

The History of Milton Keynes IN 100 Objects... ...the first 15

Living Archive

Hawtin Mundy



'Days of Pride' – 1994

Hawtin Mundy was born in 1894 and lived most of his childhood and adult life in New Bradwell, except for the years 1914-18 when he volunteered as a soldier in the First World War.

He fought in the trenches, was wounded 3 times and was taken prisoner of war by the Germans.

Years later, sitting alone with just a tape-recorder for company, Hawtin recorded his memories of that momentous time and later his memories of his childhood.

Those memories have inspired two books, a play, songs, a one-man show that got rave reviews at the **Edinburgh Festival** and a programme that won a **Sony Radio Award**.

HAWTIN 'NO HEROES' MUNDY DIES

Cloth-capped pensioner who taped his life

HAWTIN MUNDY — the pensioner who touched the hearts of thousands with his moving book *No Heroes, No Cowards* — has died at the age of 88.

Cloth-capped Hawtin, who ranked amongst the city's most popular characters, fell seriously ill at his New Bradwell home on Christmas Day and died last week at Northampton General Hospital.

Blind and housebound, he became a local celebrity in his eighties when his taped memories of life as a soldier during the First World War were transformed into the acclaimed book and a play, *Days of Pride*.

The tapes are now kept at the Imperial War Museum.

Hawtin had an incredible life-story... A farmer sporting partner to the great middle-weight boxing champion Jim Sullivan, he also coached a Woburn top-of-war team to a national final.

Hardships

He also had more than his share of hardships.

Wounded three times during the Great War, he spent 20 months as a prisoner in East Prussia.

Eleven years ago he began to go blind and then suffered the sudden death of his wife Eva followed months later by the death of his only daughter Marjorie.

But despite the series of tragic blows Hawtin never lost his zest for life.

Alone and totally blind he went on to score his finest achievement when over 80 years old.

Fast brought him into

and friends he borrowed a tape recorder and began to recount his experiences as a soldier.

Three years later, after various illnesses, he had collected 15 hours of tapes.

And the *People's Press* of Milton Keynes were so impressed by his powerful personal account that they decided to put his words in print.

No Heroes, No Cowards was born — a book acclaimed by such mighty respected authors as Len MacDonnell and Arthur Marwick.

His moving account of a head-bud in the trenches also helped to inspire *Days of Pride*, a musical documentary play which recently won seven reviews when staged at Stanburry.

Believe

In his book, Hawtin, of King Edward Street, wrote: "I don't believe there was such a thing as heroes or cowards during that war."

"It was in it from the first battle of the Somme, through included trench warfare, battle of Arras, 20 months as prisoner of war and wounded on the way.

"We were not really soldiers at all, we were just children with guns in our hands, making firing chaps."

Although blind, Hawtin was in the audience for the final performance of *Days of Pride*.

And in a moving speech at Stanburry Theatre, which left the packed audience in tears, he said:

"Why can't a white, black, brown and yellow life be peace?"

Roger Kitchin, who produced the triumphous musical documentary play, said: "Hawtin was the most incredible man."

For a person who was blind and had lost his wife and daughter, he was a great optimist and inspired an amazing amount of love. He was wonderful."

● Hawtin Mundy — a study by Stony Stratford artist Peter Osborne.

● During the last war — Hawtin Mundy in Home Guard uniform, outside his home with his wife Eva.

