



Daisy Winifred Cooper  
1909 - 2006

THIS IS THE EULOGY  
WRITTEN AND PRESENTED BY  
TONY FOX  
AT DAISY'S FUNERAL.

DAISY WINIFRED COOPER - 12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2006  
Milborne St Andrew Parish Church

Daisy Cooper - two words guaranteed to conjure up many thoughts and memories.

Daisy Winifred Legg was born on the 2nd October, 1909, in a cottage in Little England, which no longer stands. It was two up, one down with a pantry and no running water or facilities (except for a little shed at the end of the garden). She would have been born in what was then Milborne Stileham, which didn't cease to be a separate civil parish until 1933. She was baptised here in the font under the tower, as the Norman one still lay buried for another 25 years or so. The Rev'd Lloyd Evans, a controversial figure, was just two years into his 27-year incumbency when he baptised Daisy and she was to live to see an effigy of him placed in the Crown Meadow and set alight - you'll be pleased to know things have moved on somewhat since those days.

As circumstances dictated, Daisy was brought up by her maternal grandmother, Mary Ann, who had come to the village with the Rev Nigel Gresley as Lady's maid to the Vicar's wife. Mary Ann had been left a widow with five young children and so Daisy knew all about poverty. She often told me "We were as poor as Church mice, and I don't care who knows it" - I wonder if that is why Daisy enjoyed her food so much in later years? In a piece written by Daisy, she said she was reared on rabbits, mainly rabbit stew, and anything else that could be caught in the field. She once told me with some distaste about rook pie, the meat being almost black.

However, Daisy was very close to her grandmother whom she described to me on more than one occasion as a Saint. Mary Ann was a devout High Church woman, schooled by the Gresleys and Daisy remembered how she always fasted before Communion. I am sure Mary Ann would be proud of Daisy's lifelong association with St Andrew's.

Daisy earliest memories were of Mr Case, the Button maker, living at what is now the Post Office. Milborne was the centre of the Dorset Button Industry and she would have been no more than 3 years old, but she recalled it vividly. She also remembered picking blackberries so that jam could be made for soldiers fighting in the First World War!

Daisy started at the village school at the age of 4 and stayed on until she was 14. Her Grandmother taught needlework there, and that explains another of Daisy's skills. Daisy was a bright child and enjoyed school. She was top of the class. Daisy kept in touch with friends from schooldays for the rest of her life, two of her closest friends dying relatively recently.

As so many children did, Daisy learnt to play the piano and then to play the organ, playing for her first service at the age of 16 in 1925! She began playing on a Harmonium as the old pipe organ was unplayable. Daisy went with her uncle and Canon Brochner to choose the pipe organ we have today, itself in need of restoration. She continued to play here on and off for over 60 years, no small achievement. Of course she had an encyclopaedic memory of what she had played for weddings and often what the bride (or other family member) wore.

Daisy worked for a local Baker when she was 15/16, icing cakes and frying doughnuts. After her grandmother's death she took over as School caretaker, earning 5s a week for the next ten years. Later in life she would become the School Dinner Lady.

Daisy met Frank Cooper in the Church choir, he was a local Baker's lad. Frank and Daisy were married here in St Andrew's on Easter Monday 1937 at a double wedding with her Uncle Arthur and his bride. Daisy says there were 30 guests and she made the bridesmaids dresses, whilst a friend made her dress. She wore pale blue and carried yellow tulips, yellow remaining a favourite colour throughout her life.

During World War Two Daisy, along with many other women in the village, made camouflage nets for the well-know Bridport firm, Gundries. Daisy was living at Crown House by then and soldiers were billeted there, near enough to Weymouth to be ready for the Normandy Landings. She remembered there was no air raid shelter, so they had to hide under the stairs when the siren up at the Milk Factory sounded. She remembered the rationing books and that she particularly liked the dried egg used for cake making, likewise she remembered the celebrations when war was over, which included a roast ox - isn't it funny how food keeps cropping up in Daisy's memories!

Daisy lived at Crown House until 1964 and both David and Brian were born there. David tells me he has a rent book from those times, £1.00 per week!

In 1964 Frank and Daisy moved to Glenthorne, Chapel Street, where Frank died in 1981, Daisy remaining there until she went to Maiden Castle House, just over a year ago. Daisy worked for Dr and Mrs Oliver of Milton Mills, which she thoroughly enjoyed, as much for the companionship and friendship as anything else.

Daisy was Secretary to the PCC for a number of years, her familiar firm hand being instantly recognisable in the Minute Books now in the archives. She was a member of the Women's Institute and also of the Mother's Union, becoming an Indoor Member when the branch closed. She was pleased that Daphne continued to take her the prayer leaflet. She was one of the people who did fund raising on a grand scale to enable the Village Hall to be built on land given to the village for that purpose. Later Daisy joined the Over 60s Club, enjoying the socialising and a game of Whist. Daisy enjoyed a game of cards, and when her friend Audrey's daughters visited then canasta was the order of the day. Daisy enjoyed doing crossword puzzles and it wasn't unknown for the phone to ring and a voice say "Daisy Cooper here, have you done 3 down in the echo tonight?". She also enjoyed going to Bingo with her friend Gladys Parsons.

Daisy was instrumental (pardon the pun) in me getting involved with Milborne Church. The now legendary Festival of Flowers in 1967 required huge numbers of people to run the food marquee set up in the Grove and it was Daisy who suggested to one of my friends that I could help clear tables. Daisy had a way of phrasing a question so that "no" was not an option! After I became a server when John Spruyt was here, and he remained one of her favourite Vicars, she thought it a good idea if I sang in the choir at Evensong or Matins, along with Frank. I can see her now in her blue gown with the white jabot and the mortarboard-style black hat. Daisy was a good organist and when Milborne boasted a four-part choir accompanied the anthems and choral services. I thank Daisy that she taught me how to play a psalm and accompany a hymn and for her advice "Never let the congregation lead, remember you're in charge", "always sing along to the psalm and you'll get the speed right" and "never take your hands off the keyboard just because the Vicar's reached his stall, keep playing until you're finished or there's a suitable break". (So, now you know where I got my bolshiness from, Daisy was a good teacher!). I remember a visiting Vicar popping his head round the organ and saying "I thought we'd start tonight's service with hymn 430 and I suggest we sing it to such and such a tune". Daisy gave him a look and replied "I'll leave you to preach the sermon, Vicar, you leave I to play the organ". Of course, Daisy liked to tell people she had taught me everything I know about the organ, and she did encourage, comment (as I would occasionally use the "wrong" tune or chant) and give tremendous backing. When I went over the hill to be organist in Whitechurch and the Winterborne Valley, it was frowned upon until someone said to Daisy "he's not bad, he must have had a good teacher". Then, of course. it was perfectly ok!

After she was unable to play regularly in Church Daisy kept the Church's year by playing the appropriate hymns on her piano, which gave her huge amounts of pleasure. At this time of year, it wouldn't be unusual to pass along Chapel Street and hear "We plough the fields and scatter" wafting from Glenthorne.

Daisy was a lady of very strong faith, centred on the Holy Communion and it was my privilege to take her Communion at home. It began as a result of another of Daisy's firmly held beliefs, she didn't like Vicars with beards (!) and John Walton had grown one. She made no secret of the fact she disapproved, you always knew exactly where you stood with Daisy, and John suggested that as Communion was so important to her that I could take it. It was one of the few occasions when I made a faux pas. As we settled down on the first occasion I handed her a prayer Book, "what's that for?" she asked, "for the service" I replied. "Why do I need a prayer book, don't you think I know the service by now" and of course she did! Word perfect. Once, when the C of E in its wisdom began numbering its Sundays as "after Pentecost" instead of "after Trinity" I said the collect for Trinity 16, when it was Trinity 15. I didn't need to look up to know I'd made a mistake! But those visits became very special. In the end I kept a morning just for Daisy. After Communion she would say "now you play the piano for me, I've left out the music I'd like to hear, and I'll go and get the coffee". On special occasions (of which there seemed to be quite a few) it would be sherry! Often the drinks would be accompanied by some of Daisy's legendary **Dorset Apple cake (and cream)**. There were a number of things Daisy was supposed to consume in moderation (or avoid altogether), but she enjoyed her food too much to heed the warnings and sometimes suffered the consequences. During one visit Daisy talked about music for her funeral, which I could never see coming as she seemed to bounce back from all her various illnesses and ailments. All of the music I played before the service, and that you'll hear at the end, was chosen by Daisy along with the hymns - AND the tunes in case I dare play the wrong one. She particularly liked Love's old sweet song and she produced the music and put it in front of me on the piano. "Go on, and sing as well". It was quite a talking point in the Post Office the next day, that I could be heard singing Love's old sweet song to Daisy!! When I told her she burst into that full throaty laugh and ended up having to wipe away the tears. "Just as well you weren't singing 'Daisy Daisy give me your answer do", she said!

David and Brian, Pat and Edna, Kerry, Shelley and Andrew are going to miss Daisy immeasurably, she was so proud of you all. We in Milborne will miss her too, she was a living history book. How many of us have kept on and on that she should write her memoirs. To be able to ask Daisy about virtually any event since 1910 (or before) was incredible and she often had a quip or aside ready. Yes, Daisy was forthright, some would say outspoken, but she had weathered many a storm in her life and I think it was that sheer determination and grit which got her to such a great age. I said to Brian, if I had to place a bet on someone reaching their century, I would have put my money on Daisy. But we are not in control of that as Daisy knew well enough, her deep faith had seen her through so much.

The author of the book of Proverbs paints a word picture of a good woman, whom he says is worth more than rubies. "She selects wool and flax and spins and knits working with eager hands. She provides food for her family, she plants and tends her garden, setting about her work vigorously. She watches over the affairs of her household and is never idle. Her children call her blessed and her husband also." It could have been written about Daisy. That passage concludes with the words "Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate". Daisy has gone to claim her reward and I'm sure her life and her works have indeed brought her praise at the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. I hope amidst the angelic harps and trumpets there will be an organ or piano for Daisy to play, and heaven help the angels if the celestial choir is singing the wrong tune!

Daisy was proud of her Milborne roots and we shall miss her. But for as long as this Church building remains Daisy will not be forgotten. It is appropriate that the High Altar wears the festival frontal, not only does it remind us that we are here to give God thanks for all that Daisy was and is, but it is a tangible reminder to us of Daisy's contribution to this Church. For I first saw that frontal laid on the bed in Daisy's sewing room, where she, Connie Haylock, Sylvia Ham and Ena Kimber were working on it.

Daisy, you will not be forgotten, and with every remembrance of you we will offer thanks for your truly remarkable life. May you now rest in peace and enjoy your reward. God bless you.