

Introduction

William Lloyd Miller (WLM) was my maternal grandfather. He had a big influence on my formative years, living as we did for quite a while under the same roof. He kept a diary for many years. Unfortunately only one volume - dated from 1938 to 1939 **“The Diary”** has survived (David Fenton found it). I thought it would be interesting to comment on this diary, and at the same time write a short biography of WLM as this might be of interest to his great-great- and great-grandchildren.

The Family

“Grandad Miller” – William Lloyd Miller (WLM) was born on 24th April 1884 at Northgate Street, Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire (now Ceredigion), Wales to Alfred Augustus Miller (1858 – 1929) and Mary Elizabeth Miller neé James (1858 – 1909) who was Welsh.

He was the third child of six. His siblings were Alfred George James (1881 - 1961), John Edward (1883 – 1945), Mary Elizabeth (1886 - 1980), Edward A. (1889 – 1945) and Annie Rebecca aka Nancy (1891 - 1967).

We learn from the census of 1901 (when he was 16) that he was living at 13 Ancona Road, Islington, London together with his parents and his five siblings. His profession or occupation is recorded as “Clerk Commercial”. In the 1911 census he was living as a boarder at 39 Ulysses Road, Hampstead, London and his occupation was “Assurance Agent”.

He married “Grandma” Dora Jane Myland (DJM) – who was born on 10th March 1884 - on 7th August 1911 at the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Stoke Newington Common, Hackney, London. WLM and DJM had three children: Dora Mary born 19th July 1912, Kathleen Emily born 11th April 1914 and Arnold Myland Lloyd born 29th December 1923.

In the 1921 census (19th June 1921) we find the family registered as living in Walpole Marsh, Wisbech. They had been living there since during the war on a nursery belonging to George W. Miller (1847 – 1923). (A photograph of George exists with his long white beard and bowler hat standing behind a gigantic *Cardiorinum giganteum* in his nursery). WLM records his occupation as “Fruit Grower Farmer’s Clerk”, and DJM as “Home duties”. The children Dora and Kathleen were 8 and 7 years old respectively, and the parents were 37.

Early Life

Of WLM’s early life I know very little. (I should have interviewed him 70 years ago to record his life story – but how many grandchildren take the trouble to do this?) WLM lived through two world wars which significantly influenced his life. When the first world war broke out in 1914 WLM was 30. As a pacifist and a conscientious objector and refused to go to war for King and Country. As history has shown it turned out to be a sensible move, but must have required great courage on his part to resist the pressure all round to go to war. Having said that I would say that as a smallish Welshman he would have been totally useless as a soldier (he couldn’t hurt a fly) and would not have survived combat. Also Arnold was not born until five years after the war ended. Being a

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conscientious objector had its down side as he had to go and work on a nursery in Norfolk belonging to a relative. It was there that DJM wrote a poem about the strawberry fields “Up the long rows ...” which I believe she put to music. As mentioned above the family continued to live there for a while after the war.

Stoke

At some point WLM must have obtained employment in Bishop’s Stortford, and as far as I remember they lived in a small dwelling in Northgate End (near the junction with Half Acres) where Arnold was born in 1923. Some time after this WLM had a house built nearby. The family home was “Stoke” 12 Half Acres, Bishop’s Stortford, Herts, which was built on a narrow plot of land sloping down between the Half Acres footpath at the south, and Elm Road to the north. The front door was on the south side and there was an entrance to the kitchen up some steps on the west side. The ground floor consisted of the kitchen and separate pantry, living room on the east side, and a dining room with a hatch into the kitchen at the south-west corner. On the north side of the living room was a door with a stained glass window out to a veranda. Due to the slope of the ground there was space under the veranda to store unwanted objects. They inevitably decomposed before long. Also under the kitchen was a small cellar which did not provide much protection for things stored there. Upstairs there was the main bedroom on the SW corner and the girls bedroom to the SE. A third smaller bedroom for Arnold was at the NW corner (later to be turned into the famous darkroom by the German POW Wolfgang Nack). There was a bathroom and a separate WC on the North side. After the war there was still gas lighting in the WC as I remember. At some point the telephone was installed at Stoke, Bishop’s Stortford 994, but there is no mention of having it during the time of the diary. This explains the almost daily exchange of letters or postcards (P.C’s) between members of the family. I lived at Stoke with Judith and our mother from the end of 1944 to March 1946, before moving to a flat in Oxford House – since demolished - at the other end of town. At primary school I spent quite a lot of after-school hours at Stoke. According to Zoopla, Stoke was last sold in Sept. 1998 for £192,500 and is now (end 2021) estimated to be worth £799k to £796k – incredible!

The Diary

Employment

WLM was an insurance agent for what was then the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society Ltd. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liverpool_Victoria. “Liverpool Victoria was most commonly associated with "penny policies" collected door-to-door by a cross-country team of agents to offer a method of saving to people of modest means.” WLM covered Bishop’s Stortford and the outlying villages. He “worked from home” as it would be called today. The diary records the rounds he made for collecting the premiums, and presumably canvassing, which hardly varied from week to week.

Monday:	Town round (i.e Bishop’s Stortford)
Tuesday:	Hadham or Sawbridgeworth and Harlow
Wednesday:	Returns (bookkeeping?)
Thursday:	Broxted and Henham or Newport
Friday:	Takeley and Elsenham or Farnham Green
Saturday:	Stansted

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All of these villages are within 4 to 9 miles from Stoke, so not having a car he probably made the rounds on a push-bike. It would have taken up to about three quarters of an hour to get there. (Evidence for him cycling is the entry for 26th January “Snow. Broxted and Henham - difficult riding”). See also 9. Apr 1939 and 28. Apr 1939. After the war there were in fact two derelict cycles in the cellar. In any case he records every day when he returned home from the round - generally in the early afternoon, so that there was time afterwards for a walk round local fields and woods. There is no mention of his bringing cash to a bank, so it's not clear how that was organised. Occasionally there are references to meetings in various places in Hertford and also London, which could have been in connection with his work. Returns were written in a collecting book.

DJM (aka “Mother” in the diary or occasionally as Dora) was a primary school teacher, and on 9th January 1939 she started supply teaching at Hatfield Heath School, and continued there until the end of the time covered by the diary. She travelled to and from school by bus, or sometimes by train. Later she taught at Broad Oak and Sawbridgeworth, and after the war she taught me for my first primary school year, which was probably 1946, at St. Michaels Primary School Bishop's Stortford (sadly demolished to make way for a car park).

Religion

Although WLM worked six days a week and only had Sunday free, a lot of time was spent on Sundays with going to church and diverse religious activities. Going to “our church” is mentioned, although I’m not sure which one that was, as well as the Congregational (now United Reformed) Church in Water Lane <http://www.waterlaneurc.org.uk/history/>. Dora and Kathleen sometimes went to the Parish Church of St. Michaels (C. of E.).

On Sunday afternoons DJM generally went by bus to a Widford Chapel to take Sunday School. Although not strictly speaking a religious organisation, the grandparents were very active in the temperance society Band of Hope (B. of H.). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hope_UK. Meetings were held on Monday evenings. The location was not mentioned, but due to the number of children involved was obviously not at Stoke. As strict teetotalers a great deal of tea was drunk – somebody estimated at least ten pots a day). Grandma preached at the Sisterhood and other organisations, and Grandad preached occasionally too.

The diary in more detail

The daily entries begin on 28th November 1938, when the grandparents were both 54. Dora was 26 and was training to be a nurse at St. Georges Hospital London. Kathleen (aka Kay) was 24 and had started work as an almoner at Norwich Hospital. Arnold was 15 in December 1938 and was a day-boy at Bishop’s Stortford College. The diary ends on abruptly 19th September 1939 just after the outbreak of the second world war.

It’s not obvious exactly why WLM kept a diary.

After a brief description of the weather, presumably important since he was cycling during the day, on weekdays WLM records his round and the time he arrived home. On Sundays he reports if they went to church in the morning, afternoon or evening.

Also, he inevitably records when he “came up to bed”, and if other people were still up and about downstairs (So that is when he probably made entries to the diary). Interestingly he only once mentions when he got up in the morning, but I think one can assume that when doing his rounds, he got up fairly early.

Hardly a day went by without visitors dropping by for tea, supper or whatever. Apart from friends of WLM and DJM, many were contemporaries of Dora and Kathleen (although the girls were now not living at Stoke), and friends of Arnold. Names that keep coming up are Mr Gammon, Douglas, Luke, Ken, Gordon, Mr Proctor, Kerans (see comment from Katrina on page 19), etc.

Here is a transcription of the diary for 28th November to 31st December 1938 in **bold font** with my notes (in normal font). To continue the biography during and after the war I have included excerpts from the diaries of Kathleen (KEM – later KEW). These are in *italic font*. She kept four diaries between 1934 and 1948. She made entries about once a month, but unlike the diary of WLM, she placed more emphasis on her feelings and comments than on the bare facts.

Nov 28th 1938 Mon. Dull. Town round – home at 5 o’c. Dora arrived home about 2 o’c. B. of H. (Band of Hope) meeting this evening. Letters from Mary and John (Mary and John – presumably WLM’s sister and brother or possibly Mary’s son (Dr) John Hawkey from Wantage) . Went to bed in dining room at 10.45 (No explanation as to why he had to sleep downstairs! I do remember however, there being a “Put-u-up” in the dining room.)

Nov 29th Tues. Foggy – then fair. Hadham round – home at 1.45. Arnold (nearly 15) and Dora went round to Whitehall and Mother and I went up Cricket Field Lane to meet them. Photo from Kay (Kathleen aged 24. Since October 1938 KEM had been working as an almoner at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.) of herself with letter. Came to bed at 11 o’c.

Nov 30th Wed. Fine. Arnold and I slept in dining room last night and I got up at 5.30 – made some tea and did my returns (presumably “working from home” weekly returns for the insurance company.). I went with Dora to London by 11.17 coach – we arrived at Knightsbridge with just time to have a cup of tea – after I had left her at the Nurse’s home, I went to make a business call in Kensal Rise (?) and returned on the 4.40 coach from Eldon St. arriving home at 6.40. Douglas and Kerans came in at 10.5. Came up to bed at 11 o’c.

Dec 1st Thur. Fine. Cool. Broxted and Henham – home at 2.50. Mrs Featherby (The Featherbys lived in the bungalow next to Stoke on the west side, and Dorothy must have been their daughter. They also had a dog Peter who was taken for walks sometime by WLM and Arnold.) came in to supper. Wrote to Dora. Came up to bed at 11.15.

Dec 2nd Fri. Fine. Takeley and Elsenham – home at 1.20. Arnold and I took Featherby’s dog (? piece missing) across the fields and round Hoggett’s Wood (not far from the cricket field) – we saw a fox at Hoggett’s Wood. See <https://getoutside.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/local/hoggates-wood-east-hertfordshire> Mother spoke at Sisterhood this evening – I met her and we went to the FoR. (Fellowship of Reconciliation – a Christian Pacifist group) P.C. (postcard) from Dora. Letter from Kay - I wrote to both of them. Came up to bed at 11 o’c.

Dec 3rd Sat. Fine. Cool. Stansted, home at 3 o’c. Gammon (Mr Gammon had a car see 24.02.1939), Luke and Ken (two young friends of Arnold’s) in to supper. Came up to bed at 10.35.

Dec 4th Sun. We did not go to Church this morning. Wrote to Dora and Kay. Douglas, Kerans, Luke and Ken came in just before we went to Church – on our return we found that they had gone – they did not come back tonight. Came up to bed at 10.45.

Dec 5th Mon. Fine. Town – home at 5 o’c. Brother John (probably WLM’s elder brother ?) here. B. of H. Came up to bed at 12.30. Letter from Kay, PC from Dora. Letter from John.

Dec 6th Tues. Fine S(awbridge)worth – home at 4.10. Mother at Dunmow Guild this afternoon. Mother wrote to Dora, Arnold wrote to Kay. Came up to bed at 11 o’c.

Dec 7th Wed. Fair. Did returns. Reg. Bonnett in this morning. This afternoon I walked round Hoggett’s Wood – Arnold’s cold not being better, he did not come with me. Mr Proctor in to supper. Letter from Kay. Wrote a PC to her. Came up to bed at 10.30.

Dec 8th Thur. Cloudy and dull all day. Newport, home at 2.45. Arnold's cold not gone yet, so he has stayed in bed all day – Listened tonight to Broadcast appeal by Earl Baldwin on behalf of Jewish Refugee fund: we feel that should like to offer to take a child. Mrs Maynard in this evening. Came up to bed at 10.30.

Dec 9th Fri. Fine until late afternoon, then rain. Farnham Green in morning. Met Dora and Jerry off coach at 1.00. Union meeting at Hertford this afternoon – took bus from there to Widford – met Mr Ashford by appointment and he and I went to Widford Chapel to service held by two Faith Missioners – home at 8.45. Came up to bed at 11.15. Mother and the girls still downstairs.

Dec 10th Sat. Fair. Stansted – home at 12.45. Kay arrived about 5 o'clock. Dora and Jerry met her at Station. Mr Rowles and the two Lady Missioners here to tea – left about 7 o'clock. Douglas, Kerans, Gordon and Luke and Ken in this evening. Too much noise for me, so brought work upstairs and in bed at 10 o'clock.

Dec 11th Sun. Fair. We did not go to church today. Denny arrived at 10.45. This afternoon Gordon, Ken and Luke came to tea and Kerans came after tea. Mother, Dora and I went to Station and saw Kay off by the 10.55 to Norwich. Came up to bed at 11.35.

Dec 12th Mon. Fair. Town – home at 4.45. Mother and I saw Dora and Jerry off by 11.17 coach this morning. Letter from John. B. of H. Dora (Mother!) addressed the meeting. 29 children present. Came up to bed at 10.20.

Dec 13th. Tues. Fair. Mild. Hadham and Thorley – home at 3 o'clock. Mother and Arnold walked round Whitehall – I went to meet them. Did returns. Proctor came in this evening for a short time. Came up to bed at 11 o'clock. P.C. from Kay.

Dec 14th. Wed. Mainly fair – some rain. Went to Henham this morning. Finished returns and continued writing new collecting book. Mother was going to Widford this evening but as it turned out a foul, foggy damp night, she stayed in and wrote to Dora, Kay and Millie. We listened to "Band Waggon". P.C. this morning from Dora – came up to bed at 10.20.

Dec 15th. Thur. Foggy then fine. Broxton and Henham – home at 2 o'clock. Mother, Arnold and I walked round Whitehall. Wrote to Dora and Mary. Mother at choir practice. Dorothy Fetherby and Mr. Gammon in to supper. Dorothy left at 12 – 10. Came up to bed at 11.25

Dec 16th. Fri. Rain all day and this evening. Takeley and Elsenham – home at 2 o'clock. - wet. Letter from Kay, wrote to her and to Dora. Came up to bed at 11.30 – light out at 12.20.

Dec 17th. Sat. Fair cold. Stansted – home at 3.00. Letter from Dora. Nobody came in this evening. (!) Came up to bed at 11.5.

Dec. 18th. Sun. Mainly fair, freezing, with bitterly cold wind – Mother at church this morning. I saw her off to Widford this afternoon, and met her just before 5.00 on her return – I did not go to Widford this evening, as intended, as the chapel – keeper thought that nobody would be there. Mother, Arnold and I at carol service in our church this evening. Gordon came at 4.00

and stayed to tea and afterwards went to the Methodist church. Nobody came in this evening. I wrote to Dora and Kay and took letters to the G.P.O. just before 10.00. I was going to light a fire in the girls' room for Arnold, but did not do so as the wind The following two pages (one sheet) are missing.

(Dec. 25th. Sun *Christmas day*) We had chicken for dinner. I went out to go to Widford this afternoon to take Mother's S.S. (Sunday school) but found the 'buses were not running. Luke came in after tea and Mr and Mrs Charles, Arnold and Luke did charades. Came up to bed at 1 o'clock.

(I think that this is the only occasion in the diary that food was mentioned in detail. In those days a chicken was something special and appropriate for Christmas dinner. Note that "lunch" is sometimes referred to as "dinner". There is no mention made anywhere of actually buying food, which would presumably have been from local shops long before the days of supermarkets. The only thing I can remember from after the war was that Grandad was keen on a fry up).

My mother Kathleen wrote diaries between 1934 and 1948 in a very different style to WLM's diary, but there are a few times when both writers cover the same event, and this is one of them.

December 31st 1938:Christmas this year was quite a happy one but Dora was not there. Christmas eve Douglas came in and stayed till nearly midnight. Since when he has not been heard of. Luke also was in, and came again on Christmas day and kept us very lively. Mr And Mrs Charles came in too. On Boxing Day we all went to Dulwich for dinner, and then saw over St Georges with Dora. The next day Dora came home but we were all very tired. We had tea at Mrs Charles. One or two things gave me great happiness. I had a beautiful blue handkerchief from Heinrich Gruber made by Swiss women with my initials.....

Dec. 26th. Mon. (Boxing Day) Mother, Kay, Arnold and I set out in a snowstorm for Dulwich, and arrived there at 12.30. We had Xmas dinner – present, besides ourselves, John , Millie, Marjorie, Donald, Mary , Betty, Rev. and Mrs Copeland. We called on Alf (WLM's brother Alfred was a schoolmaster at Dulwich College) and Win (wife of Alfred) and then went to St. George's Hospital, reaching there at 5.00. Dora took us round some of the wards and afterwards came with us to the Corner House (see for instance <https://flashbak.com/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-lyons-cornerhouses-and-their-nippy-waitresses-35186/>) – we left her at 7.45 – caught the 8.22 train from Liverpool Street and arrived home at 9.30. We soon had supper upstairs by the gas fire, and I lighted a fire in the girls room and we listened to a very lively and good Dance Band – Joe Loss.

Dec 27th. Tues. Mainly fine. Thaw set in last night – did most of my Monday round and arrived home about 3 o'clock. Dora arrived at 1 o'clock. We all went to the Charles' to tea. Came up to bed at 11.30. case of carvers (?) today from Walter and Louise (?).

Dec. 28th. Wed. Fair. Hadham round and finished yesterday's Town round -home at 3.15. Did returns. Dora Jun. (?) saw Kay off to Norwich this morning by 9.20 train. Peggy Swan in to tea. Dora went to London by 5.15 train to meet Raines (?). Arnold at flicks with Kelly and then home with him – returned at 10.15. I am off to meet Dora who arrives at 11.48. Mother wrote to Kay.

Dec. 29th. Thurs. Fair morning, rain in afternoon. Henham round – home at 4 o’c. - wet. Arnold’s (15th) birthday: birthday card from Kathleen and letter to the family. This has been one of our extra special kill-quickly hectic days. I met Dora at the station at 1 a.m. and after tea and ? In the bedroom it was about 2.00 when the light was put out, we got up late this morning, and I did not start out until 11 o’c – I arrived home wet and had to change. When I returned home, I found Rosy and Pansy Ballard, Peggy Swan, Mrs Charles and George Kelly here to tea. Gammon called in later, but only stayed a minute. Peggy phoned for a friend of hers at Takeley, who came on later with his saxophone – I’m afraid the saxophone is not designed for music, ... (unreadable)... - I am writing this at 10.35 and I hope the saxophone chap and Peggy will depart soon, so that I can lay my weary body in bed. - Peggy and the saxophone bloke left at 10.50 and I have come up to bed – the others are downstairs -Dora gone home with Peggy – Dora arrived back at 12 o’c.

(WLM played the violin, and as I remember after the war, used to perform at family gatherings where DJM would lead the family in singing and I for my part would play the piano. Interesting that he took a dislike to the saxophone and/or music played on this instrument, because later on Arnold took up the saxophone. I remember that he sold the instrument when he got engaged.)

Dec. 30th. Fri. Fair – Takeley and Elsenham – home at 1.15. Arnold had two teeth extracted this afternoon by gas by Mr. Dodd – Dr. Holmes in attendance. Arnold saw Dora off by 11.17 coach to London. Mother wrote to her this evening – I wrote to Kay. Came up to bed at 10 o’c.

Dec. 31st. Sat. Fair. Fine intervals. Letter from Dora saying that she is coming home again next Thursday. Stansted round, home at 4 o’c. Mother gave a treat this afternoon to her Widford S.S. (Sunday School) children at Widford, and I met her off the bus on her return at 7.30. Arnold at Kelly’s this afternoon – he reached home about 8 o’c. Came up to bed at 11.5. The old year will soon be out. Much to be thankful for in 1938 – Kathleen settled in her first post, and Dora in training for Hospital Nurse.

1939 (see Diary 1938-9.pdf)

The diary carries on in the same style in 1939, so I have not troubled to transcribe it, and will only point out any items of special interest.

January 1939 pp 7-14

Jan 1, WLM mentions bringing the wireless up into their bedroom. Before the days of portable radios, there must have been electricity in the house at least.

Jan 9, DJM started supply work at Hatfield Heath school which she continued until the summer. (see my entry for Oct 18.)

Jan. 12 “Dorothy Featherby (daughter of the next-door neighbour) cooked dinner”.

Jan 14 “Daisy Day” was a professional photographer who made some of the family photographs.

Jan. 15 – “Dad’s birthday” presumably his father Alfred Miller.

Jan. 18 shows WLM’s interest in nature and in particular, bird watching.

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February 1939 pp 14-20

Feb 4, Arnold took part in the “Yeo Cup” at Bishop’s Stortford College which was the annual cross-country race. Coming fourth was quite an achievement. I can’t remember over what distance this race was. When I took part, I certainly didn’t come anywhere near to being fourth!

Feb 8, Apparently the Rowlingsons, next-door (?) neighbours on the east of Stoke had moved and the new neighbours were called Nelson.

Feb 18, John’s birthday.

Feb 21, WLM gave an address to the Young Peoples Guild at Dunmow on The “New Testament basis of pacifism”.

March 1939 pp 20-25

Mar 3, WLM mentions some sort of disagreement with “Proctor” who came round although he had told him not to come again. (He came round again so the disagreement must have been sorted out).

Mar 10, DJM’s 53rd birthday (Le dix mars!) . She had a present from Arnold of a gramophone record of “Penny Serenade”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgJ8ut6dXmo>. I’m not sure if this is the actual recording, but I remember well the gramophone at Stoke after the war. It played the old 10” and 12” shellac records at 78 r.p.m. My job was to wind up the motor when I heard that it was slowing down. Among other cards, letters and presents DJM received a letter from her mother Mary Elizabeth Myland (néé Tarrant – born 1856 -who would have been 82 at the time).

Mar 12, Preacher at the Congregational church was Dr. Harold Moody, well known Jamaican civil rights activist of the Colonial Missionary Society

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Moody

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonial_Missionary_Society

In the evening WLM and DJM went to a Plymouth Brethren meeting at Dane Hall
Dora stayed at Stoke as she was down with ‘flu till Mar 27.

April 1939 pp 25-33

Apr 7, Good Friday Three hour service at St Michaels.

Apr 10 Dora and Arnold went to the cinema to see “Lost Horizon”

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029162/?ref=nm_sr_srsrg_2

Apr 11, Kathleen’s 25th birthday. WLM went to the cinema to see “Lost Horizon” but “did not care for it”.

April 15, Dora and Kathleen (KEM) off for a week’s cycling tour.

Here is what KEM wrote in her diary about the tour:

Sunday May 14th 1939.

I meant to write this diary immediately after Dora and I returned from a week's bicycling along the east coast, but somehow I didn't, and the memory of it is not so fresh as it might have been. Besides, this diary is intended to portray, or more accurately! Betray, the impression of the moment, as I shall then be sure that it is a faithful account of my life and bears none of the colouring which retrospective might give it. So I will be brief. We set out from Norwich, where Dora had spent the night, on Sunday April 16th after lunch, and bicycled (our own coined word) through Aylsham to Cromer. There we found rooms in Prince of Wales Rd and stayed there till Tuesday morning. There were two other occupants of the boarding house – ships passing in the night as we were – a poor hotel chambermaid of about 50 years with a very pale face and an awful cough, and also a young London graduate with a beautiful voice and enormous head who kept us greatly amused the short hours we saw him. His name was Lawrence Ghent.

Monday it was very windy. We walked along the cliffs to Overstrand and found that the Garden of Sleep had been washed away completely. We walked back to Cromer along the shore. How the wind blew! The sand beat against our bare legs and through our hair, and the rain came down and tried to drive us back. The great and utter joy of breaking free from civilization and being alone with my dear sister and all the open treasures of wind and sea and sun!

Tuesday saw us into Yarmouth along the coast through Trimingham, Happisburgh and Horsey. We spent the night in Yarmouth, even at this time of year too crowded, and so on to Lowestoft by midday Wednesday. In the afternoon finding it so cold there, we pushed on to Beccles – dear Beccles, so friendly and waiting for us! There we stayed at a commercial boarding house and met a travelling salesman by name H. Winter who lent us a map for the rest of the journey.

Gradually the weather became warmer. It was like summer when we pushed into Bury St Edmonds through Bungay and Harleston, a long drive. Bury St Edmonds did not receive us with such warmth. We tried three hotels before we were given a room.

On Friday we bicycled against a high wind through Newmarket with the race-horses on parade, and lost our way off the beaten track round about Buxley (?). We were not sorry to reach Saffron Walden by tea time and so home in the early evening through Newport. Altogether a grand week, ending it with a pleasant weekend at home.

April 18, WLM heard the cuckoo for the first time this year. Always a notable event to be recorded in the diary!

April 24, WLM 55 today.

May 1939 pp 33-40

May 1, DJM and Arnold went to the cinema to see "The Citadel".

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029995/?ref=nm_sr_srsrg_0

May 2, John arrived and he, WLM and Arnold went to see "The Citadel" which WLM enjoyed very much.

May 14, WLM finished reading "The Bible" (!) - starts to read it to DJM.

May 20, Arnold went to North Weald Aerodrome

<http://www.northwealdairfield.org/>

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see also <https://www.facebook.com/HavLib/posts/3714399371941419>

May 31, Arnold out photographing.

Jun 1939 pp 40 - 46

Jun 17 Anniversary of Dad and Mother's Wedding day (Alfred and Mary Miller. Speech Day at Bishop's Stortford College.

Jul 1939 pp 46 - 52

Jul 5 Clacton excursion. Possibly some connection with his job since he went alone. He was met by Mr Gammon (with car) at the GPO (alongside the Methodist church since 1921). - see <https://www.stortfordhistory.co.uk/guide15/blue-anchor/>

Jul 6 "Dora phoned to Kathleen" was there already a phone installed at Stoke, or did she have to go to a phone box?

July 19, Dora's 27th birthday

July 23, WLM's mother Mary Elizabeth James (1858 – 1909) - her birthday

Aug 1939 pp 52 – 59

Aug 1 to Aug 10, Arnold went camping, but I can't make out where.

Aug 7, 28th wedding anniversary of WLM and DJM.

Aug 9, DJM with the Widford Sunday School – day out at Clacton.

Aug 10 and 12, DJM and WLM went to see the film "60 years glorious reign" which probably refers to "Sixty Glorious Years" aka "Queen of Destiny", a Technicolor film made in 1938, starring Anna Neagle

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0206302/?ref =nv_sr_srsg_0

Aug 13, DJM went (with the choir?) to sing at Haymeads (hospital).

Aug 17, WLM on holiday for a week.

Aug 22, Trip to Norwich via Great Yarmouth to visit Kathleen

Aug 23, Arnold went to the flicks (cinema) to see Kidnapped – probably (1938)

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0030321/?ref =fn_tt_tt_14

while WLM and DJM went to see Robin Hood - probably "The Adventures of Robin Hood" (1938) with Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland which won 3 Oscars and has a imdb rating of 7.9/10

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029843/?ref =nv_sr_srsg_10

Aug 30, WLM and DJM went to Hatfield Forest and picked 4 to 5 lbs of blackberries. I remember going with my parents to do the same in the early 50s. My mother made great bramble jelly then!

Sep 1939 pp 59 – 62

Sep 1, Hitler invaded Poland (was not recorded in the diary)

Sep 2, walk past Dane O'Coys – see
<https://www.stortfordhistory.co.uk/guide5/dane-ocoys/>

Sep 3, Britain declared war on Germany, marking the outbreak of World War II. Interesting that WLM does not mention this in his diary!

Sep 6, WLM records an air raid warning at 6.50. He went in to Mr. Cooper's until the "all clear" signal at 9.15. This is the first and only mention of events connected with WWII. I'm not sure who Mr. Cooper was and whether he had an air-raid shelter.
<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1939/sep/06/air-raid-warnings>

Sep 7, WLM slept on the veranda. Perhaps he thought it would be safer there in the event of an air-raid!

Sep 19, Final entry in the diary (although there were plenty of unused pages in the notebook).

Wartime 1939 -1945

There is no mention why WLM ceased to write his diary so suddenly. Obviously it was a time of turmoil for him because after the outbreak of WWII he believed that Bishop's Stortford could be a strategic target for the Luftwaffe, and so hastily decided to move away (even further) into the countryside!.

KEM wrote in her diary a month later:

October 18th 1939

.....Stoke has been closed down and the parents and Arnold have gone to live at Hatfield Heath. Mother was in the school there but has since had to leave it. They are staying at the Clipped Hedge Guest House and are very happy there. I hope they will get stronger and less nervy and regard it as a prolonged holiday. It is a pity that mother is not needed at the school any longer as they may have to return to Stoke. Any other time I should have regretted the closing of Stoke, but this war seems to have flung everything out of perspective and I can only look forward to a grand reunion when it is all over and the boys return home (if any are left to do so). Raids have now started over England....

December 17th 1939

The war has been raging nearly four months now – such a strange war
Since I wrote in this book one or two changes have taken place, but nothing catastrophic. The family has now found a bungalow on the heath (Hatfield Heath – probably in Lea Hall Bungalows) and I'm expecting they will write any day now to say they have moved. This means that the furniture will be moved from Stoke, and the house put up to let empty. So home has really gone

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at last. I have always looked with fear to the time when when this would happen – something like the death of a dear one which one knows must happen one day.

The Clipped Hedge was a strange place; it had the atmosphere rather like Emily Bronte's novel; with its low-raftered ceilings; its wide open fireplaces; its great dogs, and Peter, the little boy with the hare lip

December 31st 1939

.....The family has now moved into a bungalow on the Heath. Dora and I call it "Warmania". But it is a sweet little place; quite primitive, but cosy.

July 17th 1940

.....The family is now at Englefield, Hatfield Heath. We left Lea Hall Bungalows a week ago today, and I'm not sorry. It was a small, dirty place, and this is so beautiful. I have worked to make it as beautiful as it deserves to be, and Geoffrey (Wood - GHW) has been very kind and has helped me in many ways. Mother is teaching at the (Hatfield) Broad Oak so I have the whole day to myself. It is a little heaven on earth here – the large garden, soft lawns, and bay windows, are things I have often dreamt of and felt would be ours one day.

KEM married GHW in November 1940 and continued to live in Englefield, and I was born in October 1941. My father was serving in the RAF and was eventually sent to Scotland for training in the Air Sea rescue. From February 1943 to December 1944 we lived in Kirkcudbright, but when my father was posted abroad my mother, Judith (born June 1944) and I returned to Englefield. Ironically Hatfield Heath suffered hits from V2 rockets nearby. I remember diving under a table with WLM after an explosion which broke windows and when plaster fell off the ceiling, so it turned out to be more dangerous than living at Stoke! During the war I have no information about WLM, but presumably he continued his job as before, but one by one the young people who called in regularly at Stoke were pulled into the war.

October 21st 1945

Life has once more changed after a period which at the time seemed as if it would go on endlessly. We have moved back to Stoke, which is in every way a good thing. I feel that things should be better now that we have left the curse of Englefield behind – I am sure there really was some form of curse over that bungalow which was slowly eating into our very souls.

Dora has moved to Woodford and has a very nice little home there.

Geoffrey returned from Sicily last Saturday 13th.

Post War 1946 – 1964

My parents Geoffrey and Kathleen, Judith and I continued to live at Stoke until March 1946 when we moved to a flat in Oxford House which was in South Road at the other end of Bishop's Stortford. (This was a large house with a big garden which was later demolished to make way for a garage).

What I remember well was that after the war there was a prisoner-of-war camp not far from Stortford with German POWs. The grandparents invited some of the POWs round for Sunday dinner, despite the food shortages. I don't remember any of their names apart from Wolfgang Nack who became very friendly with Arnold. Wolfgang was very entrepreneurial and took photographs of other POWs and he developed and printed them at Stoke to send back to their families. To do this he and Arnold set up a dark room in Arnold's small back bedroom. Wolfgang obtained materials

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from the camp to construct an enlarger. I had my first experiences of photography in that darkroom with Arnold. Much later on when I was working in Hamburg between 1968 and 1972 Vreni and I met up again with Wolfgang and he helped us a lot while we were there.

WLM probably retired in 1949 at the age of 65. During the time I was at primary school in Stortford I often dropped in at Stoke. He and I would go on the walks nearby which are mentioned in the diary, and he taught me to recognise the birds and plants we encountered.

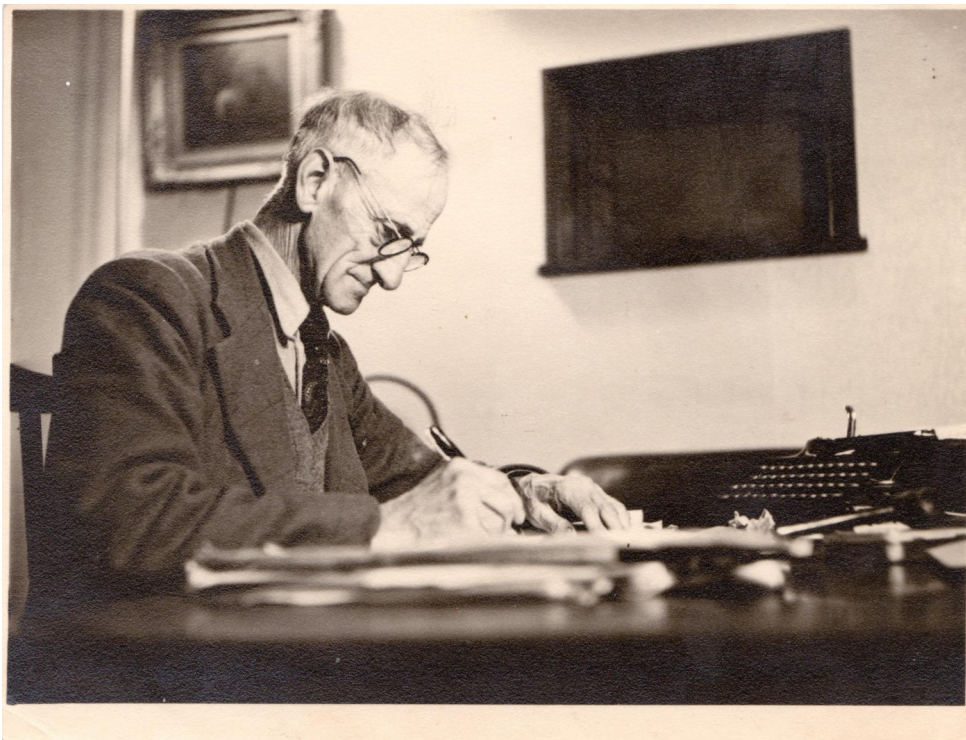
Toward the end of the 1950s (I can't recall the exact date) Stoke was sold to Arnold who had married Margaret Rayment and came to live there with his young family. The grandparents were suffering from failing health and Grandma with increasing dementia so they moved to 36 High View Road in South Woodford to live with Dora and John Fenton in 1962. An extension to the Fenton's house was built over the garage to accommodate them. Vreni's old friend Rita came an au pair to look after DJM for a while.

WLM passed away on 8th May 1965 and DJM on 17th March 1968.

Photo Gallery



The Grandparents sometime in the 1920s (?)



WLM at his desk in the dining room at Stoke. This could have been taken on the occasion of his retirement. A pity he didn't use the typewriter to write his diary!

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The Miller family outside the front door of Stoke about 1950.
Back row – Arnold, Kathleen, John Fenton, Dora and Johnny.
Middle row - me, DJM, Judith and WLM.
Front row – David and Dick.

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Comments from David: (2/12/2021)

Hello there, many thanks for sending us your biography of grandad. It has brought back so many memories (all of them lovely ones!) First, I must say what a smashing job you made of the material available to you. Loved the way in which you were able to bring in your Mother's diary items, alongside grandads' Loved reading it through. As you say, it is a great shame that none of us sat down with grandad and talked through his life and memories with him. But, I suppose, that is quite typical - we all have regrets that we didn't spend time with parents/grandparents to learn more about their lives and how they felt when we had the chance. Too full of our own lives at the time!

I have learnt a number of new things from the biography. For example, I always thought that the Welsh connection was grandma, not grandad, but I clearly got that wrong. I also did not realise the strong connection with Hatfield Heath - presumably that was where mum and dad became good friends with John and Jose Carlton?

My memories are still very strong of those early days, visiting "Stoke". Dick and I, from an early age, used to be put on the 720 green line bus at Gates Corner in South Woodford and then got off at the stop at the bottom of Half Acres. It was always grandad that met us there and walked up Half Acres with him. When we left, he would press a half crown into our hands, very generous as that was not an inconsiderable sum in those days!

It was always fun at Stoke - the style of life there was so different, and with no tv we all had to make our own amusements there. I have memories of the large old apple trees in the back garden and of grandad picking up the windfalls and putting them in his basket. They would then be put up in the rear bedroom, on newspaper laid out on the floor for the winter. There were always visitors and music in the evenings. Grandad played the violin so well, with grandma playing the piano and leading the singing. Grandad would often take us for walks to the cricket field and up Rhododendron Walk. He loved seeing all the birds and being out of doors.

Am I right in thinking that Stoke was named after Basingstoke, where they lived for some time?

I remember being told that grandad read a lot to grandma in bed, Especially he loved Dickens, with David Copperfield being a particular favourite - "Barkis is willing", I remember them saying. I always wondered if my mother was named more after David Copperfield's wife than her own mother!

Grandad was always a gentle, caring person - reflected in the way he treated me and Dick. The reference in his diary on 2nd December refers to FoR, which is the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a Christian Pacifist group. I suppose you would call grandad a Socialist - he told the story that when they moved to BS he ordered the Daily Herald newspaper from the newsagent, to be warned by the newsagent that this was "a Labour supporting paper" !! he was the only one in town to read it. !!!

I have an 1898 booklet of the Basingstoke Primitive Methodists. Grandma is listed a member of the Sunshine Committee - so religion was always a very big part of their lives. I can remember going with them to Plymouth Brethren meetings in an upstairs room, above some shop, in BS.

a couple of other comments:

Dec 26th - was the Joe Loss orchestra

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I think their move to Woodford was not until 1962 (Pam remembers it happening and that helps date it! She had written a daily diary of that period with many references to grandad and grandma, at Stoke and at 36. .

In looking through my old papers - which there aren't many, I came across 3 letters that your father sent my mother in 1940. Not sure what to make of them, but thought you might like to see them, so will put them in to an envelope and post them to you.

Many thanks again for all your work. It has rekindled so many memories of the simple, happy upbringing we had.

Katrina wrote: (6/12/2021)

Dear Stephen,

You have, indeed, been busy! What a treasure trove of memories and insights into Miller family life...thank you so much for emailing them to me. Being so much younger, we don't have the memories of when our grandparents were still active and such a hub for family and friends. I do remember Grandpa coming round with his wicker basket containing a bowl of milk pudding (semolina if I remember rightly) when one of us was ill. We did go for Sunday lunch at theirs sometimes, and attended a family party on one occasion. Looking at your dates, I must have been nearly ten when Grandpa died. I remember Dad rewiring Stoke and laying the wooden flooring after having the extension built. I think we moved in over the summer before my last year of primary school. Dave and I weren't able to buy Stoke when my Mother came to sell it...how different the bank balance would be if we had been able to do so! It was also lovely to read your mother's diary entries. What a traumatic time they lived through, and yet what a sense of warmth and hospitality in their simpler lives.

I was interested to see the name Kerans in the diary entry; I had a Laura Kerans in my class at Northgate. She had an older sister (possibly Heather) and a younger brother who turned up to survey our house in Stortford many years later (possibly Nigel). Perhaps their father was my father's old friend, unless there were other brothers. I can't remember ever being told that a Kerans had been a close friend for a while.

I have a box under the bed, which I think holds some old Miller family bits and pieces. It's been on tour and taped up for the move, but when I last opened it up there were a couple of Dad's school reports. There were some old Stortford family names in there. Dad had come second in the class one year, but then, when he was about 14, he suddenly dropped to half way in the class; I wondered whether the build up to the war and conflict between being at the College, but being expected to be a Pacifist, was causing him a lot of turmoil. I wonder if the boys who did return wanted to continue being friends with a conscientious objector. I don't think he ever got over the experience. There was also a copy of the letter a member of the Friends had sent to excuse himself from service, and if I remember rightly, a copy of the letter Dad sent, based on it. I remember Dad talking about Wolfgang, who came to visit while we were still at Chantry Close. There might even be a letter from him upstairs...

I hope that you, Vreni and the family are keeping well...flourishing, even...in spite of the difficult times we are living in.

Love to you both, Katrina

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Simon wrote: (2/2/2022)

Hi Steve ,

Many thanks for your last kind message !! Sorry it has taken so long to reply !!

Actually , Sally has just taken out a brief subscription to Ancestry , and has been doing some more work on the family tree , including Grandad`s siblings , which you can see !!

Thanks also for including Katrina`s memories , many of which ring true for me !! While I`m here I could also mention a memory of one day when Katrina and I were left to play on the veranda at Stoke , and unfortunately there were some paint pots there which we used to daub paint all over the veranda door !!! Not surprisingly Grandad was very upset/cross over this !!! We had that door stored in the cellar at Stoke for a while after we moved in , I think !!!

Meanwhile , thanks once again for all the information on Grandad , Grandma and Stoke !!!

Lets keep in touch , and hope you and Vreni are keeping well !!

Love to you both,

Simon

Added 9th April 2022



The Miller/Fenton/Wood families at Stoke for Christmas early 1950s.
Back row – Geoffrey Wood, Arnold Miller with his then girlfriend, John Fenton.
Middle row – Kathleen Wood, Grandma, Grandad, Dora Fenton, Johnny Fenton.
Middle row – David Fenton, me, Judith Wood and Richard (Dick) Fenton.

1938

GRANDAD MILLER'S DIARY

Nov. 28th Mon. Bull. Town round - home at 5.0. Dora arrived home about 2.0.

B. of H. this evening. Letters from Mary & John. Went to bed in dining room at 10.45

Nov 29th ^{Wed.} Tues. Fine. Arrived. I slept in dining room last night & I got up at 5.30 -

made some tea & did my returns. I went with Dora to London by 11.9
Coach - we arrived at Knightsbridge with just time to have a cup
of tea - after I had left her at 2.0 at the Nurse's home, I went
to make a business call in Kensington & returned on the 11.40
Coach from Eton St. arriving home at 6.40. Douglas & Murray
came in at 10.5. Came up to bed at 11.0.

Nov 29th ^{Thurs.} Wed. Daffy - then Fri. Hadham round - home at 1.45.

Armed & Dora went round Whitehall & Mother & I went up ^{Cricket Field Lane} C. F. Lane
to meet them. Photo from Kay of herself with letter.
Came to bed at 11.0.

Dec 1st ^{Thurs.} ~~Wed.~~ Fri. Col. Brocket Henham - home at 2.50. Mrs. Featherby came in
to supper. Wrote to Dora. Came up to bed at 11.15.

Dec 2nd ^{Fri.} Fri. Family Clonham - home at 1.20. Armed & I took Featherby's
my across the fields round Hoggalls Wood - we saw a fox at Hoggalls' wood.
Mother spoke at Siskinhood this evening - I met her & we went to F.O.H. mtg.
Pl. from Dora. Letters from Kay - I wrote to both of them.
Came up to bed at 11.0.

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The 1921 Census

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Please read the Instructions and Examples shown on the back, and then fill up the Schedule carefully and in Ink.

To be filled up by the Enumerator.
No. of Schedule 107

NAME and SURNAME:— <small>Of every person who is alive at midnight on the night of Sunday, 24th April, 1921, and who, whether as member of the family or as visitor, boarder or servant in the household or establishment, or (1) passes that night in the dwelling of the household or establishment, or (2) arrives and is received into the household or establishment on the morning of Monday, 25th April, not having already been enumerated elsewhere. No one else must be included. (For order of entering names see Examples on back hereof.)</small>	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Household. <small>State whether "Head," or "Wife," "Mother," "Son," "Daughter," "Step-son," or "Step-daughter," or other Relative, "Visitor," "Boarder," or "Servant." (See Instruction No. 1.)</small>	AGE. <small>In years and months. If male write "M," if female write "F." (See Examples.)</small>	SEX.	MARRIAGE or ORPHANHOOD. <small>For males aged 15 and over write "Married," "Widowed," "Single," or "Divorced." For females aged 15 and over write "Married," "Widowed," "Single," or "Divorced." If under 15, write "Both dead" if both parents are dead.</small>	BIRTHPLACE and NATIONALITY.		PERSONAL OCCUPATION. <small>If attending a School or day school, or of educational institutions, write the purpose of attendance, and "Pupil" or "Student" of the case may be. (See Instruction No. 2.)</small>	OCCUPATION and EMPLOYMENT.		PLACE of WORK. <small>Give the address of each person's place of work. For a person with no regular place of work write "No fixed place." If the work is carried on mainly at home, write "At home." (No entry is required for any person who is retired or out of work.)</small>	Information required only in respect of Married Men, Widowers and Widows. <small>Number and ages of all living children and step children under 15 years of age, whether enumerated on this Schedule or not, i.e. whether residing as members of this household or elsewhere. Total number under sixteen years of age. If none write "None." For each child place a X in the column corresponding to its age. The number of crosses should be the same as the number shown in Column (e).</small>																																	
					(1) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County and of the Town or Parish. (2) If born outside the United Kingdom, write the name of the Country, and of the State, Province or District, or "At Sea." (3) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and of the Town or Parish. (4) If born in a foreign country, write the name of the Country, and of the State, Province or District, or "At Sea." (5) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and of the Town or Parish. (6) If born in a foreign country, write the name of the Country, and of the State, Province or District, or "At Sea." (7) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and of the Town or Parish. (8) If born in a foreign country, write the name of the Country, and of the State, Province or District, or "At Sea."	(1) If working for an employer state the name and business of present employer (person, firm, company or public body) as if at present out of work of last employer adding "out of work." (2) If employed persons for purposes of business, write "Employer." (3) If working on one account and not employing persons for purposes of business, write "Own Account." (Note.—For Domestic Servants and others in private personal service, write "Private.") (See Instructions 3 to 8, 11, and Examples.)																																						
1 William Lloyd Miller	Head	37	2	M	Married	Cardigan, Wales	OX	Print Book, Stationer's Clerk	Mr. W. Miller, 012 Walspole Marsh, Walspole	Walspole Marsh, Walspole	2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Under One</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>Over One</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	Under One	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Over One															
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To be filled up by the Enumerator.					Enumerator's Initials.
Males	Females	Persons	Boys	Girls	
1	3	4	5	6	WLM

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.
Signature: William Lloyd Miller
(Head of Household, Manager of Establishment, or other person responsible for making the return.)