

Dorothy Clay was born at 9, Kay Street in the Primrose Hill area of Wakefield on March 10th 1902. The eldest child of Mary Edith Clay, Dorothy was always led to believe that her mother had been married to a gentleman named Abraham Clay. Unfortunately, the true position was that Mary Edith Clay was her mother's maiden name.

Although Mary Edith declined to name a father on the birth certificates of both Dorothy and brother Leslie Cecil (who was born a year after Dorothy), she obviously didn't feel able to withhold such information from the Church. Both children's baptisms were held at the Chantry Chapel of St Mary, off Kirkgate in Wakefield, and named Abraham Clay, a mineral water manufacturer, as their father.

Dorothy's early years saw more than their share of tragedy and brother Leslie died just short of his first birthday in July 1904. He was buried in an 'unpurchased grave' in Wakefield's Belle Vue cemetery.

At the time of Dorothy's birth, Mary Edith was lodging with the widowed Mrs Ada Field at Kay Street. Presumably Mrs Field was not happy with the arrival of a new baby, or the lodgings were not suitable, as the family quickly moved to 11, Sanderson Street, which is directly behind Kay Street. Sanderson Street was the family's home for at least two years, but not a lot is known about the immediate period after that. It is well known that Dorothy's education suffered because her mother, a concert pianist, travelled around the country with her work, and Dorothy frequently went with her. A favourite tale to her grandchildren was of how she used to be placed on trains, at various railway stations, with a luggage label tied to her coat lapel either leaving or meeting her mother.



At the time of the 1911 census, which was taken on the evening of April 2nd, nine year old Dorothy and her mother were lodging with Mrs Hendersby at 6 Lees Yard, Millgate, Selby.

Dorothy's school history is to a large part unknown, but in June 1912 at the age of 10, she commenced at the Abbey Church School, Selby, having previously been a pupil at Norwood School, Beverley some 30 miles away. At this time Dorothy was under the guardianship of Harry Hensby, whose relationship to the family has not yet been established. Dorothy remained at the Abbey School for some two years until August 1914 (coinciding with the start of the First World War), when she returned to Wakefield to complete her education at St Mary's School in Wakefield. She remained at St Mary's until her fourteenth birthday on March 10th 1916.



On leaving school Dorothy went into service and, eight years later, she was working as a general domestic servant at the Wellington Hotel, Kirkgate in Wakefield, prior to her wedding to Fred Dews. She married Fred, a 33 year old corporation labourer on August 18th 1924, at Wakefield Register Office. The ceremony was witnessed by her mother Edith Clay and new brother in law Barron Dews. Out of interest, her late father was described on the marriage certificate as a General water works labourer!

Fred and Dorothy's new married life started badly, when less than six months later, Mary Edith died at the relatively early age of 61 (although

Dorothy thought her mother was 54!) from chronic inflammation of the kidneys. It is sad to think that in later years, her mother could have been saved by the advances in medicine. Dorothy could not have been told too much about her father, as she described her mother as 'the widow of Abraham Clay, a Teamer by trade'.

Things started to improve the following year when daughter Dorothy Clare arrived on June 28th 1926, whilst the family were living at the aptly named Frederick Street, just north of the cathedral in Wakefield city centre. The growing family then moved to the newly built council estate at 20 Robin Hood Crescent, Lupset where they were living when Annie Mary (June 5th, 1928) and Winifred May (September 22nd, 1929) arrived. Unfortunately Annie was not a well child and only lived for approximately six weeks.



The next move was to the family's long term home at 32, St Catherine's Street, Agbrigg Road, Wakefield. Fred and Dorothy were now bringing up their family in the Great Financial Depression of the 1930s, and although Fred was employed by the local

council, his pay was not good and it made financial sense to share the house with brother Barron and his family. As a result the offspring of both families were brought up more as siblings than as cousins.

The high infant mortality rate of the era hit the family again in 1936, when Dorothy bore twin girls on July 20th. Unfortunately one child was stillborn and Brenda sadly died on September 8th. There was much better news a couple of years later when the family was completed on February 10th 1939 with the arrival of daughter Edna.

Seven months later the Second World War broke out and Wakefield had its share of Hitler's air force targets, including the industrial areas along the River Calder and the canal. The first air attack on Wakefield was by a single German bomber on 28 August 1940. At 1.45 a.m. it dropped a high explosive bomb which destroyed four houses in Norton Street, Belle Vue, just half a mile from St Catherine's Street.

Dorothy was widowed on August 13<sup>th</sup> 1956, when husband Fred died at their home in St Catherine's Street, aged 65 years. By this time, both their daughters Dorothy Clare and Winnie had married and moved twenty miles up the Calder Valley to Sowerby Bridge. It was agreed that Dorothy and her seventeen year old, youngest daughter Edna, should also move to Sowerby Bridge. Thus Dorothy and Edna found themselves living at 14a Hollins Lane, in a cottage attached the home of former local mill owner Mrs Longbottom.

Edna married two years later, and shortly afterwards Dorothy made her final move to 41 Hollins Lane, across the drive from her eldest daughter and family. Dorothy then spent her last twenty years surrounded by her family, including her eleven grandchildren. When she was taken ill around 1974, her one remaining wish was to be a great grandma and this she achieved in 1975.

Dorothy died from bronchopneumonia on March 13<sup>th</sup> 1981, aged 79 years and was buried five days later at Wakefield cemetery alongside husband Fred, daughter Annie and mother Edith.

