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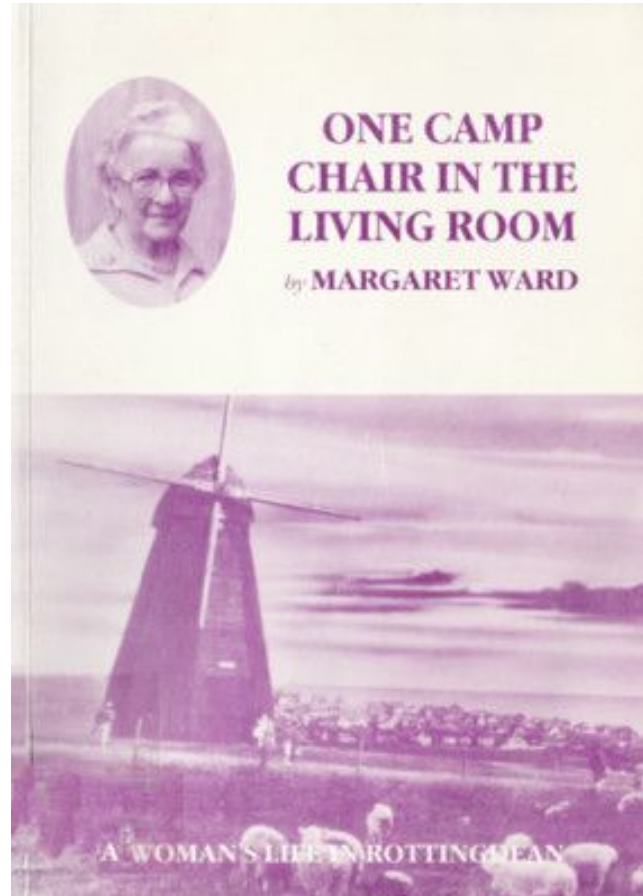
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About this book

Born in 1916, Margaret Ward describes her life as a 'winding lane' because of the many twists and turns it has taken. Her autobiography describes her childhood in Rottingdean, growing up amongst a loving family in the picturesque Sussex seaside village.

Her autobiography brings alive a rural childhood in the aftermath of World War One, with its privations, colourful characters and sense of community, through her adolescence and working life from the age of 14, though the Second World War, a marriage where she suffered domestic abuse, to her eventual retirement. Margaret recounts with raw honesty the good and bad times that she experienced, painting a picture of changing times in this fascinating memoir.

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ONE CAMP CHAIR IN THE LIVING ROOM

A Woman's Life in Rottingdean

by Margaret Ward.

Dedicated to my Dear Mother

My Parents

Having dedicated this to my dear mother, it seems appropriate to tell you first of all a little about her. She was born on 24th July 1884, at Tonbridge, Kent, and had six brothers and two sisters. One sister, named Lucy, died at four years of age. The other was named Alice. One of her brothers, named Percy, was killed in the first world war. Another, named Alfred, went to live in Toronto, Canada. The others were named Arthur, Herbert, Sidney and Fred.

My mother and I enjoyed a very close relationship. We were so happy that I never remember having a wry word with her. My daughter once said to me that she hoped we would share the same happiness together as I had done with her granny, and I'm pleased to say that this has always been so.

My mother came to Rottingdean as assistant matron at Rottingdean Preparatory School, which was pulled down when the Rotyngs Estate was built. She loved the school and told me that she used to bath Mr Hyslop (who in later years became joint owner with Mr Webster,) when he was a boy.

My mother and father were married on 28th December, 1912, at the Tonbridge Parish church. They spent the first years of their married life at the coastguard cottages at Saltdean.

Father was born on 14th November, 1886, in a small cottage at the west end of the Elms garden, which was bought in 1984 by the Rottingdean Preservation Society, for the use of the villagers.

Father had two sisters named Alice and Ethel, and one brother named Richard. The family later moved to a cottage called The Mascot, opposite the old flint school in the village. All the cottages have now been pulled down, but they were there when I was at school. My father once told me, that when he was a lad he was sitting in The Mascot all alone, when suddenly he heard a bumping sound and on looking up saw an old-fashioned wicker invalid chair come bumping down the stairs with a man sitting in it. When it got to the bottom, lo and behold it went straight through the wall. Since he told me this I have always believed in ghosts as I know my father would never tell a lie. He was a very sincere man.

Father was a true Rottingdean man, since his ancestors had lived there for centuries. Before he passed away he was known as 'The Grand Old Man of Rottingdean.' I was always very proud of him. His mother's family came over from Spain in a small boat and landed on the Isle of Wight. She was called Elizabeth and had one sister named Annie and three brothers named Charles, Fred and Bill. I tremble when I remember the picture of her father. He looked very stern with long straight hair - in fact a typical sailor of that period.

Nowhere in the World is there such a Lovely Place

I was born on the 3rd of October, 1916, at number 4, Court Ord Cottages, which was one of a row of eight nestling under Beacon Hill in Rottingdean. From here we could see the gaunt black windmill, which has always been the main feature of the village.

The house belonged to Squire Brown who lived at Challoners and was a farmer. He owned three of the cottages, numbers 4, 5 and 6. He preferred his workmen to live in them, and my grandfather was one of his thatchers. At the age of three we moved to number three, where I stayed until 1942.

Oddly enough, although I am a true Rottingdeaner and very proud of it, my first recollection is of a day at Tonbridge. The family were seated around a large dinner table at my Granny's house, 28, Hawden Road. I remember Granny Bristow standing at the head of the table, dressed in a high-necked black dress on which she wore a white bibbed apron. She was serving vegetables from an ornate white vegetable dish, and when I later described this to my mother she said she remembered it very well. I must have been three years old at the time, as Granny was taken ill soon after, with a very long and painful illness.

Grandad Bristow had died previously, as when he was younger he was struck by lightning and for the remainder of his life suffered from creeping paralysis. Granny had to work hard as a midwife, bringing many babies into the world for little or no payment. She often walked over fields in the middle of the night to attend a birth. She died just after my fourth birthday. I remember very plainly driving from Tunbridge Wells station to Tonbridge in a covered-in horsedrawn carriage which, I believe, seated four people. The carriage was lined with dark green material and studded. There were no trains or buses on the route in those days.

I have a sister who is nearly three years older than myself. Her name is Christine, and this name was chosen for her by Lady flume-Jones. My own name Margaret, is of course, the same as our village church, where I was christened, confirmed and married. It is a little church that I love so much and in which I always have a wonderful feeling of peace. I can never pray with the same feeling in any other. To me it is a very special place. My mother and father are laid to rest in the churchyard together with my ancestors, both the Whale and Snudden side of the family.

When Father left school at the age of twelve, he went to work as gardener/houseboy for Mr Thacker at Norton House, which is next to the church and Colonel Phillips at Hillside. He then carried on working for the Beerbohm-Tree family at Hillside. Then he worked as under gardener for Sir Edward Carson with his uncle Edmund, who was head gardener. After this he served his apprenticeship at a large house at Esher.

When he returned home again he went to Sir George and Lady Lewis at the Grange, which is now the Rottingdean library. Then he went to Sir William Nicholson the artist, who was living in the house vacated by Sir Edward and Lady Burne Jones. When we were children, we had all the toys which were discarded by the Nicholson family. I remember a beautiful full size rocking horse and a large doll's house.

When Admiral Clarke came to live at Hillside with his sister-in-law, Miss Nellie Moens, who acted as housekeeper, father went back there to work, and we were allowed to play there. Our favourite place was the gazebo which stood at the top of a flight of steps and was originally built as a lookout for the stage-coach. We ate fresh fruit picked from the trees and hushes; figs, pears, apples, mulberries, peaches, gooseberries, and red and black currants. Father kept the garden immaculate and it was very much admired.

We called the cook Auntie Mary. She gave us lots of tasty food left over from the dining room. There were other servants in the house, who used to play with us. The house was very large and had one room with a huge oven, called the bakehouse, next to the kitchen. Admiral Clarke used to enjoy seeing us playing. He was a fine man and I always remember he had his own pew in church as did some of the other rich families. But they always treated us on a level with themselves and were very kind and friendly.

Squire Brown, who was a J.P. and lived at Challoners when it was just one large house opposite the bowling green, was also a very kind man, and allowed the villagers to use his beautiful large garden for fetes for the Scouts, Guides and Brownies, and we used to end the day singing all the good old songs. We also had an International Camp on Beacon Hill every year, and in the evenings sang songs round the camp fire.

From an early age my sister and I had a plot of garden each at the back of the cottage. Father started us off with two rose bushes each and from then on taught us how to grow seeds and plants in their different seasons. This is probably why I love gardening so much now. I invariably whistled while working in my garden and Granny used to come out and say, 'A whistling woman and a crowing hen, is neither good for God nor men.' This did not deter me and the same thing happened practically every time. I would not give in and neither would she. Granny often quoted little sayings and usually prefixed them with, 'As Mr Asquith used to say.'

Apart from the cottage garden father also had an allotment on the east side of Beacon Hill, just below the windmill. He was well known for growing vegetables of a high standard, and took many first prizes at flower shows, both in Rottingdean and at the Corn Exchange in Brighton. He thought nothing of carrying a sack of potatoes on his

back from the allotment home to Court Ord. Sometimes Mother would ask me to run upstairs in the early evening to see if Father was on the allotment. We could see it plainly from one of the top bedroom windows. It was not until many years later that I suddenly realised that if he was not there he would be round at the Plough having a well-earned pint of beer, and that was her way of finding out.

We always had our hair washed on a Friday evening and it took a long time to dry as it was so long. Mine was extra thick so father always dried it. I used to stand between his knees, and he rubbed it vigorously with a thick towel. These little things formed a great personal tie between us. On Saturday evenings he always went down to the Plough. That was his evening off while we had our baths.

When our meals were laid, nothing apart from food was allowed to be placed on the table. If Mother ever found anything out of place we were in trouble. At the beginning and end of each meal we had to say Grace. The first one was. 'For what I am about to receive, may the Lord make me truly thankful, Amen.' After the meal we had to say, 'Thank God for my good dinner, please may I get down.' This, of course, depended on which meal it was.

Not only did we have to do this at home, but at school when morning session was over we said, 'Be present at our table Lord, be here and everywhere adored.' On our return in the afternoon we sang, 'We thank the Lord for this our food. For life and health and all that's good.' Children don't appear to say Grace anymore. Perhaps we were fortunate.

When Father was rearing little baby chicks, Mother used to chop up hardboiled egg and breadcrumbs for their feed. When I was very young she noticed that I was helping myself to this, so she always had to make some extra for me. The little chicks were like tiny balls of fluff, and we spent a lot of our time just watching them. They had a small ramp to walk up to their coop, and quite often tumbled off and had difficulty in getting up.

During the early twenties, radio came into our lives. The first one I saw and heard belonged to Mr John Copper who lived at No 6, Court Ord. It was one mass of wires. It was an exciting day when he invited us to listen to the Oxford and Cambridge boat race. It almost seemed like a miracle. We had always been very interested in the race and some of us represented Oxford and some Cambridge. We used to buy something dark or light blue to wear on the day.

After a while Father bought a radio. It took up a lot of space in our small room. It needed an accumulator to make it work, and had to be filled with distilled water regularly. We had to take it to the village to be recharged. It was as much as we could manage to carry. We also had a gramophone which had a huge horn shaped speaker. This took up a lot of room too. Most of the records were of military bands.

In those days all the streets were lit with gas lamps and in the early evening we would see Mr Hilton come up the road with his long pole to light them. He had to come round again in the morning to put them out and must have walked miles in a day, but always appeared to be cheerful.

The seasons of the year were marked by the church calendar. First came Mothering Sunday. We walked up to Happy Valley in Woodingdean on the Saturday to pick a bunch of blue, pink and white violets to give Mother on Sunday. She was more pleased with these than all the flowers that are bought today to mark the occasion. Mother came to church with us on these special days, as there was always a family service at 3pm. The next was Easter Sunday, when the lovely Easter hymns were sung. The one I remember most of all is, 'There is a green hill far away.' We had lots of Easter Eggs too, as there were so many relations to remember us.

Then came Harvest Festival, when we took a bunch of Michaelmas Daisies and a basket of fruit up to the altar. A lot of trouble was taken to present a lovely basket. Mother used to get two mushroom baskets from the greengrocer and we were sent down to Mrs Godden at Challoner's Cottages to ask, 'Please may we have some of your Virginia Creeper to line our Harvest Baskets?' These leaves were different shades of red and grew from top to bottom of her front wall; father helped us set them round inside the oranges, bananas and grapes. When Christmas came, we had a Carol Service and took toys to Church and laid them at the altar. This was always held on the Sunday before Christmas Day.

I'm afraid we were not always exemplary in our ways and did quite a lot of naughty things of which our parents were unaware. For instance, when the light began to fade we used to make up a parcel and tie a long string round it and put it on the road. When someone bent down to pick it up, we pulled the string and ran from our hiding place round the corner. We also tied the door knockers together down the High Street, and knocked one door. Of course, once a door was opened, they all went one after the other.

At the age of ten I fell ill with T.B. which was a killer disease in those days. But after four weeks in bed and three months away from school I pulled through. How well I remember Father sitting night after night on the top step of the first flight of stairs, which was just outside my bedroom door. I could sometimes hear him crying. This was a very traumatic period in my life. Apparently, everyone thought I was going to die, and I thought so too. I was so ill and lost so much weight that when I eventually was allowed out of bed, even to stand was a difficulty. Mother and Father bought me a doll's pram on which to lean to help me walk. I already had a beautiful large china doll named Pam and a little rag doll called Betty, which accompanied me everywhere from my very early childhood, and was always my favourite.

When I was recovering I well remember writing little prayers of thanks because I knew I

had been very near to dying. However, to everyone's surprise including my own, I went back to school and came top of the class at the end of term. I then went on to pass the Scholarship to the Intermediate School in Brighton. I remember sitting for that examination in a strange classroom. It was an atmosphere you could cut with a knife. I tried so hard, and was so excited to have passed. But although the headmaster implored my parents, they would not allow me to accept it. I was also offered employment at the local Post Office but they would not let me go there either. Instead they chose to send me out to do housework. I was most unhappy. I can't understand why they stopped me taking advantage of the scholarship, unless it was under the influence of my grandmother, who always dictated what we should do or not do. She would not have liked to see one of us do better than the other.

Soon after this I joined the church choir and enjoyed this very much. At last I found out what the noise was that I had heard during my childhood when the sermon was taking place. To my surprise it was Uncle Joe Brooker winding his large pocket watch, which he wound without fail every Sunday at the same time when the choir was at the back of the church. I also found out that the organ would not work, however clever the organist, without a boy at the back of it pumping the bellows.

When we were children we used to go to Sunday School at 10am and then on to church at 11am. When I was very young our Sunday School teacher used to sit me on her lap for the church service. Her name was Miss Crookenden, and she did an enormous amount to help the villagers. (She was also an aunt of Sir Laurence Olivier). On Sunday afternoons we went back to Sunday School at 2.30pm, after which Mother and Father would meet us if the weather was fine and take us for a walk. Father would wear his best suit and carry a very fine polished walking stick. Mother was always in her best clothes as we were. We only wore them on Sundays and special occasions.

Sometimes they took us over the hills if it was not muddy. We would go up 'Breaky's Bottom', behind New Barn Farm, between the hills and then onto 'Honeysucks' at the top of the hill. On the horizon there were lovely gorse bushes which smelled so beautiful when in bloom. Our other favourite walk was up the Falmer Road and over into Ovingdean village, where we stopped to look at the cottage gardens. Father would explain to us about the flowers and shrubs, as he was a professional gardener, having served his apprenticeship at a large house in Esher, Surrey.

In the early thirties the bungalows in Eley Drive and Eley Crescent were built, so it was necessary to have a road leading to them from Falmer Road. This was called Court Ord Road. Before this there was just a rough grassy track leading to an old wooden shack and a field of marguerites, poppies and pink and blue cornflowers. In the old shack lived Jurry Murrell and her husband. She kept a small sweet shop, with sherbet dabs and liquorice shoe laces. In her bottles of sweets were usually some dead flies. We were told never to buy sweets from her, but quite often that would be where our Saturday pennies would go.

Old Jury Murrell's husband kept a small farm with cows, pigs and free range chickens. We used to play on the farm. In the late twenties we had an epidemic of foot and mouth disease in the district and poor Mr Murrell lost everything. I can remember the authorities making what they called a cow pie. This was a very large hole which was dug in the ground. All the cows were killed and put into it and burned. Then it was tilled with earth. The stench stayed for a long time. Being so fond of animals, we all cried.

After the farm had to go, in 1930, the Brighton Council built a housing estate on this piece of land. The two roads were called Court Farm Road and New Barn Road. These houses were built especially for Rottingdean people. It was an idea put forward by Miss Crookenden, who was a councillor at the time.

When we were children there was no electricity in the cottages, and no main drainage. In the back room we had a gas jet above the mantleshelf. This was on a short bracket protruding from the wall. Inside the globe was a fragile gas mantle, which would break at the slightest touch. We would then be sent to the village to buy another one which we guarded with our lives so that it didn't get broken. The only lights we had in the sitting room were two very nice oil lamps. Upstairs there were candles in old fashioned candlesticks, which must have been very dangerous.

An old earth bucket was the order of the day for the outside toilet. The men had to dig holes and bury the contents in a plantation on the plot of ground above the cottages in what is now the grounds of the chapel.

The only means of cooking was on a blacklead kitchen range in the back room. This had an open coal fire on which a kettle always stood to supply a small amount of hot water. I remember coming in from school on a cold day to the sound of the kettle singing. On the left hand side of the fire was the oven with the hobs on top for the saucepans. It has always amazed me how mother turned out such beautiful cakes and pastry when she had no way to test the heat of the oven. Although she had very little money, we always had tasty meals.

When Mother had her first gas cooker installed in the scullery, it made life a great deal easier, although we were all a little apprehensive of it at first. Shortly before I left school, electricity and main drainage were laid onto the cottages. What a transformation these things made to our lives.

Our only means of bathing had been in a zinc bath in front of the kitchen fire. This bath was filled with hot water from the saucepans. Behind the back room, which we called the kitchen, was the scullery. This had a concrete floor and contained a stone sink with brass taps which were always kept shining.

There was also the old-fashioned copper under which mother had to light a fire. In this copper the washing was boiled. In those days all the bed linen and towels were white.

These had to go through the mangle when they were dry. As we didn't have a mangle, mother had to use Granny's, which was in her scullery next door. We would often hear her churning away at it long after we were in bed. It was a huge thing with very large rollers and it made a terrible noise as it stood on the concrete floor. Underneath the mangle Granny kept a large sack of sharps, and another of corn to feed the chickens. If I got half a chance, I used to pinch a handful of sharps to eat. These were like coarse bran, and I was very partial to them.

We were extremely fortunate to have such a happy home. Mother and Father adored each other and this overflowed into affection for us. When we were quite young, and when they could least afford it, they bought a piano. It must have been a struggle for them to pay for weekly piano lessons for us, first with Miss Ellis and then with Mr Collins the church organist. My sister didn't like it from the start, but I enjoyed it a great deal. I used to spend many happy hours playing, and quite a lot of money went on music in my teenage days. Our father was very fond of music and used to know the classics well. He could always name the composers. He used to play in the village band as a young man. He also had a beautiful tenor voice and was always singing around the house. The song I remember him singing more than any other is, *The Rose of Tralee*. It brings tears to my eyes when I hear it.

Christmas was a memorable time. For years the family gathered in our house on Christmas Day. On Boxing Day we all stayed next door with Granny and Grandad. They had an organ which you had to keep going with your feet. Aunt Alice played this while we sang the old carols. Grandad had a very good voice, a little lower than my father's and every year they would sing *The Holy City*. Granny and Grandad also had a fine musical box which was made of highly polished wood and played large metal discs edged with jagged teeth. This was always kept under the large armchair in the sitting room, hidden from sight by the flounce on the chair. It was a special treat for us to be able to take it out, since the magic sound of it was really beautiful.

Unfortunately, in later years, Grandad developed asthma and was confined to the sitting room. He was such a dear old gentleman; we felt very privileged to be allowed to spend a little time with him. When I was a tiny girl, Granny had her own mother, Great Granny Snudden, living in the small back bedroom, and she used to throw a small screw of paper to us from her bedroom window. In this would be a few black and white peppermints.

At the front of the cottages where Meadow Close stands was a beautiful hay field called Gorham's Field. It stretched from the bottom of Beacon Hill to Falmer Road, where it was bounded by a lovely hawthorn hedge. In the spring this would be white with May blossom, and the scent was gorgeous. There was just one gate through which the farmers could bring their wagons.

When it was haymaking time all the mothers from the cottages would bring our tea into this field, and we would sit in the hay like one big family party with the old brown teapots

on the go. The hay used to smell lovely, and we could see our pretty cottage gardens in the background. Then, when the hay had been lying there long enough to dry off, the men would come along with their pitchforks and toss it up into the wagons. We would ride with them and have a great time.

In those days the Falmer Road was not as we know it today. There was no pavement and, of course, very little traffic. There were mostly horses and carts, and we could stretch our long skipping ropes across the width of the road and skip for a very long time without interruption. At intervals during the summer the water cart would come along and spray the road to keep the dust down.

There were very few houses between St Mary's Home and the village. St Mary's was built in the early 1900's, and was a reform school for girls. They used to walk out in a crocodile in pairs, and wore striped dresses. It was run by Protestant nuns and we knew most of them well as they often took us into the lovely chapel which unfortunately no longer exists. Now and then the girls would go over the wall, and I don't blame them as the home was a very cheerless place. Outside it was a magnificent red brick building, which quite disguised the cold stone walls of the interior.

Opposite St Mary's were two chicken farms. The smaller one belonged to Mr Nicholls and the lower one to Mr Mellor, who lived there with his three nieces. It was bordered on the west side by Rowan Way and a high hedge, and on the south side by the council estate. There was no twitten then. There were no more houses down Falmer Road on the right-hand side until Downs Cot and Lathkil. Then on the corner of Court Ord Road, stood the house now called Jasmine Cottage, which was renamed Channel Villa. All the front of this house was completely burned out when I was a schoolgirl. This happened during the night and I watched it from my bedroom window at the back of the cottages.

I awoke in the night to hear a man's voice calling, 'Women and wives, have you no men? Our house is on fire and they are trapped in the bedroom!' Of course he meant his wife and daughter. Everyone jumped out of bed and there was a man running up and down at the rear of the cottages. He was dressed only in pyjamas and had got out with knotted sheets. The men all rushed round there and we could see the front of the house alight. Flames were leaping out bright red against the night sky and shooting across the road, burning down the telephone wires. The men helped the two women climb down the knotted sheets at the back of the house. They were unhurt but very shocked. Apparently they had gone to bed leaving clothes airing round an open fire in the front sitting room. A fireman was kept on duty for a long time afterwards to make sure it did not break out again. The smell of burning stayed with us for quite a while.

After passing Court Ord, which was then known as Klondyke, the next two cottages were Balsway which are flint and semi-detached. They are now Bowring and Honey Cottage. There were no more buildings until Rottingdean Preparatory School. The two entrances to this were in Falmer Road. But we called this small incline Parkers Hill. On the left hand side of the road there were no buildings except New Barn Farm, where

there was a dew pond from St Mary's until Bazehill Road.

Opposite the bottom of Bazehill Road were Challoners Cottages which belonged to Squire Brown, and Northgate Cottages, which belonged to one of the other farmers. These were all tied cottages. There were only two or three houses in Bazehill Road, including a very large one in which Sir Edward Carson lived, who later became Lord Carson and was the instigator of all the trouble in Ireland. My father knew him very well. I once asked him what type of man he really was. He told me he was very tall and exactly like Ian Paisley.

In the late twenties and early thirties many farm buildings were converted into dwellings, such as 'Little Barn', and Squash Cottage. Tudor Close was a very large farm complex and I remember going into it and listening to the owls hooting in the evenings. This was transformed into a luxury hotel where stage and film personalities came in their rest periods. It was later changed into flats.

'Squash Court' was built to serve the Boys' school known as 'Down House', halfway up Doctor's Hill. This is the hill where Falmer Road divides. One road goes round by the church and the other, Doctor's Hill, down to the Hog Platt and into the village. There were cowsheds where the bowling green is now and we used to watch the milking going on. It was there that I first saw a calf born. I was very young at the time and will never forget the little animal getting to its feet and staggering around almost immediately. It was a wonderful moment.

Since those days more farm buildings have been converted and we have lost our cows and sheep from the village, which has changed the whole atmosphere. There used to be sheep all over the downs with shepherds watching them. One was named Arthur Moppett, whom we could hear long before seeing, as he was always playing his mouth organ.

My father was a founder member of the Bowling Club with three other men, Mr Murfield, Mr Newman and Mr Carney. It is now a flourishing club. Mother used to go to do the teas, and they spent many happy hours together there.

Once a year in the summer we had a flower show. This was held in St Aubyn's, another Boys' school in the village. The produce was displayed in the gymnasium and we had sports on the playing fields. There were all kinds of races, and other games like, 'tip the bucket'; pillow fights between two people balancing on a horizontal pole; a greasy pole with a leg of mutton on top, and a brass band played all day and there were cups of tea and ice creams from the pavilion.

In the evening there was a 'Dutch Auction', where my father always bought my sister and me a specimen rose. What a day that used to be. At Christmas there was always an Old Folks' tea-party and entertainment, and for the young folks the same. We always came home with an apple, an orange and a few sweets. These parties were held in the

school room.

I started going to school after my fourth birthday. We had to walk down in the morning, back home to dinner, and down and back again in the afternoon. We had to do that in all weathers as there were no buses then. The children from Woodingdean had to walk and also had to bring food for midday with them. But those living in Ovingdean had transport, which was Taylor's covered horsedrawn cart.

We had a Sunday School outing each summer. Char-a-bancs would take us either to Hassocks, Burgess Hill or Bramber to a children's playground. There were all kinds of things for us to do, such as swings, swing boats, roundabouts and donkey rides. We were also given a very good tea, usually in a large wooden building. Our highlight of the day was choosing a present to take home for our parents. This generally was a piece of crested china which cost about sixpence of our treasured pocket money. It is now known as 'Goss China' and is quite expensive as each piece is a collector's item.

We were also given an outing each summer by the landlady of the Royal Oak Public House. This outing took the same form as the others, though we thought we had been miles, as even going to Brighton was a treat which only happened about three times a year. In the autumn Mother and Father took us to the Chrysanthemum Show at the Corn Exchange. We would finish the evening sitting among the beautiful blooms and listening to the military band. Then at Christmas we were taken to Soper's Bazaar at the top of North Street to see Father Christmas and receive a small gift, and on to Lyons to tea. Sopers was a large store at the top of North Street.

Our schooldays were very happy. We had an extremely conscientious headmaster, who really took a pride in the school and did everything possible to help us. He lived with his wife and two young sons in the schoolhouse. His name was Mr Taylor and he was the instigator of our school uniforms. These were brown with a touch of yellow and were very smart.

We had sport on one afternoon each week. The girls played netball and stoolball, and the boys played football and cricket. We used to carry all the gear such as posts, bats and balls up to the field. This is now the village cricket club almost opposite the Rotyngs.

On Mayday we had a maypole on the village green, and the girls wore white dresses and carried garlands of flowers. One of the girls was dressed as May Queen. Also in May, Empire Day was celebrated. The whole school assembled in the playground and sang songs of 'The Empire', with the Union Jack flying above us. Of course, it wasn't just a day to celebrate; we were taught about the Empire in our geography lessons, which is what made it so special.

At Christmas we put on an operetta, with children from each class taking part. This was held in St Aubyn's gymnasium and was most enjoyable. We tramped all round the village selling tickets and the room was always packed with people, which was most

encouraging.

If we misbehaved at school we had to take our punishment. The boys had the 'cat o four tails', which was four throngs of leather joined together at one end, and the girls had the cane which was administered by Miss French. I remember her very well as the end of her nose used to twitch. When we knew someone was due for the cane we used to break it in half and hide it behind the needlework cupboard. At one time they decided to decorate the interior of the school and this cupboard was moved. There were all the broken canes! That caused a few laughs. We didn't escape the cane punishment, however, as we were always sent down to old Nell Tuppen's shop to buy another one and believe me she always had a good supply.

As we grew older father's sisters married and we went to stay with them for part of the summer holiday. Aunt Alice lived in Earlswood and Aunt Ethel lived in Bolney. This was my favourite holiday because she lived in a Lodge on the edge of the woods and we used to walk through the wood first thing in the morning to fetch the milk from the farm.

My granny and my father used to tell me that when he was a young man the houses surrounding the village green were occupied by notable people, and that Granny was friendly with them all. 'The Elms' was the home of Rudyard Kipling and his family and she often went to tea with them. Our family are in possession of a vase which we call the Kipling Vase. Then there was Sir Edward Burne-Jones, the great painter, and his wife, Lady Burne-Jones, who was Rudyard Kipling's aunt and a very special friend of Granny. They lived first in Prospect House and then bought Aubrey Cottage and made the two into one. Sir William Nicholson occupied The Grange, and the Beerbohm-Tree family were at Hillside. The Risdale family at The Dene were great friends of granny, and when one of the daughters named Lucy married Stanley Baldwin, Aunt Alice and Aunt Ethel were flower girls at their wedding at the village church. Stanley Baldwin went on to become Prime Minister. He was a cousin of Rudyard Kipling. Lady Baldwin had a brother named Julian, and whenever he came back to the village he always visited Granny. I remember him well and always enjoyed his visits. But more than this I fell in love with his name and always said that if I had a son I would like to call him Julian. So, with the agreement of my husband our son was named after Lady Baldwin's brother Julian.

There were some lovable characters in the village when I was young. For instance I mentioned Nell Tuppen whose shop was situated in the centre of the High Street between St Aubyn's school and Tallboy's. It is now converted into two shops; one a haberdashery and the other an eating house.

Nell Tuppen turned night into day and walked the Downs at night always dressed in long black clothing and a bonnet, carrying a walking stick. She spent the daytime in bed above the shop where she lived. If anyone made any undue noise in the shop you would hear the tap tap of the walking stick on the ceiling, which meant keep quiet. She sold everything in the shop; newspapers, pottery, pictures and postcards; ornate paper parasols. These were in beautiful colours and everyone had one.

Other old characters were Crowy Mockford the greengrocer, and Ferny Hoad the baker. Christmas and Kingdom occupied the dairy at the corner of Park Road. One was as tall as the other was short. Ernie Stenning had the blacksmith's forge opposite the Plough Inn, and Harry Hilder was the other baker whose shop was up a flight of steps next door to the Black Horse Inn. His brother, Bill Hilder, owned and lived at Whipping Post House, where he had a butcher's shop and slaughterhouse. I used to go down there with Mother on Saturday evenings at eight o'clock to buy the Sunday joint. The floor was always covered with sawdust. We would then go on to get the rest of the weekend shopping as no shops closed until nine o'clock or even later.

Cruse's was our grocer's and everything had to be weighed up and put into stout blue paper bags, which they made themselves from a square piece of paper, screwing them in such a way as to make a cone, with a twist of the hand to make the bottom secure. which always intrigued me. We had one sixpennyworth of biscuits which had to last the week. But we could also buy a pennyworth of broken biscuits, as they were packed in tins and sometimes got broken in being removed. The butter had to be patted up, also while you waited.

There was another grocer named Richardson where the Westminster Bank is now, and his niece had a haberdashery shop lower down the High Street, which she kept with her friend Miss Dabney. Lloyd's Bank building was a tea room run by Mr and Mrs Thomas and at the back of it was a tennis court which they kindly allowed us to use for our tennis club. We formed this club when I was about seventeen.

We also had a Girls' Club and a Hockey Club. I was on the committee of these and enjoyed them all. When our daughter Angela became old enough she joined the Girls' Club. By this time the leadership had been taken over from Miss Ellis by Miss Violet Wootten. They were both very good friends to all the girls and worked hard for the club.

Another old character we all loved was Old Charlie. He was always to be found at the White Horse Hotel, where the buses turned the corner into the High Street. Charlie had shoulder length white hair and always carried a white rat on his shoulder. He often recited Shakespeare and the passengers used to throw money to him from the top of the bus.

Another old fellow we all knew well was the verger, Butty Bowles, who lived where the Co-Op butcher's shop is now, next door to the old Post Office which was run by a lady named Mrs Bowles. Butty Bowles jumped over the cliff and committed suicide. This was a tragedy to everyone who knew him.

Then there was our school caretaker named Pompey. He was a very big man and all the schoolchildren loved and respected him. He took a great pride in the school and kept it immaculate.

There is another character I must mention and that is Shamrock Titchener. He was responsible for the beach and was very dedicated to his job. He was most particular with the deckchairs, and bathing huts could only be erected where and when he gave his permission. The beach was all sand on the right hand side of the slipway, and rocks on the left where we went to get winkles and prawns.

On summer days we spent a good deal of our time on the beach, swimming, prawning and winking. Mother used to meet us from school and we would have a picnic tea down there. There was once a tidal wave. The tide was very low at the time, and as the sky grew darker, forming a straight line above, the wave came right up to the foot of the cliff and up the slipway to the main road. Everyone ran and left their possessions on the beach. Thankfully, no-one was drowned. It was an eerie sight. I must have been about thirteen years of age at the time and was very apprehensive for a long while after.

The slipway led from the road down to the beach itself and was extremely slippery with green seaweed at the bottom where the sea washed over it. At the top were about four fishermen's huts where they used to mend their nets and keep their boats and tackle. They could slide their boats straight down the slipway into the sea. Granny's brother was a lobster fisherman. He was always there with his lobster pots.

We lost the sand in the 1930's when the undercliff walk and the large concrete groynes were built from Saltdean to Black Rock. Before this the groynes were made of wood and looked much nicer. There were also caves in the cliffs which led up to the cellars of various houses in the village. We were told not to go into these caves, but needless to say we did.

On the cliffs to the west of the White Horse Hotel was a large house which gradually crumbled into the sea. At the front of the White Horse was a wooden hut called 'The Mast Head'.

This was where the village dances were held and where I first started dancing. The present village hall was built in 1935 and was opened by George Robey, who used to live in the village. This was preceded by dances and most social gatherings were held there.

The first dance I remember there was to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George the Fifth and Queen Mary. It began with a torchlight procession from the sea front up the High Street, round the pond and up the Hog Platt to the windmill, where there was a large bonfire. Hence the name Beacon Hill. A beacon was always lit there to celebrate any special occasion, and the torches, reflected in the pond, always looked spectacular.

We also had a dance at Christmas known as the Dickens Dance, which was by invitation only. It was put on by Mr Lang who owned St Aubyn's school. It was held in the gymnasium and everyone had to wear Dickensian costume which we used to hire.

All the old dances came into their own, such as Sir Roger de Coverly, and the Minuet. During the evening we all retired to the huge kitchen for a meal, after which there was always a very large iced cake.

I cannot finish writing these memoirs without mentioning the day in 1928, when Brighton took over Rottingdean and some surrounding districts. We were all given large sticks with which we beat the bounds, having to walk all round the local hills. This is an old country custom to keep the imaginary line which separates the old parish boundaries. We ended up in the evening with very tired and sore feet.

I shall never know how Mother managed to do everything and have so much time for us, as she went out to work six mornings each week all year round, and let rooms with bed, breakfast and evening meal periodically throughout the summer months. Father also worked hard with his allotment from which he sold vegetables, and his chickens which he kept in Hillside Barn and yard by kind permission of Admiral Clarke where he was a gardener for years. He sold chickens for the table and beautiful eggs by the dozen. We could always have eggs for tea, and they were such a lovely flavour.

I shall always be thankful I was born in this peaceful, pretty village. I'm sure that nowhere in the world is there such a lovely place and I feel privileged to have spent my life here.

Growing up

When I reached the age of fourteen and left school, all the childhood games took second place. I suppose, without realising it I was growing into a young woman. We pestered the life out of father to let us have our hair cut, as all the young women were having bobs, shingles and semi-shingles. At last, he could stand it no longer and said, 'Oh, go on then.' We were down to the village in no time and came back minus our lovely hair. He was most upset but the deed was done.

It was at this time that I started using make-up. I remember meeting the grocery boy coming out of granny's house one day. He said, 'Do you know what your gran has just said? Why does she put all that muck on her face? She looks better without it.' I wore 'Tangee' lipstick, and when you put it on, it changed colour to suit your colouring. The boys all called me the Tangee Queen.

It was at the tender age of fifteen that I first fell in love. A young man named John Brooker, who was seventeen, came from Plumpton Agricultural College to study chicken farming at one of the local farms. He became my Granny's lodger for a year. It was love at first sight for both of us. He was dark, handsome, and had lovely brown eyes. He also had a charming voice. I was completely bowled over. When he asked me to go for a walk one evening, it seemed like a dream come true. We went up onto Beacon Hill and then down into the copse. There was a huge moon shining through the trees. His arms went round me and then he gave me a long lingering kiss. This was my

first experience of anything like this and my heart was singing. After a day or so he asked father if we could walk out together. The answer was a firm, 'No.' I remember running upstairs and crying for a long time as if my heart would break. However, we were allowed to play cards together in Granny's kitchen. I was often in there but we were never alone together. The last I heard of him was in 1940, when he was a bomber pilot and posted missing, believed killed, over Germany.

Blackleading and Backless Evening Dresses

During this time I started to do the dreaded housework. The first job was for three elderly ladies at five shillings a week. This lasted for a year, until one of them died, and they had to make other arrangements. After this I was recommended to a Mr and Mrs Ramsden, who lived in Marine Parade, Rottingdean. They were very kind. He had lost his first wife and married his housekeeper. She taught me how to cook and do the housework. They had many dishes which I had never tasted before, such as halibut and turbot. These, of course, were beyond my mother's purse.

The housework was very hard. One of my tasks was to blacklead the boiler in the kitchen. Another was to hearthstone the back steps. There were no helpful gadgets at that time. Everything was done on hands and knees. Work started at 5am and finished around 4pm. I had to cook for the Ramsdens, so breakfast and dinner were included. The washing and ironing were left to me.

The washing was done with a large bar of yellow soap, soda, and a 'blue bag' to keep the whites white. The clothing did not go through the mangle but was ironed. This was done by using two flat irons in turn, heating them either against the bars of the kitchen grate or on the gas stove. When the iron wouldn't run smoothly, we rubbed it on a piece of yellow soap and then on the doormat.

I particularly remember one day, when I was brushing the carpet with a stiff brush. I was so tired, I sat in the middle of the lounge floor and thought, 'I can do no more.' But after a while I got up and carried on because I knew I had to. I was about fifteen at the time.

After about two years Mrs Ramsden suffered a massive stroke, which necessitated a resident nurse. The woman who came was very kind and insisted on invalid cooking for the patient. This she taught me as I had no idea how to do it. I also took over the housekeeping and shopping. Mr Ramsden handed out the money and never asked for confirmation as to how it was spent.

It was very nice to be trusted. I still have the letter he wrote to my parents giving me a good character reference.

My next situation, when I was seventeen, was on the Rottingdean Heights, where I cooked and kept house for a Miss Bacon. She kept a high-class bookshop opposite the White Horse Hotel. She lived in a Tudor-style house with her invalid father, and my

duties included looking after him as well. Here I earned £1 per week rising to 25/-. However, during those teenage years life was not all work. I had some very good friends and there was plenty of social activity. A dozen of us got together and formed a social club which we called, 'The Endous Club'. This was named after the cottage in which Bob Copper lived because it was his idea to start the club. We used to meet in a little cottage named Satis House, at the bottom of West Street, in which Eric and Ina lived with their widowed mother. Three of the boys formed a musical trio. Bob had a bassoon, Les played the piano and Eric strummed the guitar. For a while Eric was my boyfriend, though this did not last. The same thing happened with Les. I suppose it was inevitable really, as we were together so often and held lots of parties.

We often went to dances together. We thought nothing of walking to the Peacehaven Hotel wearing very long backless evening dresses and carrying our evening shoes. If we were lucky, one of the boys would manage to get his father's car, and after the dance we would all pile in and go up to Brighton Station for hot chestnuts and coffee.

In those days I had one very special friend called Joyce Stevens. We went everywhere together and enjoyed some lovely holidays. Joyce has now married and changed her name to Davey. Sadly, we don't meet very often now.

I met my future husband, Jack, at a Tennis Club party. We were engaged on Christmas Day 1936. I gave him a gold signet ring, he gave me a very pretty ring which was a solitaire diamond, set with smaller diamonds. How proud I felt wearing it. All my friends used to admire it and tell me how lucky I was to have such a handsome fiancé. He suggested we had a secret code which we said to each other when in company. We used the numbers 9.12.25, which were equivalent to the letters I.L.Y. meaning I Love You. We often said it but no-one knew what it meant. These courting days were wonderful. How lucky I am to have such memories.

While we were courting we built a car together. We went out in this quite often and even had jaunts to London. We also built a boat and an outboard engine for it. We used to go fishing and often took some friends. I had been fishing before with my uncle and knew how to find the fishing grounds. To do this, two landmarks had to be lined up, such as the windmill and High Barn. This barn stood on the skyline, but has since been demolished.

The High Barn was at the end of a rough road, where the waterworks built a pumping station. This was where Jack worked for a number of years. Everything was kept exceptionally clean. The walls had pale green tiles, and the metalwork, which was mostly copper, shone brightly. It was quite a showplace and groups of celebrities, some coming from abroad, were often taken there.

Family at war

After we were married I carried on doing odd housework jobs until illness struck. We

had been married for about seven months when I went to see a consultant who told me that if I did not have a child at once, we may never be able to have one. Up until this time we had been preventing one because of the war. This meant attending the Women's Hospital in Windlesham Road for some very drastic treatment three times a week for five months. I always like to believe that I conceived our daughter on our wedding anniversary. I can never explain the wonderful feeling I had when the Doctor put Angela in my arms for the first time, after being told I may never have a baby. We had produced this precious little girl, and what was more, we were told we could have more children in the future, which was so important to us.

When Angela was three months old we moved from my parents' home to Newbarn Road, on the Council Estate, where I still live today, 42 years on.

She was a lovely baby and grew to be a very happy little girl. My husband doted on her. Four and a half years later, when the war ended, our son Julian was born, which made our happiness complete.

During the war, while Angela was a baby, Jack worked alternately, one month days and the next month nights. This meant I was in the house alone with Angela. So we had a Morrison shelter erected in the kitchen in which we put a mattress and an eiderdown. When the siren went off in the evening, usually about 9pm, it meant the German bombers were coming over. I used to bring Angela downstairs and get into the shelter with her and my knitting. She was a good little girl and seldom woke up. But I used to sit there with my knees audibly knocking as I heard the bombs whistling down.

We had a number of bombs dropped in Rottingdean. One very large one fell near the windmill. No one could eat their vegetables on the nearby allotments, because they were all covered in some kind of white substance. Another one dropped straight down the lift shaft at St Margaret's flats, which had not long been built. A policeman was killed and several people were injured. When the latter one came down I was standing at the back door watching a plane fly over the farm. Suddenly there was a terrific bang and the door was blown out of my hand. Without realising it, I was watching the plane which had discharged the bomb.

One night a plane came down near the Pumping Station. My husband had to help take the pilot prisoner and keep him there until the Home Guard men came to fetch him. Jack had not been called up as his health was not AI. So he was automatically in the Home Guard, as were all the men working with him. They were issued with uniforms and all the necessary equipment.

We had to black out all the windows, and had wooden frames covered with some special black material to fit them all. We had to check constantly, for if a chink of light showed we were in trouble.

There was a huge underground air raid shelter at the front of our estate which would

hold everyone living there if they wished to use it. One night there was a terrible noise and I could hear bombs coming down. On opening the front door, I saw that the whole of the skyline was ablaze. I heard the next day that a plane had dropped a stick of incendiary bombs along Longhill Road, Ovingdean. This is the hill just above us. Every bomb except one fell into the gardens and the odd one dropped into a loft but did not explode. This seemed to be a miracle indeed.

When Jack came home from night shift on his bicycle one morning, a plane was dropping bombs behind and in front of him. He was very exposed, riding along the top of the hill, but he escaped uninjured. When he arrived home he was ashen-faced and shaking. I was so pleased to see him as I'd heard the bombs and knew he would be on his way home.

During the early part of the war, we were all issued with gasmasks, ration books, and clothing coupons. The gas masks had to be carried everywhere with us, and how we managed on the meagre rations, I will never know. But we survived and that is all you can call it.

Fruit was very scarce, but one day my auntie's brother came home on leave from the Navy and brought a small amount of bananas. We had not seen one for a very long time, so Auntie shared them around the family. We had one between three of us and considered ourselves very lucky. We were fortunate that father's brother worked part-time on a chicken farm, and so was able to get us a few new-laid eggs sometimes. Word soon went round if one of the shops had anything almost unobtainable, and we would queue for hours.

There was a practice shooting range near the Pumping Station, where Jack searched for spent cartridge cases. He sold them to a friend of his, who was a scrap metal dealer at Peacehaven. As they were brass this made quite a nice supplement to our income.

One Camp Chair in the Living Room

When the war ended, there was the most wonderful sense of relief everywhere, although rationing only gradually faded out. It was a long time before clothing and sweets became easier to buy. How lovely it was to go and choose clothing in a shop again instead of jumble sales. I remember queuing the length of the High Street to buy an ice cream for Angela the first day they were on sale.

We also had a lovely street party. We all contributed with anything we could spare. One of our neighbours made a beautiful iced cake, the like of which we had not seen for years. We had sports for the children and a fancy dress competition in the field opposite. I made Angela a Little Bo-Peep dress out of the lining of the cradle which was white crepe-de-chine, on which there were tiny pink flowers. Her father made her a crook. That was truly a day to remember, as she took first prize.

Throughout these years, the same milkman came around who used to come when I was living at home. His name was George and he delivered twice a day. He had a horse and float on which there were churns, and he delivered the milk by pouring it into our jugs with a dipper with a crooked handle hanging on the side of his can. This dipper was also a pint measure.

The baker also delivered the bread every day, pushing his handcart all the way from the village. The bread was lovely and crusty and smelt beautiful. The butcher and grocer also delivered by a boy on a bicycle with a large basket on the front. About three times a week the greengrocer came around with an old van, and we all went out to him in the road to buy the necessary items, and at the same time have a chat together while waiting. We were all glad of these services, as it was quite a long walk to the village.

When we first moved into our new home, we had very little furniture. Owing to the war, everything was scarce and expensive. We started off with a new bedroom suite, which I still have in use today; a second hand dining suite, and some kitchen chairs and a table which Jack's mother gave us. We only had one camp chair in the living room, and took it in turns to sit in it. We had to stain and varnish the floorboards in every room, and I had to keep them polished. We only had one small rug in each room. We then saved very hard and managed to buy a lounge suite. We thought we were in heaven to have a comfortable chair, although it was only Utility, as was all the furniture and soft furnishings during the war.

As time progressed, we added more and more comforts to our home. The washing was quite a problem, as I had no wringer and spin driers had not been heard of. It seems now that the underwear was much thicker years ago. For instance, the children wore 'Chilprufe' vests and liberty bodices. They had to go out on the clothes line dripping wet, but somehow I got them dry. Often I hung them on a clothes horse overnight.

Julian was born on the 19th June, 1946, and Angela went down with measles towards the end of July. The doctor told me to hang a damp sheet full length outside her bedroom door, to stop the germs coming out. This was an essential precaution because Julian was so young. Also there was a bowl of medicated water outside her room for me to wash my hands as soon as I came out. All her eating utensils had to be washed in Dettol. She was very ill because the rash would not come out. Afterwards, the doctor said, 'You can count yourselves two lucky people that you still have your little girl. You nearly lost her.'

By the time Julian was three months old, Jack managed to obtain a motor bike. He was a very good mechanic, and bought an old one which he got into working order. One day he shut off the engine and sat Angela on the back at the end of our road. Then a dreadful thing happened. She caught her ankle in the back wheel. He rushed her indoors and sat her on the kitchen table. When we pulled her sock down, we could see the bare ankle bone. He took her to the Sussex County hospital and she had a bad leg

for a long time. She had to be taken to hospital every day. My uncle did this for me as he lived in the village and had just retired. Unlike most people, he had a car which was useful as the hospital was four miles away. I could not go out unless some-one came to help, as Julian was in the pram and Angela was in the pushchair. This was when I found out who my friends were, as they rallied round to help.

When Julian was six months old he had bronchitis very badly at Christmas time. I had to burn a medical lamp in his room. After this he got it each time he caught a cold. When he was eighteen months old we were spending Christmas with my parents, and he went down with gastro-enteritis. Early on the Boxing day morning he was so ill that I ran to the 'phone box at the corner of the road in my nightdress with a gale blowing. The doctor said, 'If you have any whisky in the house, give him a teaspoonful and I will come straight away.' When he came he said the whisky had saved Julian's life, and if he had been less than a year old we would have lost him. It seemed to be providence that we were not at home at the time, as we had no whisky there. Jack was at work while all this was taking place.

Julian was only allowed to eat Bengers food, which I mixed up with water. He ate this for three months and went from a robust little boy to a very weak child.

Six months after this both children had whooping cough. This was most distressing and sometimes I did not know which way to turn when they were both sick at the same time. However, we got over this hurdle and everything was going well until Julian started school and had his first medical examination, after which the school doctor asked to see me. He said, 'I am sorry to tell you that your little boy has a heart murmur, and you will have to take him regularly to see a heart specialist. Also, he has one leg half an inch shorter than the other, and a check must be kept on this. If it gets any worse he will have to have a built-up shoe.'

When the doctor spoke about Julian's heart, I realised why he used to come in after playing for a little while and lie on the settee. He got tired very quickly. Fortunately, he grew out of these complaints, and during his latter years at school was playing football and doing cross country running for his school. I feel very grateful when I realise how close we came to losing both our children. Through all their adult years they have been there when I needed someone to turn to. And who better than my own children?

Holidays and Parties

In 1950 Jack's foreman moved back to Scotland with his family, and my mother offered to look after the children so that we could visit them. We went for a fortnight. By this time we had a larger motorbike, and we went all the way to Alloa on this. I recall that when we went through Doncaster, it was pouring with rain, so Jack decided to buy a cap. We saw a little shop with a sale on. So we went there and bought a cap for 5/11 1/2 d. reduced from 6/-! We laughed about this for a long time.

We visited Gretna Green on the way back and Jack bought me a silver brooch in the shape of a horseshoe. This is still one of my treasures. We broke our journey at Scotch Corner and an A.A. man found us lodgings in a bungalow, with a young widow who was glad of the money. We were so pleased because it was almost dark. We were not so lucky on the way back. We found a place for bed and breakfast, but it was not very clean, although recommended by the Cycle Club. I did not like the toilet facilities, so I went round the back of the building and Jack kept guard while I went behind a bush. We neither of us ate the breakfast as we did not fancy it.

As the children grew older we took them camping with the motorbike and sidecar. Some friends of ours, Doug and Margaret Swain, came with us to Land's End. They had the same transport as ourselves and helped to carry the gear. One day we had taken down the tents and started on our way, when it started to rain. It absolutely fell down, so we called at a farm to see if they could help us. They offered us a hayloft. There were cows underneath and chickens running around. We had to climb a rope ladder, and the farmer had some old car seats which he kept for such a purpose. So we made a round bed. In the morning our friend said he had not slept a wink as he had noticed signs of rats being there the evening before. I had seen him putting all the food away and thought, 'Doug is fussing around.' We all enjoyed that holiday very much.

On Bank Holiday Mondays, we nearly always went to a motorcycle grass track meeting. We would go off for the whole day with a picnic dinner and tea. We used to get there early to find a nice safe position, because some of the bends could be dangerous. We got to know the names of all the riders and this made it more interesting. Jack's friend from Peacehaven used to ride as side-car passenger. This was really only a chassis and the passengers had to hang right out of the side touching the ground on the bends.

We also went to Arlington quite often to the motor-cycle speedway, as my uncle Allen was the timekeeper there, and we got complimentary tickets. I love to watch the speedway on television now.

We used to visit Jack's mother frequently. She was a dear, quaint lady and looked older than her years because she always wore long dark clothing. She was profoundly deaf and because of this she always thought we were talking about her. Jack's father died just after we became engaged. I shall never forget the lovely gesture he made although ill in bed. He took our two hands and held our two rings together and blessed us.

Granny Ward, as we used to call her, visited the children and me every Monday morning. I would look up and see her smiling face at the window. She always seemed to be smiling and we all loved her. Jack had two brothers, Cyril and Arthur, and one sister Peggy. We were a very close family and spent many happy hours together.

I think my own sister and I grew closer during the war years than we had ever been before. The difference in our ages seem to come between us when we were younger,

and when she married in 1938 she went to live in Devon. When her husband went into the army she came back to live in Rottingdean. He was stationed in India for three years and during this time we spent a good deal of time together, and knew each other better than we had ever done before. I think this was partly because she had a small son and I had Angela. The children seemed to forge a link between us.

It was about this time that I started to have the Christmas parties instead of mother. The only time we missed was when Julian was ill. It was quite usual for me to entertain about twenty relations at Christmas. I recall only too well the first Christmas Pudding I made. On turning it out onto a dish I found that the water had got into it and ran out like soup. So we had to open tins of fruit instead. We would have chicken with stuffing and roast potatoes. The Christmas pudding would have a silver sixpence hidden in it while being made and we would have it with custard. We would always have alcohol at Christmas. The list would be the same every year, 1 bottle sherry, 1 bottle port, half bottle of whisky (for the men), ginger wine, orange wine, raisin wine and lemonade for the children. We would have sing songs and play games like 'Squeak, piggy, squeak,' 'Charades,' and the whispering game. We would enjoy ourselves immensely.

After the war, Christine and her family moved back to Devon, but they still came to us at Christmas. They have since come back to live in Brighton. I don't see them very often now. Our paths seem to have drifted apart.

Coming to Terms

It was in 1950 that Granny died; Grandad having passed away when I was twelve years old. The asthma he suffered made him weaker and weaker. After Granny's death I had to go into hospital to have an ovarian cyst removed. Recovery took quite a while.

It was in 1952 that Mother first became seriously ill. I noticed that she was getting breathless, so I insisted that she went to see the doctor. She came home and told me that he had said that there was nothing wrong. After she left me I rang him up and he said he had told her to go straight home to bed or he could not answer for her within a week. A valve in her heart had collapsed. So I rushed to the cottage and brought her back to our house and put her to bed. The doctor came and gave her an injection to force her to rest, and said to keep her quiet. She must not even talk for a week. I kept her with me for a month. Father came for his meals but slept at home because I hadn't enough sleeping accommodation.

After this, Mother was a semi-invalid for three years and then had a massive heart attack. We stayed up night and day with her for four days, and doctor said she must go to hospital when the crisis was over. This was left for me to tell her, and I shall never forget sitting on her bed and breaking the news. She had a dread of hospitals, never having stayed in one before. However, she took the news very well and held my hand. When the time came to go, I thought we would never get there. The ambulance crawled along at snail's pace, trying not to distress her.

She was put into a small room at the hospital, and had a very kind Jamaican nurse to attend to her. She got quite fond of this nurse, and I'm sure we have a great deal to thank her for. This was the first black person she had ever met. Mother said afterwards, that she'd changed her attitude regarding hospitals and would never mind going again.

She was in hospital for weeks, and when she eventually came home I had her stay with me again. But she was not allowed to walk upstairs. As I only had one sitting room, she had to stay upstairs. I got a commode for her and she used our bedroom for a sitting room. When she was able to go back to the cottage with Father, (who had been staying with my sister) we put a bed in the front sitting room and she never went upstairs again.

I bought her a second hand invalid chair from a friend of mine and used to take her out or she would sit in the garden in it. By doing this people used to come and talk to her and she did not feel so shut away. I went in every day to keep the house clean until someone suggested a home help. I then got myself a job at a local Guest House. I still went to see them every day except Sundays.

It seemed ironic that just after Granny died Mother was taken so ill. For as long as I can remember Granny had ruled the whole family, especially ours, as we lived next door. She made all the major decisions, and Mother always allowed her to do this as she wished to please Father. This we could understand as during the first world war he was very badly gassed and shellshocked, and there was no news of him for three months. The family thought he had been killed. After his demob, he suffered very badly with his nerves. And so, being the lovely woman that she was, she would do anything to save him distress.

Torn Apart

About 1950, when both the children were going to school, Jack and I joined the Parent Teacher Association, and after a few years he was elected to the committee. They used to run whist drives. Although he did not play whist, he had to show up. One day someone told me that while the whist drive was on, Jack was always in the Black Horse with another committee member. Of course I didn't believe it, but someone else told me the same thing so I confronted him with it and found he had been having an affair with her for some time. He was so annoyed that I had found out that he hit me. This was the beginning of a very traumatic period in my life.

He had affairs with one woman after another, always promising it would never happen again. He was hurting me more and more both mentally and physically. At one time he cracked my ribs and broke my nose. We were just about to sit down to Sunday dinner and there was blood everywhere. Angela phoned the doctor. He got an ambulance and took me to hospital.

This happened when my mother was so ill. I could not see her for about two weeks as

my face was so distorted. My cousin, Win Boniface, who lived next door to Mother, told her I had a bad cough and did not want to pass it on. She was always very kind, helping me to care for them. She has been like a sister to me and we have many memories to share.

One Sunday evening, in March, 1958, for some reason I felt uneasy about Mother. I said to Jack, 'I have a feeling that all is not well with Mother. I think I must go down there.' He said, 'You must be mad. If you aren't back, I will go to bed.' When I got there my cousin Win and her husband were there. One of them said, 'Thank God you've come, your mother had a heart attack.' I went in to her and saw she was struggling to get her breath. I did everything the doctor had told us to do. Someone 'phoned him. He came straight away. Mother said to me between the gasps, 'I feel so giddy.' Then she started choking. I asked the doctor to do something and he said, if we had a rubber tube he could. I went into the other room where the others were gathered with father. I knew my cousin had a tube for winemaking. She fetched it and the doctor put it down mother's throat. I held the chamber while he sucked the tube and syphoned something up into it. He told me she was going to die. As father walked into the room I shook my head and he walked out again. I shall never forget him crying. He had lost his loved one. We got in touch with my sister when it was all over, but she will never know something that will always be with me. We stayed with father all night, and when I went home in the morning, Angela and Julian broke their hearts crying. But Jack just said, 'Everyone has to lose their mother, and it's no worse for you than anyone else.' I think Jack really did care about her, but he couldn't bring himself to show it, and I needed someone to comfort me.

When Mother died I lost something very precious. We had shared something extra special which many people never experience. I have wonderful dreams about her, and when I wake up I feel we have really been together. To see her suffer and unable to go out. It must have been terrible for her and I could do nothing to alleviate it

Father went to stay with my sister for a few weeks and had almost decided to move away from the cottage when suddenly one day he changed his mind, and managed better than we could ever have imagined. With the aid of a home help he kept the cottage just as Mother had done. The taps still sparkled and the kitchen lino shone.

I used to love Sundays when he sat there telling me tales of bygone days. It was during one of these conversations that he told me about the ghost at Mascot. I would look out of the window and see him walking round the garden. He would come in and always say, 'I've been looking round the estate.' By this time we had acquired a car and often took him out into the country. We also took him to the motor cycle racing, which he enjoyed very much.

Soon after mother passed away I took a job working for three elderly sisters, the Misses Steinberg. I worked for two hours each morning from Monday to Friday. They were very wealthy and had a large house at the top of Neville Road, Rottingdean, which was full of

beautiful antique furniture, china and glass. They looked after the valuables and I just helped in the house. They also had someone to clean the bathroom and toilets and to do the vegetables. The eldest sister did all the cooking. She was called Dora. The other two were Lily and Enid.

During 1959 Jack changed his job and had every evening free. He gradually stayed out later and later. I used to stay up peeping through the curtains waiting for him to come home. He told me he had joined a fencing club. But as time went on he took his pyjamas with him and I would not see him till morning. When he started spending nights away from home it was the last straw. I could take the fact that he had other women friends as so many men do, but sleeping away was different. A new neighbour told me that he was with her mother's next door neighbour and that she was not a very clean woman. I still had to do his laundry, so I put some Dettol in the water, as I felt dirty.

This went on for some time, then he started going out all day on Sundays. This was heartbreaking as we always spent Sundays together. Then one morning I went to his pocket for a box of matches and found evidence that he had been sleeping with another woman. I did no work that day and walked round the house almost demented. I telephoned my sister and she said, 'Go and tell your doctor in the morning.' He said, 'Divorce him, Mrs Ward, you have had enough.'

I was amazed when Doctor Smith suggested this, as he was a devout Catholic and went to church regularly. But he had been our family doctor for some time and knew me very well.

In January 1960, I went to the Citizens Advice Bureau, and they gave me a list of solicitors who practised Legal Aid. I made an appointment to see one of them. When I got home after the first interview Jack said, 'Where have you been?' I said, 'To see a solicitor. You'll be receiving divorce papers in a few days.' He said, 'Nonsense, you wouldn't have the nerve.' He then proceeded to do what he always did when a meal was late, without fail he hit me. I often got this treatment for no reason at all, so once more didn't make any difference.

He got the shock of his life when the divorce papers arrived. He said we could go back and start again. I told him no, I could never go through it all again. Then he said he would bring the other woman to live here with her three children and I would be glad to leave. So, on the advice of my solicitor, I wrote to the housing manager and he replied, 'Send your rent book back to me and I will change the name to yours and then you can tell him to go.' I did this and Jack left the house in April, 1960.

He stopped giving me any money, so my employers offered me extra work which I was pleased to accept. Jack kept coming to the house when I was out and things disappeared, so I was advised to have the locks changed. He often went to his workshop at the end of the garden. We used to crawl on our hands and knees under the windows so that he would think we were out. If we were already out, my neighbour

would watch for us to come home and we would creep in the front door.

He came home one evening and Julian was watching television. He said he had come for the television set and cut the aerial lead outside and proceeded to break a window. So I phoned for the police. When they came they said I must give him the television, because he had bought it. They would come in and get it, which they did. A friend in the next road came and boarded up the window. We were all so distressed that a neighbour took Julian for the night.

Jack tried to get custody of Julian, but Julian said if he took him he would run away. So I had to take him to the solicitor to sign a statement. In July I got a decree nisi and the divorce was made absolute in October. As I stood in the court I knew that I still loved Jack but could not take what he was doing to me. I was torn apart.

Living on a Shoestring

During this time, Dora, one of the ladies for whom I worked, had a stroke. As it was she who did the cooking, I took over and cooked for them. I also took another job from 8am to 9am seven days a week, looking after two elderly people until their home help came. I lit the fire, made their beds and cooked breakfast.

After leaving the three sisters at Neville Road at 3:00 each day, I took on extra jobs so that I worked until 6:00. This brought in more money, but we were still living on a shoestring.

Jack married a woman seventeen years younger than himself in November. She had three very young children. They went to New Zealand as her mother lived there. I had a maintenance order which proved to be of no use. By the time the solicitor had found out on which boat Jack had sailed, it had docked at both Auckland and Wellington and Jack could not be traced.

When Jack left us my whole world crashed around me. All the happiness we had shared flashed before me, and the wonderful future I thought we were going to have seemed to disappear like a candle in the wind. We'd built a lovely little home together and our sex life was perfection. I could think of no other reason why he went with other women except to boost his ego. He was very handsome and arrogant and was always telling me that other women admired his voice. But now I had to come to terms with his leaving and rebuild my life.

Angela started courting the year after my mother passed away and Jack left us. One evening Angela and David asked me if they could become engaged. I advised them to wait until they were a little older. That weekend they came in so very happy and showed me her ring. I got out a bottle of sherry which had been in the sideboard for a very long time, and we all three drank a toast to their engagement.

In that same year, 1961, Julian became fifteen and eligible to leave school. After his father left he settled down to his homework much better than before. He took on two paper rounds and was out of the house by 6am each morning and back in time to catch the school bus at 8am. He did this on his own initiative as he knew I could not give him any pocket money.

The careers officer wanted Julian to take a job working with tools at Allen West, but the form master said he had the ability to do better than that. He asked me if I was prepared to keep Julian at school until he was seventeen. I said I would, wondering how on earth we would manage on the money I was getting. However, Julian got work in a local restaurant on Saturdays and Sundays, and this helped out. When he was seventeen he got a five year apprenticeship as a draughtsman with P.B. Engineering at Crawley. Of course there were books to buy and bus and train fares to find. As soon as age would allow, he went to work at the White Horse Hotel at weekends; midday in the kitchen and evenings in the bar. He often worked till midnight, but all has proved worthwhile as he achieved all the exams which he needed to become a senior designer with Link Miles.

His Name was Fred

A few months after Julian started his apprenticeship, something happened which was to change my whole life. One afternoon I heard someone hammering in our workshop. When I looked it was the man who was staying in the house which backed onto our garden. I'd never seen him before. He said he was repairing the back of the workshop for me, so I thanked him and went back into the house. The following Sunday I was walking past the cricket field with a bunch of flowers for my mother's grave when someone suddenly sat up and asked me where I was going. I told him and recognized him as my workshop repairer. He told me he was going to the pictures and I told him he was very lucky. He asked me if I would like to go with him. I accepted and went back home to tell the children. They were delighted and told me to go and enjoy myself. Fortunately, my sister had started to look after my father every other Sunday.

My new friend told me his name was Fred. From then on he often took me out for a meal or a show. After a while I found out that he was only sleeping at the house behind us and eating in cafes, which meant greasy food. He had already told me he had perforated ulcers so I knew it was the wrong food for him. I offered to give him a meal when cooking in the evening. He accepted my offer and as time went on he told me was separated from his wife but she was still living in the same house, which was his. Apparently, she refused to look after him when he was convalescing and he had to go to a Nursing Home.

Eventually, he asked me if I would marry him if he got a divorce. I agreed, and he offered to give the house to his wife if she would allow a divorce to take place. He signed the house over to her and two weeks before going to court she went back on her word and we could not marry. I talked it over with Angela and Julian and they advised

me to take him to live with me as we were so happy together. Everyone seemed to accept this and told me how happy I looked. We met Fred's youngest son and his daughter and they were very pleased to see him settled in a better environment. He had been through a very difficult time. I had never been wined and dined so much. He was always taking me out to dinner and a show or doing alterations and decorating in the home and bringing me flowers and chocolates. We had very happy days together.

Soon after this Angela got married and in 1963 presented me with my first grandchild; a darling little girl whom I adored. They named her Debra. My only disappointment was that Jack was not there to share out happiness. Although Fred loved Debra it was not quite the same. We were very good friends but it was not love. I enjoyed his company because it filled a gap in my life. He took away that feeling of loneliness.

Dusting the China

I was still working for the sisters in Neville Road, but Fred insisted I gave up the other jobs. As he was paying his way I was able to do this. The Miss Steinbergs started to go away for holidays and their brother Percy came down from London to look after the house, (although he told me that if anyone broke in he would tell them to take the lot as long as they left him alone!) This went on for a few years, and then the sisters came back before the dustmen had been round and found a number of empty whisky bottles in the dustbin. That was the end of Percy coming down! They asked me to hold the keys and gave me the money to pay the servants, gardener, and window cleaner. I also had to make sure that there was milk and biscuits in the house for their lunch and the gardener's tea. I never had to account for the money. It was nice to be trusted.

At one time the Steinbergs went off to Canada for three months and another holiday in South Africa. When they travelled so much, I had to have an itinerary in case I needed to get in touch with them.

When they were away I had to wash all the valuable china and glass. No-one else was allowed to touch it. Three tall men came to my front door one day and told me they were detectives. They showed me their identification and told me I must go immediately with them as someone had tried to force their way into one of the back windows at Neville Road. Apparently, when the gardener arrived in the morning, he found two stocking masks and two knives thrown into the side of the garden path and signs of a window being tampered with. They had almost got in, and looking back it seemed that the lady next door must have put on her bedroom light and scared them off.

Anyway, I went with the detectives and they said they were going to drop me off with one of them at the end of the road where the main road joins it. We were to walk along and I would unlock the door and we would both go in. We were to stay there for a while and then I was to come out alone pretending to lock the door, leaving the detective inside. I was then to walk casually down the hill to the garage at the bottom and the other detectives would pick me up and take me home. When I got there no detectives

were to be seen and I thought, 'Oh my God, I've let the burglars in.' Just after this I heard a low whistle, and there the detectives were, hiding behind the petrol pumps. They brought me home and told me to stay where they could get in touch. The day before the burglars tried to enter I had been cleaning some of the valuables and had to go back to finish them. I don't mind admitting I was terrified. In the room where the valuables were kept there was a huge inlaid satin wood grand piano. It was made for Queen Alexandra and the twin to it is in Buckingham Palace. Again, I was the only one who was allowed to polish this as it had some very intricate woodwork in parts, especially the legs.

The next thing I knew, they had brought the old ladies home and they, myself and the detectives sat round the large mahogany dining table discussing the incident. The detectives came to the conclusion that the Steinbergs must go back to the hotel. They would put a policeman with a dog in the house each night, and I would go in each morning and take over from him, stay all day, and make things look quite normal. I was terribly frightened. They eventually bugged the house under every carpet and up the staircase. They showed me where I could walk.

At last the Steinbergs were allowed home and they had a burglar alarm fitted. A push-button bell was also put behind the long heavy curtains in each room. The detectives said if one of the alarms were pressed the police would be there in two minutes. This happened by accident one day and sure enough the police came immediately.

Soon after this Dora had another stroke and was confined to a wheelchair. She had to have her bedroom downstairs. Then Lily had a heart attack, so they had to employ a day nurse, and another to come in at night. This situation carried on for some time and Lily recovered fairly well. Then I took over from the day nurse. It was quite hard work as Dora had to be lifted onto the toilet and onto the bed each afternoon for her rest. We became very good friends, and although her speech was impaired I did my best to converse with her. I still carried on doing the cooking and stayed until a shift of nurses relieved me.

Gradually, Lily developed Parkinson's disease, and I was always helping her. She used to fall over and could not get up. I would hear her quiet voice calling me, and then we could not get her to her feet because we were both laughing.

One day Dora and Lily had the masseuse attend to them. Dora was back in her chair and Lily was left on Dora's bed. I went to tell her that lunch was ready and sat her up. But she didn't come down and the others were sitting at the table. Enid was getting very irate and I should have been feeding Dora, but I went back to Lily. She was lying down again and said she could not dress. So I dressed her and took her into the dining room. She said, 'I do feel ill.' Enid said, 'Nonsense, eat your lunch.' She couldn't eat so I took her to lie down again and put a cover over her. As I did this, she said, 'I cannot stay here, I shall have to go away. I'm too much of a nuisance.' I told her, 'You must not talk

like that. I love looking after you and this is your home.' She asked after my two youngest grandchildren and that was the last time I saw her. She died that evening. I missed her very much.

This happened in 1977. In January 1978, Dora had a very bad stroke and was confined to bed. I could see that she was dying and I asked Enid to get a feeding cup, but she would not. We had to try to give her milk with a teaspoon, but it ran out of the corners of her mouth. On reflection, I'm sorry I didn't buy her one myself. Enid was too mean. Dora was due to go into a nursing home on a Saturday. I knew she would never return, and on the Friday, someone asked me if I knew anyone who would look after a husband and wife just around the corner from my house. The wife, who was 86, had shingles, and the husband, who was 88, could not boil an egg. I went to see them and stayed three hours as the lady had not eaten anything for three weeks. I fed her with tiny pieces of bread and butter and promised to go the next week.

I gave my notice in to Enid Steinberg, as I knew she had two women coming in to do her work and I was upset because she had been so unkind to her sisters. She was flabbergasted. She thought I'd stay for two or three weeks, but I left the next day. This was a big wrench and a sad time for me. I had spent a lot of time with the old ladies over twenty years, and was very fond of Lily and Dora. But Enid had always been a cold person with no deep feelings.

Comings and Goings

Angela had two more children, a girl named Lisa and a boy named John. They were lovely children, but David didn't seem to be the least bit interested in them. Julian and I sensed that the marriage was not as it should have been. He begged me to do something about it. I told him I would not interfere, but if Angela ever came to me for help I would be there. One day in 1968 she did just that. She left home with the children and came to live with us.

After a few weeks David came and pleaded with me to ask her to return. He was crying and promised not to ill-treat her anymore. So I persuaded her to go back. Julian said I had done the wrong thing, and if anything happened to her he would blame me. Sure enough it was the same treatment all over again. In fact, much worse. She came back to live with us only without the children. He would not allow her to have them and threatened to put them into care. Finally, with the intervention of Julian and myself, we got them back and she divorced David in 1970. This was a very traumatic time for me as I knew exactly what my daughter was going through.

In 1968, Julian finished his apprenticeship, but stayed working for P&B Engineering until 1971, when he decided to go on an overland trip to Australia with two of his pals. They bought a large, second-hand van, and equipped it for sleeping and cooking. He got a job in the catering department at an iron ore mine in North Australia, and the two other boys worked in Sydney. They returned via America when the year was up with lots of

interesting stories.

One evening in January while Julian was in Australia, Fred and I were sitting in the lounge when he suddenly jumped up. He started banging his head on the settee and pulling the cupboard doors off. I asked him what was wrong, but he didn't say a word. I ran next door and called to my neighbour, George, through the window, 'Come quickly, Fred has gone berserk.' George came round and said, 'What's the matter, old chap?' By this time Fred was sitting in the armchair and looking as white as a ghost. He didn't answer George and we couldn't get a word out of him. George told me to phone the doctor, but the doctor thought it was just a case of bad temper and wouldn't come.

Being a kind neighbour, George spent that evening with me watching Fred. When it was time to go to bed, he told me to put Fred in another room and lock my bedroom door. I did, but was still scared stiff. The next day, I told Fred that he would have to go. I was afraid that he would start to treat me as Jack had. I could not stand any more violence after what I had been through.

After a few days Fred came in one evening and started packing his belongings. He wouldn't tell me where he was going. In April, I had a call from Bevendean Hospital and was asked to go there, as Fred had been admitted and was asking for me. As I walked down the hospital ward he burst out crying, 'You've come, you've come!' Apparently, he was in for blood tests and trouble he had been having with his head. He was living in a flat in Hove, and I went there to get him some clean clothes. The landlady told me that Fred used to sit there rocking to and fro with his head in his hands.

He was in hospital for seven weeks. I went to see him every evening without fail, and brought his laundry home. When they allowed him to go home, he went back to work, but had to keep in touch with the hospital for blood tests. He used to take me out now and again, but he stayed in his flat and only came to my house to pick me up. We had some lovely outings, and of course over the years had grown very fond of each other.

A Most Unfortunate Year

One Friday in January 1973, I received a telephone call from Brighton General Hospital and was told that Fred had been admitted. He was having a blood transfusion both that day and the next, and was to have surgery on the Sunday. They asked me to go at once, which of course I did, and found Fred very ill indeed. They operated on him on the Sunday. When I went to see him, he was in a dreadful state as he had undergone a colostomy. He was still very ill, so they decided to do what they call a repair operation, which luckily was a success. We were very pleased that everything was back to normal again.

After the operation, I used to go to see him every evening and at weekends just as before. I was sitting by his bed one Sunday afternoon when he let out a terrific scream and held his side. I pulled back the bedclothes and saw that the repair had burst open. So he went back to hospital to have another colostomy. After it was over, they put him

in a small back room with three other men. I had the suspicion that he had cancer. After four months, Fred was sent to a nursing home in Rustington. Angela used to take me there every day in Fred's car. One day the matron told me that he should never have been sent there because his illness was terminal. To have this confirmed was a terrific blow, especially as he was in such acute pain at times and had to take so many drugs. Finally, the matron said he couldn't stay there and discharged him. He had no place to go but back to his fiat. Angela went to see him every day at midday, and I went every evening. He was in such pain that he would scream for me to help him. I had been told to give him brandy with the drugs if the pain got too bad, so once I gave him a large dose and a sleeping tablet. When I got home, I told Julian I had left him in a deep sleep. He said, 'Mum, you may have killed him. If you have you will be in trouble.' But I told him I had to do it. The next morning I rang Fred's doctor and she said, 'I will go to him straight away and get him into a terminal hospice. Come immediately.' Angela came with me, and we went with him in the ambulance to the Coppercliff Hospice near Withdean Stadium.

I used to sit with Fred and pray that God would take him. He was in such dreadful pain that he was living on morphine and heroin. He didn't know even then how bad his illness was, and we used to make plans for when he came out. Every evening as we left, Angela and I used to ask, 'How much longer has he got to suffer?'

This went on from July until Christmas. On Christmas Eve, I told Angela I would go to see Fred in the afternoon leaving her free to go out with her friend, who had been so kind staying with the children for us in the evening. But in the evening the hospice called to say Fred was asking for me. I told them that there was no way I could get there as a taxi was impossible on Christmas Eve, so one of the Sisters came for me in her car. Fred passed away on New Year's Eve. His brother came back from America, so at least he was among family and friends at the end.

I was completely and utterly lost. I missed Fred. There was no one to visit every day. Life seemed so empty. I missed Fred. I didn't see any of his relatives for a very long time, and then after about three years, his brother started coming for holidays and is now a very good friend to me. My friends rallied round me again and once more I had to rebuild my life.

Jack Walks in

A few weeks after Julian came back from Australia, he went to the wedding of one of his pals, where he met a girl named Brenda. This friendship blossomed and they married in May 1974. I was so pleased to see him settled down with such a nice girl, as I was always afraid that he might return to Australia. Angela also became friendly with a very nice young man, called Tony, who was very fond of her children. Gradually I could see how her feelings were developing towards him. It was lovely to see her so happy. They married in December 1974.

I also joined a number of clubs in the village; one for the over-sixties, called the Good Fellowship Club, the Windmill Women's Institute, and the Hard of Hearing Club as a hearing member. I have many more friends and we have some lovely meetings and outings.

On the 5th May, 1975, Father died very suddenly. He'd been in an old gentleman's home for four months. He was not very happy leaving his cottage, but he was getting very feeble, and as I had to work I couldn't look after him. It used to make me very sad to see him there and I never liked to come away and leave him. I still don't like to see his cottage occupied by strangers.

The year after Father died, Angela and Tony had a little girl, Heidi, and Brenda and Julian had a daughter, Nikki. These babies brought more happiness. I had always looked after Angela's three children on Saturdays after David left her, because she had to work. We had some lovely days together and grew very close. They often tell me how happy they were. We used to go gathering conkers and they had me doing gymnastics in the garden, where they always had their meals when the weather was warm. When Nikki was two, she had a brother called Neil, so I then had six grandchildren.

When I left work in Neville Road, I carried on working for the old lady and gentleman round the corner until I was sixty-six. It was impossible to leave them, as they had no relatives and were so old all their friends had died. With the help of the doctor I eventually put them into a nursing home, and a solicitor sold the bungalow. They had only been away for about six months when they both died within three weeks of each other.

I couldn't get used to retirement, and felt quite guilty with time on my hands. I was very glad to go to the clubs I had joined, and was able to go to them at my ease without having to rush around all the time.

Two years later I had arranged to go to an evening performance of a pantomime with Angela, Tony and Heidi. They invited me to go there for a meal first. A short time after I arrived, Angela said, 'I have something to tell you, Mum. I think you had better sit down.' When I did, she said, 'Dad is coming home from New Zealand next Thursday.' I cannot describe the shock I felt. My first thought was, 'Would he want to see me?' I knew with all my heart that I wanted to see him. I asked her how she knew and she said she had been writing to him for the past few months. She had got his address from his brother. This was something I had been urging her to do for some time, but she didn't tell me because she didn't want to upset me. Apparently, they all knew before Christmas that he was coming but were unsure of how I would feel.

I don't think I saw anything of the pantomime. At least I cannot remember it. The night was very long with no sleep. For the next six days I was in a world of my own, not

knowing what to think.

Thursday came and Angela, Tony, Brenda and Julian went to Gatwick to meet their father. I felt numb all day. In the evening Angela and Brenda came, bringing the two little girls, Heidi and Nikki, with them. They said, 'Dad wants to see you.' I burst out crying, letting all my pent-up emotions go, and collapsed into their arms. When I collected myself, the two children were standing there in bewilderment. They had never seen Granny cry before!

Angela told me that when Jack came off the plane he said, 'Where's your mother?' They told him that I did not go because I was not certain of his feelings. He replied, 'Of course I want to see her. Can I go in the morning?' They told him he could do this. At about nine o'clock the next morning there was a knock at the back door. It opened and Jack walked in. We threw our arms around each other and I asked, 'Is it really you?' He replied, 'Yes, it really is.' We kissed a loving kiss that I will never forget. We had not seen each other for twenty-five years. He hadn't changed except that his hair had turned white and he had lost some of it.

We went into the lounge and sat down opposite each other. He said, 'I haven't forgotten you know. I still remember June the 1st when we met and which we always celebrated. We courted for five years, didn't we? Until we married on March 23rd. Your birthday is on the 3rd of October.' While saying these things tears were streaming down both his face and mine. He then said, 'Do you remember which side of the bed I slept on and when we used to bath together? We were very happy, weren't we?' My heart was pounding.

He asked me if I remembered him painting the cradle and the cot white, and that he made a stand for the cradle. Or that he made a playpen and when we put Angela in it in the garden we found her with a snail in her mouth. He said, 'I have remembered all these things over the years.' I remarked, 'You must have wanted to see your children very much to have sold your motorcycle and all the things in your workshop to get the money to come.' He said, 'Not my children, our children. And it was not only them I came to see. Take your glasses off and let me see you.' I did this and he said, 'You haven't changed, and you still look lovely.' After about three hours he left to go back to Angela's. As he was going out he put his arms around me and said, 'You are lovely and cuddly.'

I was over the moon to know that Jack had remembered our married life together, as no one will ever know how much I still love him. I have had to show a brave face to the world, but underneath my heart was broken.

The following morning Jack came back and handed me a parcel. He asked me to open it, which I did. There, to my amazement, was a large box of Black Magic chocolates. He said, 'I haven't forgotten, you see!' These were the chocolates that he gave me years ago which were my favourites. He stayed for a couple of hours and then Julian came for

him. They had arranged to meet at my house but hadn't told me.

We sat talking for some time. He said he didn't know what made him treat me the way he did, as I was a perfect wife, and he never remembered me refusing him sex. I felt rather embarrassed, and yet I was pleased that he had told Julian these things himself. He spent quite a lot of time with Angela, Julian and their families, and went walking alone quite often. One evening at Angela's, when we found ourselves alone together, he remarked on the fact that I was still wearing my engagement ring. He also said, 'I think I owe you an apology. I gave you some rough treatment. I'm sorry. Aren't you lucky to all be so close together. I must say the children are a credit to you.'

He took my photograph from his wallet and told me he carried it everywhere over the years. He then told me that he and his wife slept in different rooms and that she had slapped his face the day before he left. He also said that his mother-in-law had told his wife that he would never return to New Zealand. I think this was an opening for me to ask what he intended to do. I wish now that I had, as he might have stayed here.

On the last evening before Jack was to return, the family discreetly left us alone to say goodbye. I said, 'I don't suppose we will ever meet again.' He replied, 'It seems that way.' Our lips met in one lingering kiss that will remain with me forever.

It wasn't until he had returned to New Zealand that Angela told me he had asked to borrow her car to take me to all the places we used to visit. She said she refused because it might have hurt me. If only she knew how very happy I would have been.

After Jack left, Angela and Julian didn't hear from him for quite a long time. Then one day Angela had a letter from his wife telling her that he had been ill ever since he returned and would write as soon as he was well enough. He did, however, add 'Love from Dad' at the end of the letter. He is better now and writing as usual. I feel as though he has taken part of me with him, as I know that our marriage has never been forgotten and that he still cares.

Angela's son passed a managerial course in butchery and has recently been accepted into the Coldstream Guards. Her two eldest daughters are now married and each has a baby son. They are called Karl and Jonathan. So we are now very proud great grandparents. Jack asked Angela to congratulate me in one of his letters and this added to my happiness.

My life has been a winding lane taking many twists and turns, some happy and some sad. I have stopped off here and there to help sick people, which has been very rewarding. I have also shared happiness with my loving, caring family. I know I am very fortunate to have them around me. I only wish Jack could be with us, but we shall always have our memories.

Dedicated to my Dear Mother

*Put your arms around her Lord, kiss her smiling face.
For my Mother was someone special; no-one can take her place.
To those of you who have a mother, love her while you may:
For I would give the world and more to have her here today.
There's a bridge of happy memories from earth to heaven above
That keeps you ever close to us; it's called the bridge of love.*

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