

## **Annie Biles 12th April 1901 - 2nd November 1988 (87 Years)**

**By Sam Biles**



Dec. 1971

Annie Biles was born Annie Gilbert, the first child of James Gilbert 1870-1935 (Mount Joy X 3b) and his wife Frances nee Hayles 1877-1937 (Mount Joy X 3b). Annie had brothers and sisters - Benjamin Hart (1903-1991), Roy James (1906-1995) Doris May (1909-1999) and twins Nora (1912-1996) and Ralph (1912-? ). After attending school locally Annie worked as a waitress at Weeks Restaurant in Newport which was situated on the High Street in St James' Square - now (2019) occupied by Halifax Building Society. She married Charles Frederick Harold Biles 1898-1961 (Mount Joy B2,182) in 1924 at St John's Church, Newport. They started their married life at Devonia (now called The Birches), at Forestside (Forest Road) at Carisbrooke but when this house was requisitioned in WW2 they moved in with Harold's father 'Fred' Biles at Trafalgar Cottage, 13A Union Street Newport - on the corner with Trafalgar Road.

Harold and Annie had 2 children David (1935-2015) and Joyce (1929-2017). Harold was a cattle dealer, pig & cattle farmer and knackerman. He had a knackers yard at Park Green Farm, Forestside and a butcher's slaughterhouse at Scarrots Lane. Annie was a stalwart of the business; every night she wrote up, from Harold's pocket diary, the deals he had noted down and entered them into the cashbook. She did the wages, ran the family home and ran the pets' meat shop at the rear of Trafalgar Cottage cutting up the meat, weighing it out and making up parcels in newspaper for her customers. Harold expanded the business, taking on the tenancy of Gotten Leaze Farm, Calbourne in the 1930's and then buying Somerton Farm, Northwood just after WWII.

During WW2 the pets meat business run from the brew house to the rear of Trafalgar Cottage did well - it was supposed that some of the better meat was stewed up to augment the purchaser's meat ration! In the War there was a fair bit of barter going on. Often meat would be left for collection in the cupboard outside the house in the evening. David recalled hearing footsteps outside at night and being told not to look out. In the morning fresh eggs or milk would be in the cupboard and the meat was gone. Technically it may have been against the rules, perhaps it was just surviving. The glass in the large sash windows at the property were blown out in the war when nearby Moreys was bombed, relieved of the weight of the glass the lead weights came down, the frames were sent upwards and smashed the roof of the conservatory; Joyce was blown down the stairs by the same bomb.

David went to Ryde School and then to King James Grammar School in Newport under Major Erith where he had better success becoming Head Boy. After school he joined Harold in the business but shortly after Harold bought Somerton Farm in 1952 David decided he had to get off the Island and he did his National Service. This caused Harold some consternation as David could have been

exempted as working in Agriculture. David however returned and worked successfully with his father for a few years before the latter's untimely death in 1961. Harold's health had deteriorated - he may have had diabetes - and he died in July of that year from a heart attack after having had a row in Newport Market.

It must have been a terrible blow to Annie, her son David had just been operated on for Appendicitis and her Daughter Joyce's home in Arreton had just burned down. She was only 60. She was made of stern stuff and knuckled down. The business now traded as A&D Biles and David quickly learned the ropes with his mother handling all the administration and finances, encouraging him and successfully 'keeping the show on the road'.

Annie helped run the Isle of Wight Hunt Ball for many years and remained on the Committee until well into her 80s. She helped organise Point-to-Point dinner-dances and was a keen follower of racing and Point-to-Points, travelling to many meetings with Harold across the south of England. She was involved with the Royal Isle of Wight Agricultural Society Annual Show and assisted with the time keeping and scoring for the Show Jumping classes.

Located, as it was, in the heart of Newport, Trafalgar Cottage was 'open house' and friends and family were always calling in. Tea and refreshments were always at hand - a cold sausage, rock cakes which Annie called 'nubbies', shortbread or bread pudding. Annie's home remained the centre of her family with David lunching there every Tuesday - market day with fellow cattle dealer Buzz Terry from the New Forest. Annie was liked and respected by all who knew her and greatly mourned when she died in 1988.