

Wedding Day in 1943

From Henry Hanson

Henry Hanson's family history from 75 years ago.

James and Kathleen McInness are Henry's maternal Great Grandparents.

At the start of the war James was 22 and a trainee civil engineer with Sheffield City Council and for the first year or so it was a reserved occupation so he was not called up. Later he asked to be released so that he could volunteer for the RAF. He trained as a navigator in the RAF and flew in Lancasters. As part of his training he went to Canada to learn aerial photography and later photographed the V2 construction sites. He gained a lot of weight while in Canada, no rationing over there, and the crew of the Lancaster nicknamed him Herman. He was stationed in Lincolnshire during the war for most of the time but also in Cambridgeshire.

Around VE day James was due to go with his squadron to the Far East but he had a bad reaction to the Yellow Fever inoculation, and they left without him. Sheffield had been badly bombed during the war and the City Council wanted him back for the planning of the new road network so he was demobbed and never re-joined his squadron.

Kathleen was 18 at the start of the war and was working as a book keeper for a company in Sheffield, these days she would probably have trained as an accountant. During the war Kathleen was in the Signals and was stationed in both Nottingham and Sterling. She learned to send and receive Morse Code, which she was able to do for the rest of her life. During the war she is enjoying riding pillion on the despatch riders motor bikes. Also, towards the end of the war there were Americans at the same base and when they were ordered to leave, they left behind a lot of food including tinned peaches and ice cream something the British had not had for years because of rationing.

They were served peaches and ice cream with every meal and apparently were initially very pleased but after a few days were fed up with it!

Kathleen and James were married on the 25 October 1943 at Norton Lees Church in Sheffield. Many people during the war got married in uniform or normal clothes because material was rationed, and you had to save coupons to buy clothes or material. But Kathleen was based in Nottingham at the time and was able to get some Nottingham lace – cheap and she also managed to source some parachute silk, so her mum made her wedding dress.

Here is a photo of Kathleen and James McInness on their wedding day in 1943.

