



My Dad was born in Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire on the 5th April 1931, the second child of Alice Briggs. His childhood can not be described as the most perfect one but it certainly was one that would mould him and he would quickly learn just how much you have to try and work hard to achieve anything in life, and that nothing is simply handed to you on a plate.

Due to some family difficulties dad was sent off to live in Carleton Homes from the age of 4 to 11 years old, after which he was brought back to live with his mother and new step father. His step father was not a warm man to say the least and by the age of fourteen, dad was moving on again, this time to go and live with his Auntie Ella, who lived at No 4 Westfield Terrace, Tanshelf Drive, Pontefract, and although he had no idea at the time, this was where his destiny was going to be founded.

It was there, playing out on the spare land around the air raid shelters in Pontefract that he first met my mum, Dorothy Berry, second child of Willie Thackray and Mary Berry of West End Stores, Pontefract. They were still just kids at the time, and were both part of a large group of kids that all played there together regularly. The boys would be playing cricket, and the girls fielding out for them, or they would just be generally hanging around



Stan and Dorothy, along with many other kids, became good friends at this time. Some other members of the group were Granville (Retty) Redfern, Jack, David and Beryl Berry, Brian Walker, Cerise Jackson, Eric Brooks, Eric Miller, Brian Shields, Barbara Redfern, Kathleen Bradburn, Pat Spur, Mable Langley, Terry, Barry & Michael Walker, Pauline Robinson and virtually the 'whole' Westerman family to mention but a few! Many good times were shared by this large, yet close group of friends.



At 18 years of age, Dad was called up into National Service, and it was then that he asked my mum, Dorothy, if she would write to him while he was away in the army. At this time their relationship was still only one of friendship. Mum agreed to write to him while he was away and on the day of his departure, she went along with a friend to The Corn Market in Pontefract to wave him off.

After only 3 months in the army, dad was shipped off to Egypt for what ended up turning out to be a 21 month tour of duty, much longer than had been expected. But as promised by both parties, all the time that dad was away, he and mum continued to write to each other regularly, and when dad finally returned to England, and then Pontefract, he and mum met up again as soon as possible, but the difference this time was that they went out on their first 'actual and official' date.

..... And so the story begins!

At that time, my mum lived at West End Stores, Newgate, Pontefract where her parents ran a grocery shop. West End Stores has been the centre of the Berry family for many years one way or another, I think almost every member of the family has worked there at some point, and as a little girl I can remember weighing out the lard, straightening the boxes on the shelves and winding the bacon machine while my Gran or my Mum supervised me. I guess most kids love to play shops,

I also remember that I used to love going out with my Granddad in his car on Saturday mornings to deliver groceries to the regular customers, at no extra charge to the customer I might add, not something that would happen today. I would probably have been about six or seven years old then, which in turn made me Granddad's little helper, which in turn meant that I would get pocket money or home made biscuits or even sweetie treats from the customers that we delivered to. So as you can imagine, I was always keen to go, although it did have it's one down side. Granddad used to smoke in the car but never roll the windows down, so by the time we got home from doing our rounds, and having a tummy full of biscuits, sweets and pop, I would often be feeling quite a bit worse for wear. Still you have to learn early that some sacrifices have to be made in life in the quest for goals to be reached!



West End Stores, Newgate, Pontefract



After a wonderful courtship, Mum and Dad were married in 1952 when Dad was 21 and Mum was 19. Their wedding was held at St Giles Church, Pontefract and a reception was later held at West End Stores. They certainly made a handsome couple and I wish I had more photos of this momentous day that charted mine and my brothers' very existence, but I only have two (pictured here and shown larger in the 'Wedding' section of this website). Mum told me that they couldn't afford big fancy Weddings and receptions with photographers and all the bells and whistles in those days.

It was quite the norm to get married, and then go along to Mauds Photographers Studio in Pontefract Market Place for the official bride and group photo and wedding party photo before going on to the reception. In fact if you look in the wedding section of this website you will probably notice that most of the family's wedding photos are taken at Mauds, all with the same scenery and just a change of backdrop depending what year you got married. After the ceremony and photographs had been taken, everyone was then invited back to my Gran's house, West End Stores, where a 'spread' had been put on and everyone joined in the celebrations. I'm sure a grand day was had by all.



Mum & Dad with their first born son - Barry



Dad and second son - Tony



Third child and only daughter Christine - ME!

When mum and dad were first married, they lived with mum's parents at West End Stores, Star Yard, Newgate, while they could find somewhere of their own to live, and it was there where their first son, Barry, was born on 2nd March 1953.



Halfpenny Lane, Pontefract - 2007

By 1954, they had moved out of the shop and into their first home of their own at No.15 Halfpenny Lane, Pontefract. It was just a rented property and may not have been the grandest place on earth, but it was the first home together that was all theirs. They soon settled there and it wasn't long before they were adding to the family with their second son, Tony, being born on the 2nd August 1954. Now the family was four.

In 1956 another move was on the cards. They were now to move to No 3 Westfield Terrace, Tanshelf Drive, Pontefract. It was here where their third child, and only daughter, me, Christine was born on the 13th August 1960. Dad told me when they said to him "congratulations you have a daughter", he said "thank Christ for that, that can be the last one then. Apparently mum had had the name Christine picked out for a long time and had I have been a boy, then I would now be speaking to you as Christopher Briggs, this being the closest boys name to Christine. So anyway, I'm very pleased too that I turned out to be a girl because that way I got to grow up and be a mother too, just like my mum, but without the natural cooking skills !!!

I don't remember the house at Tanshelf Drive at all as I was far too young, in fact I was still only two years old when we all moved out to go to 112 Rookhill Road, Chequerfield, Pontefract. We don't have any photo's of Tanshelf Drive, and as it used to stand where the Pontefract Telephone Exchange now stands, I have lost the chance to ever have any photo's of it. So if anyone out there

I don't have any photo's of the house in Chequerfield either, just one photo of Barry and Tony playing cricket on the back lawn. I have to admit that I don't have and recollection of the house there at all, but unusually whilst I can not even sum up any kind of image about the house, I can vividly remember almost every inch of the garden. The cricket games we used to set up on the lawn, the perfectly kept garden with the flower beds that ran all the way around it and the old wagon wheel that dad had set into a small wall at the end of the garden which framed a raised flower bed area. Our garden backed onto miles of farm land, and it was on this wall where I would sit and watch the farmer driving his combined harvester. I would sit and wait for him to pass so that I could wave to him, he would always wave back and then I would run in to mum all excited to tell her that the farmer had waved to me again.



Barry the batsman in our garden at Chequerfield

In 1964, Gran and Granddad had been experiencing some problems with their business, for many different reasons, so mum and dad ended up moving back to West End Stores to help out. At that point, Granddad had pretty much given up on the hope of keeping the business going, and Gran was devastated at the prospect of going bankrupt. One day when she was feeling particularly low, she confided and cried to dad saying what a disgrace it would be to go bankrupt, people thought no higher of this than they did divorce in those days. It was after that conversation with my Gran that dad announced he and mum would do everything they could to help stop their business from going bankrupt. Quite a tall order as dad didn't have two pennies to 'scratch his arse' with at the time. But with a huge amount of determination, a lot of talks with suppliers and putting his own head on the block by personally guaranteeing the repayments, he managed to keep everyone on side and the business going.

He told me that they even kept all the shelves looking full by filling them up with empty boxes when they couldn't afford to carry a full stock. He gave part of his own wages every week to help pay off debts bit by bit, and after two long hard years, he and mum finally got them back on their feet.

Now in those days Dad was only earning a very low wage at that time and with his own growing family, it was actually a lot to give up.

Anyway Dad did his bit, Terry Brightmore (Auntie Sylvia's then boyfriend, later husband) also helped and Uncle Willis agreed to give his old van to Granddad and take Granddad's new van and all the outstanding payments that were due on it which immediately alleviated one expense.

During this time Mum and Dad lived with Gran and Granddad to keep everything in order and keep the plan on



**My Gran and Granddad
Willie Thackray & Mary Berry**

Previous to all this my Granddad had held the role of 'Town Shopkeeper', which basically meant he did absolutely nothing, got all the glory and Gran did all the work. With all the help coming in from the rest of the family, Gran decided to also take a turn at grasping hold of the reins and announced to Willie that "somebody else here needed to go out and get a job", so Granddad made a few enquiries and through a friend he got himself a job at Pollard Bearings to do his bit to help pay off debts, along with running a house and providing for his family.

It was also around this time that Gran was trying to think of other ways to make extra money at the shop. Auntie Sylvia's then boyfriend, Terry Brightmore, worked as an architect in town and one day after seeing Sylvia in his lunch break, Gran made him some sandwiches to take back to work. On doing so, his friends at work asked where he had got the sandwiches from, on giving the answer they then asked if Mrs Berry would make some for them as there was nowhere to buy sandwiches at lunch time. This was to be the birth of 'Berry's Butties' but that is another story all of its own and you can also read about that on this web site.

1966 came around, Gran and Granddad were doing fine and mum and dad had not only managed to get Gran and Granddad back on track but they had also managed to save up a deposit for a mortgage. They found a house in Knottingley that needed a great deal of work, but they could see its potential and decided to go for it. So when I was five years old, our family of five moved to 34 Pontefract Road, Knottingley. Mum and dad named the house 'Kingsbridge', after the beautiful town of Kingsbridge in Devon where Dad's sister, Mary, lived and where my brothers and I would get to spend all of our childhood summer holidays.

Again, as I was very young when we moved to Knottingley, I don't remember all the details of the house and what it looked like at the time, but looking back at the old photos and hearing mum and dad's descriptions, the house was in quite a bit of a state. But in usual 'Mum & Dad' style, they rolled up their sleeves and did what they could when they could and over the next few years, rubbish was cleared, walls were knocked through, fireplaces were built, lawns and gardens were created where rough land had once been, a crazy paving driveway was laid around the entire house bit by bit, as and when dad could beg and borrow broken paving stones and eventually a wonderful home was created.

I have very many happy memories of 34 Pontefract Road, although I'm sure my brothers may not always share my enthusiasm as being older than me, and being boys, they would often be roped into help dad with the building jobs or the garden jobs, or any jobs that needed help with. Once again I was grateful to be a girl and only five years old, my job was to make fancy patterns in the cement before it was used or to lay pennies in the cement in-between some of the crazy paving stones. I wonder if they are still there ?

Some of our best memories were the family parties that were held there, My Uncle Willis, Uncle David and Pete Hopkins who had their own band would bring all their kit and play and sing. All the family would gather, eat drink and dance loads and I thought it was all magical and fantastic.

The only draw back of living in Knottingley for me was that I went to school in Pontefract so none of my friends lived close by. But that didn't mean that I got bored, I would spend hours sewing with my mum, apart from making all my dresses and knitting all of mine and my brother's jumpers, she would also make me the most beautiful dresses for my dolls. I used to love it when she would take me to Pontefract Market where we would rummage through boxes of material remnants, picking out the best, brightest and prettiest materials, then we would go home and she would turn it all into the best ball gowns a doll could ever wish to own.

My other way of entertaining myself would be by making up dance routines on roller-skates, I would practice all day whizzing round and round the house, then at the end of the day everyone was made to come out and watch me. Mum and dad would always eagerly come and watch, but I think Barry and Tony looked on reluctantly, I'm sure they found it all very tiresome, but they did come and watch! Maybe mum made them though, I don't know, I will have to ask, after all, it was just girl stuff. They were far more interested in cars, building them, repairing them and driving



'Kingsbridge' 34 Pontefract Road, Knottingley - Before and after



When Dad had got the house how he wanted it, he then started on building a large garage, the boys were getting older and very much into their cars, and as no one could afford new cars it was obvious that having somewhere dry to be able to work on them was going to be essential. He also thought that if he was going to fulfil this need, he might as well do the job properly and dig out a full size pit in the garage too so that any repairs needed to the under sides of cars could be done with ease and safety. It was this pit that made our house the busiest one on the planet. Barry and Tony and all of their friends would gather at our house to use the garage for all their repairs. Mum seemed to be forever making butty's and drinks for everyone but she didn't mind at all. As she said "The boys friends were always very nice and polite and while they are all here I know where they are and I don't worry about them". I didn't much understand her reasoning at the time, as I thought she would get fed up of always having a house full, but since growing up, getting married and having boys of my own, I totally understand her. I would much rather have the boys and their friends eating me out of house and home rather than worry about where they are.

Of course this philosophy completely goes out of the window when they eventually move away from home, that's when the real worrying starts. I'm 47 now and I know that my parents still worry about me so I guess I can forgive myself for doing the same with my own two sons. It's just a natural trait, the funny thing is that they are always telling me that I worry too much and they can look after their selves, and I of course tell them "Yes I know, and that's exactly what I used to tell my mum and dad, you're young and invincible, all that's missing is the cape and wearing your pants over the top of your trousers!. When you have your own children, you will understand" If course this little speech is about as much use as a chocolate fireguard, but I am 'mother' I have the knowledge that comes with 'been there, done that' and yes they will worry about their kids too one day. I just can't wait for the day when they actually admit it!



Me sat on the Star Yard entrance steps of West End Stores. Many Berry family photo's have been taken in this spot !

Whilst living in Knottingley, Mum still worked at Dunhill's sweet factory and later for Gran at Berry's Butties in Pontefract and I still went to school in Pontefract until I was 11, so mum and I used to have to go through the daily routine of catching the bus to Pontefract early everyday. I can tell you, we used to have some hectic mornings getting up and getting ready to catch that bus, probably because I was so slow to wake up and get going (which I still am by the way, I never have been and probably never will be a '*morning person*').

Our house was situated between two bus stops, we could see the one on the Knottingley side and if we could see the bus was already there, I would set off at lightening speed ahead of mum to the bus stop on the Pontefract side of the house so that I could reach the stop and hold the bus whilst mum caught up. Sometime's the bus would be beating me, but others waiting at the bus stop would see me and they would hold the bus for both of us. It makes me laugh thinking back to that because we actually had to run for that bus far more than we ever had to stand and wait for it!

My other memory of that bus ride was making the trip home on hot summer days; remember when we used to have a lot of hot summer days? The bus would be very hot and stuffy. Poor mum would have been on her feet all day working hard and probably ready for a sit down on the way home, but she would end up having to stand up with me all the way up at the front of the bus, catching the draft from the door as I would get travel sick if we didn't.

We took the bus from Knottingley to Pontefract Bus Station everyday, and then walked to the shop where my Auntie Sylvia would meet us and walk me to school until I was old enough to be allowed to walk to school by myself. Of course when I was old enough to go to school by myself I couldn't always be trusted to actually get far past the shop door never mind all the way to school. Customers would go into the shop and say "Dot, do you know Christine is standing outside the shop door saying that she doesn't want to go to school". Although I did eventually accept the fact that I would have to go to school everyday like everybody else I was fine. But I do remember that I would always walk to school but run home! I can honestly say that I was only going because I knew I had to and not because I wanted to, nothing changed from then until the day I could legally leave, I 'never' liked going to school, and much preferred being at home or at the shop with my Mum and Gran, making dolls houses out of crisp boxes, paper chains out of that shiny paper you could buy on a roll back then, filling up the shelves in the shop and taking the sandwich orders that came in on the phone. What did I need to go to school for, I was learning to talk to customers, add up the cost of their groceries, that's English and Mathematics, that was all I needed wasn't it? I think I unwittingly passed on this trait to my eldest son who very much grew up of the same opinion; he always said he could learn everything he needed to know out of school from his dad and granddad and nothing that he needed in school. OK, so they don't teach you how to change an engine at high school, but just like me, he still had to go and do his time.

In 1978, Gran decided it was time to hang up her apron and retire and Mum took over the running of Berry's Butties. Although Gran had six children, Mum was the one chosen to hand the shop over to as Gran said that it was only because of her and dad that the business still existed, and didn't end up folding back in 1964 when times were hard and Gran and Granddad were struggling with the shop.



The shop had been relocated from it's original site at West End Stores after compulsory moving was ordered due to the building of Jubilee Way bypass

By this time Barry and Tony had both married and left home, but I was just 18 and still living at home so I too went with mum and dad to live at the shop in Pontefract. Running that shop was nothing short of damned hard work, especially for my mum, as she would be up at 6.00am every morning preparing the food ready for the shop opening at 8.00am. This is when there would be a massive surge of customers all coming in for their breakfast before their own working day started. The shop would close at 2.00pm and then she would have to start cleaning down the cookers, boning and cutting up full sides of bacon and cooking ham joints, all ready to start again the following morning.

Only when all that was done could she even begin to think about housework, cooking tea, washing, ironing etc., all the stuff that mum's do. Both dad and I also used to help out, we would get up early to help mum, although 6.00am was pushing it for me. I would probably show my face by 7ish, both dad and I would start off our day by cutting bread cakes ready to use which were freshly delivered every day, peeling boiled eggs, cutting tomatoes, washing lettuce for the salad sandwiches etc., Dad would leave for his work at 8:00am, other staff would arrive to help by then and I would serve in the shop until just before 9.00am when I had to go to work myself in Knottingley. Mum ran Berry's Butties until she eventually retired in 1993, Dad also retired from The Wakefield Metropolitan Council at this time where he had worked as a heavy goods driving instructor.



Love Lane - The perfect address for two love birds to retired to

After retiring and selling the shop, Mum and Dad moved to 56 The Limes, Love Lane, Pontefract in 1993 where they still live today. Once again they took an average and very ordinary little bungalow with a very scruffy unloved garden and turned it into a beautiful home. Lots of patience and hard work being something they are not only familiar with but something they have perfected into a fine art form and applied everywhere they have lived. The garden is now that which picture postcards are made of, particularly in summer when all the flowers are in full bloom, not a blade of grass out of place and a greenhouse which produces tomato's and plant cuttings of every type



Dad likes to keep his garden in tip top shape



and mum produces another bumper crop of tomatoes

With all this done and only the day to day maintenance to take care of they now spend their days in much more relaxed circumstances than that of the past. Dad loves to complete his daily newspaper crosswords and competitions, mum loves to read her Mills & Boon books, they go out for drives in the country side almost every afternoon and every now and then take trips back down to Devon where they have previously spent many a family summer holiday with us kids. They come across to the Isle of Man two or three times a year to see me. Dad loves to come and put my garden straight and help with any odd jobs I need help with and mum loves the change of scenery, the rides around the coastline and fish and chips on the harbour in Port St Mary. The last time they came, dad started repairing an old stone wall which runs up the lane to my house, he is still happiest when he is building something and I would stake my life on the fact that that wall will not fall down again ... not too bad for a 77 year old, he puts many a lot younger than him to shame!



Taking a ferry ride to the Isle of Man



With their two grandson's Scott & Travis, the day before Scott left for Oz



Dad supporting me in my latest venture of building my own fence



Never happier than when out working in the fresh air. Dad repairs the dry stone wall outside my house



February 2007. I took them on a day trip to Chester to visit my son Travis where he is studying at University



Well, that has been a quick insight in to the story of two people who met, married and worked hard together to provide a stable and loving home for themselves and their three children.

As you can see for yourselves,
all is good with ...

... *Mr & Mrs Briggs*

... *Stan & Dot*

... *My Mum & Dad!*

Story written by:

'a very proud to be their daughter'

Christine Briggs