

# **Moyra Mary Lane, formerly Cross née Davies.** (11<sup>th</sup> July 1926 – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016)

It can be quite difficult at times to recount the life and achievements of a woman like my mother within our society. She had no profession or calling, she had no formal career or academic qualifications, she was as some might say merely a housewife. Actually she was a granddaughter and daughter, niece and cousin, sister, wife, mother, grandmother and aunt, and in all of those she had no superior. She spent her entire life looking to and working for the needs and benefit of her family and its members.

Moyra along with her elder sister Dilys Delores, younger sister Valerie and brother Jeremy were born and brought up in Sawston.



**Moyra to the right enjoying an early holiday in Yarmouth with her big sister Dilys.**

She was educated in the village initially at the infant and junior school along by The Baulks, the buildings of which are in the process of being

re-developed into residential houses. You can take a trip along The Baulks on Google Street View [HERE](#).

Her secondary education came from Sawston Village College, only established a few years after her birth, and although she attained no distinctive academic qualifications she learnt plenty. The primary function of the College was to provide an education for the life the students would subsequently lead and in that and with her they succeeded admirably. Moyra became an excellent cook and a very skilful needlewoman both making and altering clothing for the family as well as furnishings and household fittings.

World War 2, which commenced shortly after she began her secondary education, changed everything. Duxford and its environs attracted attention from many quarters as one of the principal airfields in the battles that were to follow. One of those brought to the area by the war was Dennis Walter Cross of Stockport, Cheshire. He had joined the Territorial Army and the Welch Regiment and was posted to Biggleswade along with his unit to provide perimeter defence for the various East Anglian airfields. Somehow they met, Moyra and Dennis and on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1943 they married after what must have been a brief and inter-dispersed relationship, probably not an uncommon thing at that time. On the marriage certificate Dennis's unit is shown as No 1 Commando which means he must have spent quite some time away in the Highlands of Scotland on the intensive induction and training course.



Then very shortly after the marriage he was away to India and Burma and one of the forgotten wars only returning to the UK in September 1946.

**Dennis in India shortly before his return in 1946**

During his absence a son was born so for two and a half years she had sole charge of his upbringing, fortunately within a strong family unit, nevertheless they could not have been easy years.



**The young mother and son.**

Dennis's return from Burma brought with it a very happy event and a new member of the family their daughter Nicola, unfortunately not everything else was happy. After what today would be classified as domestic violence the couple separated, Dennis moved away and divorce proceedings followed. Whilst I cannot condone the incident I witnessed at that time it would be wrong to make judgement on that one incident alone as I have done. Burma was no holiday and it is impossible to say what effect that experience had upon him, all I can say is his subsequent military career, which you can read about [HERE](#), demonstrated that he was something of a hero.

So Moyra was now left with two children to rear although not entirely alone as she could and did rely upon her family. It was not long either before a new man came into her life and one she did not have to look far for as he lived only two doors away.

Norman David Lane, like most others of that generation had been engaged in the war. He served in Europe through France to Germany in the Essex Yeomanry and a self-propelled gun.



**Norman in Germany in 1946**

With a new marriage came new children and Janie, Amanda and Kimberley completed the family group. A growing family required larger accommodation and after a short spell at 45, High Street a move to the recently built estate at the back of the gardens of 41 and 43 High Street that they had been using and to Churchfield Avenue. I must confess that in the few years we lived at Churchfield Avenue I was quite a challenge to Norman in a way that only a stropky, awkward young boy can be. He endured it very well and I can honestly say that he really was one of the nicest men I have ever met, they truly made a wonderful couple. After just a few years we moved to No 10 Hillside which offered better accommodation for the family and a large garden and orchard that provided fresh fruit and vegetables for us all.

With growing children comes ageing parents and shortly after her second marriage Moyra's father, Edgar Royston Davies died in Addenbrooke's Hospital after undergoing surgery. While of course there were other family members to lend support to her mother part of that responsibility lay with her. Lending support and help to her elderly relatives as well as looking after her own children as they grew up was very much the focus of Moyra's life.

In 1963 I joined the army and so left home at the age of 19 leaving some space for my brother and sisters. I also lost the daily contact with the house and family. After 2-3 years I decided to try for the S.A.S. and returned home for a weekend leave before going off to the selection course. During that weekend my mother produced to me an envelope addressed to her from my father Dennis dated 1952 which showed that at that time he was serving with the S.A.S. in Malaya. We had never spoken of him before and did not discuss him then, or since. Perhaps we should have done. I don't think she kept that correspondence from any sentimental reason it was just that she never threw anything away, a habit which I am pleased to have inherited. She had however remembered after 14 years or so that she had it, where she kept it and clearly those initials registered some meaning for her.

Life at Sawston moved on and while her children grew up and started to have children of their own her elders grew older and Moyra was on hand to help them all. Aunt Alice, Great Aunt Alice Godden, came very much under Moyra's care at the end of her life. She had been born in Bures, Suffolk and moved to Sawston in the late 1800's with her parents and



brothers to live in the [Old Vicarage](#) when they came with the new vicar the Rev. Charles Edward Crump. Alice spent much of her life in service and was a very proud and excellent cook but marvelled at Moyra's puff pastry, not realising that it was the "modern" kind, bought frozen and quickly cooked. Uncle Roy Challis, younger brother of Madge, Moyra's mother, led a very independent life for most of his years. He lived and worked alone after his parents died running the grocers shop at 43, High Street but in his later days was grateful and appreciative of the help and support that Moyra offered.



**Norman with Moyra.**

Madge, her mother spent much of her later life with Moyra both working with her in the earlier times and being cared for in the later period. The final care came to a halt when Moyra developed stomach cancer for which she had to be hospitalised and treated. While Madge moved to the care of her son and daughter-in-law Moyra's treatment was fortunately

successful. This did bring about a change in her, clearly after the treatment she had to re-cooperate for some time but perhaps this illness brought with it a realisation of human vulnerability and took away some of the confidence that time and experience had given her. She continued to be the mother and grandmother we knew but just that tiny edge of confidence had gone.

Some little time after this she lost the man who had stood by her and with her and who had loved her and supported her for most of her life when Norman had a stroke and subsequently died. I went with her to visit him in hospital. He was not conscious at the time and it was clear that he would not regain consciousness. She took that situation quite stoically and we returned home.

The last 15 years of her life lacked the hustle and bustle of the busy family life that had preceded it. With children and grandchildren full grown it was now a time for the great grandchildren and nothing pleased her more than to see and cuddle a baby. Unfortunately, with time her mind began to slip as dementia tightened its grip but as you can see below in a photograph with her latest great grandson Sebastian taken as recently as March 2016 the recognition and pleasure of holding a baby is still there.



On Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016 her youngest daughter Amanda, who had been her primary carer, on one of her frequent daily visits found Moyra lying in the garden amongst a group of apples she had been gathering together. She no longer ate the apples but gathered them up as she had done throughout her years at No 10. She could not be roused and so an ambulance was called and she was taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital. Examination showed she had sustained a fracture to her upper leg. She was regularly visited by her daughters and youngest son but rarely wakened. I visited her just once and found she was receiving excellent care. She lay in an inflated bed with both her head and feet raised up. She did not wake but lay there in an apparent state of restful slumber. I was quite amazed to see her legs. For years she had suffered the pain, inconvenience and embarrassment of enlarged and discoloured legs from varicose veins but now her legs looked like those of a young girl, well perhaps not quite a young girl but they looked clean and fine and well. Just a few days later in the early hours of September 14<sup>th</sup> she passed away.

Nigel Lane

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