

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

Report by PHIL TAYLOR

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 former sporting partner to the great middle-weight boxing champion Jim Sullivan, he also coached a Wolverton 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 Maribel.

But despite the series of tragic blows Hawtin never lost his zest for life. Always and totally blind he went on to score his finest achievement when over 80 years old. *Fun 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 11 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 highly respected authors as Lynda MacDonald and Arthur Marwick.

His moving account of a life led in the trenches also helped to inspire *Days of Pride*, a musical documentary play which recently was raved reviews when staged at Stratford.

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."

"I was in it from the first week to the finish, that included trench warfare, battle of the Somme, battle of Arras, 20 months as prisoner of war and endured three lots of

wounds on the way.

"We were not really soldiers at all, we were just civilians with guns in our hands, mainly young chaps."

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

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

"Why can't white, black, brown and yellow live in peace?"

Roger Kitchen, who produced the triumphant 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.

