



Herbert Ashley Smith
Born: 17 May 1906

Herbert was born in 1906 in a small village called Hunmanby in North East Yorkshire. He celebrated his 100th birthday on May 17th 2006 in Manly, New South Wales. Between those two events are many stories.

Herbert grew up in a village without electricity so as a young man he generated his own. His first outfit was a Clyno thirty-five volt dynamo, belt driven by a Stuart engine. The second was an Austin engine direct coupled to a one hundred and ten volt G.E.C. dynamo.

He worked on the cutting edge of technology building and selling wirelesses and offering a battery recharging service for his customers. He trained as an electrician and was responsible for replacing oil lamps with electric light bulbs in much of the village – practising on his mother's house first. Later he took over the family grocery business, bought up the old Methodist Chapel and, with a bit of a conversion job, created the very first self-service shop in the whole district.

He retired in 1971 and took up music, learning to play the electric organ; and writing, trying to document a way of life before it was lost for ever.

In 1988 at the age of 82 he migrated to Australia with his wife, Amy. Once here he bought a computer and set about typing up his hand written memoirs. Over the next six years he published two volumes of Life in an East Yorkshire Village. On Herbert's 90th birthday a friend gave him a website on which to advertise his books. He sold over 200 copies of each volume and answered requests from all over Australia as well as from England.

Amy too learned to use the computer; she kept in touch by email with children and grand-children in England and Scotland. In 1995 she surprised her family with her own volume of childhood memories called Talking About This and That. Herbert and Amy's books were acquired by local libraries, state library and the national library. Amy died in 2004 at the age of 95; they had been married for 72 years. Herbert lives in Manly at the Wesley Heights Nursing Home where he's visited by friends and relations almost every day.