**Memories of my father, Sam Frederick**

**A tribute at his memorial service in St John the Baptist Church, Pemshurst**

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**By Simon Frederick**

For the first 12 years of his life, my father lived in little Lucy's farm in lower Street in Leigh.  His father rented 29 acres and kept a few pigs and about a dozen cows. He was one of seven farmers who had a milk round in Leigh, which he delivered on his pony and cart.
Dad had a sister, Babs, four years older, and twin brothers, Dick and John, four years younger.

From an early age he helped out on the farm feeding the pigs and milking the cows before walking to school in Leigh. Unfortunately his father suffered from bad asthma and was quite often laid up, so dad had to stay away from school, sometimes for a few weeks at a time and help his mother manage the farm. However, he never remembered this as an unhappy time, and the school was very understanding and knew the home situation.

In 1938, when he was 12, the family took on South Park farm in Penshurst. Dad moved to Penshurst school and when war broke out about a year later he left school for good, aged 13, and worked the farm with his father.

 His father's asthma became more debilitating, and dad took on more responsibility of the running of the farm when he was 14. I remember him telling me that he was paid 5 pounds for his first whole year of work, which did not strike me as very encouraging!

In 1940, when a stick of bombs fell along the New Road, the roof of their house at South Park, was blown off while the family were in the sitting room listening to my grandmother playing the piano. Bits of shrapnel flew through the room but fortunately no one was hurt. The only casualty was one of the rabbits whose destiny would have probably been lunch anyway.

As a result, the family moved at nights to sleep in Southpark house owned by their landlord, Lord Harding.

He had a very nice Butler called Merriman, who was very kind to dad, and used to give him some of the food from the plates of Lord Hardinges' guests if he considered the portions were larger than required, as dad was always hungry.

This would have been the time of the Battle of Britain, and every day bombers were flying overhead for London, and there were many a battles and dogfight above him as he worked.

I remember dad telling me how he and Merriman saw a German pilot shot down from his plane coming down in his parachute, and Merriman gave dad his shot gun, and told him to go and shoot him when he landed. Dad wasn't too keen on this idea but went anyway. However, when he got to the field by the river, the poor German was already dead, and I'm sure he could not have brought himself to shoot him anyway.

When he was 16 he joined the auxillary fire service and was on duty one night a week, putting out fires and clearing bomb damage in the village.

Apparently, 144 bombs landed on Southpark farm during the war, and their house was damaged twice again, once by a doodlebug and once by a V2 flying bomb that landed over by the Warren.

Towards the end of the war he grew a few acres of buckwheat for the American soldiers and was very worried that an incendiary bomb would land on it, as it was worth £100 a ton of all those years ago. Fortunately, it was all fine and a profitable crop to grow.

His mother was a very able horsewoman, who rented out horses for hunting. She was also an accomplished pianist, entertaining the family in the evenings with her playing. This gave him a lifelong love of listening to piano music. In recent years, my sister Domini has continued to play for Dad, which has given him much pleasure. You will hear one of his favourite tunes at the end of the service.

The neighbouring farmer, Mr Davison from Ford place, taught dad how to broadcast and sow seed by hand. He would mark out the field with sticks and then walk up and down the furrows broadcasting with both hands from a trug of seed carried on his front. In fact he was still broadcasting by hand well after the end of the war and was apparently very good at it.

They did manage to buy a tractor and plough when he was 16 and he ploughed many other farmers land earning 1 pound an acre and ploughing about 4 acres a day, which was equivalent to a weeks wages at the time. Before the war they hadn't seen a ploughed field in the area, most wheat being cheaply imported from America .

His father had also bought an old Humber car which they made into a pick -up, by opening it at the back and pulling out the seats so they could use it for carting dung out of the sheds.

 Dad used to drive this on the roads during the war when he was only 15 or 16 because it was the only way to make deliveries or collections. The local policeman was a very understanding man and turned a blind eye to this even though he knew dad was under-age, and even accepted a lift from dad from Penshurst station back to the village.
Penshurst station was used much more in those days and I remember dad telling me they once had a flock of sheep delivered by train which had been grazing in Hyde Park.
In fact dad never did take a driving test and he would tell you that you that he never had an accident, although more recently, there seemed to be some mysterious dents in the Land Rover, which he conveniently ignored.

Dad used to enjoy playing football and cricket and was actually due to have a cricket trial for Kent when he was 14 but then war broke out. After the war he and his brothers joined the Tunbridge Wells amateur boxing club which met once a week  at st James hall. He took part in the southern area championship in 1949 in the Assembly hall in Tunbridge Wells and unluckily was drawn against the champion of the south of England. He actually nearly won, and there was a headline in the courier next day --  First time in the ring and nearly beats champion! He told me his disadvantage was he couldn't get angry enough against his opponent.
He always loved watching boxing on the television and if we were sitting beside him on the sofa, the whole thing would move about, as he couldn't help ducking and dodging with the boxers.

He also loved dancing, and in 1950, met my mother who was working in Tunbridge Wells in a home for neglected children. Less boxing and more dancing now!

 I remember mother telling me the first summer when they were courting that he said to her --

" One day when it rains, I'll take you to the seaside!
Ever the farmer! I just hope he had cleaned the dung out of the Humber car!

In 1951 they were married and lived at South park, where my two sisters Domini and Mary and I were born.  Mother worked hard and helped support us, keeping chickens and selling the eggs and making our clothes. Dad often said he would never have achieved so much if he hadn't had such a supportive wife. I read somewhere that one of the best things a father can do for his children is to love their mother, and he certainly did that.
His brothers John and Dick were working on the farm too now so more land could be taken on and in 1961 we moved to Beggars Barn, where he lived for the rest of his life.

All the physical work made him and his brothers very strong, and as a young boy I used to relish how strong he was. Bearing in mind the standard sack size was 2 1/4 hundred weight or 114 kg they needed to be strong. One afternoon, when he was 17, he carried 60 of those sacks up awkward stairs, into the hayloft at South Park. It must have made an impression, as he often told me about it, and how it finished him off for the day.

 Once my grandmother sent a wrought iron and teak garden bench down from London to the farm. It was very heavy and the delivery firm sent three men with it. They were huffing and puffing, dragging it along the lorry, and my dad just picked it up and walked off with it, apparently leaving them open mouthed, wondering what creatures inhabited the countryside!
Many of you have probably been on the receiving end of his hug or handshake. When Tony Curry, the new Rector, met my dad and shook hands apparently he couldn't play the organ for a week!

Dad was a Penshurst Parish Councillor for many years and was also nominated to be a Justice of the Peace when he was 48 and he served as a magistrate in Maidstone until he was 70. I know he really enjoyed this and I'm sure it was a healthy change from the long hours farming, and he sat on the bench over 600 times.

He loved his family, and enjoyed working alongside his brothers John and Dick for many years. Dick was known for his physical strength and stamina, and had a real way with animals. John was a very good mechanic, he had a great gift for making and mending machinery. When Dick moved to Hartfield in the 1980s, Dad and John continued farming together in Penshurst.

In later years Dad and Uncle John would often be seen together, passing through the village in the Landrover, feeding animals and delivering hay. They were the best of friends.

Dad loved living in Penshurst and always considered that he lived in one

of the best places in the world. I remember chatting to him once, about countries that I had visited, and he said, "Well of all the places I've been, you can't beat England!" I said, 'but dad you've never really been anywhere else! "
His only foray abroad was a day trip to Dieppe for my sister Domini's 21st birthday, where his worst fears about the French were realised, when the first thing he saw were two men relieving themselves against a wall in the street!

He was from the generation that have seen so many changes over the years, from hoeing weeds by hand, and carting hay with a horse, to working in modern tractors with computers and GPS.
A few years ago, The Farmers Weekly published that picture of him in the order of service sheet, taken when he was 13, carting hay with a horse, together with a photo that I took of him when he was 83 in that same field, harvesting wheat with a modern combine.

More recently, he became frustrated that he couldn't work so much, but never complained, and was always very positive. My sister Mary used to bring him in her car, along to the fields where we were working. He enjoyed these trips so much, looking at the crops and checking the animals.

 He would come along with me when he could, and you may have seen us go by in the Land Rover, loaded with hay, and his  Zimmer frame strapped to the back .

  He was such a kind and generous man, and we have had many letters from people whom he had visited taking chocolates, potatoes or raspberries.

 Many of you may remember that when asked how he was, he would reply, "All the better for seeing you!"

It has been a real privilege to work with my father. I suppose I must have seen him most days of my life, from when he used to tie me with baler twine onto the tractor beside him, in the days before cabs, and health and safety; to more recent days when he would be riding beside me.
We have been so fortunate to have had such a loving and devoted father. He was also very proud of his four grandchildren and his two great-grand children.

 We will miss him greatly, but we are comforted by the fact that he had such a full life and did not suffer in death.

 I know he had a firm Christian faith and I am sure that I will see him again. I don't know if there are such things as handshakes in heaven, but if there are, he is probably cracking fingers, even now.