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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

A Life Behind Bars by Marjory Batchelor

Born in 1908 at the Marquess of Exeter public house (now the Chimney House), which was run by her parents, Marjory Batchelor spent her working life as a barmaid and pub landlady in and around the Brighton area. Marjory recalls her experiences of growing up and working through two World Wars in Brighton, Worthing, Rottingdean, Mile Oak and Portsmouth up to the present day.

From the days of spit 'n' sawdust and horse-drawn drays, to the arrival of fruit machines and 'pub grub' – Marjory remembers it all with humour and affection. Her account documents the many changes that have taken place in pub life in Marjory's lifetime, and she also recalls Brighton shops and entertainments, providing an interesting social history through first-hand experience.

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A LIFE BEHIND BARS

1908 - 1918

I was born in 1908 and looking back over the last ninety years I marvel at the changes that have taken place. My birthplace was a small public house just off Dyke Road on the corner of Exeter Street and Upper Hamilton Road, near the border between Brighton and Hove. My father ran the pub which was known as *The Marquess of Exeter*, and it was rather unique, only having a six-day licence and therefore not allowed to open on Sundays. This was due to some clause in a will and until all the family passed on, nothing could be changed. At this time pubs were mainly male dominated, and many of the smaller ones were just alehouses where only beer was sold.

Life was definitely in the slow lane in those days. Barrels of beer were delivered on a dray by two horses rather like Shire horses, and rolled down to the cellar on ropes by a very skilful drayman. The barrels were heavy wooden ones and had to be lowered carefully to another man who waited to catch them at the bottom of the stairs. He'd then roll them onto stolleges (wooden supports) ready to tap and spile (pierce a hole in the cask).

There were several small pubs between Exeter Street and Preston Circus: *The Prestonville* on the corner of Hamilton Road and Brigden Street, *The Bridge Inn* in New England Road and, further down, *The New England*, now known as *The Cobblers Thumb*. It was quite a haul from the Circus to Upper Hamilton Road and the horses got so used to stopping at these pubs, that when passing at other times they refused to go on without first having a rest. At the last pub they were sometimes rewarded with a pint of beer, which they never forgot!

Coal was also delivered by one of the big horses. Bread was delivered in a light van by two local firms: Clarks, who had a bakery at Newtown Road near the Brighton and Hove Albion Football Ground, and Gigins, who had shops all over town.

A fishmonger pushed an open cart through the streets at least once a week, calling out loudly, and housewives would take a dish out to him. He had a pair of scales and a bucket of water hanging from the cart handle, which he used to freshen the fish in hot weather. The fish all slid around and got mixed together on the cart, but he would pick out the one you wanted.

Our milkman had some premises at the end of Port Hall Place, near Port Hall Tavern, at the junction of Stanford Road and Dyke Road Drive. He brought the milk in a metal churn on a handcart with a half-pint measure hanging from the side. You took your jugs out to be filled and covered them with a piece of muslin weighed down with beads. The pub had an outdoor cupboard that we used to put

the jugs in during hot weather. The doors were covered with fine mesh and should you be unlucky enough to find a fly swimming round in the milk, you just hooked it out with a spoon - not exactly hygienic by today's standards! In the twenty-five years I lived there, I never heard of anyone having food poisoning.

Life seemed to go on pleasantly. I went to infants' school at Stanford Road and on July 10th 1914 my sister Doris was born. Less than a month afterwards, World War One started. It didn't seem to affect us at first until battles started raging in France and Belgium and as there were only Casualty Clearing Stations there, the wounded had to be shipped home. Hospitals became crowded, so schools were taken over and turned into hospitals, and as Stanford Road School was one of the first of these, we had to go to East Hove School in Davigdor Road, which was quite a walk for six-year-olds.

On Saturday mornings we used to go along to Stanford Road and look at the walking wounded through the railings of our old school playground. They wore suits of a very light blue sort of serge material lined with white, a white shirt and a red tie with a khaki peak cap. We children were quite fascinated by the sight of them.

That year the Brighton and Hove Grammar School had been completed, but wasn't opened until after the war, during which it was commandeered as a hospital for the wounded. The same happened to nearby Wistons School which housed the officers. These changes helped my father's business quite a lot, because he was asked to deliver beer and spirits there. There wasn't much wine about in those days - only port.

Prior to that time our pub only sold beer but it was now granted a full licence. Father was able to employ a man to help him with the cellar work and deliveries. He also hired a barmaid as my mother already had my sister and I to look after, along with grandfather, who had come to live with us by then.

Lemonade and gingerbeer were delivered in two-gallon stone jars, with a screw top and a wooden tap, from a local firm called Frys. Our Saturday morning treat was a pint of our choice and a large Brighton Biscuit, which was really special and made by a firm called Meredith and Drew.

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There came another change of school when East Hove was commandeered and I had the choice of going to Clifton High School near the Seven Dials, which was in the underground part of a church, or Preston Road School, which was at the bottom of Dyke Road Drive. As the former meant working under gaslight all day, it was decided that I would go to Preston Road, another long walk four times a day. The homeward journey was uphill all the way.

There were no school dinners then but in cold weather we took cocoa in a medicine bottle, which we stood in front of the fire until playtime. There was no central heating, just a coal fire, so those who got in first stood a better chance of a warm drink. Those who sat in the front of the classroom were warmer than those at the back by the windows.

The cleaning was done by the caretaker and his wife, who had a small house adjoining the school. He tended to the playgrounds and the toilets, lit the fires, carried up the coal and did many other jobs. The school was divided: the girls one side, the boys the other. The girls played basketball, the boys football, and we had to ask the caretaker for the equipment and wait while he blew up the balls with a bicycle pump.

Discipline was very strict in those days and in schools, the cane was quite frequently used. If you were persistently disobedient you were sent to the headmistress who administered a collection of leather straps known as the 'tawse'. This was more painful than the cane as it was used on the posterior and was considered a great disgrace!

The weather was very predictable then with winters being very cold and sometimes there would be weeks of snow. We used to make slides down Stanford Road and Dyke Road Drive, which froze over and became very icy. Sometimes we arrived at school much wetter and dirtier than when we started out! We wore layers of clothing: underneath, a woollen vest, a warm liberty bodice, fleecy-lined knickers and thick stockings.

On top we wore button boots, thick skirts, cardigans and jumpers, knitted scarves, hats with pom-poms and gloves with a tape sewn on each. The tape went through each armhole and across the back so that you didn't lose them. Spring came about the end of March and then we wore gymslips. I remember my father carried a school photo of me sitting on a chair in the playground, hair parted in the middle with two plaits, feet turned inwards, still wearing boots!

* * *

Spring and summer were the seasons for games. A spinning top was popular with us girls. You had a piece of stick with a length of string at one end, which wound round a groove in a wooden top. If released rapidly, and if lucky, your top would spin away and you would follow it. There were competitions to see who could keep theirs going the longest. Then there were hoops, wooden ones, which you bowled along with a stick. This was known as 'trolling' and became competitive, as did skipping. If you were lucky, you had a proper skipping-rope with coloured handles, sometimes inserted with silvery beads rather like small

ball bearings, and you were allowed to take them to school to use during playtimes.

If you could get hold of a length of rope, with one of you holding either end the others could take it in turns to 'jump in'. Gradually, those turning the rope would increase it in height and length and the game was over when everyone had had a go.

Hopscotch was the game for you if you didn't possess a hoop, top or skipping-rope, as you only needed a piece of chalk to mark out the pitch, which consisted of squares and numbers. You had to hop on one foot from one numbered square to the next. If you wobbled and put your foot down, you were out!

All these games were played in the streets and in the roads, only stopping if a horse and cart or a cyclist came by. The boys played cricket with stumps chalked on the wall, making their own rules about bales. Football was played with clothing used as goal posts. Rounders was another game you could improvise if funds were low, using a piece of wood for the bat and clothing to mark the places you had to run to.

In the autumn, the boys went into the parks and raided the horse chestnut trees for conkers, and using a meat skewer, would gouge a hole through the middle. With a piece of knotted string threaded through the hole, the conker was now ready to show its strength as one boy tried to smash his opponent's conker with his own. These contests became very serious and the winner whose conker remained intact was the hero of the season.

Marbles was the most expensive game, for they had to be bought and much bartering would go on. At the end of the season the boy with the most (especially the alleys, the large ones) was envied and respected by the others.

When the weather was too bad to go out, us girls would play happily with a bowl of soapy water and clay pipes, blowing bubbles. There were plenty of clay pipes around as men used them for smoking. They smelt dreadful and made noises like bacon frying.

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Behind Highcroft Villas there was a field, known as Penny's Field. I think it belonged to Mr Magnus Volk, who owned Volk's Railway, which still runs from the Palace Pier to the Marina. I remember him as a kindly gentleman with very white hair. He used to allow the children from Sunday School to go to Penny's Field for an afternoon in the summer, supervised by the teachers of course. He

would appear with a huge bagful of sweets and would throw handfuls over the grass and let us scramble for them. He was very popular!

A favourite walk on Saturday mornings was a visit to Booth Bird Museum in Dyke Road, which is still there and has become very well known. There was a uniformed man in attendance, and as we were only allowed to talk in whispers, we never stayed very long. Further up on the left of Dyke Road was Holes Farm where they kept a dairy herd and delivered milk locally. We used to watch the cows being milked in the sheds. There were also pigs of various sizes in sties, farm horses, and chickens running around. There was quite a lot to interest us.

An added attraction during the war was the arrival of German prisoners, and we felt very daring watching them working on the land. They wore grey uniforms and round caps with a red band and were chained together. There were several guards around so we were quite safe!

Sunday was quite an eventful day. There was a church hall in Exeter Street belonging to St Luke's Church, which was on the corner of Old Shoreham Road and Prestonville Road. We all assembled there and went to our classes. The register was called and we were given a stamp of a biblical scene to stick in a book, so those who attended regularly soon got their books full. After hymn singing and a short service, the under-sevens went home while the rest of us were lined up in pairs and marched to the church for morning service, unless we could think of a good excuse not to go. We fidgeted through the sermon, though if the vicar became somewhat forceful or dramatic we would sit open-mouthed and think it all most exciting. In the afternoon we went to Sunday School and in the evening I went with my grandfather to a Mission Hall at the corner of Exeter Street and Port Hall Road. It was more informal, the people were friendly and I preferred it. Anyway, there was nothing else to do: no television, and not even the wireless.

Monday was another eventful day, but not like Sunday, for it was Washing Day, and whatever the weather it seemed to take over everything. My father escaped to the bar and I to school. Dinner was always cold meat from the Sunday joint, with boiled potatoes, pickles and perhaps beetroot. This was followed by rice pudding, if lucky, or boiled rice with jam.

The washing took up most of the day. First there was the copper to fill with cold water, then a coal fire had to be lit underneath it. Starch had to be made for stiffening collars, the white pinafores that we wore to school, and pillowcases etc. A bath of water with cubes of *Reckitts Blue* was used to keep anything white from gradually becoming yellow. When at last everything was washed and rinsed it was carefully folded and put through the mangle, then hung out to dry if the weather was fine. If not, it stayed in the kitchen suspended from the ceiling on a pulley with four lines attached, or over the fireguard in the living room, which

created a steamy atmosphere.

Apart from the washing, in those days cleaning was really hard work. There were steps at each of the five doors of the pub where I lived and these had to be whitened each day, which entailed kneeling down with a bucket of water and a cloth. You wet the step, then using *Hearthstone*, which looked like a khaki-coloured brick, you rubbed the step, smoothing it from side to side with a wrung-out cloth. When the steps were dry they appeared white.

The kitchen range was another chore, as that was where all the cooking was done. You rekindled the fire each morning and the ashes had to be raked into a bin underneath. Once a week the fire was cleared and the range had to be black leaded. This you painted on with one brush and buffed off with another. Steel parts were rubbed down with emery paper, rather like coarse sandpaper and the area underneath the range had to be whitened. For ordinary coal fires there were fire irons, consisting of a pair of tongs, a poker and a long-handled shovel. These could be steel or brass and had to be cleaned accordingly.

There was no stainless steel in those days. Knives had to be cleaned on an emery board, which you sprinkled with a red powder. You rubbed the knives on it and then polished them up with a cloth. Forks, spoons and plated silver were cleaned with *Goddards Plate Powder*, which you mixed in a saucer of water. It's still on sale now, but comes ready-mixed. I use it today on a teapot, milk jug and sugar bowl, which were wedding gifts and are now over sixty-years old.

Toilet paper was very basic, consisting of newspaper cut into squares. A piece of string was threaded through a hole in the corner and this would hang from a nail. We children were bathed once a week using carbolic soap, which was red and so strong that it was guaranteed to keep germs at bay! *Yellow Sunlight Soap* was used for washing laundry and *Hudson's Powder* for washing-up. There was toilet soap and toilet rolls in the bathroom eventually, but in the outside toilet there were never hand-washing facilities.

When I watch television nowadays and see the choice of products advertised which are considered absolutely essential, I have to smile and wonder how we grew up without getting dishpan hands and leather-look skin! It was possibly due to the medication we were given: daily doses of cod liver oil and malt in the winter, sulphur tablets in the spring for our blood and castor oil once a week. Goose-grease was rubbed in if chesty, and sometimes something called Russian tallow, which was like candle grease. This was spread on brown paper and applied with a warm iron for bronchitis. The use of strong smelling camphorated oil in a warm atmosphere guaranteed you a seat on your own!

We had a doctor in Rose Hill Terrace, a turning off Preston Circus, which was quite a walk from Upper Hamilton Road, especially coming back which was all uphill. The doctor made up all his own prescriptions, and I used to collect them. I

often marvelled that, whatever the complaint, I always got a bottle of khaki-coloured medicine!

* * *

By this time there were more cars and vans on the road and my father acquired an old Douglas motorbike, which a friend had taught him to ride. You had to start the engine up, run with it and jump on, then keep going and only stop when you'd found somebody to push you off again.

By 1916 thousands of soldiers were being called to the services. My father, foreseeing this, learned to drive a van. Footslogging and trench warfare did not appeal to him at all. He was 'called up' that year, joined the Royal Army Service Corps and drove a lorry taking supplies and ammunition to the front lines in France and Belgium.

We moved out of *The Marquess of Exeter* to a house further up Exeter Street. Rationing had started but there were no ration books like there were in World War Two, where everyone got a small amount of necessities per family. I remember queuing at the butcher's before going to school, until my mother could relieve me. Rumours of deliveries got round, and one day I joined a queue at a grocer's and came back triumphantly with a stone jar of treacle. When we opened it, the smell was so vile it had to be tipped down the drain!

At the end of 1917 my father was sent to a hospital in Scotland, having got in the way of some shrapnel in Armentieres. He was unconscious for two weeks and was sent to a special hospital for head injuries, near Glasgow. My mother was informed and advised to visit and so she took me with her. I still remember getting on a night train at Euston Station and stepping over mud-stained and exhausted soldiers, with full kit, lying in the carriages and corridors. They were too tired to move, even if you trod on them while trying to find a toilet on the dimly lit train!

The war ended in 1918 and by that time my father had been discharged from the army and given a full pension of ten shillings (50p) a week. The landlord of *The Marquess of Exeter* decided to leave and return to Scotland, so my father was offered the tenancy again. We moved back into the pub and soon got back into the old routine.

When the 'Great War of all Wars' was over, life was never the same. The emancipation of women had started and those who served with the forces came back with many new ideas. They would come into the pub and smoke quite openly and exchange experiences with other ex-service personnel.

The wives whose husbands had been away for a long period, had become used to coping on their own and making their own decisions. They had got together,

found other interests, and made their own lifestyles forming child-minding groups and were not prepared to settle down to their old lives again.

1922 - 1934

In 1922 I became fourteen years of age and left school, as we all did. Only those who sat for and won a scholarship could go to a grammar school, and then train for a career. Not being talented in any way, I decided to help my parents in their business and began my career as a barmaid. This was when it became known as a profession and was called a Licensed Victualler's Assistant!

Most shop work was not well paid, nor easy to obtain in those years after the 1914-1918 war, so with £1 pocket money a week and no expenses, I was better off than most of my school friends. I had every afternoon free and all day on Sundays. I had one special friend who was living with her grandparents and looking after them, so we were able to meet most days. Her grandfather was a caretaker at the Xaverian College in Viaduct Road, which became an Army Records Office during the war. We were allowed to go to the staff dance at Christmas which was the only dance we attended during the year, except for the 'hop' at the village hall in Poynings on the occasional weekend.

I didn't like my job at first, a few teasing remarks from male customers would cause me to blush and run for cover. But in time I learned the art of repartee and tactful conversation and overcame my shyness. I also learned to talk about things that other people wished to hear, which was to become a very useful habit in later years. Looking back I realise it was a great education, sometimes bringing disillusionment, but also a more philosophical approach to life. At times it could be a little boring but there was always the hope of a door opening and a new face appearing.

At my parents' pub there was one bar known as the Smoking Room, which contained a quarter-sized billiards table and a piano. When it was quiet in the early evenings, I would go in there and do some piano practice for an hour. One evening, an elderly gentleman appeared with a half-pint of bitter and sat down. He never spoke, until after several evenings he said to me, 'I have some of my late wife's music I would like you to have, if you will accept it?' I thanked him and said I would, and next evening he brought it along. There was a selection of classical and musical comedy excerpts. I played some for him, and he thanked me. I never saw him again, for a few days later his body was found washed up on the beach. This made a deep impression on me, which I will never forget.

On Saturday evenings a customer would play ragtime on the piano. He put a lot of energy into this, and used to frequently bend over the piano, then throw his head back.

His hair was long and black, and brilliantined in the fashion of the day, so the effect was quite startling. He could also accompany singers, and about a week before Christmas there was a social evening, when men came to collect the money they had paid in each week during the year, and wives and friends would accompany them. A carpenter was the self-appointed compere, and as he introduced the singers, he would say, 'You will be 'ighly amused this time', whatever type of song it turned out to be. It was always a very jolly evening, as the beer flowed and the fire glowed. There was even dancing around the quarter-sized billiards table if no one was using it. On cold winters' evenings there were two or three pokers by the fire, which the men would heat up, then dip in their beer mugs to warm the beer.

On Saturday afternoons my father and I would walk to Brighton and Hove Albion football ground and back. There were no buses along the Old Shoreham Road then. I must have been about fifteen at the time. I also got to see some cricket matches at the county ground along Eaton Road, as one of the masters from the grammar school was one of our lunchtime customers. He had a pass for his wife but she wasn't interested, so he took me and sat me down in the stand, while he took himself off to the bar and, giving me instructions to keep count of the scoring, would appear briefly at intervals! I became familiar with the faces of Dennis Compton, the Parks Brothers and K S Duleepsinhji, the nephew of the great Ranjitsinhji. After the match I was taken to Fullers in Church Road and bought an ice-cream in a glass dish, which was the highlight of the afternoon.

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After the austerities of war, young people wanted to spread their wings and enjoy life, and by the time I was eighteen a new era had arrived, known as the 'Roaring Twenties'. Small dress shops opened up all over Brighton, mainly in the area around London Road, Kensington Gardens and Sydney Street. These were mostly owned by traders from the East End of London who were very enterprising and displayed silk stockings instead of the lisle ones we wore before.

Hairdressers updated their styles: hair was cut short, known as the Bob, or crimped into deep waves with heated tongs, known as the Marcel Wave. Many parents were upset at the loss of their daughters' long hair, which they had brushed and plaited for so many years.

More cinemas opened, and whereas we used to go to the Duke of York's (which is still operating at Preston Circus) now there was a choice. As it had become big business in America, we also had more films showing here (in black and white, of course). After films like 'The Perils of Pauline', which showed the action, followed by the caption, these films were much more exciting as they were 'Talkies', where the actors' voices were heard. 'The Perils of Pauline' had been exciting at the time, mainly because it was a serial which ended with the heroine in some

cliff-hanging situation, like being tied to a railway line with a train coming ever nearer. Suddenly the caption would read, 'Will the hero reach Pauline in time? Find out next week.' Then there were the wonderful Charlie Chaplin films, which are still enjoyed by many today.

Woolworths in Western Road was the equivalent of the '5 and 10 cent stores' in America. Here there was nothing over 6d (6 old pence). Sheet music became very popular, with the words and music of popular songs, and at the back of the store there was a long counter displaying them. A piano stood in the corner, and an assistant would play and sing any number you requested, while another took the money for it.

Further along the road, near where C & A is now, there was a store called Staffords; quite a fascinating place where they sold ornaments and fancy goods, the sort not seen at any other shops. In the afternoons they held tea dances. There was a small charge for a cup of tea, sandwich and cake. You could either sit and watch or participate in the fox-trot, waltz and the quick-step. The music was provided by a piano and a violin.

Owners of small halls caught on to the idea and then evening dances became popular and big business. There was Sherrys at the bottom of West Street, which was licensed, where you could sit at the tables in the balcony and watch the dancing. There, the music was played by an orchestra, mostly of trumpets and saxophones. When the Regent cinema opposite the clock tower opened, with its dance hall above, people came from all over the country, as it had the first sprung dance floor ever and was wonderful to dance on. Big bands became very popular then and Joe Loss was among the regulars who played there.

The Hippodrome in Middle Street (now a Bingo Hall known as the Mecca) was a great source of entertainment. There were two performances a night and quite a few entertainers went on to become famous such as Marie Lloyd, Max Miller and Ted Ray. Three wonderful Apache dancers were known as the Canjou Brothers. A girl who was flung around the stage as part of their act, would end up going through a scenery window at the back! Two droll little men and their female companion who did a 'sand dance' were called Wilson, Keppel and Betty. None of them ever spoke and their expressions never changed. Wilson and Keppel kept the act going over the years but many 'Bettys' came and went.

The Grand in North Road was not so up-market and each act was introduced by a compere. The audience left these entertainers in no doubt whether they approved of them or not, so it was consequently rather noisy. This type of evening is now known as 'Old Time Music Hall'. The Theatre Royal put on many plays before they became London productions, and it was said that if they got by with a Brighton audience, they would get by anywhere!

Outside the pub we had several advertising boards, which entitled us to two free seats once a fortnight. My friend and I were given these tickets. We could go to matinees on the piers (there was a theatre on both the Palace Pier and the West Pier) or the first house of the Hippodrome. After going to the latter we used to buy fish and chips at Silverthornes at 6d, but if we weren't in by 9.00pm then we were in trouble.

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The two piers were a great source of entertainment and in 1928, when my friend and I were both twenty, we used to spend a lot of time on them. I preferred the West Pier: it wasn't as long as the Palace Pier, but I liked the more sedate atmosphere. It was kept in beautiful condition and after the ravages of the sea and the weather of winter, there began a grand spring cleaning effort, where underparts were checked for damage before the arrival of the paddle steamers each Easter. The paintwork was then restored and any worn planking replaced. We used to look forward to trips on the steamers. One was called The Brighton Belle and the other The Waverley. You could go on short afternoon cruises to Eastbourne or Worthing..

Another attraction was three Italian musicians who used to play popular music: two on violins and one with a harp. They also played in the streets during the week and sometimes in pubs. They relied upon collections but were so popular that when offered professional engagements preferred their lifestyle and carried on busking for years. They were very quiet and pleasant men. Frederick, the last to survive, kept going with his violin right up until he died.

At the end of the West Pier was a theatre, which put on a variety of good plays six evenings a week, and two matinees. In the middle of the pier was the Winter Garden, rather like a huge conservatory, with plants and potted palms everywhere. Here an orchestra would play afternoons and evenings. One conductor was called Jimmy Sale, a great exhibitionist who appeared in full evening dress with white gloves and who attracted many ladies. Later, open-air dancing was introduced at the end of the pier and, weather permitting, we danced to gramophone records. We'd be protected by a high canvas windbreak with an attendant at the opening to see that no-one got in without paying. That was life on the West Pier until around 1940 when the centre of both piers were blown up to prevent attempted enemy landings.

We had some good times and it is very sad to see it as it is now, and one hopes that someone might come up with a few million to invest in it before it is too late. The Palace Pier was restored after the war and is enjoyed by locals and visitors to this day.

Fashions were changing. For men, white flannel trousers and striped blazers

were out. Grey flannel one-coloured blazers were worn with trilby hats, instead of white straw ones which had a thin piece of cord attached to the brim with the other end fixed to the lapel. This kept it from blowing away on very windy days.

As the game of golf became popular, 'plus fours' were introduced. These were tweed trousers that were gathered with a band around the knees and were often referred to as 'dung-hampers' by the crude and vulgar!

The boyish look was the rage for girls, hair was cut short like a boys and was known as the Shingle and chest-flattening bras were worn. Dresses had dropped waist-lines and belts were worn almost under the bottom. This seemed to enrage my father who was forever saying, 'Pull that belt up!'

At home we had a wind-up gramophone, which my friend and I would take to my bedroom at the far end of the house, where we'd practise dance steps to each new record we bought.

I had a 'Brownie' camera given to me, so to save money I decided to have a go at printing the films myself. I bought two small frames with a piece of glass in front, into which I would insert the negatives after soaking them in a bowl of salty water and then in another of Hypo. I'd then lay them face uppermost in the sun out of doors. This was a long process as you could only do one at a time, so they came out a sepia colour. I still have a few and marvel that they have not faded over the years.

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When us girls were between the ages of eighteen and twenty one my father was very strict and protective towards us. My sister, not being very strong, only ever wanted a quiet life and gave no trouble. When I started dating, my father was ever watchful and insisted on my date calling for me and with a few pertinent questions discovered his name, age, address and other prospects, which were then relayed back to me with unappreciated advice. This was rather embarrassing and off-putting to say the least.

I had to work mornings and evenings, which was a bit tricky for going anywhere. Eventually my friend persuaded my father to allow a young man, who lived at one of the two chalk pit cottages near the Dyke, and who owned a motorbike, to call for me at closing time on a Saturday night and bring me home on a Sunday morning. Father vetted him and the bike thoroughly and must have approved, for he actually gave him a bottle of Brown Ale to drink while waiting for me. Then off we went, no helmets, flying over the Saddlescombe Road by the Dyke and down to the village. I always enjoyed that ride and felt a free spirit.

Around this time there was hardship in the north and midlands, especially with

the coal industry. Hundreds of miners from Jarrow and other collieries marched to London with a petition with which to confront the government and draw attention to their plight.

In the south of England it was more prosperous. Lancing Carriage Works opened at Lancing Station and men moved from Eastleigh when they lost their jobs there. London, Brighton and South Coast Railways (known as the LB and SCR) were the main industry.

In 1932 I began to go out regularly with a young man who had a steady job and reputation. Of this my father approved, until a relative suggested that as I was twenty four wasn't it about time I married and moved my feet from under the parental table? My father took umbrage at that and soon wanted to know if the young man's intentions were honourable. He thought it was a good idea for me to marry and tried to make my mind up for me, but I still had thoughts of a young man called Herbert, who I knew from school days. He had worked as an apprentice on the railway for seven years until he was twenty one, then like so many others, he was sacked as soon as he was entitled to a man's wage. He then joined the Navy. We corresponded when he went on short voyages and when on leave he visited. Then in 1932 he was sent on a commission to Malta. In those days they were sent away for two years. We kept the correspondence going at first but during cruises letters got lost and it gradually petered out.

In 1934 our local brewery was taken over by a firm from London and many of their tenants were glad of the opportunity to move to the seaside. Several small pubs were selected and rents increased by so much that it was impossible to stay. Ours was one of them, so after twenty eight years, my father decided enough was enough, gave up the pub and bought a small house in Exeter Street almost opposite.

I had worked in the business for eleven years and as it was easy to find employment then, I eventually got a part time job at Brighton Station. This was not in the main bar, where it was busy and lively with people having a drink before or after catching a train, but a small bar round the corner, which was mostly patronised by cabbies and their mates. It was the most boring job I ever had. There was a door between the two bars which was kept closed, so I never got to know any other staff and felt very isolated.

Although correspondence with Herbert had ceased, I still visited his family. One bleak Sunday afternoon in February, feeling bored and missing life in the pub, I decided to go and see them. I had no idea when he was due home, and his family had not heard from him recently, but while we were drinking a cup of tea, he walked in. It was rather awkward at first and I wanted to leave, but was persuaded to stay and, after another cup of tea, he walked me home. We talked and decided we would carry on where we had left off. My mother was pleased

with the news, not so my father, who felt he was not to be trusted, so there was no welcome on the mat.

However, we married on the 28th April 1934 at St Luke's Church, Prestonville.

1934 - 1941

This was the start of a new life for me. Although twenty-five years old, I had never lived away from home. What holidays I had had were spent with relatives, mostly in Portsmouth with my aunt Amy and her husband, who although childless, had friends with children around my age and we met each year on holidays and at weekends. We would go to the beach at Eastney, which was within walking distance and the grown-ups would join us, carrying a tent, Primus stove and kettle, not to mention all the goodies needed for a picnic. The weather was usually kind to us and we spent many happy hours just swimming and lazing in the sun.

In the evenings I would sit at the piano as I was the only one who could play, and everyone gathered round and sang popular songs until the parents went down to the nearest local for a drink and a chance to chat. Then we would get out the wind-up gramophone and demonstrate our skills at dancing the Charleston and the Black Bottom.

When I went to live in Portsmouth it was not quite so strange to me, although we rented a house at Cosham, about two or three miles to the north. It was a village with a High Street of shops in those days, with a new estate being built round it. Now it is a busy town.

My housekeeping money was £3 a week and was considered quite good, although I had to pay 25 shillings (£1.25) out of it for rent. The man next door was a bank clerk and he got £5 a week and was able to rent a car!

After my life at home I found it difficult to get used to being alone during the day. All the old crowd had grown up and were at work; some had married and moved away. I used to visit my aunt and uncle once a week and at the weekend. When my husband was home there was plenty to do in the garden, which seemed to have been used for a dumping ground and yielded up large pieces of carpet, among other things. I got a few flowers growing down one side and planted bulbs for the spring and Bert got a vegetable patch started. But alas, just when we were looking forward to seeing the results of our labour, he was given a draft-chit ordering him to be ready to join a gun-boat on the Yangtze in China in two weeks' time.

We were both shattered, as he had only returned from Malta just before we were married and this was going to be a two-and-a-half year commission. Wives could

only be accommodated in Malta, so off he went to join HMS Bee. I put the furniture in storage and returned to Brighton to live with my family. This was bearable at first, but I soon realised the world was full of couples and I seemed to be the odd one out.

It was to be over three years before I returned to the licensed trade, as young men did not like their wives working as barmaids, especially when they were so far away. Therefore I got myself a seasonal job in Rottingdean at a cafe with a shop attached. The manageress was Rose Smart, who later became a family friend. I was in charge of the shop, which sold sweets, chocolate, ice cream and minerals. This was very different, very busy and hard work at times, but I enjoyed it.

Standing in the shop, which was near the edge of the cliffs, there was plenty of fresh air and always something to see. In September, when the tides were at their highest, I had to keep the shop door closed, and the customers had to make a dash to get out between waves or risk a soaking. I learned to make sundaes for the waitresses, serve in the shop, and take bills from the customers as they came out. Sometimes it was difficult to know what to do first!

I had never worked with waitresses before and I found them very interesting. They would slink in late for work in the mornings, looking very pale and tired, with a muttered, 'Morning. Is the boss in yet?' When they emerged a few minutes later, it was like a transformation. Careful make-up had been applied, cheeks glowed with colour, lips were bright, and with mascara separating the lashes the result was really startling. Most of them were from London for the season, returning about the end of September, combining work with the attractions of the seaside.

The waitresses were very friendly girls, full of practical jokes, to my embarrassment at times. On a quiet afternoon at the end of the season, when it rained hard, one particular girl would come into the shop and ask if she could use the telephone. Looking through the directory, she would phone a fishmonger and ask if they had any dry fish, and if he said, 'Yes madam', she would say, 'Bloody well give them a drink!' and hang up! Or she would find someone by the name of Smelly and ask, 'Are you smelly?', then say, 'Well do something about it then!' I had to laugh, although apprehensively, as we were not allowed private phone calls. The only time I used the phone was to call one of the cooks to take the order for the next day's supplies, when the manageress was busy in the kitchen.

I worked five days a week from 9.30am until 10.30pm for which I was paid 25 shillings a week. The bus fare cost 5 shillings a week, which left me with £1, which I was quite happy with, as there were 240 pennies to the pound then. Three of us left together at night: me, the manageress and her brother. They locked up and I cashed up. The driver of the last bus called round for us and

because he was an old friend of theirs was given a cup of tea, after which he drove full speed along the coast road to make up his time. On a rough night this was rather horrendous as the three of us sat on the top of the bus. We clung on for dear life as it swayed from side to side in gale-force winds.

My friends got off the bus at the aquarium and I went on to the Clock Tower to wait for the number 38 bus, which went up Dyke Road, and there I got off at the grammar school. It was nearly 12 o'clock when I arrived home. I thought nothing of it then. It was all good fun and I enjoyed the job, in spite of there being no break time allowed for meals. If you had a shop full of customers when your dinner was brought to you, it slowly congealed.

The Undercliff Walk was opened in 1936, extending from Black Rock to Rottingdean. We watched its progress from the cafe and had to shout against the noise as the workmen drew nearer. At last it was finished. I was on duty that weekend and it was a lovely sunny day. Normally on a Sunday morning the first hour was quiet and peaceful, but as I looked out the window, crowds of people appeared along the winding road and after looking around, swarmed into the cafe and onto the terraces. Everybody was run off their feet and we had to get in touch with other cafes for any waitresses who could be spared to help out. This went on all day and all through the season.

As this was only a seasonal job I had to leave at the end of September when the shop closed, but it was reopened just before the next Easter. Soon after I returned it was decided that the shop should be extended, and local builders were employed. At the same time the White Horse Hotel opposite had extensions being carried out by the same firm.

The shop work was mostly done by a carpenter, named Jim Copper, who soon noticed I had a pot of tea brought to me during the afternoon, and so always appeared around that time. The manageress used to send in another cup. We began to talk and formed an acquaintance which, although we seldom met, lasted many years. He had three other male relatives and they formed a group, visiting various places and singing old Sussex songs. They were very popular and the elder brother, Bob, wrote some books about Rottingdean as it was in the days of his grandfather. They were published and he made some appearances on television and gave talks on the radio.

The work at the shop seemed to take a long time, especially as I had to keep clearing shelves and putting them back again. At that time there was a popular song called, 'When the Poppies Bloom Again I'll Remember You'. I wrote a little parody on it, which went:

*'When the poppies bloom again,
This job might be done,*

*It could be done by next year,
But not by this Whitsun!*

Whitsun was supposed to be the deadline. I stuck it on the wall and when the carpenter saw it he was very amused. Sometime after that I heard he had married the daughter of a local licensee, so whenever I was out that way in the summer I would take a bunch of poppies and lay them on the counter of their pub. This went on, much to the amusement of the customers, until he died some years later.

* * *

In June 1937 my husband returned and we decided to move back to Portsmouth. We found a purpose-built flat near the airport, the furniture came out of storage and we looked forward to being able to settle down again. We made new friends and explored the area. There were some free tennis courts nearby, which we made use of early Sunday mornings; we also went for country walks and found some very nice little pubs with some really lovely gardens. We looked back on that year as a happy one.

We also discovered a friendly local pub called *The Jolly Taxpayer* and my husband joined the darts club, where we all met up once a week. We went by coach to the away matches. Outings were arranged, too. I remember one to Cheddar Gorge and Wookey Hole, which was very interesting.

Just before the Christmas of 1938, I was asked to help out behind the bar, as the full-time barmaid was taken ill with bronchitis. We went to Brighton for Christmas Day to see our respective parents and returned the following day. I went back to work to help over the busy period, which became extended as the barmaid was unable to return for another six weeks and the landlord, a retired Lieutenant Commander who had only been in the trade for a year, was desperate for help. Little did I realise it would end up being for more than a year!

Some weekends we would return to Brighton to visit our families and occasionally they would come and see us for a day. Life went on very pleasantly for the next eighteen months, then came the disquieting news that war could be imminent. Our annual two weeks' leave was always taken in August and for two years we had been to the lovely little village of Salcombe in Devon but, this being 1939, leave was brought forward to July. We deliberated as to whether we could afford to go again and whether we ought to. We decided we would go and were both glad afterwards, for as soon as we returned my husband was sent to join a ship at Scapa Flow. On the day he left, he took his darts with him and I said, 'I've heard of men going to war with bows and arrows but this is something else!' After that we only met briefly during the next six years.

* * *

There followed a year of quiet, known as the 'phoney war': nothing seemed to be happening, only at sea. Meanwhile, Hitler was stealthily taking over Poland and Czechoslovakia and everyone was being lulled into a false sense of security. During this time my husband was getting bored at Scapa Flow, as it was an isolated place with only a service canteen to visit.

Once, about a hundred reconnaissance planes came over but only one rabbit was killed, probably from fright at the noise, which inspired someone to write a song called, 'Run Rabbit Run'.

Then everything started happening. There were raids over Scotland, which damaged the *Iron Duke*, a battleship my husband was on. It listed to one side but no one was hurt, so the crew had to salvage what they could. In 1939 a U-boat got through the defences and sank the *Royal Oak*, another battleship, with a loss of 800 lives from a crew of 1,200. This was a great shock. It was said to have followed a fishing boat into the harbour, then slipped out again. My husband was sent back to Portsmouth where he joined HMS Nelson. I did not know where he was going but when it was reported in a newspaper that two battle-ships carrying 16 inch guns had sailed for Salerno in Italy, I knew where he was!

Meanwhile at Portsmouth it was no 'phoney war'. Barrage balloons floated over the town and news of the loss of shipping gradually came through. A buzz or rumour would go around that a certain ship had been sunk and if you heard it more than once, you could assume it was true. If you were in the town and looked down Edinburgh Road you would have seen a queue of women outside the naval barrack gates, waiting for news of survivors. This all took time as no news was made public until the next of kin had received the dreaded telegram, 'The Admiralty regrets ...'

Life began to get very hectic that September. Reservists were told to report for service and pensioners appeared in uniform, looking rather unfamiliar. Some were able to use uniforms that they had kept but many seemed to have put on weight and had to be re-kitted. Also pensions were paid quarterly, and as September was the last quarter of the year, some seemed to be trying to drown any apprehension they may have felt in the pubs.

On 3rd September 1939, when war was declared, I was sitting on the beach at Eastney. It was warm and sunny but strangely quiet everywhere as we waited to hear Mr Chamberlain's broadcast on the radio. It was 11.00am, and he had already given the ultimatum to the German Chancellor. Soon afterwards we heard the first air raid warning; the wardens cleared the beaches and we were told to stay indoors.

All the street lights were put out and we set to work making 'blackouts' for the windows. We bought strips of batten, thick black paper and some nails. Although I was pretty useless at DIY, I managed to cover the windows successfully. As the paper gradually got torn, we had to replace it with black cloth supplied by the Government.

The evenings were still light, but as they became darker you had to remember to put the blackouts up in the afternoon, especially if you were going out and didn't expect to get back until late, otherwise you wouldn't be allowed to turn the light on when you came home. We were allowed to carry a torch but it had to be pointed to the ground at all times. Buses ran with dimmed lights so you had to count the stops to know when to alight.

At *The Jolly Taxpayer* business went on, but not without some difficulty. In the evenings the atmosphere was exhausting and not comfortable to work in, as blackout restrictions made it almost impossible for any air to get in and dispel the smoke. Doors had to be kept closed with blackout curtains over the windows and the inner doors. This was so that people could get in and out quickly, before an over-zealous warden could yell, 'Put out those lights!' Outside were some posts looped with ornamental chains, which became a hazard at closing time when it was dark. It was quite a relief when the iron chains were taken away for use in the munitions factories. People were not so pleased when their gates and railings were commandeered. Some of the regulars gradually disappeared, but we were kept busy as it was a residential area and there was nowhere else for people to go at night.

I was quite glad of the walk home at night to cool off and breathe some fresh air. One couple who came from Brighton used to insist on their son walking me home. He was six feet tall and worked on submarines, and I sometimes thought how cramped he must have been, for space was very restricted. In a few weeks he was sent to sea and never returned.

We had our laughs in spite of everything. On Saturday evenings a young married couple would bring in their mandolins and play popular music, always finishing with the National Anthem at closing time. The bar was an L-shaped room and at one corner you could just see through into the smaller bar where people met and talked. On one Saturday evening there were some unsold pork pies on the counter. There was silence in the large bar as the National Anthem was being played and everyone stood to attention. Chatter still went on in the small bar until an enraged patriotic sailor grabbed one of the pies and hurled it through to the bar, narrowly missing my nose as it sped by. I still think of that occasion when I hear the Anthem now and smile inwardly at the memory it conjures up!

The full-time barmaid returned to work and I was going to leave, when the landlord was called up and begged me to stay on and help his wife. She was

rather reserved and did not like the business, never appearing in the bar. Two young girls, the daughters of regular customers, joined the evening staff part-time. They certainly livened up the evenings and were a great attraction to the few young men around who were waiting to be called up. The girls were fun to work with and we had a lot of laughs with them.

Further up towards the airport there was another pub, facing a small lake known as Boffins Pond. There were some seats there and willows dipping into the water, making it a very pleasant place for both children and adults. One morning I had a message from the proprietors there to ask if I could help them that weekend, as their young son had been involved in an accident and had been taken to hospital. I worked on the Saturday and woke up on the Sunday morning feeling very unwell. I visited my local doctor, who agreed to see me, much to his house-keeper's disapproval. He couldn't believe how I could be walking around with a temperature of 102 F and sent me home to bed with some medication.

There had been an outbreak of German measles at the airport where a lot of people were working and I often used the same buses as them. The landlord was most upset when I explained that I wouldn't be able to continue working and said, 'You look all right, no one will notice.' I could not believe it; never mind how I felt, or how I could have passed the infection on!

In the flat above my home was a nurse who worked at St Mary's Hospital. I gave her a key and she was very good to me. A few weeks later her husband called me upstairs where she was in bed, covered in spots! We had to laugh. When he was at work I was able to help her in return.

I still visited my aunt and uncle at Eastney. My uncle had retired from the navy thirteen years before and now worked in the offices of the army barracks at Hillsea. Soon afterwards he was called up and sent to the naval barracks in the dockyard. Not long after that he had a fatal heart attack. It was a shock when aunt sent for me. They had no family and were always together, so it was an even more terrible shock for her. I stayed with her for six weeks.

* * *

In June 1940 I returned to Brighton to live with my parents. I was sorry to leave the friends I had made but my husband wrote and begged me to go. He was very anxious that the war was not going to be short and that the naval towns would come under attack soon, and said he would feel happier if he knew I was in Brighton: so I made all the arrangements. The furniture had to be left in Portsmouth as the furniture removers could only move it up to eight miles, due to petrol rationing. The night before I left, there was an alert. There were many more firebombs after that, which devastated the city. A few years later I made a return visit and the town centre was almost unrecognisable. Back in Brighton, life

was comparatively quiet. Air raids had not yet started, but there was a certain amount of tension and preparations were made. Volunteers were recruited for fire watching and the Home Guard was formed - as in Dad's Army!

November came round and this was to be my husband's last leave while his ship was being refitted. Air raids had started by then and he got detained at Portsmouth train station with three others. They had to dive under a table in the waiting room. When the all clear went, he rushed for the Brighton train and left his cap behind. He arrived home at about 2.00am. I had waited up with the fire going and was very relieved to hear the knock on the door.

He had his gas mask and tin helmet, but the next day he realised he wouldn't be able to go out without his cap, as civvy clothes were not allowed. I went to Moss Brothers and various gents' outfitters, but if they had the right cap they didn't have the right badge for it. In desperation, I looked in at the King Alfred swimming baths on the seafront, which had been commandeered by the Admiralty and was now known as HMS Sussex. Feeling rather daunted, I approached the two armed sailors at the entrance and tried to explain my husband's predicament. They listened impassively, but when I produced his identity cards, I was taken inside to the Petty Officers Stores and, after some questioning, came out triumphantly with the required cap and badge. This took some time and when I got home he said, 'Knowing you, I thought you might have got a train to Portsmouth if you couldn't get the cap here!'

Two months later, I realised I was pregnant. When it was confirmed I told my family. My mother and my sister were thrilled; my father though, was less enthusiastic. 'Bloody fools', he said, 'fancy after seven years, starting a family when there's a war on!' However, as time went on he became more interested and even bought me a pram and arranged with a neighbour, who owned a taxi, to take me to hospital any time day or night. That was quite a help, so I booked up at the maternity hospital in Buckingham Road (which closed some years ago). A former schoolfriend who was living with her parents in Coventry Street was also pregnant, so we spent a lot of time together. There were no health clinics like today, so we joined a mothercare clinic in Dyke Road and paid a small fee.

We looked forward to going there each week and meeting all the other expectant young mothers. We went for walks, usually in the little park in Dyke Road. It was a very hot summer and we were expected to wear a coat then to disguise our ballooning bodies. Afternoon walks became an effort so we didn't venture out until the cool of evening.

One night I felt uncomfortable and blamed my mother for undercooking some peas we had eaten at lunchtime. Next morning the doctor was called. I was still insisting it was the peas, but he laughed and assured me it was not and hastened me off to the hospital, where I gave birth in the waiting room! My

daughter Valerie was born at 2.30am on July 31st 1941. She was very pretty and a favourite among the nurses. Friends and neighbours were very interested as, after seven years of childless marriage, they had given up on me.

I was very happy, except in the evenings. Fathers were allowed to visit then but most of us had to wait until the following Sunday before we had any visitors, as our husbands were away at war. We used to read or pretend to be asleep to hide our disappointment. When Sunday came round everyone turned up and when they all left we were quite exhausted and the babies were all yelling from being disturbed.

It was three months before my husband saw Valerie, and she was baptised at St Luke's Church, where I had been baptised thirty-two years before.

1941 - 1950

It was lovely that autumn, but the raids on London and the Midlands increased and alerts were heard day and night. My friend and I pushed our babies to Dyke Road Park many an afternoon, having to go home as the sirens sounded and Bofors guns (light anti-aircraft guns) fired, which woke the babies up screaming.

After the bombers were intercepted they would return, dropping the rest of their load on coastal areas. The news was depressing too. Russia had signed a pact with Germany and the Japanese had sunk two of our battleships, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Renown*. We began to feel very alone. The Germans pushed on through Holland, Belgium and France, and our army was left stranded on the beaches of Dunkirk.

From this a wonderful operation was conceived, and anybody with a boat was asked to cross the channel and help rescue those men. The response was enormous and Fred Collins, who ran pleasure boats from Brighton beach known as 'The Skylarks', took two boats over, which were badly damaged. Many men were saved, enough to start to form a new expeditionary force!

Clothing coupons were issued and much bartering went on, enabling people to get a pair of shoes, etc. Clothes were very basic: no extra buttons or trimming allowed.

Furniture, known as 'utility', was the same. We lived from day to day and people were very kind and caring. I remember queuing once for some tomatoes at the open market in London Road. I was not a regular, being then six months pregnant, and when a woman refused to serve me, I burst into tears as I turned away. She looked me up and down and said, 'Alright luv, I'll let you have half a pound.'

Everyone listened intently to the news on the radio. The National Anthem was always played first, but then as the various countries that were over-run by the Germans formed groups, known as partisans, their anthems were also played. Eventually though, they had to be curtailed to one line to save time. The news was grim, but the 'bulldog' spirit and messages from Mr Churchill helped keep our spirits up.

Then America started the lease-lend project, and sent us some destroyers and bottles of cod liver oil and orange juice for the children. The children mostly rejected the cod liver oil but enjoyed the orange juice as there were no oranges or bananas. Food parcels were a godsend, with a tin of butter, sugar, tea, a tin of peaches and dried egg, which were all real luxuries. Clothing was allowed too, but it had to be second-hand. An aunt in Canada sent me a black costume, which actually fitted, and wrapped up in tissue in the centre was a brand new yellow, silk blouse. A wonderful surprise!

At the end of 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour. It happened so suddenly, overnight: it was unbelievable. So in 1942 the Americans entered the war and sent ships, planes and troops to England. While doing their training, before being sent abroad, they made their presence felt, much to the resentment of some of our soldiers. They attracted the women and girls with their gifts of nylons, cigarettes and candy and were dubbed 'over-paid, over-sexed and over-here' by those whose wives and girlfriends were lured away from them.

During that year, we became acclimatised to the conditions and tried to live life as normally as possible. I used to make a visit once a week to my husband's parents in Lancing. Valerie, my daughter, was fourteen months old and they adored her, being their only grandchild. We left soon after tea, and as there were no street lights and the names of all stations were blacked out, you had to keep count.

Once, we had just got to Shoreham when the dreaded sound came, the train stopped, lights went out and we were stuck there for nearly an hour. Fortunately, Valerie went to sleep. Suddenly the all clear sounded and I thought, 'Thank God' as we reached Brighton Station. I was thankful it was still light and settling Valerie in her pushchair I hurried home.

My mother was relieved as she was on her own and my father had gone to work. Valerie of course was in no hurry to go to bed as she had slept, so we sat having supper and listened to the news. Then we heard, 'The Admiralty regrets...'. There had been a heavy raid on a convoy returning from Russia, HMS *Somali* had broken in half and next of kin were being informed. I sat at the table, numb with shock, for I knew my husband was on that ship, and when two days later I received a telegram saying 'safe and well', my relief knew no bounds!

In 1942 my father was working at *The Sackville*, a large public house along the Old Shoreham Road (now called *Hove Park Tavern*). One evening a week I went with him, as it became more difficult to acquire bar staff. This was the evening the Home Guards did their training, after which about forty hot and sweaty men would pour in, and I was kept busy pulling pints of beer. After closing time, father and I would walk the mile and a quarter home, as there was no public transport, thinking nothing of it. We were glad to be able to cool off as it was a very hot September again.

* * *

In 1944 I had an invitation from my cousin Jack and his wife to have a holiday in their cottage, three miles out of Watford. My cousin worked on the land, so was in a reserved occupation, but as they were childless, his wife had to work in an aircraft factory nearby. It was very peaceful there and the weather was lovely. There were six cottages alongside the Grand Union Canal, and we watched the barges sailing up and down; we even saw one being pulled by a horse along the tow path. It was like living in another world. Some days I would take some refreshment and push Valerie into Cassiobury. We'd go along the canal, which was a beautiful walk, with so much to see, like swans and cygnets. The only snag was that the tyres on the pushchair had to be replaced as they were not built for country walks. We soon got to know people and celebrated Valerie's second birthday there, and my mother and father came up for the day.

The canal had a fascination for Valerie who threw things into it, including a broom belonging to the people next door, and sometimes she would take Carlo's collar off (he was a large docile dog who lived with us). She couldn't say 'canal', but when she said 'in the well', my cousin would grab a boat hook and dash out to retrieve whatever it was. Panic set in one day when we were sitting on the opposite bank by some lock gates. Valerie had been holding the pushchair when she suddenly let go of it: to my horror it disappeared into the water. I had borrowed it from a friend, as you could not buy one then, so it was such a relief when three girls came by on a barge and hooked it out of the water!

At this time the Allies were on the attack and starting to liberate some of the occupied countries. The bombing of Britain still went on. Buzz bombs were dropped on London and the Home Counties, followed by V2 rockets, but not so much on the coast. Soon after Valerie's birthday, my husband got a few days' leave and was able to come and join us. We all had a wonderful time together and then Valerie and I returned to Brighton.

* * *

Two months later I realised I was pregnant again, and decided to find a place of my own. Some weeks earlier I had heard from the furniture depository in

Portsmouth that it had been fire bombed. My furniture had been moved to a church hall in the town. I was lucky as many people had lost their belongings this way.

My father owned some lock-up garages in Exeter Street, and as two were empty I found a Hove firm who were willing to bring furniture from Portsmouth to the garages. I found a basement flat in St Michael's Place near the Seven Dials and after Christmas we moved in. It was not exactly a dream home, having once been the servants' quarters of a big house and it still had the jangling bells inside the front door. The kitchen floor was stone and there was an outside toilet. In a narrow room opposite the kitchen (which I imagine was for storing meat because it was so cold), the landlord had put in a bath. It had a small gas boiler beside it, which had to be filled from the tap in the kitchen. However, we managed. I became friendly with two of the other tenants, both alone with young children and they were very helpful.

In the spring of 1945 my son Peter was born, this time at Brighton General Hospital. In the meantime, my husband was drafted to the *King George V* battleship which was on its way to Australia and two weeks later he received a cable telling him of our son's birth. The first supply ship reached them near Trincomalee, with cases of bottled beer for the first time ever, so Peter's entry into the world was well and truly toasted.

It was nearly a year before he returned, and I took Valerie to Portsmouth the day the ship came in. We were allowed on board and provided with huge mugs of tea and we looked in amazement at the large bowls of sugar on each table. My husband didn't seem to have many clothes but had a large kitbag filled with tinned fruit and one small banana. I wanted to eat the banana myself but thought I mustn't be selfish, so I gave it to Valerie. She promptly spat it out and when, as a special treat I put some sugar and tinned cream with it, she spat it out again: so nobody had it.

Peter was baptised on his first birthday at St Michael's, a lovely old church in St Michael's Place. Life as a family resumed again and my husband travelled to and from Portsmouth each day, but then gradually he became unwell and was diagnosed with malaria. He was given sick leave and had to take several lots of tablets, which I remember keeping in the wardrobe so the children couldn't reach them.

After a month he had to report to the naval doctor, who said that what he needed was sunshine. One day he didn't come home at all. I was so worried that night. Next day I had a letter from Liverpool saying that he would write again to explain. The next day I received his ration book, which I had to hand in to my grocer, and by the second post came a parcel of his thickest clothes. Another letter came saying that he was on his way to Australia via Malta. I thought, 'Oh no, not again.'

It was to be an eighteen-month commission 'with light duties' and there was nothing we could do about it, except be thankful, especially if it was going to help him regain his health.

* * *

During the eighteen months, I tried to make up for some of the things we had missed. I took the children to St Anne's Wells gardens, which was not far from where we lived. The children loved the squirrels and playing in the grass. We visited the grandparents at Lancing and they came to see us: my parents did the same. My sister often came over and we would all go out together.

One day I thought I would take the children to Brighton Race Course as they had never been. The night before we went I explained to them that if they ever got lost, not to be afraid of policemen but to go up to one and tell him that they were lost. While I was getting them ready for bed, Valerie kept repeating this advice, with a few extras added on and I thought no more of it. After the races were over they wanted to pick up all the programmes that were lying around, when I met some friends that I hadn't seen for some time.

Valerie kept hold of my hand and I thought Peter was holding hers. To my dismay, when I looked down, he had disappeared into the crowd. We were frantic and rushed round in circles looking for him, when we found the police tent. There he was, sitting between two policemen, holding his bear in one hand, a large bun in the other, with a mug of tea in front of him, showing no joy at being found! The Sergeant said, 'He was more sensible than you, madam, he went straight up to one of our men and said "I'm Peter Thursby, I'm four years old and I live in a basement flat in St Michael's Place."' We were all laughing then and the policemen praised Valerie for telling Peter what to say.

Valerie and the girls from next door had started school at St Mary Magdalene's in Upper North Street, which was opposite Montpelier Villas, where Gilbert Harding lived. He was a well-known and somewhat controversial character on several radio shows.

The man from next door came home, and soon there were many more walking round in their 'demob' suits, which were issued as they were discharged from the services. I'm afraid I felt rather envious when I saw them, and sad that my husband had to miss so much of our children's young lives, and that they had not been able to get to know him more. I tried to keep memories of him alive with photos and by reading his letters.

In the summer the other tenants and I would take the boys to meet the girls from school and picnic by the still empty paddling pool, hoping that it would soon be filled again. Somehow we managed to give the children little parties on their

birthdays and swap rations. We exchanged tea coupons for sugar and made cakes with dried egg as we were still only allowed one egg each a month. We conserved that ration and used them for a treat on Sundays.

One Christmas I thought I would try to write a pantomime for the children and decided upon Mother Goose. Two little girls from Montpelier Villas had joined the gang and we borrowed bits and pieces for clothes and props. What fun and games we had trying to get it all together. I cannot remember the various parts they played but Peter was hilarious as the Goose. He was shrouded in a white sheet, with a beak of painted yellow cardboard, ambling along on all fours with an orange balloon between his legs, which kept escaping at the wrong times. However, it made us laugh and a good time was had by all.

* * *

The eighteen months passed and my husband came home from Australia. He had brought with him a lovely doll for Valerie and a koala bear for Peter, which was white with brown leather feet. Peter loved it, never letting it out of his sight and he talked to it non-stop, much to the amusement of people on the bus.

My husband had completed twenty-two years service and was offered a job at HMS *Sussex* on a gunnery training ship in the canal at Aldrington Basin, Portslade. This was to last for three years and as he would be home each evening, he decided to accept, to give himself time to acclimatise to civilian life, and to look around for something else in the future.

Two years later, I was asked to work two evenings a week at *The Temple Bar*, a pub in Western Road. It was a small family place, the customers were friendly and I enjoyed it. Sometimes three female doctors from the nearby Women's Hospital would call in, and at first I was quite surprised when they called for three pints of bitter! During this time there was a smallpox epidemic in town and everybody rushed to be vaccinated. The pub was very quiet, as many people were afraid to venture into public places. The landlord got very despondent and used to walk along Western Road each evening to see how many customers other pubs had.

My husband began to hate the confines of the basement flat and found it difficult to settle down. I looked forward to moving but had got used to it and did not find it quite so unbearable, in fact I had been glad to be there when the air raids were on. I never had to disturb the children, day or night, as I felt we were as safe there as we would be anywhere.

In 1950, with the help of my father, we were able to put a deposit on our first home in the Mile Oak Road, Portslade. My father thought it was the edge of beyond then but we thought it was wonderful. The children loved the long

garden, which had thirteen apple trees, and there were schools for both of them nearby. There were horses in the paddock at the end of the road and some stables in the old village. Valerie found the stables and was soon riding over the Downs. We made some new friends and so began a new decade and a new life for us all.

1950 - PRESENT

After living at Mile Oak for a while, I found the bus ride from town rather tiring, especially the rush to get the last one at night. I began to feel that I did not want to carry on working in Western Road another winter. While glancing through the local paper one evening at work, I noticed an advertisement for part-time morning staff in a pub along the Old Shoreham Road. I did not know for how long it had been advertised, but took a chance and wrote out an application. On the way home I persuaded the bus conductor to hold the bus while I dashed across the road and put it through the letter box. I was quite surprised to get a phone call the next morning to go for an interview and started there the following week.

The Stadium was one of the more modern pubs that were being built at this time, with three bars. The clientele of the saloon bar were largely business men, who would drive up each lunchtime to talk with each other. Occasionally, I would work an evening or two if required. Sometimes the manager of the greyhound stadium would come along, and quite often they would all meet at the track, where they could enjoy a meal and watch the racing. Among them was a well-known footballer named Bobby Farrell who had played for Brighton and Hove Albion. When he retired he opened *The Neville Hotel*, a newly built pub not far away. One evening he asked me if I would help out; it was a very busy evening for he was a popular man, and several other publicans called in to wish him well. Sadly, he died a few years afterwards and afterwards and after ten years as landlady, his wife decided to retire. She contacted me saying she would like me to be there on the last evening: it was another busy evening, but a sad one. As she said, 'The end of an era!'

In *The Stadium* there was a large public bar, mostly used by men who formed dart teams, and matches were played with other pubs each week. This was quite a social evening, as wives and girlfriends came along and the landlord would provide sandwiches and pickled onions. The landlord, Mr Davis, was getting near retirement age and was lacking in charm, and sometimes one of us was sent to help him. If he had to go to the cellar and fetch up a case of bottles and you unwittingly crossed his path, he would glare and say, 'Out the bloody way!' Customers who overheard would say, 'Miserable old so and so!', but we made a joke of it, and it became a catch phrase.

The middle bar was small and mostly used by older couples; one man ran a Slate and Saving Club one evening a week and that was quite a busy evening for

that bar. He and his wife used to talk a lot about their youngest son who was doing his National Service abroad, and when he came home they introduced him to me. A nice young fellow I thought, but I never dreamt that in about three years' time Ivor would become my son-in-law, and that is now thirty-six years ago.

Staff were not allowed to drink alcohol while on duty, but one evening just before Christmas, I started to lose my voice. It was a very busy time and, as the evening wore on, I became huskier. The landlady insisted I should have a glass of port wine and sip it during the evening. This brought some good-natured comments from both staff and customers, which made me feel rather conspicuous, so I took it round to the middle bar. I expect the customers wondered what was going on, and thought how daring it was to have a crafty drink. By Christmas Day my voice had completely gone and the children insisted it was the best Christmas present they had ever had!

Sometime later, when Mr and Mrs Davis decided to retire, his brother and his sister-in-law, who had a smaller pub in Portslade, applied to take over. At this time a new pub was being built in Mile Oak called *The Mile Oak Inn*, and as it was near to where I lived I applied to work there.

* * *

This was the beginning of a great change in Mile Oak. When we moved there in 1950, it was a quiet little village. There was a church as you entered what was known as the Old Village, two pubs almost next door to each other, a small factory which was once a pickle factory, now used for making batteries, and about five shops. A bus would take you up the hill, then down to the waterworks, and there the road ended. There was a large girls' school (now a Community College) and a farm on the hill, and you could walk from there to the Dyke and down into Poynings. Between the Mile Oak Road and the farm there were a few houses and horses would plough the land right up to our garden. On Rogation Sunday in May there would be a procession from the church in the Old Village led by a priest with scouts, girl guides and other members of the church. They would walk up the main road singing hymns with music playing from a van with speakers. They would turn down Chalky Road, then up the hill to join members of the little church, which had its own priest. Then they walked to the farm where a service was conducted known as the 'Blessing of the Crops'.

The Mile Oak Inn was welcomed by the male population, who would previously have had to walk to the Old Village on a Sunday morning for a drink and a chat. It got off to a quiet start the first year, except for weekends; then Bobby Lee, the retired captain of an ice hockey team, the Brighton Tigers, took over. He was a very popular figure and Mile Oak was never quite the same again.

The rest of the team used to visit him and fans came from all around, and soon

there were streams of cars heading our way. There was no footpath between the villages, just a country road, until one man was knocked down by a car: then a pavement was laid to one side of the road. Bobby and his wife were a very charming couple who attracted many visitors. It became a very exciting place to work. A married couple, friends of Bobby's, took over the public bar and certainly gave it a lift, with evening outings and dart matches.

Apart from the man who was knocked down (who took a long time to recover from a head injury) there was another tragic accident one Sunday morning. A man from a new estate between the two villages used to call in the pub on Sunday mornings; he was very quiet and only stayed a short time. He used to bring a quart bottle to be filled with beer before he left. I served him that morning and was the last person to speak to him, for as he started to walk up the hill he slipped on a patch of oil and the bottle in his pocket broke, the glass severing an artery in his leg. Someone called an ambulance and Bobby rushed out to try and stop the bleeding. We were told afterwards that he had needed to be on the operating table within three minutes after the accident, but of course that was impossible and Bobby had the sad task of breaking the news to his wife and family.

My husband went on night work at a factory, so I decided to work only in the mornings. My daughter had left school and started a hairdressing apprenticeship and my son was at the boys' school in the Mile Oak Road, so it seemed like the best thing to do. After the first year, morning visitors to the *Mile Oak Inn* got considerably fewer and there was very little local trade, especially in the winter, so I obtained four morning sessions at *The Railway Hotel* in Portslade. It was run by a very pleasant couple who I enjoyed working with. There were two bars and being close to the railway station, a bus terminus, and main shopping centre, there were always people coming in, as well as the regulars.

The public bar had some rather tough customers who disappeared sometimes for a few weeks. We guessed they were being detained at one of HM Prisons. When we saw a group of them talking very close together, we made a joke out of it and said, 'There are those who are about to go in, and those who have just come out!'

They were no trouble to us behind the bar but one Saturday morning we had a police raid. Bookmakers ran their business from their own homes as there were no betting shops and they employed a man, known as a 'bookie's runner', to go round the pubs, collecting bets written on a piece of paper, and paying out winnings. This was not strictly legal but was done quite openly, though not if a policeman was in the vicinity.

This particular Saturday morning the bar was packed with customers, mostly men, and the man taking the bets was standing at the end of the bar. Suddenly

the door opened and eight of the burliest policemen I have ever seen marched in, headed by an inspector, who went, like a homing pigeon, up to the man taking the bets. The inspector ordered the policemen to lock the door and search the other male customers. One or two managed to slip out of a door at the end of the bar, which led through the saloon bar and onto the street. At the other end was a woman who had also been taking bets. She must have been petrified, but as there was no policewoman there she was left alone.

Two men were taken away for questioning, the inspector telling the landlady and I, who were the only two serving that morning, that he would be back at closing time to question us! He asked me if I worked there most Saturday mornings and I said that I did. He then said, 'Did you know what was going on?', to which I replied, 'You saw how busy we were, I had no time to do anything else but keep serving'. He accepted that, but took my name and address with a warning that I might be called upon in the near future. However, that did not happen, and the landlord thanked me for supporting them.

Three months later the landlord decided to retire and another took over, who brought a very different atmosphere to the pub. It was emptied and refurbished and one part was turned into a function room. One evening a week it was booked by a fishing club, once a fortnight a Masonic lodge would hold a meeting there, and other evenings a football and cricket club would commandeer it. A darts team would also use it and, in time, wedding and birthday celebrations were held there. It became a very busy and popular venue. Although it is now twenty years since I worked there, I still meet some of the old customers. The young men are now middle-aged and those that were middle-aged are now elderly, and it is quite gratifying to still be remembered and recognised. During the time I was there, the landlord suggested I should get a pub of my own, and with his help we were offered a small pub in Worthing. I was very excited at the prospect, and my husband was glad to leave the factory.

* * *

In November 1960 we moved to Worthing and took over *The Swan* in the High Street. It was rather a daunting experience at first as we were in a strange town and knew no one. The first evening was like a madhouse, though people came to help us and wish us well. We laid on sandwiches and local tradesmen and publicans called in. It was really hectic and by the time we cleared up, we fell into bed exhausted. Next day we came down to earth and started to find our way around. My husband took care of the cellar work, while I cleaned.

It was definitely not an upmarket pub, consisting only of a large public bar, and a small saloon bar, which could only seat about ten people, and at best be described as cosy. The public bar had bare floorboards, wooden seats, some bar stools, a piano in one corner, a full-sized billiards table and a large, old-fashioned

fireplace at each end of the room. We realised this was going to take some heating, so we stocked up with coal and logs, which gave warmth and was in keeping with the atmosphere and character of the place. There was only room for a small electric fire in the saloon bar but that was adequate for the size of it. The regular customers gradually drifted in and let us know what was expected of us.

A small contingent of Welsh people had formed a choir, and on Saturday and Sunday evenings a pianist was engaged, and they gathered around and sang all evening: one or two singing solo. People came from miles around to listen and sometimes join in the unusual entertainment. The atmosphere was very friendly and informal and they always finished up after closing time singing 'Cwm Rhondda', a favourite Welsh ballad, with one member producing a baton and taking on the role of conductor. We had our ups and downs, of course. On the first Sunday evening, just as everyone was leaving, a woman picked up a billiard cue, presumably to demonstrate her prowess, and ripped the cloth. It was too long a tear to stitch, so the whole cloth had to be replaced, which proved costly.

Soon we were getting ready for Christmas and we hung decorations. A pig farmer brought us some holly and greenery and another customer who had a van provided a Christmas tree. With the lights on the tree and the logs burning, it looked quite festive. When children came outside carol singing, we used to let them in and somebody would go round with their collecting tin. They did quite well. We did not intend to open Christmas evening but were told it was traditional, though not many other pubs did so as it was optional. We wondered if it would be worthwhile, but when we went to unlock the doors just before 8.00pm there were quite a few customers waiting to get in. The pianist arrived, the choir sang carols and it turned out to be a busy and pleasant evening.

Not far away was Homefield Park, where I used to take our dog for walks in all weather. I used to look for signs of the seasons, sometimes there would be snow and the dog, being a hardy mongrel, used to roll in it and push it around with his nose.

On August bank holidays, a fair would be at the park: the big event of the year. The caravans would drive in and form a circle, some were quite luxurious and it was interesting to walk round them all. The dog was not so pleased as he found it rather restrictive and would snarl at the other dogs, as he thought they were invading his territory. The owners were quite friendly and it was an experience to watch the men set up the marquees, stalls, swings and carousel and see the lights switched on.

One of the highlights of the bank holiday was the tug-of-war contests, and we were able to enter a team from the pub. We had one or two hefty bin men among our customers and that created a great interest. It was three pulls a game, and our team won the first round, but their next opponents were a rugby club from

Ferring who were young men in great physical shape and training all the time. It was an exciting event and a hilarious evening, which kept us busy.

Next door to us was a Territorial Army drill hall and the Sergeant who lived there and trained the recruits was a customer of ours. He was a very cheery man who ran the darts team and used his transport to take the team to away matches. We had a ladies' team as well.

The following February, Valerie, who by now was married to Ivor, came to help us at the pub. She was very popular with the customers. Two years later Valerie became pregnant and a few days before Christmas, Ivor and I took her to Southland's Hospital. It was bitterly cold as it had been snowing for several days and everything was frozen. They sent an ambulance and it was the coldest ride I ever had. We could not stay with her as they said if we did not go home by ambulance we would not get home at all!

My cousin and his wife had arrived from Hertfordshire to spend Christmas with us and we kept waiting anxiously for news from the hospital. I rang morning and night but it was three days before the baby arrived. She was born on Christmas morning and you can imagine how overjoyed and relieved we all were. However, due to the weather conditions, I could not get to see them until the day after Boxing Day, when our friend next door came to the rescue with his jeep. He could only take me, for there was only one seat beside the driver, and the back of the vehicle was loaded with army equipment. I was so thrilled to be able to see my daughter and first grandchild. She looked lovely in her cot with pink ribbons tied to it, and received much attention that day, and presents from friends of the Hospital. There was much celebration at *The Swan* that evening. Everyone was pleased to hear the news, her health was drunk many times and she was appropriately named Carol.

Shortly afterwards, Bert was taken ill with a massive coronary and the doctor said it was too dangerous to move him to hospital. We made a bed up in the lounge where he stayed for six months, the doctors visiting twice daily.

It was not an easy time for any of us. Ivor worked in the bar in the evenings after finishing work, and bottled up before leaving in the mornings. On Sundays, all the pipes had to be cleaned through - there was no keg beer then. Stephen was born during this time, fourteen months after Carol.

* * *

My husband gradually got better but had to take things very slowly of course. When he was able to get up and move around, the doctor called me out of the room and said, 'You will have to give up this business.' I was surprised, as it was something I had not even contemplated. He explained that my husband would want to take an active part in the business again and that could cause him

another coronary. This was shattering news, but we all agreed it would have to be done but it took time to arrange. Valerie and Ivor were able to put a deposit on their first house in Hangleton, which was much better for Ivor as he worked in Hollingbury. Then we were able to rent a ground-floor flat in Worthing, with a small garden, which was ideal. In November, four years after we moved into the pub, we moved out!

Bert's health improved, but the doctor said he would not be able to work again. We found this rather depressing news, but realised it was a fact. We had lost quite a lot of money during the last year and, as neither of us were of pensionable age, I decided I had better start working again.

I had been offered my job at *The Railway Hotel* again so decided I would work mornings. Worthing Station was only a short walk from where we lived and at the end of the train journey I had only to cross the road. I was also asked to help out one evening a week at a working mens' club just off Chapel Road in Worthing. Quite a few of *The Swan's* customers went there and as it was usually quiet on that particular evening, it was nice to have someone to talk over old times with. There was a full-sized snooker table there, and a team of players who belonged to a league. A match was played every other Thursday. One evening, a young member of the home team came up to me and whispered, 'We are playing away tonight, what can I drink for an upset stomach that is causing me some distress?' I was rather taken aback for a moment and then said, 'Port and brandy, I've been told is good.' When he came in the following Thursday he said, 'What was that drink I had last week?' I asked, 'Surely you're not still suffering?' He replied, 'No, but I sure did like that drink!'

There were also two machines there, one of which was known as a one-armed bandit: you put in sixpence and it was possible to win anything up to £5. One dear old lady, very refined and genteel, used to come in early and play most of the morning. When she won, she would come up to the bar with a beaming smile, not realising how much it had cost her! Juke boxes appeared, pianos disappeared and the old atmosphere of the pub seemed to change. Before long, only clubs had snooker tables, and pubs had bar-billiard tables which did not take up so much room.

I was offered a Saturday evening job at *The Assembly Hall*. This was a very busy session, as there was dancing from 8.00pm till 12.00pm with two live bands. It could be very hectic and sometimes the floor behind the bar would be awash with beer as we all hastened to serve, and we had to get someone to mop up before there was an accident. We sometimes didn't get home until well past midnight, but we were all sent home by taxi.

Of course, we were not allowed to drink alcohol while working, but some of the regular staff soon managed to get over the problem. We were all allowed to start

the evening with a mineral. Those who drank tonic water would manage to slip a gin or two in during the evening, the whiskey drinkers would have a ginger ale and the brandy drinkers would opt for bitter lemon, which was cloudy!

Tuesday evening was for wrestling at *The Assembly Hall* and two of us would work that evening, which was very easy. We opened at 7.00pm and some people would order a drink for the interval, which we would put on numbered tables for them. We would sometimes peep through the heavy curtains: there were a lot of people shouting advice to the wrestlers and obviously enjoying themselves. The usually quiet elderly ladies were the worst, standing in their seats screaming, 'Tear his arm off,' brandishing their sticks and umbrellas. It was unbelievable! After the last hour the crowd would go, nobody ever stayed for a drink, so we were able to get home reasonably early.

Two Worthing housewives hit on the idea of a 'rent-a-barmaid' scheme. It was advertised in the local paper and as it was mostly mornings, perhaps one or two a week, it suited me very well. It was different and interesting. My first engagement was at a small pub in Littlehampton, the next at a large pub in West Worthing. I only worked for one evening in Brighton, just before Christmas.

It was a quiet evening as regards bar trade, but part of the bar was a restaurant and when the patrons wanted Irish coffees, the waitresses ordered them from me. I had never served any of these before. I knew what to put in the glass, but the tricky bit was pouring the cream off the back of the spoon so that it formed a collar round the top of the glass, and did not mix in. 'The first order was for three, so I got them ready apart from the cream, and asked the waitress to show me how it was done. I only had two more orders, each by a different waitress, so I tried my luck again, and as they were friendly girls, I got through the evening without any trouble!

My last job was in a hotel opposite Worthing Station which was run by two men from London. Trade was very quiet at first, but then on Friday evenings a drag show was introduced. As it was over twenty years ago, this was a novelty! A stage was set up in the public bar, and the resident drag artiste, who was a sort of a maintenance man by day, turned into a glamorous looking female in the evenings. He had a good voice and strong personality, a little like Danny La Rue, and would sing his opening number, a song called, 'Everybody Wants to go to Heaven, but Nobody Wants to Die', quite a catchy tune. He would then introduce two more artistes during the evening, some of whom were beautifully gowned and very professional, especially one known as Perry St Claire. Others were mediocre and one elderly man who crammed himself into white satin was sadly pathetic. The performance started at 8.30pm and the price of all drinks was increased by three pence. It certainly attracted a lot of people. At first there was standing room only, but gradually the locals drifted away. That, and the extra cost of a pint, sent them back to the more homely pub, where they could enjoy a

game of cards among familiar surroundings.

More pubs became managed houses as tenants retired, and the atmosphere changed. Things became more sophisticated as new machines were installed and catering became the order of the day. Suddenly, I felt that I had had enough and did not want to work in a pub any more. I am still interested in the trade, and when I am taken to a country pub for a meal, I look around and think, 'What a difference!'

As I look back over the years, I have no regrets. I worked hard and enjoyed it, the educational value was great, and as the memories come flooding back, I think that this was my 'Life Behind Bars'!

Postscript

Marjory's husband, Bert Thursby, died in 1971.

She married William 'Nutty' Batchelor in 1973 but was widowed again in 1980.

Her daughter, Valerie, lives in Sompting and her son, Peter, in Surrey. They gave her seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

On her 78th birthday, Marjorie flew on Concorde and on her 90th she took a trip on the Orient Express.

Sadly, Marjory died shortly before this book was published. It stands as a tribute to her life.

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