on the Childs family at 81 Teignmouth Road. He gave the girls some silver filigree jewellery which Thalia can remember chewing up and spoiling!

Harry Bird purchased Maidencombe House for his three sons to set them up after the war. But after a few years two of the brothers bought Norman out. Dorothy their mother retained a share after Harry's death.



Norman appeared to have drifted from one occupation to another over the next few years. At one point he went to London and according to the Watsons lived in a very seedy bedsit in Acton with a lavatory at the end of the hall shared with about six others. When he arrived in London he went to stay with Warren, he was driving a clapped out car and had everything he owned in a suitcase in the boot. In the 1950's he must have returned to Devon as he used to come to London either on his own or with Gertrude. On their return they used to take Janice back to Devon with them on the train from Paddington to stay with Dorothy and her cousins for the summer holidays at Little Meadow and Mansands.

After Harry Bird died Dorothy moved to the Bakery at Kingskerswell and Norman took over Little Meadow in Widecombe in the Moor which had been owned by Harry since the mid 1940's. He built a swimming pool on the garden which really wasn't a proper one as it took around three weeks to fill. He was forever short of money and looked for alternative ways of saving money, generating electricity by building a hand made windmill type structure of beech-wood in the garden to generate power. He fixed it to the top of an old telegraph pole on a rotating mount, it made a loud swishing sound. It was connected to some batteries in the old greenhouse and then wired into every room in the house. If the batteries failed there were oil lamps in every room of the house.



Little Meadow today

He ran the house as a B&B in the 1960's and nieces used to go and clean the place through on a Saturday on change over day. There was a gap in the hedge at the end of the garden where he kept a caravan in a small field for when he had overspill guests. He then bought a property on Widecombe Green which had a business it never really got of the ground. He met two elderly widows who bailed him out by becoming 'sleeping partners', but eventually the property was sold. Norman used to make papier mâché figures depicting the famous Widecombe Fair song

*Tom Pearce, Tom Pearce
Lend me thy grey mare
(All along, down along,
out along lea)
Fer I want to go to
Widecombe fair
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer,
Peter, Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whiddon, 'Arry 'Awkes,
Ol' Uncle Tom Cobleigh an' all
Ol' Uncle Tom Cobleigh an' all....*



The Green Widecombe

In the summer of 1963 he married Gladys **Helen** Runsey and they lived in a bungalow at 2 Ridgeway Road, it is unknown whether the property originally belonged to Helen. Norman was always ahead of his time and converted his Rover car to run on gas.



The wedding



The Bungalow

Norman purchased a plot of land ‘Glebelands’ in Combeinteignhead. His intention was to become a market gardener but the plot became more famous for its weeds and unusual wild flowers. There were a couple of shacks and sheds on the land and he had an antiquated tractor. He turned one of the sheds into his den and although he had a small Belling cooker and an electric kettle he used an old Primus stove. Most of the family visited him there and drank large mugs of tea basking in the sun. It was his little bit of paradise.



At the plot with Thora and Lilian



1971

Students Of Seale Hayne College used to do visits to study the rare species of plants.

When Norman became ill in later life we have been told that he refused to take the conventional medicines prescribed by his GP.

The plot was sold on Norman's death, his niece and nephew visited in 1998 and it was much the same apart from it was completely overgrown and had gone into rack and ruin. Just left, so sad, the sheds and shacks remained, it was very poignant, the blackened pots and pans, plates and cups were still there covered with cobwebs and spiders, even his beloved chair was still in its place as if time had stood still