

The story focuses on the day in the life of a typical working class family in 1953. Britain was slowly emerging from the hardships of the Second World War, although some rationing was still in place. Despite this, many in the town were looking forward to the coming coronation of a new queen, and were hoping that this might represent a new era of peace and a beginning of prosperity.

Always the first person to rise in the mid-terraced house in Logan Street was Harry Wells, a Harborian husband, father, and householder. Demobbed from the Royal Navy some months ago, he had happily returned to his job as a signalman with LMS and was living his dream of settling down again with his wife Doris and their two children. Also living with them was his mother-in-law, a welcome and helpful addition to the household.

Harry's first task of the day was to do battle with the Ideal Boiler in the kitchen. It was an essential piece of equipment since it heated the water, warmed the kitchen, aired the washing and made wonderful toast! It was also prone to sulking when the wind was from the North, and Harry had a gas poker which, when accompanied by a few choice Naval words, showed it who was boss. Soon Doris was downstairs, and between them they prepared breakfast and packed lunches for the family. The "News Chronicle" had been delivered by the lad from top Greens, and it was quickly scanned for the news, then Harry fetched his bike from the shed and set off, reminding his wife to buy a battery for his bike's front light from Marriot's Cycle Repairs in Coventry Road. He was due at Little Bowden Junction by 8 o'clock and the traffic was fairly light as he passed the Cherry Tree on Coventry Road, but as he came to the two roundabouts on the square there were several cars on the road.

In Northampton Road he passed the Market Hall and the Ritz Cinema opposite. Once a week the family had an outing to "the pictures" and he smiled as he remembered their recent visit to see "Hans Christian Andersen," starring the American Danny Kaye. It had been tempting to stay and see it round again. They were all looking forward to seeing "Genevieve" when it came to Harborough. It had been given a very good write-up in Doris's "Picturegoer" magazine, and they were all fans of Kenneth More.

Reaching the corner of Springfield Street, known to many as Billyboy's Lane, he noticed the delightful scent of the production of the day at Symingtons Coffee Mills - Strawberry Tablecream. Turning into Scotland Road he found the railway crossing closed over the Northampton Line, but once the gates were opened he cycled on to Braybrooke Road and his destination.

Meanwhile, Doris had completed her preparations for going to work, having checked that the two children had packed their satchels. Both looked very smart at this time of day, but she reminded them to change as soon as they came home, as uniforms were a considerable part of the family's expense. Doris was proud that she had a job herself, as the extra money was a great help in the purchase of things for the children. Betty (8) was attending Coventry Road C of E School, and twelve-year old Michael had moved up to the Grammar School last September, having passed the 11+ exam. Waving to Michael, who went to school by bike with his friends, she delivered Betty to her playground then went to Tommy Marion's for the cycle battery, finally making her way to her part-time job at Richards the tailors in the High Street.

Doris was an expert hand-finisher and she also enjoyed, in her precious spare time, adapting and repairing the costumes for the Gilbert and Sullivan productions by members of the Market Harborough Operatic Society. A very high standard was always maintained by those taking part; with stalwarts like Gerald Heighton, Charlie Bindley and Jack Coles and many others. The annual visit to the Assembly Rooms was always very eagerly awaited by the Wells family and was a highlight in the town's entertainment.

At 3 pm she left Richards, and was amongst the many that paused to watch the red, white and blue bunting being strung along the street, then with her shopping list in her hand she called at Liptons, where she was served by the manager, Mr. Lancaster. She carried her full shopping bag home by the shortest way possible, using shortcuts through the Talbot Yard, School Lane and various jitties which remain to this day.

The reader may be wondering where Doris's mother fits into this narrative, and that perhaps she is not really required. Far from it: Vera Roberts had her place in the smooth running of that busy household, and was quite indispensable. Widowed in the 1930s Vera came to live with Doris when Harry enlisted, and over the subsequent years she became the kingpin of the family, being the advisor and confidante to them all. She was an avid knitter making voluminous garments for all the family, who were much too fond of her to complain, and her other hobby was attending whist drives in various church halls throughout the town.

She helped with the cleaning, washing, cooking and shopping for the family, but this is not to say that she had no social life of her own. On the day which we are describing she rose after everyone else had left the house, preferring to get up in her own time when the house was quiet.

After breakfast she set off for the High Street. Here she called to pay for the week's papers at top Greens, collected the children's comics ("Bunty" for Betty and "The Eagle" for Michael), and then went to meet a few of her friends at the Braunstone Cafe, for tea and gossip. Ignoring the attraction of a whist drive at St. Di's Church Hall, she made a call in Abbey Street to complete some important business, and then picked up her grand-daughter from school on the way home.

Soon the whole family was at home, and after the evening meal they listened on the wireless to "The Archers", a programme which had become a favourite with them all since it began two years before in 1951. It was after this finished that Granny Vera made an announcement which astounded them - she had bought a television set from Abbey Stores as a present for them all. It was a beautiful Pye set, with a 9-inch screen, and a man was coming next day to put up the aerial. Now they would be able to watch, in their own living room, their young queen being crowned.

Her family was so excited that they proudly spread the news throughout the neighbourhood during the next few days, inviting friends to join them, and so on the following Tuesday a record number of joyful Harborians packed that living room. Not one of them could have guessed that they were witnessing an event which would not be seen again for considerably more than sixty years.