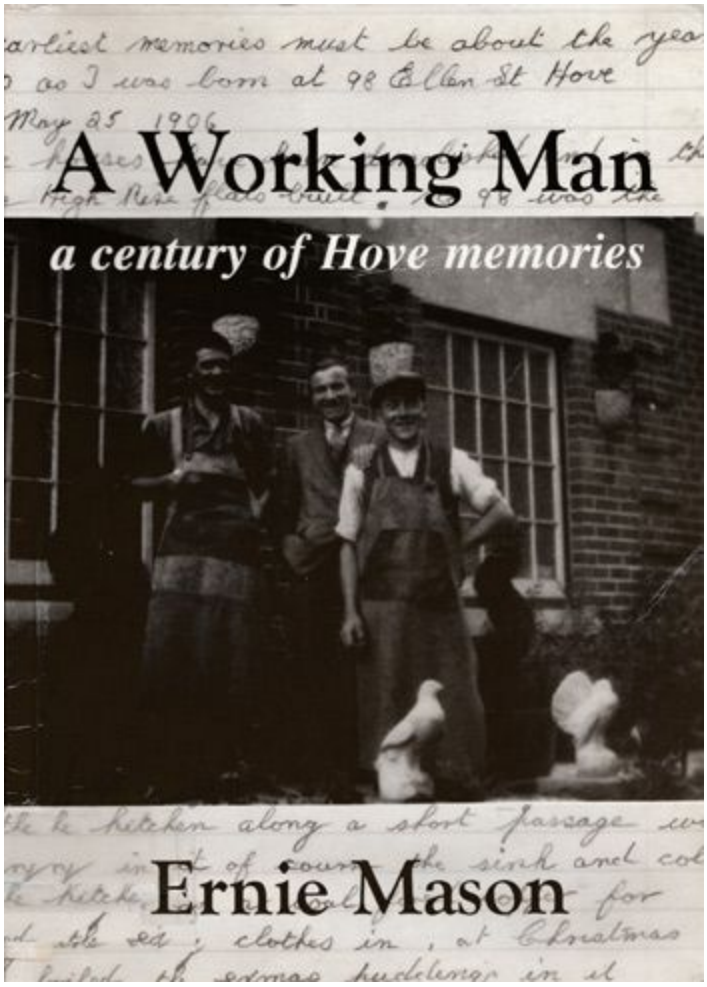
About QueenSpark Books



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

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

We thank you for choosing this book, and if you can make a donation to QueenSpark Books, please click on the “donate” button on the book page on our website.

About this book

Born in 1906, Ernie lived all his life in Hove, except for a short period spent in the Navy during the war years. Ernie recalls vivid memories of growing up in Hove, of street traders, long-lost cinemas, shops and pubs, school life and Brighton and Hove at the time of the First World War.

Ernie started his working life at the age of 11 and his 1998 memoir not only provides a unique personal history, but also depicts a largely forgotten way of life in a bygone era.

A WORKING MAN
A century of Hove memories

1996 Foreword – Grandad by Mark Stephenson

One winter in the 1980s my grandfather was at a loose end. The weather was terrible and he hated sitting indoors. We persuaded him to write down his memories and so he bought an exercise book and spent the afternoons recording his reminiscences.

My grandfather often told me that his generation was much tougher than mine. They had to be to survive childhood. He lived to be 89 and was certainly fit and active. He couldn't sit still and wanted to be occupied all the time, preferably outdoors. In his eighties, at about the time that he wrote this book, his neighbours' house caught fire and he broke into the blazing building to try to rescue their pet dog. A few years later, my mother was alarmed to find him attempting some repairs on top of the pitched roof of his house. He seemed to forget that he was getting on, referring to acquaintances ten years younger than he was as old people.

Apart from the war years, Grandad lived all his life in Hove. He was born, bred, and went to school in Ellen Street when much of Hove was still market gardens, orchards and fields. The entire street was demolished in the so-called 'slum clearance' of the 1960s. He started work at 11 and carried on working for another 64 years!

He was modest about his wartime experiences and had to be pushed to speak about them. He fails to mention that he was commended during the invasion of Sicily. He would have liked to stay on in the Navy after the war but had been away from his family too long. He regretted being away while his daughter grew up. Most people of my parents' generation were brought up as 'single parent families' as the men were away fighting in the war. His time in the Navy may explain why he was very smart and tidy. The many brass ornaments in his home were meticulously polished every week.

Back as a civilian he missed the sea. His bedroom faced the sea with the window open and a pair of binoculars handy to watch the ships out in the Channel. He joined the Hove Deep Sea Anglers' Club but lamented on the decline in the fishing. He told me that years ago it was a common event to see dolphins swimming just off the shoreline.

His great interests other than the sea were his pet dogs and the Albion. He supported the Albion for over seventy years. He would have been upset at the sale of the Goldstone but I'm sure he would have travelled to see them play at Gillingham. However, I remember him best seeing him take his dog for a walk. None of his dogs wanted for exercise. On his walks he was greeted affectionately by people of all ages as what was effectively his nickname 'Grandad'.

Hove, Autumn 1998

A WORKING MAN

98 Ellen Street, Hove

House and Home

My earliest memories must be about the year 1910 as I was born at 98 Ellen Street, Hove on 25th May, 1906.

These houses have now been demolished and in their place high-rise flats have been built. Number 98 was the usual two-storeyed house. On the ground floor facing the street was the sitting room (to us it was the front room), behind was the kitchen. The kitchen had an oven on one side of the fire, the top was for boiling and this was called the hob. The mantelpiece had a fringe tacked around it with brass-headed nails. On the wall hung a picture of the Royal Family. Dad was always for King and Country, although he had to work hard for very poor pay. We had a good doctor, who really cared for the working people, and he did not think much of Dad for voting Conservative.

Along a short passage from the kitchen was the scullery. In it, of course, were the sink, cold water tap and a coal-fired copper for boiling the dirty clothes in. At Christmas Mum boiled the Christmas pudding in it. After we had given the mixture a good stir, Dad used to put a few silver threepenny bits in it for luck. I think when Mum dished up the pudding she used to cheat a little as it was always us kids who got the threepenny pieces. There was a gas cooking stove and on the wall over it was a bare gas jet. There was a very heavy mangle for wringing out the clothes after being washed. We did have a larder, but as we never had enough food to put in it, it was always full of tools and junk. We used to call it the 'Black Hole', perhaps it was because having no window or light in there it was always dark.

On Saturday evenings a galvanized bath, which usually hung on the wall in the backyard, was brought into the kitchen and placed in front of the fire. The hot water, which was heated in saucepans on top of the hob, was tipped into the bath. My eldest brother Charlie went in first. When he came out, my sister Ivy, who was a little older than me, went in. Then it became my turn. A little more hot water was added each time. It was not a very big bath and the only part of our body that was covered was our bottoms. After we had all been in the bath we had to have a dose of liquorice, which was made by mixing the powder with water. It was nasty to take, not at all like the Liquorice Allsorts we buy now. As we got older we went to the Public Baths in Livingstone Road. We used to take our own towel and soap but we did have a real bath with lots of hot water for two pence.

The lavatory was out in the backyard separated from our neighbour by a thin wall. As you might guess, at times it was quite tuneful.

In those days most of the neighbours kept rabbits and chickens in their backyards, but not as pets - they were for food.

Potato peelings and greens were boiled in an old pot and fed to them. In return we had eggs and dinners on special days. Most people kept at least one cock bird, which used to wake up everybody early in the morning with its crowing. But we never heard them on Christmas morning or for some time after.

Ice Cream and Strawberries

I do not know who wrote Coronation Street but I think they must have lived in Ellen Street once, because during the evening the mums and dads used to bring their chairs outside their front doors and natter to each other and to those passing by. The summer evenings seemed to be longer than now and warmer.

In the evenings a man used to come along the street selling the Brighton *Evening Argus*. He was allowed to shout the headlines then, and he always found something sensational but when you bought the paper you found you had been seen off.

We used to have a lot of street sellers come round. There was the Hokey Pokey man with his ice cream, which was wrapped like a sandwich in white paper. It was said that he was an Italian and made the ice cream in his bedroom, but no one died through eating it. Others were the watercress man and the man who sold muffins. He carried them on a tray balanced on his head and rang a bell. Another sold winkles and another, of course, strawberries. A man and a lady came round with a cream-painted cart pulled by a small pony. On the cart was a highly-polished brass milk churn of skimmed milk. You took your own jug out to them and using a pint or half-pint measure they would fill the jugs from a tap on the churn. Being the cheapest milk, it was in great demand in our street.

Pubs and Churches

On Sunday mornings we were always made to go to church. I went to St Barnabas in Sackville Road. I had to go in the morning for a short service, then walk round to St Agnes in the Fonthill Road for Sunday School, as St Barnabas' hall was not built then. I was always made to go again in the afternoon. I think this was a con to get me out of the way because when I got home again Mum and Dad were having a rest in the front room - at least that is what they called it - there just happened to be a bed in there! I was quickly given half a penny to go out and buy some sweets.

The first Sunday after I was confirmed, feeling very holy, I went to early morning communion, but I forgot the collection afterwards. I saw the sidesman talking to the

priest and looking at me. I must have felt guilty at not putting my money on the plate. I never went again.

On Sunday evenings Mum and Dad used to take us for a walk. We were all dressed up in our best clothes and were made to walk very correctly in front of them, or we would get a clout round the ears. The usual walk was up Conway Street. The first stop was the *Cliftonville* pub. The Public Bar was underneath. It was known as the 'Blood-Hole' because of the fights that went on there. From there we went up Cromwell Road to our next stop, which was *The Palmeira* public house, which is at the top of Holland Road. While Mum and Dad were in there we would go across the road and watch through a door which was always left open as it was so warm inside, because of the generators of the Hove Electricity Works, which were there then. What was the next stop? No prizes for guessing: it was down Holland Road to *The Wick Inn* at the corner of Western Road. From there we went to a pub opposite the old church near the bottom of George Street, Hove. Dad called this the '*Hole in the Wall*'. From there we went up George Street to *The Exchange* public house in Goldstone Street, Hove. Dad got generous and he brought us out a glass of lemonade and a large hard biscuit called Arrowroot. This ended our Sunday evening walk.

I think my Dad was a bit of a lad on the quiet, I can remember him coming home one Sunday lunchtime with a lovely black eye. I think Mum felt like blacking the other one!

No Christmas has been the same since those when Dad used to take us children out. We were taken into Brighton, to the area around Gardner Street. The streets were lit by paraffin flares then. The shops had rows of rabbits, chickens and so on hanging from the shop fronts. Every street had rows of stalls all selling toys, balloons and paper chains. There were also barrel organs, hot chestnut sellers, music and carols. The whole atmosphere was full of Christmas cheer and went on until late in the evening. What a difference today, when after lunch the town goes dead.

Gas Lamps and Marbles

Like all the children the world over we played games; ours were mostly in the street. The girls played Buttons. A small chalk square was drawn on the pavement and in turn the girls had to flick a button from an agreed distance. The object was to get them into the square. Hopscotch, a game played now, was popular. Marbles was a game the boys played. A hole was dug in the middle of the road like a small bird's nest and the players had an 'x' number of marbles each. From the kerb side you each threw your marble and tried to get it into the hole. When some player managed it, he won all the marbles.

Another game which was played was Kick the Can. A mark was made in the middle of the road, which was the camp, and one boy was chosen as guard. The can was kicked

down the road and the guard had to retrieve it. Whilst doing so, the rest of the boys had to run and hide. They hid in people's porches, the areas of houses behind fences, or any place they could find. The guard, having replaced the can, had to find the hidden boys. As soon as he spotted one, he called out his name and this boy had to go back to the camp. The guard then had to look for another boy until we were all caught. But, if one of the boys hiding ran out and back to the camp before the guard caught him, then all those caught would scatter and hide again. Such was the spirit of all the neighbours that none of them complained about the boys hiding in their areas or doorways.

The roads were lit by gas lamps. At the top of the lamp standard an iron bar stood out for the cleaner to rest his ladder against. We used to tie a rope to this and use it to swing round the post. The lamps were lit by a man who came round of an evening with a long pole, which had a light in a shielded brass cover. With the pole he turned on the gas and lit the mantle at the same time. The lamplighters were so good at it they could ride along the street on their bicycles and light the lamps without stopping. In the mornings they had another ride round to put the lights out.

Every Good Friday a long heavy rope (it reached from one side of the pavement to the other) was brought out and almost everybody in the street, including the mums and dads all joined in skipping. Keeping time with the rope, they used to sing '*Hot Cross Buns, one a penny, two a penny, Hot Cross Buns, all hot*'. Sometimes they would get a second rope and put it in the other direction so that it formed a cross. They then used to skip through the cross. This was not very easy to do.

All the girls had wooden hoops, which were propelled by hitting them with a wooden tick. Most of the boys had steel hoops and they used a steeler to propel them. This was like a large metal buttonhook. The two steel items rubbing together made a lovely sound.

If your parents were better off, you would have a scooter. These were like a small bicycle, but with a flat board between the wheels instead of pedals, and you pushed it along with one foot on the ground and the other on the board. When you got enough speed you could put both feet on the board.

During my school days there were no motors. The roads were made of stones and grit and during the dry weather a horse-drawn water cart was used to spray the roads to keep down the dust. If anyone was very ill, the road on each side of the house was strewn thickly with straw to keep down the noise from the horses and carts passing the house.

There was no radio at this time and not many people owned a watch, so the school bell and the works' hooter from the nearby laundry became our main timekeepers.

Schooldays

Infants and Juniors

Ellen Street School, to which I went, was opposite my home. The ground floor at one end of the building was for the infants, the second or top floor for girls, the other end of the school for the boys. On the roof in the centre of the building was a bell tower. The bell was rung by the caretaker at 8.45 am and again at 9.00 am. If you were late for school, you had to stay in late after lessons were finished.

I remember one morning the bell rang when I was in the infants and, afraid of being late, I ran to kiss Mum goodbye. The trouble was she was in the lavatory, which, as I have said, was in the backyard. As you might guess she was not very pleased; with the door opened she could be seen by anyone from the houses opposite. For the rest of my life I never went to her for another kiss. Not that it worried her, she never liked kissing anyway. I don't believe she ever kissed Dad.

When in the infants' school, one day of the year was known as Empire Day. On that day a large coloured map was hung on the wall and all the children in the whole school were assembled in the big hall. We were told that all the countries coloured red were parts of the British Empire and that we should all be proud that we were British. We then had to march past the Union Jack and salute.

The time came when I was moved into the big boys' school. You started at Standard One and then if you passed the annual exam, moved up a class to reach Standard Seven. When you were thirteen years old, that was the highest standard and you were then allowed to leave school. But, if your parents allowed you to stay on another year, the class was called the 'X Seven'. I had to leave at thirteen years old to start full-time work.

Most of the people in our area had little money, so it followed that we were considered to be the roughest. Not far away, at Connaught Road School, the parents used to pay a small fee for their children to attend there, even though it was a council school. Because of this our boys thought it was class distinction and it created bad feeling between the two schools. It was made worse because the Connaught Road pupils wore part uniform.

Fist Fights and Canes

On the whole, though, we were the rough lot and our teachers had to be very strict. They always had a cane handy and used it if necessary. When they did use the cane, it was no use running home to Mum and Dad to complain because they would give you

another one. But, for all this, we used to respect our teachers. They were always nicely dressed and I when I was in Standard Four my teacher, knowing I lived close by, used to send me home to borrow a stiff clothes brush which we had, to brush his own clothes. Why he never had a brush of his own I will never know.

Often, a couple of boys would have a quarrel, like we all do at times. This would develop into a fist fight in the playground, but it was always a fair fight. They never used their boot or any other dirty tricks. The rest of the boys would form a ring round them. Teachers could often be seen looking through the windows at them and when the boys went back into school, they would be asked to shake hands. Usually they were better friends afterwards.

During the break between school lessons we went into the playground. I remember one favourite game was Cowboys and Indians. A chalked circle was marked on the ground. This was the fort. Some boys were cowboys and some Indians. The Indians ran around the playground amongst the other boys who were playing. The cowboys had to capture them by tapping them on the head three times. The Indians were allowed to struggle whilst being captured. They were then taken to the fort, but, if any Indians still free managed to run into the fort and shout, 'Release!' then all the Indians who had been captured could run off. They then had to be caught again.

The school in Portland Road was taken over in the First World War as a hospital for wounded soldiers. They were always dressed in light blue jackets and trousers. Because of the school being taken over, the pupils of Portland Road School had to go to Ellen Street School. So one school went in the morning from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm and the other school went from 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm, each school taking it in turns to go in the morning and afternoon. This meant we only had twenty hours' tuition a week.

Later when I had started work full-time I went two evenings a week to what was called 'Continuation Class'. However, while I was still at school I managed more by luck than ability to reach Standard Seven. The teacher of this class, Mr Davis, was the hardest and yet fairest in the school. He had to be strict in this class for none of us could be called angels. I myself was always in trouble and received many a whack with his cane; it was usually one on each hand. I soon learnt the trick was to hold your arm in line with your shoulder, hand well stretched out and when the cane came down, your arm came down a little with it so it did not hurt so much.

There was another form of punishment, which I think was the worst. The school desk and the seats were in rows and the seats were joined together. The top of the desk lifted up so that you could slide along between them and then close the top of the desk. The punishment was to make you stand up with the desk top down. This meant that you were forced to stand in a crouched-up position, because the seat dug into the back of your legs and your tummy into the top of the desk. How long you had to stand in this position depended on your teacher's mood, which could be for some time. Believe me, it was painful even after a short time.

Another way of punishment was, as you all know, that a pupil was made to stand in front of the class wearing a conical hat with the word 'Dunce' written across it. This was not physical punishment but I think it was a mental one. I don't remember it being used at my school. Maybe there were not enough hats to go around!

The best piece of advice that was given to me by my teacher on my last day at school was 'Mason, you are leaving school today and you think your education is finished. Believe me it has only just started.'

I never did shine at sport. I was once chosen to play football at the Reformatory School at Mile Oak Road in Portslade, where, being a bad boys' school, we had to put a guard on our clothes while we played. I did score a goal, but it was for the other side, so I lost my chance of becoming a football star. I did play one more game in my life: that was against an army team in Egypt but then they could not find anyone else. I played a little hockey while in Egypt, which I enjoyed very much.

I did do some boxing at the Manchester Street Boys' Club. It was a well-known club, started by a policeman and sponsored by traders, to keep the roughs off of the streets because fighting was what they enjoyed most.

I also had fights at the Army Drill Hall in Church Street, now the main sorting office. But my courting days finished that. However I kept on with gymnastics with the RNVR (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve) and later a six-week course at the Royal Navy Gymnasium at Portsmouth as a 2nd class physical and recreation instructor.

I also used to do cross-country running with the RNVR. One of our runs against the Brighton Cruising Club was from the windmill, which was on the north side of the Old Shoreham Road, across Southwick Hill to Henfield.

Grandparents

Two Shillings and Sixpence

New Dorset Street has been rebuilt now, but when my grand-parents lived there the houses were very old. The one my grandparents lived in was a terraced house built partly below ground level. The front room opened directly onto the street. It was a very small room and besides being below ground level it only had a small window, which made the room very dark inside. In one corner of the room was a very narrow stairway going up to the only bedroom there was. In the backyard there was a lavatory. What it was like inside I don't know. The outside was enough to put me offl There was also a water tap in the backyard but no running water in the house itself.

My grandfather was a horse cab driver. The horse was stabled in nearby Gloucester Road (the Mews is still there). The cab rank started at the top of Terminus Road and went down past the side entrance to Brighton Station, down Trafalgar Street, left to the back of the station and then up the inside to the front to pick up the fares. The cab rank was always full when I saw it and the poor horse and cabby had to wait a long time in the rain and cold. Men used to wait outside the station and when they saw a cab had a passenger and luggage they used to run behind the cab until it reached its destination. There they would unload and carry the luggage to the house, where they hopefully received a tip.

I was about twelve years old when grandad died. I used to walk every Sunday morning to my grandmother's to take her two shillings and sixpence, which my mother used to give her. I remember sitting at her round table on which the first gramophone I had ever seen stood. The records were cylinders, like the cardboard inside a toilet roll. If my grandmother had any other money it could only have been a very small amount from the State. I am sure my mother would have liked to send her more had she been able to. Sadly, my grandmother died in the place where most of the sick and poor died - the Workhouse.

The Workhouse was in the Brighton General Hospital, where the old people with no income were sent to die. A man and wife taken in there would be parted from each other. It must have been a sad day for them.

Teenage Memories

Bread and Cake

Thinking back, I was always doing the wrong thing, like the time when the coal was left in the cupboard under the stairs. As we only had oil and candles for lighting, I had to hold the candle while my sister Ivy got a shovelful of coal. She had long hair; at least she did before I set it alight with the candle. Still, today she would have to pay for a singe and it would not have been as good as the one I gave her.

Again, there was the time when Mum and Dad were at work and we came out from school at dinner break. My brother Charlie and sister Ivy were playing in the street and sent me to get the dinner from the Salvation Army, which was, and still is in Conway Street nearby. It was a good soup at a penny a jug. Of course, you took your own jug! I got home safely with it and as they were still playing I thought I should keep it warm, so I put it on the gas ring. The trouble came when Charlie and Ivy took it off. You see, it was a china jug and the bottom fell off, so it was no dinner for us that day. The soup

made a bit of a mess over the gas stove, but at least there was no jug for Mum to wash up when she came home!

I have always had a sweet tooth, but we could not afford to buy cake. However, at about teatime the baker was getting near to the end of his round. I found that if I went to meet him and helped to push his barrow back to the bake house and then waited, he would bring me a cake.

Sitting on the grass bank at the top of the three-cornered copse in Dyke Road, an old man called Charlie used to sell oranges from a wicker basket. Being on the main route front Brighton to the Devil's Dyke, it was a popular run for pub outings from Brighton. There were brakes pulled by two or more horses carrying perhaps about twenty merry passengers. As they passed Charlie they used to give a cheer and throw him pennies. I used to pick them up for him and for doing so he gave me an orange. I suppose it is hard for people today to understand that even an orange was a luxury for us.

I also had a sister called Winnie, and about this time we found another way of earning money. There were a lot of horses around then and we went round shovelling up the manure. At least I did. I had the shovel; Winnie picked it up with her hands. Then we sold the manure for a penny a bucket.

There was a large army camp at Shoreham during the First World War. There were huts, tents, field kitchens and troops by the thousands. Some of the children in Ellen Street used to be sent by their parents with a pillowcase to walk to Shoreham Camp and back again before school to collect bread, which the soldiers used to slip over the fence to them. I must admit this was something our family did not have to do, although bread was scarce.

Later I stood at the end of Ellen Street at the junction of Sackville Road to watch these soldiers marching in fours on their way to Newhaven Harbour. It took hours for them to pass by; they kept in step by whistling some tune. I wonder how many of these men came back.

Sugar and Spice

It was in the cinema that I learnt that girls were not all sugar and spice. I got friendly with a girl about my own age. In my dream we were in love with each other and she would one day be my loving wife, to be mine and mine alone (after all I was thirteen). I made a date to take her to the pictures one Saturday afternoon; I looked forward all the week for that afternoon to come. Knowing that men always treated their girls with chocolates when they took them to the pictures, I saved enough pennies to pay for both of us and a bar of chocolate for my love. When we went into the cinema, instead of sitting together holding hands, she sat about three seats away from me so I could not even whisper to her, let alone hold hands. Just the same she did eat my chocolate.

The first cinema in Hove was in Blatchington Road just round the corner from Sainsbury's. They were of course all silent films, and sitting just below and in front of the screen was the pianist and she was good. Her playing kept pace with the film: the faster the film that was being shown, the faster she played, slow if it was slow, or it might be something romantic. One tune I remember went:

You are all in all the world to me,
Lady Fair, Lady Fair,
You're the fairest flower I 'ere did see,
Lady Fair, Lady Fair,
Bright the stars gleam and yet
Heaven is no more alluring,
For you won my heart when first we met,
Lady Fair, Lady Fair.

Inside the cinema it was always dark. There were no windows or electric fans, so it got very stuffy and smelly. During the interval the attendant came and sprayed a lavender mist around. It was a lovely smell and to make sure we were not missed we used to yell out 'over here mister!' It cost us a penny for the Saturday afternoon, which was held for children.

Spit and Sawdust

The public bars were the working men's clubs and the toilets were always built outside in the street. In the club the floors were bare boards, covered with a layer of sawdust and there were bowls for the men to spit in. Usually the language was very strong and there were lots of arguments, sometimes turning into fights. In the midst of all this a Salvation Army lassie would walk in and she would be selling her *War Cry*, which most men bought. They would then ask her to sing and she would respond with a Salvation Army song. These men gave her every respect, for rough as they were, they were also the salt of the earth.

Some pubs ran what was called a Tontine Club. The regulars used to pay an agreed sum each week and if during the year a member went sick, he was paid sickness money, while away from work. At Christmas all the money not claimed was shared equally amongst the members. Of course how much they received depended on how many were sick during the year.

Boys and Girls

On the north side of Dyke Road, near the junction of Woodland Drive, in fact close to where I used to pick up the pennies for old Charlie, there is an underground water reservoir. At this time reservoirs had a large painted white board standing up straight on the top. Attached to it so that it was free to float from inside the reservoir was a pole. On the top was an arrow pointing to markings on the board, this showed how much water

was in the reservoir and, with the use of a telescope from a distance, the one on Dyke Road could be seen from the Goldstone Water Works where Dad worked.

Between the reservoir and the water works were only fields then and part of Dad's job was to read how much water was in the reservoir and how much more he had to pump in.

One day when I was about fifteen years old, I and a mate of mine went roaming round the fields and copse with a girl we got friendly with, playing around, as boys and girls do. But, that evening Dad very nearly gave me a good hiding. It turned out he had been checking his reservoir with his telescope and had spotted us. Dad, you did not know it then, but I began to think there was another life I did not know about.

At the corner of Goldstone Street and the east end of Conway Street, now part of the bus garage, there used to be a piece of open ground. This became known as the fairground, because at regular intervals it was visited by a travelling funfair, with all its usual amusements: swings, roundabouts and coconut shies. It used to bring a welcome bit of life to the town. You could always buy a packet of confetti which, of course, was meant just to throw over each other. However, we boys found that was a bit tame. It was much more interesting to push it down the front of girls' dresses. Of course, the girls used to pretend they did not like it, but really they enjoyed it as much as us, and nobody in the fairground minded either. All good clean fun!

Lanes and Trains

Going up Goldstone Street under the railway bridge to the corner of Newtown Road was Clarke's Bread Factory. This company had a large number of bread vans. Horses were stabled round the corner in Newtown Road on Clarke's Farm. There was a large duck pond separated by a fence from the south end of the Brighton and Hove football ground (the fence being put there after the ball had to be fished out of the pond). Before the council put a sewer in Old Shoreham Road, that part behind the north end of the ground used to flood after heavy rain, so a pond appeared there sometimes. On the east side of the football ground was the residence of Mr Clarke who owned the bakery, farm and much of the ground around the area. The house was called Goldstone House. When the Albion acquired the football ground, he made it a condition that no stand should be built there. Goldstone House has since been demolished and there are bungalows there now, and the Albion have still not got their stand on the east side.

At the top of Tamworth Road in Hove there is a cattle arch. At its north end there was a footpath which led up to the Old Shoreham Road. On the right side of the path were allotments, on the left side ran the railway line to the Devil's Dyke. No houses were there then and I don't know why, but this path was known as Tickle Belly Alley. At the top end of the path, after crossing the Old Shoreham Road, there was a lane which

went up through fields to West Blatchington Farm, where the windmill is. One of these fields was called the Jackarse Field. Every Sunday morning the local lads went there to gamble. Pontoon was the favourite game played. Somebody was always on the lookout because occasionally it was raided by the police. I don't know if anybody was caught, the lads were too quick for them.

Most of my mates used to work for Clarke's the Bakers on the bread vans. I used to wonder why they always had so much money to gamble with, until I found out that part of their job was to call on their customers to collect the week's bread money on a Friday. They used to charge them for a loaf they had not received, because most customers did not keep a record.

A short way up the lane leading to West Blatchington Farm was another lane which went up to join the Hangleton Road (this is now Elm Drive). There was a small farm which we children knew as Gibbets Farm, so it is likely there was a gibbet here years ago. It is known that many years ago a fourteen-year-old post boy was robbed of the mail by two men. One named Rook was caught and was hanged and, as was the custom, his body was left hanging on a gibbet as a warning to others. Rook's mother collected his bones as they fell and buried them at Shoreham in consecrated ground.

Lord Tennyson wrote a ballad about it called Rizpah. It went:

Do you think I was scared by the bones?
I kiss'd `em - I buried `em all,
I can't dig deep, I am old,
In the night by the churchyard wall
My Willy'll will rise up whole,
When the trumpet of judgement'll sound,
But I charge you never to say that
I laid him in holy ground.

Number 42 to 46 Elm Drive is where Gibbets Farm was.

Today, people think nothing of going abroad for a holiday, but in my young days to go to the Devil's Dyke was a pleasure everybody looked forward to. Some went by open-topped brakes pulled by two horses, but many more by train. The train left the main Brighton to Worthing line at Aldrington Halt and following the line of what is now Amhurst Crescent, went under the Old Shoreham Road, past the present fire station and up the back of Elm Drive and Rowan Avenue and across a bridge at Hangleton Road. Hangleton Road at that time was just a country lane and used to dip down under the railway bridge. The train then continued north over another bridge where the library is now and up where Poplar Avenue is to the Dyke. At the top of Poplar Avenue the track of the railway still exists.

When Elm Drive estate was built about 1935 near the junction of the shops and Rowan Avenue, the railway company built Rowan Halt. The line was very steep and so when the train was crowded, there were two steam locomotives, one at the front to pull and the other at the back to push. The first train left Rowan Halt at 7.00 am and ran until about 7.00 pm.

The Fire Brigade was housed in George Street, Hove. The fire engine was drawn by two horses which had a special harness so they could be turned out quickly. At the rear of the fire engine was a steam boiler for raising the pressure of the water on the fire hoses. The men were mainly volunteers and with their buttons on their jackets and brass helmets, they looked and were very efficient. The engine did carry a ladder, but the main fire escape ladder was kept against the wall of the old Hove Town Hall. It had two very large wheels and when required it had to be manhandled and pushed to the fire. It was most likely kept there because most of the big houses were nearby. Also next to it was a long wicker basket stretcher mounted on two wheels. This was the ambulance. I have seen a policeman pushing it through the streets with a dead accident victim to the mortuary, which was in Sheridan Terrace, Hove. Later the fire engine and motor ambulance were housed in Hove Street, from where they have since moved to the Old Shoreham Road.

First World War

Pumps and Bicycles

I remember the start of the Great War of 1914 and it was during the War that I had my first job. It was delivering the *Evening Argus* from a newsagent in George Street, Hove. My round included all the avenues off Church Road down to the Kingsway. All the lights were blacked out because German Zeppelins used to come over to bomb London. The Germans were not far from the coast of France then and we would hear the rumble of the big guns. As it was dark I used an oil-lit bicycle lamp to help me round; there were no battery lamps then. I remember one very wet and stormy night when some poor old lady in great distress came up to me and asked if I would help to find her hat which, in the wind, had disappeared into the night. But I was not much help as my oil lamp blew out. That hat meant a lot to her. I doubt if she ever found it.

There were more well-to-do people living in Hove than there were in most towns on the South Coast then, but it also had a very large number of poor people. Those who could had to work very hard to make a living. My Dad was one. He worked in shifts of twelve hours a day one week, nights the next, for the Brighton Water Works Company. He was a stoker for some years and then was a driver of the beam engine at the Goldstone Pumping Station. He always had an oil can in one hand and a ball of cotton waste in the other and every part of the engine including the guard rails shone. Every stroke of this

pump from a one hundred and sixty-foot deep well sent one hundred and fifty thousand gallons of water into underground reservoirs up on the hills. The beam engine has now become a museum piece and the work it once did is now being done by an electric motor.

Things were not easy for mother. On top of all the work and worry of the house and family, to bring in some money to help to keep us, she used to go out cleaning and collecting other people's dirty clothes to wash, iron and deliver. We may have been poor but we were proud and never owed anyone a penny. I hate myself when I remember the trouble I caused when Mum made me turn the handle of the mangle to wring out the washing, which she had worked so hard to do, and all I wanted was to just go out and play. (Sorry, Mum!)

During the summer Mum used to pay into the coal club and the coal was delivered in the autumn. When the coalman brought it, Mum used to carefully count each one and a quarter hundredweight bag as it was carried through the passage to the coal cupboard. She took no chances of being short-changed. We children used to stay outside the house and admire the very big horses the coalman used.

My brother Charlie raised his age so that he was only sixteen when he joined the Army for the 1914 War. At first, he was based at the Sussex County Cricket Ground, which then had a large drill hall. It was a pedal bicycle company. The cycles were very heavy machines with a special rack to carry a rifle. I believe they were part of the Royal Sussex Regiment. One day he came home wearing a kilt. He was then in the London Scottish Regiment. How he got there I do not know for, like me, he was Sussex born and bred. After serving in the trenches in France, he finished his service with the Black and Tans in Southern Ireland.

Homecoming and Song

During the War when every soldier came home on leave a party would be held. One evening the front room would he cleared of unnecessary furniture and chairs would be arranged all around the room. All the neighbours would be invited in and a barrel of beer and other drinks provided. In our home we did not have a piano or any kind of music, but it did not matter as we made our own music. My Dad's party piece was a song of a little boy who woke up one morning and told his Dad he'd had a dream and this was his dream:

Don't go down in the mine Dad,
Dreams very often come true,
Daddy you know it would break my heart
If anything happened to you,
And 'ere the day ended the pit was on fire

And scores of brave men lost their lives,
And his father thanked God again
For the dream his child had,

Dear Daddy don't go down the mine

They all had their own favourite like:

The sunshine of your smile,
Give me the right to love you all the while,
My life forever,
For the sunshine of your smile

Another was *Come into the Garden Maud* but as I think they changed the words I had better say no more!

Horses and Mules

I remember at the mouth of Shoreham Harbour two concrete towers or `mystery ships' being built, they were really massive. It was a miracle to me that they could float. But only one was finished and after the war ended this was towed to Portsmouth and is now the Nabb Lighthouse. It was believed they were to be used as forts across the mouth of the Thames.

I also remember during the war years the old Hove Park was taken over by an army transport unit and hundreds of mules were tethered to ropes across the park. They were bound for France.

The Army confiscated all the good horses during the war - horses that were willing to do a good day's work and then go home to a comfortable stable, a good rub down and feed; horses that knew their drivers and were pleased to see them in the morning. I have seen a hard and tough carter in tears when his horse was taken away. None of these horses ever came back. Their peaceful life was ended.

In the First World War there were more casualties than in the Second. Almost every evening the wounded arrived at Brighton Station from Newhaven Harbour. Once I stood in Queen's Road and the ambulances, which were garaged at what is now the casino, were taking them off to the hospitals. Many of these were requisitioned buildings in Brighton and Hove and were in addition to the county hospitals. There were a great many stretcher cases and the people used to give them a cheer as they went by.

In those days, going to the Brighton and Hove football ground was a real pleasure. There were usually some local footballers who, although professional, were very loyal to the club and the supporters. There was no fencing around the ground. The home and away supporters were all mixed together. Any young children, if they could not see the game, were lifted up and passed down to the front row. At Christmas time one of the most welcome teams and supporters was Portsmouth, with the carol singing and cheering. It really was a happy morning, football at its best. It has never been the same since.

When I was a boy, there were no houses on the Old Shoreham Road north of the ground from the Upper Drive to Shoreham, although the parks were there and orchards. Now there are houses in roads like Orchard Avenue. North of Hove Park there were lovely big juicy gooseberries like small plums; they do not grow them now. I did a fair share of scrumping here. We had to keep a lookout for a man with only one arm. He lived in the farm cottage, which has now been demolished, at the north east corner of the football ground.

When Lord George Sanger's Circus visited Hove they used to stay in the Wish Road area, which was then all fields. They were a good crowd. They allowed us young kids to lead the horses along to the public horse troughs just along the seafront. I had a mare with a foal which used to trot along-side its mum without a halter. The circus used to have a parade through the town and back along the seafront. It really was something, with its stagecoach, clowns, horses, elephants, band, cowboys and Indians.

Early Working Days

Baskets and Barrows

At eleven years old I was only going to school half a day because, as I have explained previously, Portland School pupils had to share Ellen Street School. I had to work the other half of the day. I was an errand boy for W Miles and Co, a high-class greengrocer and florist at 16 Church Road, Hove at the top of Second Avenue. Miles was a subsidiary of West Brighton Estate, which owned all the Avenues and the lawns on the seafront.

The hours of working were in the morning from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm. On Saturday it was from 8.30 am to 6.30 pm. For this I was paid three shillings a week. The next week when the schools changed over and I went on afternoons the hours were 1.30 pm to 6.30 pm. Saturday remained the same but this week the pay was two shillings and six pence. The reason for this was that the shop closed on Wednesday afternoons so I did not have to work that afternoon. Of this, a grateful Mum gave me sixpence a week pocket money.

We used to deliver the goods in a wicker basket. These baskets held twenty-eight pounds of potatoes and at eleven years old it was no joke! When I finished on a Saturday evening I was so tired I had to sit down several times on the way home.

W Miles had about eight roundsmen. These men used to leave the shop first thing in the morning and call on their customers for their order, return to the shop, make up their orders and deliver them on barrows. There used to be two Italian men, one played the Violin the other one the harp. They would play in the avenues and were always welcomed. People would put money in their hat or throw it from the windows. It was bad luck for the cooks waiting for their vegetables. When I came across the Italians, I used to love the music they played and used to sit on my basket and listen. Until then I did not know what good music was.

There were two other boys, beside myself, who worked at W Miles. I remember that the grapes came in large wooden casks packed in cork dust. When there were not deliveries to do we boys used to go down into the cellar and unpack the grapes. We would empty the cask onto the bench and with hand bellows blow the cork away and put the bunches on trays. There were always a lot of loose grapes, it made a nice job for us boys. I remember Percy, a nice polite boy, filled his cap with some of the loose ones. When we went home that evening the manager, who was really someone in those days, and was always addressed as 'Sir' by all, was standing at the open door. As Percy went past him he said 'Good night, Sir', and raised his cap and out came a shower of grapes!

I left school when I was thirteen years old and carried on working full-time for W Miles and Company. At one time my job was to go into rich people's houses to tend all their plants, flowers and plumes that were in halls, dining rooms and lounges. This meant watering and replacing many plants and flowers. The leaves of the palms used to get dusty and had to be sponged.

One of the houses was in King's Gardens, the residence of Sir David Sassoon. King Edward at one time stayed there. You cannot imagine what it was like for a poor lad like me going into one of these houses. It was like going into a palace, everything around was so rich and beautiful. But what was strange was that the front doors were always unlocked. I used to walk in and carry out my duties and often never even saw a servant or butler. I did once go downstairs and in a small room lined with green baize met a footman cleaning a mass of silver. Such a house today would have to have an armed guard at the door!

Jam and Oranges

At the top of Denmark Villas was the Lido Cinema. It was quite a large cinema and a good one, but it replaced the first and best skating rink on the south coast. This rink was

better than the one in West Street, where the Brighton Tigers used to skate. But the ground it was built on belonged to W Miles & Co. On it were greenhouses, stables and a building at the far end which was a jam factory, and it was to here that I was transferred from the Church Road shop.

I was assistant jam maker. The jam was boiled in copper vats heated by steam, each making sixty pounds of jam at a time. After each boil, it was turned out into a copper pan, which was filled to the brim with the boiling jam. The foreman and I had to carry it into the bottling room. As we wore wooden clogs and the floor was concrete it was a tricky job to lift the pan up onto the bench. It was in this room that a woman used to fill the jars using a copper jug. The jams we made were the best it was possible to buy anywhere. There was only one recipe, fifty pounds of fruit to fifty pounds of sugar. All the fruit was fresh from Brighton Market every day.

We also made marmalade from Seville oranges, chutney and bottled fruits. One thing we did cheat on was the pineapple, which came out of tins and was transferred into glass jars. The customers did not like pineapples out of tins but were quite happy with it in jars! Honey also came out of four-gallon cans and was transferred into small jars, but never sold as English honey. Today most jams are made from fruit pulp.

There were only three men employed in the factory: the foreman, the stoker and myself. We had about six girls who were permanent but the company took on more during the season. With no main drainage the toilets were 'country-type' for both men and women. It was the stoker's job to dig the cesspit and empty the buckets. The women did have their own changing and mess room and were quite happy working for the company.

As the work in the jam factory was seasonal, I also had to do maintenance work on the greenhouses. These were old and large and to paint and replace the glass I had to work on top of them. It was a bit shaky up there sometimes. I used to mix the paint myself. This was white lead, boiled oil and driers. As lead is poisonous it is not allowed to be used now.

The coal for heating the greenhouses came from Holland Road Goods Yard. There was also a railway halt for passengers, but the site has all been built on now. The railway truck the coal came in had to be emptied in three days. One day one of our drivers was unloading coal from his lorry and he fell through a greenhouse, cutting his arm very badly. I happened to be near at the time and bound it up very tight. He was rushed to what later became Hove Hospital, which was not a hospital then, but a dispensary. There was also one in Brighton. They were built for poor people needing treatment.

Backwards and Forwards

At this time W Miles were replacing horses with motors. The manager, having employed me as an errand boy, made me a jam maker, then a maintenance man and then decided that he would make me a motor driver and detailed one of the other drivers to teach me to drive. I went out with him a few times but he would not let me take the wheel. He did not want me to drive. Perhaps he thought I was going to pinch his job. The manager, thinking I am sure, that I had been learning, sent me out on my own. Somehow I managed it, but I really taught myself. There was no Ministry of Transport then, so I did not need a test. As I am still driving and have been for sixty years without one, I had better not blow about it as there is still time for me to have to take one!

The motor I took over was a one ton MT Ford. The advance and retard lever was on the steering wheel and so was the throttle. There were three foot pedals: one for the brake, the one in the centre was the reverse pedal and the other one if you kept your foot pressed down on it was low gear. By taking your foot off you were in top speed - about ten or so miles an hour. The side lamps were lit by oil, the headlamps by a dynamo. This meant the lights were only on when the engine was turning. When the engine stopped the lights, of course, went out. The top section of the windscreen opened up on hinges, which was an advantage in fog. The screen wiper was operated by hand from inside the cab, later by vacuum from the engine. There were no side windows, but it did have side curtains you could slip on when it was raining. It was law then that you had to give hand signals, indicators not having been invented then. The right and ahead signal by hand was easy, to turn left and the overtake signal not quite so easy.

What we did was to cut from plywood the shape of a hand at the end of a one-foot wooden arm, paint it white and using one screw as a pivot fix it to the outside of the driving cab, then tie one end of a length of cord to it. The other end of the cord went inside the cab, so when you turned left you pulled the cord, up went the hand and after turning you let the cord go and down went the wooden hand.

The MT Ford, I think, owed its success in its day to the fact that it was so simple. No matter what went wrong with it, it was repaired and back on the road again within hours. We found out quite a few different things we could do with it. There was no self-starter, so you had to use the handle. When starting was difficult we used to jack up one rear wheel off the ground, open the hand throttle and swing on the starting handle. This meant the rear wheel clear off the ground acted like a flywheel to spin the engine. It did work, but one day it slipped off the jack and finished in a greenhouse!

We also used to do a lot of work on rubbish tips and as the ground was often soft it was not unusual to be stuck in the mud. By using the forward and reverse pedals quickly and alternately we could rock the lorry out of the mud. The reverse pedal made a very good brake as well.

The jam factory used to boil up the old season's jam with plenty of apples mixed in it and put it in seven-pound storage jars. We took it to London to the Rowton Houses, which were poor men's lodging houses scattered about the City. Handcross Hill really

was a hill then although it has been levelled out now. When we had a load up, if it was too much for the van to go forward we turned around and went up the hill in reverse. This could have been because the load was being pulled up the hills and not pushed up. Perhaps it was the forerunner of today's front wheel drive, so there is nothing new. By the way, London then was a four-hour drive each way.

As time went on the other drivers were getting Bedfords in place of Fords. Of course, I wanted one so I did my best to ruin my Ford. It didn't give in and it was some time before I got one.

Servants and Gardeners

Later, I found out that the building used as a jam factory had been a water works and supplied the water for all the Cliftonville area, which that part of Hove was known as then. Hove Station at one time was known as Cliftonville and the pub opposite still bears that name. The water works was transferred to where it is now and called the Goldstone Water Works, where my Dad worked. I would think if a borehole was sunk at the Denmark Villas site, water would still be found there. The well went when I worked there. It was filled in and covered over.

Hove, when it came to traffic control, was one up on Brighton. In Brighton they had a semaphore system, operated by a policeman in the centre of the road by the fountain in London Road. Hove had the first traffic lights. These were at the Sackville Road and Church Road junction. I remember trying to dodge them the first week they were installed by turning left into Connaught Road and was stopped by a policeman round the corner who wanted to know why. I could give no real reason and he gave me a talk about them, but that is all he could do as it was not an illegal offence. Later they put pads on the approach road to them, which triggered the lights in your favour. Now I think it is best to make use of the lights.

Harking back to the days when I was working for W Miles, only the rich could afford to live in the West Brighton area.

Most of the residents living there employed a large staff. There was the butler, housekeeper, nanny (if there were children), chambermaid, parlour maid, cook and the scullery maid, who was considered to be the lowest of them all, for there was even class distinction amongst the servants. At mealtimes, the butler sat at the top of the table, with the housekeeper facing him at the other end. In between the others had to sit in their set places; the scullery maid most likely in the scullery. In the nearby mews the coachman lived over the top of the stables. These mews are now in great demand as flats.

W Miles employed jobbing gardeners, landscape gardeners and tree cutters. They were employed on regular contract work in the town, spending perhaps a day or half a day in

the gardens right through the year. As driver I used to deliver their needs - tools, bedding plants and so on - and collect the garden rubbish. I used to dump this at old quarries. There were several in the town and one was off Portland Road, now Davis Park. There was one off Vale Road, now Vale Park, Portslade. We used to pay sixpence a load.

There were a number of nurseries I used to collect plants from in the town: English Nurseries; Hazeldene just off Dyke Road now Hazeldene Meads; Brighton Nurseries in Lyndhurst Road, later taken over by the Hove Council; Caisters and, of course, Miles Nurseries in Denmark Villas.

The lawns on the seafront from First Avenue to Fourth Avenue were owned by the West Brighton Estate and were fenced in. Flower beds were planted according to the season. Under the ground was a pump which pumped sea water to all the houses on the estate. The grass was cut by a mowing machine pulled by one of W Miles' horses, who, to stop the lawn being damaged, wore leather boots fitted over his hooves. My part was to collect the cuttings for disposal. These lawns, being private, could only be used by the residents on the estate who had keys. After the war the Council took them over and of course they are now part of the Brunswick Lawns.

My work also included taking the buyer to Brighton Market, which was then all around the Brighton Town Hall. It was 5 am Tuesdays and Thursdays 4 am on Saturdays. On Mondays and Fridays before the shop opened, I had to clear away the rubbish, which was stored in the cellar: a job I was quite happy to do, you see, for my daughter Margaret was brought up on oranges.

W Miles sold the nurseries at Hove and bought another along with a large market garden at Lancing. We used to collect the produce and bring it back to the shop for sale that same morning. Nothing but the best and the freshest was good enough for W Miles' customers. We used to go across the old wooden bridge at Shoreham. This was the main road to the west then and the railway crossing keeper was paid six-pence as it was a toll bridge. It is now just a footpath across the river. The road back to Brighton along the seafront, being free, was sometimes used and we made a quiet sixpence for ourselves.

In my early driving days there were far more horses on the roads than motors and if you drove a motor lorry you thought yourself someone. I suppose I considered myself to be well-paid. I earned two pounds and five shillings a week, five shillings for extra hours worked and a sixpence or two for the load of rubbish that never seemed to reach the tip, and another sixpence or two from the toll bridge that wasn't there.

Christmas and No Debt

However, to my regret, I thought it time to leave W Miles and I became a coalman for a contractor who worked for the Brighton Co-op. This was really hard work. We started at 7 am and were expected to deliver four loads a day of between two and three tons. You were very lucky if you were finished by 6.30 pm. The job was not so bad if you had a delivery of one or two tons to one of the big houses. You could shoot it into the cellar through a trap in the middle of the pavement, but it was mostly one bag delivered. The bags then were one and a quarter hundred weight and usually had to be tipped into a small cupboard under the stairs, or along a passage at the back of the houses. If you had to carry it through the house and accidentally spilt a knob of coal on the way, some of the Co-op members, who thought they owned the Co-op, were on the phone to complain to the office before you were out of the house!

Wages have always been a problem, especially if you are thinking about getting married and where to live. I did not have a hope in hell of getting a council house and was not earning enough to get a mortgage, but I was lucky, my father-in-law was good enough to stand security and I was able to buy the house I am still living in now. Although six hundred and fifty pounds doesn't sound much today, to me then it was a fortune and for twenty-one years it was a struggle to get by. We could never go away for a real holiday, but I had the biggest asset any man could have, a good partner, a wife who stood by me all our married life.

Our honeymoon was from Good Friday to Easter Monday and spent at Saddlescombe near Devil's Dyke. We got there by taxi and we just had enough money to come home by train, but there was no way I could afford to take even a week off work.

The London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, as it was then, used to run a seven-day holiday ticket for seven and sixpence which allowed travel between Portsmouth and Hastings. We made good use of these tickets. I used to earn some money gardening in my spare time. Don't get me wrong, we enjoyed life, we got plenty to eat and we never borrowed money and were never in debt to anyone.

Christmas was Christmas then. Every working family saved for weeks so they could have a chicken for dinner at Christmas. If it stretched to having a turkey, all the neighbours had to know about it. The children used to hang up their stocking and on Christmas Day got excited finding an orange, an apple, a few nuts and perhaps a small bundle of chocolate tied with a pretty ribbon. After a breakfast of bacon and giblets as a special treat, came presents, for the girls perhaps a doll, for the boys a box of lead soldiers. A happy evening was spent playing games. Now all they want to do is watch television. The parents must find it very hard to find presents that please their children.

RNVR

Bombs and Barges

Should you read this, you will rightly think I am being sour. I joined the Hove division of the RNVR (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve) when I was seventeen years old. There were two sub-divisions at Hove, two at Newhaven and two at Hastings. The Commodore was Viscount Curzon, who was later Earl Howe. We were really volunteers and we gave up a lot of our spare time spending evenings and weekends training. Each year we were expected to spend at least two weeks with the Royal Navy. Some employers would release us from work for much longer. I spent two months qualifying as a physical training instructor and later I took a course on torpedoes. We did receive an annual small bounty. There were other divisions, one in London, HMS President, one at Bristol and three in the north of England. On September, 1939 we were mobilised and were serving at sea a few days later.

After we were called up, our headquarters was the King Alfred. Men joined the navy straight from civvy street to train as junior officers, which was fine, but they were called RNVRs. To my mind they were not RNVR, as they would have been conscripted into one of the forces. Anyway, some years later they were honoured by a reception held for them at the King Alfred, but it did not include the Sussex Division.

I don't want to linger on the war years as so much has been written about them. Many lost their lives and many thought they won it all on their own. I was no hero. Like everyone else I had some good times and some not so good, but I can honestly say I was never worried that anything could happen to me and I think many felt the same about themselves - not even when I nearly blew myself up and half of Southampton!

I was at the time skipper of the tug Kelpy. She was a London river tug taken over by the Royal Navy. It was about halfway through the war and sea-going trawlers used to tow huge barges into the port. They were loaded with guns, tanks and explosives in readiness for the Second Front. I had to moor them to buoys anchored all down Southampton Water, up the river at Cowes, under the trees in the Beaulieu River and some were moored to posts up the River Bitterne which runs through part of Southampton. I was ordered to go up the River Bitterne one evening at midnight to secure two barges which had partly broken their moorings and tow them back down the river to Southampton Water. I had a crew of two seamen and two in the engine room; also the Commander gave me three London bargemen to assist with the job. We secured the barges to the tug with the tow, let go of the mooring holding the barges to the post and started to tow them back down the river to Southampton Water. At least that is what I was supposed to do, but I was not aware that there was such a strong tide running. The tug and barges got mixed up together and with tons of explosives in the

barges, we were swept up the river, crashed through the bridge hitting the sides as we went, into quieter waters on the other side. When the tide had reached its flood, I was able to tow them back to Southampton Water, but that was not the end. The crew could not have secured the tow safely. One of the barges decided to go off into the darkness on its own and with still one barge on tow I had to go after it in pursuit. In the morning I had to report to the Commander that the order had been carried out, but he already knew all about it and was not very pleased.

Home and Abroad

Soon after, the Admiralty recruited London tug skippers and bargemen into the service so I got a draft chit into combined operations. I became senior coxswain to the 57 Landing Craft Flotilla. After training in Scotland we embarked on HMS Keren and went to the Mediterranean the long way round, that was via Freetown, Durban, Aden, and the Red Sea to Suez. It was here we learnt that our landing craft, with six of my lads who had sailed in a freighter before us, had been sunk.

At Durban I remember, as do thousands of troops, a lady dressed all in white. As each ship of a convoy passed the end of the pier she used to sing Land of Hope and Glory - she had a lovely voice. I am pleased to say she was not forgotten when the war ended. She was invited to London so she could be thanked.

At Suez we transferred to the troopship Dunera. The ten life-boats she carried were exchanged for ten assault landing craft; each craft carried twenty-two commandos, a crew of four plus the coxswain. There were one hundred and twenty men in the flotilla, and I knew the names of all of them. Now I forget the names of people I meet every day so I must be getting old. We carried on training in the Red Sea.

Then came the day when we embarked three thousand troops, which included some commandos, and we sailed through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean Sea. We were well out to sea before being told our destination was Sicily. The code name was 'Husky'. The intelligence must have been good as we were told the Germans were moving their crack paratroops into Sicily, and we were given maps of the coast we were going to land on, which even showed where the gun emplacements were. The landing started on the night of 10t" July, 1943. Our troops were landed near Syracuse. As usual the commandos were landed first with their faces blackened and they were armed to the teeth. I was glad they were on my side.

With the American sector there were seven hundred and fifty ships, six hundred tanks, fourteen hundred vehicles, more than was used at any one time, including the Second Front. By morning we had ferried all our troops ashore and sailed away from Sicily thinking we were going to England, but no such luck, it was first to Malta then back to Sicily. On our way back I often thought of the fate of the two airmen, their plane having

been shot down had parachuted safely into the sea, but with U boats around our Captain could not risk stopping to pick them up. I don't know if they were British or German.

From Sicily I was drafted to Egypt to become coxswain, driver and bodyguard to Rear Admiral Walker who commanded the Red Sea and Canal areas. This meant that wherever he went I had to be with him, apart from inspecting HM ships passing through the canal. He travelled everywhere in Egypt, Palestine and at one time to Istanbul in Turkey. As his bodyguard I wore a gun and rather fancied myself strutting around. While I was in Cairo the British Ambassador was assassinated. When arrested by the Egyptian police the men said they were sorry they had to kill the British Corporal who was driving the car, but he was armed. After hearing this, and as I have said, I was no hero, I stopped wearing the gun and kept it in the glove box of my car, just in case someone else got the same idea.

The war, however, was won, not only by the armed forces but also by those who stayed at home. The women worked in the factories, workshops and in the hospitals. They drove ambulances and were firewatchers and did many other jobs. They were bombed and saw death and destruction all around. Those too old to work knitted scarves and gloves and so on for the troops. I myself received a woollen helmet, which I was glad to wear at sea on the night watch. They had somehow to make the rations go around. I don't know how many civilians (men, women and children) were killed, but their share should not be forgotten at remembrance services. I said we won the war but nobody really wins. In the end it is all for nothing.

People forgot that although the war in Europe was at an end we were still at war with Japan. It was the atom bomb that ended the war and when it did my time for discharge came from the Navy.

I was offered the chance to sign on for another three years and have always regretted not doing so, but I had already been away from home for three years. Then like many others I found it hard to settle down to civilian life after living in a man's world for six years.

Later Working Days

Saving and Serving

I tried to resume my old job as a coalman but not for long, because I was taken ill and spent some time in hospital. When I came out I was not fit enough and did not want to go back to work as a coalman.

So errand boy, paper boy, maintenance man, driver, jam maker, coalman, sailor - it had to be different. It was. I became a shop blind fitter working for J B Bennet in North Road, Brighton. They had several shops and were a good firm to work for. I was happy there and liked the work, but the pay was not very good, so off I went again. I became a chauffeur to a Jewish family. Mr Moss, for whom I worked, had a factory in London making ladies' coats. I remember once when driving in the East End Mr Moss saw a woman wearing a very smart coat. He stopped the car and told the woman that he liked her coat and for five pounds (which at that time was worth much more than it is today) persuaded her to go with him to his factory. While she was in his office having coffee and biscuits, he took her coat into the workroom, where it was taken to pieces and the pattern of each part copied. The coat was sewn together again, pressed and returned to the owner, who didn't know what had been done to it, as it had been done so quickly. Mr Moss had copied another firm's design!

In the machine room was a line of machinists. One would sew just one part of the pattern, pass it to the next one who would add another and so it went down the line until the coat was completed. One day while watching, I noticed the edge of the cloth kept breaking away. The workers were having to go back over the seam, and being paid on bonus were not at all happy about this. On asking why it happened they said it was cheap cloth made for the sales. I don't trust sales now.

The worst part of this job was the long and unsocial hours I had to work. I kept the job for about two years and left because I never had any time of my own.

This time I went to work at a well-known garage, first servicing cars, then as manager on the forecourt, but in those days we did not sit in the office and wait for the money as they do now. On top of serving the petrol, we were expected to check the oil level and battery. In those days even the best cars used more oil than they do now and batteries were not filled for life. We also had to check the tyres and if the customer was lucky his windscreen was wiped. As trade increased, like today the customers were always in a hurry and checking tyres always caused a delay, so at weekends when the director was away, I put out a board stating 'the air is free, you may help yourself'. This worked very well as the petrol pumps could be preset to the amount required and you could hand him the nozzle so he could fill his tank himself while you could get on serving the next customer. Naturally you had to keep a sharp eye to see that he did not go off without paying, as at the end of each shift the duty attendant had to pay for any loss that was made, but to be fair any money that was over was his. If you gave good service you did not do badly for tips.

On leaving the petrol station I had two more jobs. The first one was for a solicitor, a nice cushy indoor job, but after six months I found working indoors was not for me, so I left.

The second job was for a firm of road carriers, collecting and delivering goods covering the South East. I was here for a few years which brought me up to the time most people

look forward to, the time when their workmates present them with a clock. Why a clock? Perhaps they expect him to sit on his backside all day and watch it ticking away the rest of his life.

But this was not for me, I carried on working for another ten years with a printer's, working twenty-two hours a week.

Then I did get my clock, and have been watching it for another ten years.

Beloved Dogs

There has never been a time in my life when there was not a dog in my home.

Snap and Spot

The first dog I had was a mongrel bitch called Snap. I would have been about nine years old and she was a real pal. I remember one day when I was too venturesome and got lost over the Downs, Snap knew I was lost. She whimpered and started walking one way, then she came back to me. When she saw that I was following her she kept going and that dog led me home.

Spot was another dog. He was a white crossbreed with a black spot, hence his name. He belonged to Dad. But Spot was not a lucky dog. At that time I was courting my wife Glad and we were walking just off the Dyke Road one day when Spot ran into the road and was injured by a car. I carried him home to Ellen Street, borrowed a pram and we pushed him down to the Sussex Hotel at the bottom of Osborne Villas. Behind the hotel there used to be stables and a well-known veterinary surgeon called Mr Stuart. Spot recovered from his accident but because one of his front legs had been broken he had to hop on three legs. I know Dad took a dim view of this and one day when I came home Spot was missing. Dad said he had found him a home in the country, but I am sure Dad did not tell me the truth.

Toby

Along came Toby. I had not been married long and Margaret my daughter was about three years old. Toby was of no special breed: he looked like a Punch and Judy dog. I remember taking him for a walk over the Downs. Not known to me, just over the hill was a large chicken run. Suddenly I missed Toby, but could hear him yapping. I found him in the chicken run, but not before he had killed some of the chickens. I did not stop to count them but I just put Toby on the lead and ran. I could not have paid the owner for them had I been caught.

Where I was working at that time there were lots of rats. One morning I caught four live ones in a cage trap. I had Toby with me that morning. I took him and the trap into a lock-up garage and released the rats. They ran all around the garage part way up the walls. One of them must have given him a bite, but in no time at all he had killed them. From then on, we went ratting and he was champion at it. But for all that, he was good. Margaret had no brothers or sisters to play with, but Toby was her pal and she used to dress him up like a doll and put him in a pushchair and wheel him around the streets. All the neighbours used to say 'that dog is going to bite her one day', but not Toby, they had grown up together and were pals.

Taffy and Danny

And then there was Taffy, a Welsh sheepdog. I had been with my wife to Rye for a picnic. On the way back we stopped at Beachy Head to give the dogs a run, and we had Danny, a young German shepherd dog as well then. When the time came to leave we could not find Taffy. I knew that Taffy loved to hunt rabbits - and there were plenty of rabbits on Beachy Head then. I had to assume that he had gone over the cliff and the only way to reach the foot of the cliffs was to go back into Eastbourne and walk along when the tide was out. We walked along searching the cliff and rocks for his body, but it was not to be found. But, somehow I felt he must be there, so for three days running at every low tide we went back to search for him. I kept calling him, but with the noise of the waves pounding on the beach and the sea gulls screaming, it was useless. Come Sunday, Glad, my wife, feeling very upset, decided to have one more try. We still could not see him, but as I walked away I took one last look back and there he was one hundred feet above us on a ledge. The gulls were beginning to attack him and no doubt he was getting weak.

The cliff at this point is five hundred feet high and all I could do was to ask the police for help. The RSPCA man came with ropes and said that Taffy would have to be shot. How-ever, the police said they would try at seven o'clock next morning. My wife Glad was at Eastbourne Police Station with Margaret at six the following day just in case they had forgotten.

The following is the report in the local newspaper, the *Eastbourne Gazette*:

Reconnaissance indicated the dog could not be reached from the beach and a Sergeant volunteered to be lowered down the cliff by rescue apparatus. Walkie-talkie radio was used to guide him in his descent.

The steel cable used for the descent was some 20 feet short, and Heasman had the choice of leaving the dog to die of starvation, or to risk his life. He chose the second alternative.

He had taken a spare coil of hand-line with him. Although a strong south-westerly wind was blowing, he attached the hand-line to the cable hook and swarmed down the line to the dog.

'The dog did not give me any trouble at all, for had it done so rescue would have been impossible. I put the thumb of my right hand through the collar of the dog, and using both hands pulled myself back to the hook, dragging the dog as I went.'

On reaching the steel cable, Sergeant Heasman attached the hook to his leather harness and then was hauled to the top holding Taffy under his right arm. It was difficult to say which was the most overjoyed — Taffy, or Mr Mason and his daughter when they were re-united.

The worst part of the rescue was the descent and ascent of the 20 foot hand-line. There was no question of toe-holding, for this part of the cliff is almost perpendicular. All who witnessed the rescue could not speak too highly of the Sergeant's gallantry.

The Sergeant received a silver medal and the Queen's commendation. The next day we took Taffy to Devil's Dyke and the first thing he did was to chase the rabbits. I have never taken a dog anywhere near cliffs since and never will. Danny, the German shepherd dog, who was with us when we lost Taffy, was Margaret's, that is until she started courting, then of course Mum and Dad took over.

The end came for all of our dogs eventually, but Taffy and Danny never really left home. They are buried at the bottom of our garden.

Brandy

Now I have got Brandy. When my dear wife, failing in health, wanted a golden retriever I made sure she had one. I think this was the best thing I have done in the whole of my life. For the one year Glad lived after we got him he gave her so much pleasure during the short time left to her that I cannot thank him enough. Glad told me when I came home one day that she had fallen down in the garden and was unable to get up. She called Brandy to her. He is a strong dog and he stood firm as Glad pulled herself up on him. Without him, she could have lain there for hours. Brandy is still with me. My biggest worry is that something might happen to him.