



## About QueenSpark Books

QueenSpark Books was founded in 1972 as part of a campaign to save the historic Royal Spa in Brighton's Queen's Park from being converted to a casino. The campaign was successful and it inspired participants to start collecting memories of people living in Brighton and Hove to preserve for future generations. QueenSpark Books is now the longest-running organisation of its kind in the UK.

More than one hundred books later, as part of our 45th anniversary celebrations, we are making the original texts of many of our out-of-print books available for the first time in many years.

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## About this book

Margaret Ward was born in 1916 and brought up in Rottingdean and lived there all her life. This autobiographical book is a sequel to *One Camp Chair in the Living Room*, published by QueenSpark Books in 1988.

In this booklet Margaret recalls her childhood in Rottingdean in the 1920s, local places and people in the 1930s and life in the village during World War Two. This memoir represents a valuable first-person snapshot of rural Sussex life in the first half of the 20th century.

## Original 1993 Introduction

These reminiscences follow on from *One Camp Chair in the Living Room*, published by QueenSpark in 1988. This book had told the story of Margaret Ward's life up to 1984, when she was 68 and her estranged husband Jack returned from New Zealand to visit her.

In the spring of 1988 Margaret had a minor stroke. A year later she had another stroke, this time a major one affecting her left side, two days before Jack's second visit. Writing as part of the process of rehabilitation after her 1989 stroke, she told the story of Jack's visit, of the stroke itself and of the first weeks of her hard struggle towards recovery.

However, during a period of inspiration, Margaret experienced a powerful surge of new memories of Rottingdean covering the same period as *One Camp Chair*: her childhood, her teenage years and her early married life. These are the pages presented here with illustrations by members of Margaret's family.

She made a good recovery from this second stroke but unfortunately in the spring of 1990 suffered a third one which, though relatively slight, left her with problems of balance and a feeling of "muzziness". Thus she had a stroke in the spring of three years running. However, in 1991 there was no recurrence. In April she started working with a new QueenSpark writing group of eight stroke survivors meeting weekly to talk and write about their experience. These writings, including Margaret's description of her second stroke and its aftermath, appear in *Life After Stroke*, another QueenSpark Market Book.

## **Memories of Rottingdean by Margaret Ward**

I have lived in Rottingdean all my life. I was born in 1916 at number 4, Court Ord Cottages, one of a row of eight nestling under Beacon Hill. I married my husband Jack in 1940 and we lived with my parents for two years until my daughter Angela was born. We then moved to New Barn Road on the Council Estate where I still live, forty-eight years on.

My lounge wall looks unusual because I am a digitabulist and have a display of two hundred thimbles, as well as an attractive collection of teaspoons, twenty-nine at the last count. My son Julian brought me a thimble from New Zealand with a kiwi on it. I also collect lead crystal which looks lovely in the glass cabinet.

Collecting has always been a pleasure to me. When we were young it was cigarette cards which came out in a series of twenty-five or fifty, one in each packet, but there always seemed to be one number no-one could find. This takes me back to schooldays again. There were so many things left out of my first book which are of interest, such as the old post office which is now Johnson's Newsagents. The post office was at the end near the door and had a wire barrier in the front so the people serving looked as though they were in a cage. Mrs Bowles was Post Mistress and looked like little Queen Victoria, she was so tiny. At the other end of the shop Mr Bowles and his sister Vi sold newspapers and stationery. Next door was an ironmongers shop, to the south.

At the bottom of Nevill Road on a corner with the High Street, the Reading Room still stands. At one time some newcomers to the village wanted to demolish it, but it is a fine old flint building which has always been the Men's Club, and before the village hall was built it was used for Jumble Sales and other such events. It would spoil the village to remove it.

I am especially fond of it as they loaned it to us for our wedding reception because the village hall was being used for sick soldiers. We had a wonderful wedding day. I can still see the sun shining in the church window onto the daffodils on the altar. When we arrived at the Reading Room for the reception, it seemed all the people had come out of the shops to see us and to cheer. To one side of the Reading Room was a row of old flint cottages called Bunkers Row. They have renovated these almost to the point of rebuilding them and have now renamed them Margo's Mews which I think is a pity because the old name suited them so well. I know a few people who were born in these cottages and they are most upset. Behind these more buildings have sprung up.

Further up the village is the War Memorial which stands in front of the church. Every Armistice Day we used to stand there for the service with our mother and father, Edith and William Whale. We were always accompanied by Mrs Gaston and her two sons, Harry and Arthur, as father went to the First World War with Mr Gaston who was killed and we kept this custom up for many years. I can see all the men standing there with heads bared whatever the weather and the St Aubyns boys playing the last post.

Brownies, Guides and Scouts, in fact anyone in uniform, was there and I wonder if it is the same now as I am unable to get there and have to watch television, but my thoughts are always there with those ex-service men who stood together in their grief.

Many people have asked me why I didn't mention Lucy Ann's shop in the High Street in my first book. This was because in my schooldays it was not there. It was a flat-fronted cottage where Mrs Gaston and her two sons lived. In 1930, when the council estate was built in Falmer Road, they moved there. Lucy Ann used to look after a shop for her sister, Mrs Peacock. This was situated on the corner of the crossroads where Floods Chemist is now, and steps led up to it. All the buildings that side of the road and that end of the village were demolished and the shops and flats were built. There were some lovely little flint cottages and Hoads the Bakers and Filkins Dairy.

When the flower show ceased to function in St Aubyns, we started to have a village fair on the village green on the first Saturday in August each year. This green was always known as Pump Green when I was young and there was a well on it, also another road ran across it. When the village fair first started an old lady named Jinny White used to be responsible for the teas, which were usually in The Elms garden with little tables and the members of the Girls' Club dressed in long flowered dresses with large puffed sleeves and poke bonnets waited at table. Miss White made our dresses as she was a dressmaker. She was a busy little lady and gave her help in many ways to the village. We all loved her. There is now a competition for the best dressed stall and the fair is run with a theme each year, each organisation having a stall and the members dressed in costume and forming a procession from the crossroads to the green with a band marching at the head. Then it is opened by a well-known personality.

One thing is missing from our village fair now and that is the greasy pole. There used to be a leg of lamb on the top. The youths and young men climbed it and if they were successful were awarded the joint, but they did get in a mess. Many of them of course could not manage it but what fun it was watching them slide down! The last ones up were the lucky ones as the grease had been rubbed off.

They always have a bar by the pond with tables and chairs. It is most pleasant to sit there on a lovely day. The ducks can stay on the pond all night now as there is a pretty island in the centre. At one time Mr Hilder had to get them in every evening because of the foxes. Two men used to stand opposite each other at either end of the pond and drag a rope over to gather the ducks in for the night otherwise the foxes would get them. It is a lovely sight to see the seagulls swooping over the pond and swimming with the ducks. One thing we miss is when the pond is frozen over, there is no skating like the old days, especially at night with the car headlights shining all around it.

Another thing we miss is the Old Oak Tree by the Lychgate. It had stood there for many years but was blown down in the Great Storm in 1987. The rooks came back near the pond since many trees were uprooted elsewhere. There was very much damage all over the village and I walked round and took photographs of some of it. The cricket

pavilion was completely stripped of its roof as were many houses. My six-foot fence was blown down and in pieces, and there was a terrific noise on the roof in the night which was the television aerial coming down and part of the chimney.

It is now Christmas and the church is floodlit as usual and outside stands a magnificent Christmas Tree with coloured lights. This has only been achieved in recent years and makes our old church look truly beautiful. Inside it lends itself to decoration and always adds to the Christmas feeling. The crib is always there and I always go in there alone and admire it in all its majesty. It stirs something in me and reminds me of days gone by.

Thinking of days gone by I remember so many things that we don't do any more such as the Gymkhana which we had every August Bank Holiday Monday. We would spend all day there, taking picnic lunch and tea in the field beyond the cricket field. Gradually the horse boxes collected in the open space next door, and then the children usually performed first, taking part in their events and thoroughly enjoying themselves and keeping us in fits of laughter. Then the adults appeared with their larger horses. This was most interesting. My mother's youngest brother and his wife always came from Tonbridge for that weekend, he loved it so much. There were always a large number of spectators. So many people must have enjoyed it, but like so many things it has faded into the past. The stoolball has also gone, our mothers used to come and play against us in the evenings sometimes, and we had great fun.

The beautiful building that was St Mary's Home has now been converted into luxury flats, also the lovely Chapel, and is security guarded and renamed Rottingdean Place. There are rows and rows of trees planted in the field adjoining New Barn Farm to the south. They should make a delightful sight when grown and form a very nice plantation. The field looked a dreadful mess where the flood water poured down in October 1987 when many houses and bungalows were flooded and many people had to leave their homes. We had so much rain and it ran down over the ploughed fields bringing the mud with it. These fields had always been pasture land before, on which sheep and cattle were kept. I never remember floods before in 73 years, just a dewpond at the farm which had been dried up for years.

Once having lived in a village such as Rottingdean, it would be very difficult to settle anywhere else. There are so many memories wherever you wander in the village, such as the forge which unfortunately was dismantled and flats built in its place sometime ago. These are named Forge House. When we were children we spent hours there watching Mr Stenning and Mr Hearn shoeing the horses. Once you have smelled the delightful smell of a shoe being put on a horse it is never to be forgotten. The shoe is put on very hot and the steam that comes from it is delightful. The forge was situated opposite the Plough Inn where the implements are displayed in the forecourt.

Set back to one side of the forge, the Blacksmiths Cottages are still there in their original condition and very pretty. To the side of these in Vicarage Lane are some other

flint cottages which have stood there for years. I have a mental picture of "Old Mr Weekly" sitting outside one of these for days on end years ago. Opposite is a small shop which sold sweets and tobacco and is now closed down but was always a great attraction with a little courtyard with budgies and flowers in abundance.

Just around the corner at the bottom of Steyning Road and opposite the Reading Room was a tailor's shop. This belonged to a tiny little man named Mr Trowbridge and opposite that, on the other corner where The Chocolate Box is now, was a guest house and on the corner opposite this was a chemist named Mr Coe. He was a rotund man who was full of fun and the schoolchildren all loved him, he always had time for them and lots of jokes. We often used to congregate in his shop because we were sure of a laugh.

When I was a very little girl we used to have a bonfire up by the windmill on Guy Fawkes Night and I remember someone let off a jumping jack which went down my wellington boot and burnt my leg. After this I always watched the celebrations from granny's front bedroom window. I have an extra-special memory of one night sitting on my mother's knee and she was rocking me to and fro and singing Molly Malone. This memory and the song mean so much to me.

There used to be a winding path which started at the Hog Platt and wound round at the back of SOGAT and The Rotyngs which we called "The Back of Parkers". Every so often you came to kissing gates and on one side was a field which we called Hilder's field because Mr Hilder kept his riding horses there. This path led to Beacon Hill and we often went home from school that way. There was another field nearby which we called "The Three-cornered Field".

It was round the "Back of Parkers" that we used to go to see a film each week. Every Saturday evening a travelling film company brought a film to Rottingdean, which was shown in the Preparatory School and we all trooped round to the large hall at the back where we saw a silent film which was sometimes Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy or something of that type. We thoroughly enjoyed it and thought it was so wonderful. This was in my early teenage days when we got very little entertainment. This all seems very paltry now but believe me it was magic in those days. It took very little to make us happy.

We used to have dancing lessons at the Girls Club given by a very talented teacher named Mavis Ward and then Miss Owen took over and taught us Greek Ballet. We entertained the villagers at first and then danced in the Dome in quite a large show which was put on by a drama company. I remember we wore three-quarter length pink dresses which were in Grecian style. This dancing entails some beautiful movements many of which I remember to this day. We also had Keep Fit lessons at the Girls Club and entertained the villagers with displays after the Village Hall was built.

There used to be an old caravan standing on the green above the bowling green not far

from the road in which lived a quaint old lady named Kitty and it was always filthy. When we were schoolchildren four of us used to go in and clean it up when she was out. Our mothers would have had forty fits had they seen us but to my knowledge they never knew.

We also tended any graves that had been left unattended for any length of time in the churchyard. We cut the grass and took out any weeds and then to make them look cared-for we picked some wild flowers and put them in jam jars. I now tend my parents' grave which is in St Margaret's Churchyard and is in a part which used to be the garden of The Grange but was given over to the church by the owners. It is situated next to the Garden of Rest. My father used to work in this garden years ago, soon after they were married. He told me this himself when my mother passed away.

About this time I started to write what I called my magazine. I bought an exercise book each month and filled it with anything that I thought would be of interest to anyone, such as little pieces from the Children's Newspaper which we bought each week and was edited by Arthur Mee, little items from my father's Feathered World which came out each week also, anything of interest from his Gardening magazines and little poems I wrote myself. This magazine I took to the neighbours and left it with them for a few days and charged them one halfpenny to read it. The money went to charity but I did enjoy doing it and most people gave me more money than I charged.

I used to do shopping for some of the neighbours each Saturday, for which they each paid me sixpence. I also brought their daily newspapers to them as there were no deliveries. I got to know them very well through doing this, and one of them always made me a birthday cake with white icing and decorated with mauve. There was always a posy of parma violets in the centre, mauve being my favourite colour. This was the colour of my bedroom accessories and my best china doll was always dressed in mauve. She was a lovely jointed china doll with dark hair, and her name was Pam. The last I saw of her was when my daughter took her to the Carol Service. This service is held annually on the Sunday before Christmas at St Margaret's Church, when the children take their unwanted toys up to the altar to be received by the vicar and to be distributed to children in hospital and to those who lack presents at Christmas. I hope some little girl got my doll who loved her and enjoyed her.

Uncle Dick Whale, father's brother, was a carter on the farm with a wagon and team. These were kept at New Barn Farm, and if ever one of the horses was not well uncle used to stay all night with them. He was a very good living man, attending Chapel regularly and very kind to us. He did not marry until late in life and his wife was equally kind and a good friend to mother as they lived next door with granny.

Grandad was very fond of Brampton Stocks and at the right season his back garden was full of them, a mass of different colours and the scent was magnificent. He had an allotment at New Barn Farm where there were about half a dozen for local men. He used to take us down there and pull some lovely fresh carrots, wipe the dirt off with his

hands and give them to us to eat. They were truly delicious. He grew some beautiful vegetables. Uncle Dick specialised in chrysanthemums and daffodils. He always took some water to the bottom of the garden by the shed and washed and scrubbed the pots until they were absolutely clean. When these flowers grew everyone in the family was given a pot and they were superb.

There used to be three or four haystacks at New Barn Farm where we used to play as children. This changed to love-making in later years and then a Dutch Barn was built and filled to overflowing, so there were no more haystacks.

But one night this barn was on fire. Whether it was children playing or combustion we shall never know, but the road was closed because of thick smoke and flames and we couldn't open our windows for more than a week. There were particles of soot everywhere.

When Jack and I first went to live opposite the farm, we could go across at any time to buy fresh milk. I once dropped my daughter Angela's milk when she was a baby and the young lad next door went straight over and came back with more. When it was time for milking, the cows used to crowd round the gate waiting to be let in to be milked by hand, you could tell the time by them. How I wish they were still there, also the men working on the farm with their dear old Sussex brogue. I am told I have a touch of the Sussex brogue. If so, I am very proud of it.

The cows' field was full of buttercups and daisies, also clover. There is something wonderful in watching a bee crawling into a flower after choosing from three or four, and staying there a while before coming out with the little bags on his side. Mushrooms used to grow prolifically in the field and it was quite a usual sight to see them being gathered before breakfast in time to enjoy a delicious meal.

I notice the neighbours don't mix so well now. We used to get together to do this sort of thing and to walk down to collect the children from school. These days most people have a car, and they don't walk out together so much.

We had no bus service for many years from the village up the Falmer road. It was first started by a Mr Price in the 1930s, soon after I left school. I was coming home on it one day and when we got to the top of Doctor's Hill it turned right round to the left and went right through the flint wall and into the stables which have now been converted into a house. We were all very shaken at the time, this bus was a single-decker, not very large and privately owned. To the right of this house were some farm buildings which housed cows and pigs. These have now been made into a mews. We used to play there as children. To the right of this there is the bowling green.

When our children went to school there was a small bus and every other one went to Woodingdean. The one in between only came to our estate, and the bus drivers took our children safely to school. The drivers' names were Joe, Dan and George. If you left



it a little late to get the bus as it came down the road they would slow down and pick you up. They wouldn't dream of passing you or taking off and leaving you behind if they saw you running.

In a house called Dale Cottage, which faces the green and is next door to the Convent, lived a man who kept race horses. They were stabled at the back of the house. Every time Brighton Races were on, a jockey named Jimmy used to stay as a lodger with my mother and father and I well remember mother ironing his silks which were beautiful colours and the texture of the cloth was a delight to touch. He was a little man and always very happy. Although I have lived in Rottingdean all these years only once have I been to Brighton Races and suddenly a thunderstorm started and we got drenched. Julian was only about two years old and Angela six. We were frightened and there was no shelter. We only went because we had some friends staying with us and it was their choice. We preferred motorcycle grass-track racing and used to go off all day on some Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays, taking picnic meals. We used to go early to get a safe place to sit, spreading out our blanket and some toys for the children, although they loved the motorcycles too and came to know many of the competitors' names as we did. These races need a great deal of skill, especially the sidecars when the passenger leans out and at times comes in contact with the ground.

Our other Sunday pleasure was to take a picnic tea to the cricket field. Many of our friends did the same thing and we enjoyed those afternoons all together in the sunshine, there was plenty of room for the children to play. Henry Blythe was the captain and Mr Coates the umpire for many years and we knew the names of all the Rottingdean cricketers. Every year there was a cricket match which took place with celebrities playing and I got quite a number of autographs of distinguished people. We also used to watch the football matches. Jack and his brother Cyril played as full backs when they were young men and my son Julian played both Saturday and Sunday for Rottingdean as soon as he was old enough. The football field was behind the cricket field.

Norton House boys school had their tennis courts and cricket pitch in the field on the opposite side of the road to Court Ord Cottages and The Dene girls school had their hockey pitch there, which they loaned to our Girls Club Hockey Club. Norton House is next to the church and they have recently sold part of it to the church as a cottage in which small functions can be held. The Dene is now a convalescent home. The playing fields are now ploughed and arable crops grown on them.

Years ago beautiful flowers grew on Beacon Hill such as cowslips, gypsy roses, buttercups, daisies, marguerites and shoes-and-stockings which is a yellow flower and crept between the red, blue and pink thyme and grew close to the ground. Amongst these flowers were bee orchids, poppies, mignonette, toddlegrass and blue, white and pink violets. I often lay up on the hill and watched the sky lark singing and hovering high above before dropping straight down to the ground and creeping along to its nest. This was one of my favourite pastimes. There was no worry then of terrorists and it was quite safe.

My friends and I used to pick a bunch of marguerites every year for a very special lady who lived in the village. Her name was Mrs Lunnon and she was cashier at Cruses grocers in the High Street. I can remember her sitting in a semi-circular pay-desk with a glass front. We used to go in there for a pennyworth of broken biscuits. She knew us all by name and always made a fuss of us. The flowers used to make her so happy it was well worth our small effort.

I was on the hill watching the lark after I heard that the war had started on that fateful Sunday. I had been there quite a long time when suddenly with an almighty swoosh three planes came swooping in over the cliff top and came very close to the ground on the hill. Of course I thought they were Germans and jumped up, taking to my heels and getting back home in no time, but afterwards found these planes to be Spitfires. I had never seen one before as we only had a few. I remember afterwards selling flags in the High Street for the Spitfire Fund and after that seeing many of these planes in dog fights over the coast.

The walk across the hill is delightful and the view of the sea and windmill magnificent. It is a favourite walk for dog owners. We used to climb the trees at the bottom of the hill when we were quite young and tore many pairs of stockings in the process. These were black ribbed ones and were worn with black lace up boots. I remember my friend sewing a hole up tightly with white cotton hoping her mother wouldn't notice it. There was a metal scraper fixed in the ground by the back door where we had to get rid of the mud before going indoors. Boots got very muddy in those days as the road was not made up and there were no pavements. Of course we played around the farm frequently and there was plenty of mud there. We used to be able to see the windmill from our garden when we first lived opposite the farm in New Barn Road, but during the forty-eight years I have been living there the scrub and trees have grown so much that all I can see now is the ends of the sweeps. This makes me very sad as it was such a lovely view.

In times gone by Rottingdean had a lovely sandy beach until in the 1930s when the undercliff walk was built from Brighton to Saltdean and the huge concrete groynes took the place of the lovely old wooden groynes. Since then nearly all our sand has disappeared.

It was when I was about twelve years of age that a few friends and I started smoking. We could not take cigarettes home so decided to take a large lump of chalk out of one of the caves in the cliff and put in the cigarettes and then replace the chalk. After a while this did not prove to be satisfactory as they got damp so we went along Back Way. This is a path between St Aubyns School and their playing fields. Here there is a flint wall so we followed the same procedure with a large flint. I did not really like smoking but it was so exciting.

It was about this age that we were all on the beach as usual when the sky suddenly

darkened over the horizon and it gradually crept over the sea towards us in a direct horizontal line. With it a huge wave came and we all picked up our belongings and ran for our lives. This wave came right up to the crossroads but luckily no one was drowned. Nevertheless we were all extremely frightened. We learned afterwards it was a tidal wave.

During the war there was a machine gun post on the hill. There are two large round dips on the north end, one larger than the other, and the gun post was in one of them. It was kept manned night and day to keep off the planes. The Germans came in shooting haphazardly at anything in sight. My friend's father was shot while working in the field next to St Dunstons. Another friend was shot through the bedroom window. These were both killed outright.

My cousin Win Boniface, whose husband was in the army, and I used to go firewatching before Angela was born. A rota was drawn up and we all had to do our nights allotted to us. We used to take a flask of cocoa and watch that no incendiary bombs were dropped.

There were soldiers everywhere in Rottingdean and they took over Rottingdean Preparatory School. By this time we had moved to New Barn Road. My husband got quite friendly with some of them and they often came to us in the evening for a game of cards and brought me large bowls of dripping which were most useful.

Court Barn Road and New Barn Road are on a parallel with each other, houses on either side of both roads. One night I was ironing in the kitchen when my husband had gone on night duty and the back door opened and in came a drunken soldier. He had mistaken the roads. I had great difficulty in getting him out but succeeded in the end and kept the door locked after that episode.

One day the army vehicles were parked nose to tail around all the roads, and the soldiers came up to us in the evening bringing grey blankets, boots for my husband, some food and quite a lot of other things. In the morning they were all gone without telling us and then we heard it was D-Day. I often wonder how many of them came back. I suppose they did not know where they were going. We had of course lost many men from Rottingdean. Some were boys who had sat in class with me at school. We were always wondering who would be next, and it was almost impossible to believe.

At one point I was told Angela and I were to be evacuated and had to go down to the school and stand with the other mothers to collect our personal labels and those for our luggage. But in the end we didn't go although some of the older children went and I still have our labels. I used to have to walk to the village with Angela in the pram and if the air raid siren went and we were on the road it was very frightening.

We had very few new clothes as all clothing needed coupons. A friend used to give me her little girl's cast offs for Angela. I was very lucky as they were very good quality, very

pale colours and mostly beautifully smocked. When Angela grew out of them I passed them on to someone else.

Throughout the war years our beaches were sealed off with thick rolls of barbed wire in case the Germans decided to invade. We were not allowed on the beach for years and the first one to be opened up was Seaford, and then we invaded that. We used to go over together, a whole crowd of people with our children and picnics. For quite a while Angela wouldn't go near the water. She was quite scared of it but there was a children's playground which was very useful. By the time our beach was opened up she had got over her fear and we spent every possible moment on the beach. Of course by this time she was older and in later years became a good swimmer. In fact both our children are. They spent much of their time in the water.

When we were married in 1940 the vicar of St Margaret's was the Reverend White, but when the children were young at school Mr Tavener took over and the children adored him. He came swimming in the pool with us and when they went off on the Sunday School outing we used to follow on behind the charabanc on our motor bike, meeting them at their destination. Those were the days, such good fun.

After Mr Tavener came Mr Walters who was a very kind man. He was good to me when Jack left home and brought me money from the church. Our curate Peter Ball was very friendly too. He is now the Bishop of Lewes. He also presided over my mother's funeral service. Julian remembers him well because he played football with the boys, riding to the field on his bike, and was very popular and I am sure enjoyed himself.

Julian carried on playing football until he married when he was 28 and moved into Brighton. The footballers have all kept very friendly and still have parties together with their respective wives. Considering Julian is now 43 I consider these to be wonderful friendships and feel sure Peter Ball would be pleased to know about it.

Although Julian was born after the war ended he is very interested in anything appertaining to it, so much in fact that I have given him my bound volumes, six years of war, one for each year. How fortunate we were that Jack did not have to go to war and the children were not old enough to really be affected. It must have been very traumatic for families who were split up for one reason or another.

My grandson Neil is very much like his father in many ways and shines at rugby which he loves. He is also very interested in birds, just the same as his father and can name any bird that he sees. He just stands and watches them as his father used to do. We used to watch them together, also the sky and the way it changes. The colours are beautiful and the clouds gradually change shape. I think perhaps the sky is not observed enough. The flowers and trees change also with the seasons but we are inclined to take all this for granted.

How I wish I could paint! It must be wonderful to see a canvas come to life with your

work. As I can't do this I take photographs instead and have some very pretty ones of the garden which is the next best thing. My father used to paint and produced some lovely pictures. I wish he had passed the gift on to me. Sir William Nicholson wanted to send him to Paris to study the art but for some reason unknown to me he didn't go. What a pity, a great talent wasted!

He also drew some lovely sketches. One was put on exhibition in the Rottingdean Grange. This was a sketch of his brother Dick with his wagon and team which he did in Dean Court Road when Uncle Dick was a young man and it was all fields before being built on. Before my father died he gave it to my son who proudly has it hanging in his dining room. This sketch is one of four. My sister has the other three.

I didn't understand what my father went through in the First World War until after he died and I watched a television programme of the men living in those wretched trenches. He was one of a number of soldiers operating a big gun, as he called it, and one day they caught it. He saw his mate blown to pieces and he was gassed and shellshocked himself. Now I know why he couldn't bear to watch the Western Films on television. "All that shouting and banging" he used to say, but of course Julian loved them. I wish now I had been a little more compassionate although I couldn't please them both.

He used to tell us about the days when Rottingdean had a fire engine and he was a fireman. At one time the windmill was on fire and they put it out by using a chain of buckets from the village to the mill. He always seemed to have a story to tell. One was when he saved a man from drowning when they lived at Saltdean. This man was named Mr Chandler and I know it to be true because his wife often used to say to me "it's thanks to your father that I still have a husband" and his daughters Dorothy and Joan went to school with me. Also, while they lived at Saltdean he fell down the cliff and broke his leg. He was lying on the rocks below and the tide was coming in when fortunately a woman was walking on the rocks and she sent for help. He had to lie for weeks with his legs between sandbags, this was before splints or plaster were heard of. It must have been 1915 because they had been married for three years. The men used a rope tethered to the cliff top to go down to get driftwood, there were no steps in those days.

One day mother, my sister and I came home to Court Ord and when we looked through the window as we opened the back door there was father sitting in his windsor armchair swathed in bandages. A carthorse had knocked him over and rolled on him. He had some broken bones and we were terrified and ran round to granny. The next accident he suffered was to be knocked down by Mr Dilley's coal lorry. He was a friend of father and kept his coal in a large building and yard by the side of North End House. This was originally built for storing grain.

Mother was taken ill on their Silver Wedding Anniversary, December 28th 1937. It happened quite suddenly. We had enjoyed a lovely Christmas and she just managed to get to Christine's wedding in January. She was ill for months and I don't know how I

would have managed without the help of cousin Win and granny living next door either side. They looked after her while I went to work in the mornings. My sister had gone down to Devon to live and didn't know how ill she was. Mother could not get a hand to her mouth and I had to sit her on the edge of the bed and lift her legs round. It was months before she made any progress. The doctor said it was rheumatic fever which was the beginning of her heart trouble later on. I had to keep the house clean and look after her on returning home from work. Christine didn't know how ill she was because someone wrote and told her she was getting better and we didn't want to spoil her first few months of marriage. There were no vacuum cleaners or washing machines in those days so it was hard work and took up all my time, but I would have done anything for my mother and father, they were such loving parents. Jack was most understanding. We were courting at this time and married the March following, in 1940. We lived with mother and father for two years when I found I was pregnant with Angela and felt it unfair to have a baby in the house and by this time mother was feeling much better, so we wanted her to stay well.

This was the happiest time of my life. Jack was a wonderful husband, we had a lovely little baby girl whom we worshipped and had moved into our first home of our own. Everything seemed to be so perfect, it seemed impossible that anything could ever change.

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