

Bramham Millennium Characters 8 : Elizabeth Bustard



Born in 1928 , in Low Road , now Low Way , near the Chapel , Elizabeth Sanderson was the fifth of seven children , each one born on a different day of the week to Mrs Mary Sanderson and her husband Harry, a native of the village and a gamekeeper at Bramham Park. At eighteen months , Elizabeth moved to the end cottage facing the churchyard where Vicarage Lane meets Back Lane , and , apart from her domestic and military service , has lived in the village virtually all of her life. A Bramham villager, through and through , with a pedigree to match ; her four grandparents -- Scott , Cass , Sanderson , Smith -- were all local families.

After leaving the then village C of E school at age 14 , Elizabeth entered domestic service as kitchen maid at Stockeld Park , at the time a nursing home during World War 2 . Here she worked from 6.30 in the morning until 11.30 at night with half a day off each week , and a weekend every month , for wages of 30 shillings a month. Her next job , working in the fields , continued until Elizabeth was 16 and a half , when she ran away to join the forces towards the latter end of the War. After three and a half years in the Auxillary Territorial Service [the ATS] , she was demobbed on 26 August 1948 to marry , the next month at All Saints Bramham , Reginald Bustard , a Dales lad she had met in the Army at Bardney in Lincolnshire. The couple came back to Bramham , initially to live with Elizabeth 's parents in Vicarage Lane , before moving into their new Council house on Lyndon Square , which was to be their family home for the remaining 50 years of their married life.

It was here that the three **Bustard children** , Kenneth , Lydia and Robert were raised , the boys eventually continuing the family tradition by making distinguished careers in the Army , whilst Lydia remained living close to her parents. Indeed , Kenneth and Robert both rose through the ranks as soldiers . going on to attain a Queen 's Commission. Kenneth retired at the rank of Captain , whilst Robert continues to serve in the rank of Major. Such promotion is an impressive achievement for any soldier and is possibly a unique distinction for brothers to attain.

Elizabeth 's connections with the village lie not only in her having lived here all her life, raised from generations of village lineage , for she has taken a large and varied part in Bramham life. As a girl , she was a Girl Guide here , and served as a volunteer at the Biggin when it housed waif and strays during the War. She cleaned at the Clifford village school for 13 years as well as for a variety of residents. She was one of the team of churchyard grave diggers, a family tradition since her grandfather Smith 's time as the last Sexton ; this work Elizabeth did on and off from her girlhood until she became a pensioner , and she has a wealth of

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stories she could tell , like the nobles buried upright in their tombs near the path , or the little boy who wondered why his parents were putting a wardrobe into a hole in the churchyard . However , Elizabeth was brought up to respect the dead , with the belief that what happens in the graveyard stays right there .

All her life Elizabeth has worked for the the village , with church youth groups [Sunday School teacher , Girls ' Friendly Society and Girls ' Life Brigade] and , notably , as one of the Village Hall Supporters ' Committee which was set up in 1975 to rid the Hall of debt. She also served on the Parish Council for 9 years and remains one of our Neighbourhood Watch leaders .

However , she would have no doubt that her most cherished contribution has been to the Royal British Legion , her service beginning as soon as she left the Army in 1948 , and continuing into the new Millennium , a proud record indeed. Elizabeth has held every position bar President in the Boston Spa branch of the Legion [the RBLWS] , carried the Standard for 30 years until after the VE and VJ anniversary celebrations of 1995 , and has laboured tirelessly in the Legion 's work to support their injured comrades. Her Legion work still continues , for the West Yorkshire County Committee , as a representative for the Leeds Group.

After a lifetime here , Elizabeth Bustard has seen Bramham grow from the small farming community it was between the wars to the larger mixed country and commuter village it is at the beginning of the new Millennium --- and very few if any residents know more , or care more , about it . Bramham truly runs through Elizabeth 's veins.