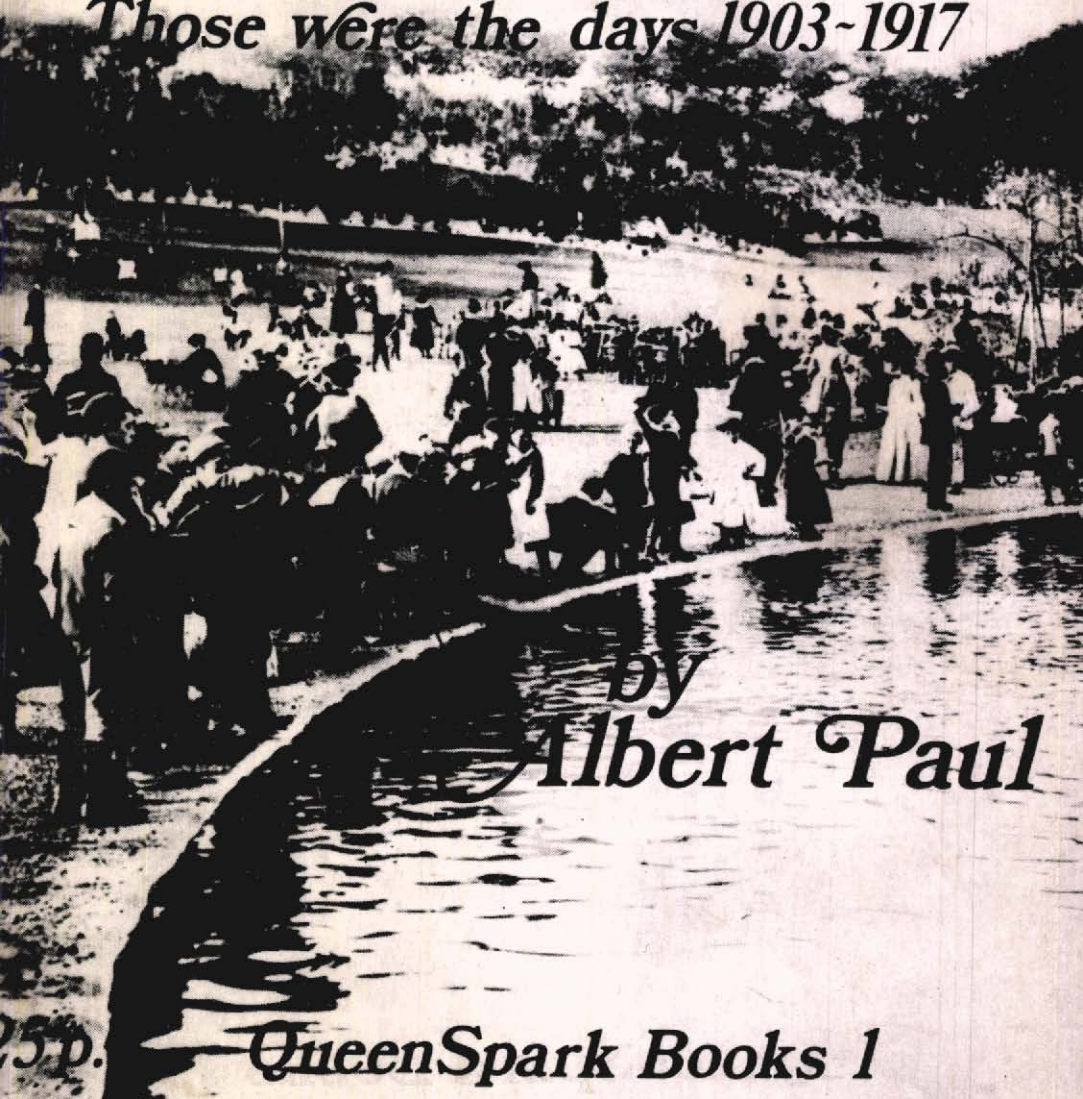


# poverty-hardship but happiness

*Those were the days 1903-1917*



*by  
Albert Paul*

25 p.

*QueenSpark Books 1*

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# *Introduction*

Albert Sydney Paul was born in St. Martin's Place, Brighton, in 1903. His father, a builder's labourer, suffered a great deal of unemployment so his mother was not only a laundry worker but also took in washing to supplement the family income. Albert was the ninth of ten children, and when he was three years of age the family moved to Southampton Street, to the same house where Albert lives today; but before the move two of the children had died.

Albert Paul married Ada Sadler, appropriately a harness maker's daughter, in her home town of Petworth in 1925. Their first home was in a Brighton flat but they were given notice to quit when it was known that they were expecting their first child. So young couples then knew some of the difficulties newly-weds have today when starting a family. Later, when his father died and his mother decided to live with her sister, Albert was given the opportunity to become tenant of his old home. He had to pay the higher rent of 12/6 per week, whereas his mother's rent had been 10/3, but then Albert had already been paying 12/6 for a flat. These were quite high rents for those days when the wage rate for a skilled joiner-carpenter was 1/9 per hour. Apart from the due care the couple have given to their home the house remains much as it was when Albert was a boy.

Mr. Paul with his wife outside her parents' cottage

Mr. Paul started writing his book in 1972 when the nearby Cobden Road was undergoing some improvements. This was part of a General Improvements Scheme brought about by the 1969 Housing Act that gave local authorities the necessary finance to brighten up these small old-fashioned streets. Mr. Paul was passing when workmen were demolishing a flint wall. He remarked "That's the first time I have seen behind that wall since it was a soup-kitchen." The young workmen were not only surprised but were interested to know more. He told them that he was one of the children, many without shoes or socks in those days of little money or food, who queued up, after morning school, for soup and thick bread slices, not only for themselves but for their families too. On several mornings Albert Paul chatted to the workmen, then one day he was approached by a Radio Brighton interviewer who asked him if he would visit them to make a recording of his recollections. The eventual broadcast brought about the interest of Brighton local history Librarian Miss Hollingdale. She asked Mr. Paul if he would put his story on tape for the library.

She was so pleased with the result that she suggested to him that he should write a book. "But I'm no writer," he said. However, he was persuaded to have a go, so he returned home one day armed with a 6p exercise book. Tuesday was Mrs. Paul's regular afternoon for her Meetings, so in Mr. Paul's own words: "When she left the house at half-past two out come the exercise book and my pen. I sat down for about two hours and I wrote my memories; but as she came in bang went the book, I didn't

write any more till the next Tuesday; and it took me seven Tuesdays to write this story."

Albert Paul was a 'chippy' - a carpenter, as a bricklayer is a 'brickie', a plasterer a 'spread', a paperhanger a 'sticker', a painter a 'skib' (or 'scib') and an electrician known as 'sparks'. He knew, as all building workers knew, the over-hanging cloud of being 'stood-off'. This was not always necessarily dismissal, but if there was no work his firm did not need him, and this probably meant that from then on he would be calling daily at this firm and elsewhere until he obtained a job. This was especially so during the Depression of the 1930s, when building materials and work were in short supply.

He sees the skilled workman as almost a dying race. In spite of the dread of unemployment Mr. Paul has been able to resist the demands of high production at the expense of good workmanship. He recalls that during a spell of unemployment about 1950, when the Regent Cinema was undergoing some repairs he applied for a job there. He was given the very difficult task of matching up the decorative ceiling in the ballroom. This was successfully achieved whilst working on a movable scaffold which swayed throughout his task. The illusion of swaying would stay with him when he had left his work, even during his meals. By the time you read this the Regent Cinema and Ballroom will have been demolished.

Mr. Paul was responsible for some of the carpentry in many other well-known Brighton buildings.

including the Officers' Quarters and Married Quarters in Lewes Road Barracks, the Royal Hussar pub opposite, Varndean Girls' and Boys' Schools, two Hollingbury factories, both Brighton hospitals and the extensions to the Old Ship Hotel. When he had to work at the Balsdean Pumping Station he had to walk  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles in each direction over the Downs.

In this book Mr. Paul not only recalls the difficult days of his childhood and early manhood but also depicts a very different pattern of life, with a slower rhythm than today. There were more exacting standards of work and behaviour. The responsible family man dare not be too adventurous in his outlook, and very often the only reward for a worker's loyalty and toil would be the love and security felt with his family, however strict, however poor.

Although he suffered the poverty and hardship that were the normal lot of the underprivileged classes Albert Paul emerges with a cheerful appraisal of his seventy-one years.

# *childhood*

I was one of a family of 10 children. I was born May 10th 1903. I had very good parents, hard-working and honest. My father was a building trade labourer, and owing to conditions work became very scarce at times and he was unfortunately out of work for at least 3 months out of every 12 months every year (and there was no dole money those days).

My mother went out to work in a laundry and also took in washing to get a few more shillings extra to buy us children food and clothing.

With 10 children, and themselves making 12, my oldest sister had to go into private service, and my oldest brother slept and worked at the sanitorium (Bear Road) before joining the Coldstream Guards. My next two brothers passed away (through illness) leaving 1 sister and three brothers and myself, as well as a younger brother (the baby), making 8 with my parents.

Having a three bedroom house my mother got over the sleeping problem by buying a second-hand 4ft 6in iron bedstead and a 3ft 6in one. Three boys slept in the large one and in the smaller bed two boys slept. These beds were in the top front, and my other sister slept in the smaller top back room. My mother and father occupied the back room on the middle floor. Our house is three storeys high:



kitchen and scullery in the semi-basement, 2 rooms on the middle floor and 2 bedrooms on the top floor.

These bedsteads had 4 brass knobs, one on top of each main support. Well, during the summer months us boys would unscrew these brass knobs then take the corners of the quilt, put these one on each upright and then screw back the knobs and so form a tent. After one or two nights of this, combined with the laughter, Mum heard the commotion downstairs. She crept up the stairs, coming into the bedroom she caught us redhanded. My word! What sore bottoms we had. From then on no more tents.

We found another game, quieter we thought. Our beds had a gap of about 36 inches between, so, one at a time we would jump from one bed to another. All of a sudden my father shouted up "What are you boys doing? Go to sleep." We all went suddenly quiet and then we decided to continue our jumping from bed to bed, not knowing that we were making a thump-thump noise that Mum and Dad could hear downstairs. Suddenly we heard my Dad hurrying up the stairs. We all got between the sheets in double quick time. In comes Dad in a temper. He covers us up well, off comes his leather belt and tans us one by one. Not a sound after this. We all got a severe lecture next day when we were all together at tea-time.

We all had our little jobs to do in the home to help my mother. One would clean the windows, one would scrub the wooden stairs (no carpet or lino those days), another would wash down the outside

steps and the pavement outside, another would take down mother's coke-fired ironing stove and clear away the ashes and soot. This stove was used to place the flat irons and polishing iron on, and so make them hot for Mum to iron the washing she took in. I myself used to clean the knives, forks and spoons. The various dinner knives were cleaned with a to and fro action on a board covered with a thick brown lino, with a brown knife powder shaken on. The forks and spoons were cleaned with damp whitening powder. For doing these various jobs Mum would give us ¼d each. Mind you, sweets were then 6oz a penny, boiled sweets - the best sweets - were 4oz a penny.

As each one left school, that meant more jobs for the next one left. My other sister learnt tailoring, and George was a porter in a shop. Now when Charlie and Fred, my two twin brothers next to me, left school, myself being next to the youngest had a lot to do. During the First World War my mother, as I said, used to take in washing and we used to deliver it for her. We used to go as far as Waterloo Street, Hove, out past Hove Town Hall, Tisbury Road, Norton Road - my mother had washing for them all. The baby wasn't allowed to go out, because he was the baby. He might get killed. So I had to go, but I accepted it.

I bought a Tate sugar box, which was how sugar used to come in those days, in a great big wooden box of half a hundredweight of cube sugar. Tate sugar boxes were just right for the wheels of a pram, so I used to go to Richmond Buildings and buy a pair of wheels for about sixpence a pair.

I used to bolt the axle onto the bottom of the box, put a pair of handles on, and then off I used to go with it to collect the washing. During the 1914 War you weren't allowed to have any lights, same as in the other War, so I used to have a candle in a jar swinging on the barrow, and I used to go right out to Waterloo Street.

I'll tell you a little interesting story about my young brother. I encouraged him one day to come with me. I said to Mum, "Let Cecil come with me" so she did. She said, "Look after him." The basket used to settle down in the top of this box, but I couldn't look over the top. I was too short, and I used to have to go sideways to see where I was going. I was coming along Upper North Street, up Dyke Road, and down Mount Zion Gardens to the top of North Road, which is very steep, down to where the traffic lights are, by Queens Road. I asked if he'd like a ride on the top, so I sat him on top of this basket of washing. As we got down Mount Zion Gardens to the very steep part of North Road, all of a sudden it was top heavy, the road was on the twist, and it went over. He shot off the top, the basket of washing came off, there was dirty washing rolling after him, women's underwear. Of course, in those days of the first War they wore no end of stuff underneath - three or four petticoats, thick knickers, all that sort of caper, and they rolled after him. I had to gather this lot up and pick him up, and he had a terrible lump on his forehead. I said, "Tell Mum you'd had a fall", so he said "All right", so I said "I'll give you a farthing." That's all we had then - a penny between four of us, a farthing each. When

we got home my mother asked "What's he got on his forehead? A lump?" I had to tell her he'd had a fall. And that's the story of my mother making ends meet.

In my young days all bakers used to have a horse-drawn large van pull up outside their premises and take in to the shop 2 cwt. sacks of white flour. The assistants had to measure up 1 quart of flour (2 pints) and put same into a white paper bag, well tuck in the corners of this bag, and then flatten the bag of flour to make it better for stacking on top of one another on the shelves. Well, my mother asked me to go and get a quart of flour. I was a bit late for school, and so she waited on the steps of our house to take it quickly from me. When I got to her she was in a rage. She said, "Look back up the street", and there was a long white trail of flour from the end of my street up to my home. I had put the open end of the bag the wrong way under my arm and it had come open and had poured out.

Here are two more family stories, when my family were all quite young. I was about 8 years of age. It was Christmas time and my mother had made 2 large Christmas Puddings all done up in the usual cloths (no basins those days). They were put into a large round iron saucepan with a long projecting handle. The saucepan was placed on the hob (or top) of the kitchen range. The one we had had an open fire with fire bricks all around. My twin brothers aged 11 years were in the kitchen at the time. Fred was standing in front of the fire, with his hands behind him. The other twin

(Charlie) was playing with me and we both had an argument. I said something naughty in my temper and he made attempts to hit me, and so I ran around the table (which was in the centre of the kitchen) with Charlie chasing me. We must have made about 4 runs around the table - and so, to get around the table quicker I pushed Fred in the tummy, when all of a sudden there was a terrible hissing and noise coming from the fireplace.

I looked around. I found I had pushed Fred into the fireplace. As he fell he caught the handle of the iron saucepan, over this came with the boiling water pouring all over Fred and the two Christmas puddings rolling over the floor. Well! The kitchen was full of sulphur steam because, also, some of the water had gone into the red hot fire and this sent up stinking sulphur ashes plus smoke.

I gave one quick look at the state of the kitchen and poor old Fred rolling in pain on the floor, scalded with boiling water. Well! I ran upstairs and got out into the street panic-stricken. I ran and ran, not knowing where I was going. Anyway! I finished up in Queen's Park. After things settled down at home, with poor old Fred with a massive water blister on his back, Mum suddenly looked around and found I was missing. They hunted the house from top to bottom. I was nowhere to be found, until I saw my sister frantically searching the Queen's Park. I was pleased to see her. She said, "Come on home Bert!" I said "No! Mum will hit me." After a lot of persuading we both returned home. Mum never hit me, she was too worried over poor ole' Fred. He was in bed laying

on his tummy. My oldest brother was there (age 20). We all gathered around the bed (with my sister holding the lighted candle - no gas light or electricity those days) when Mum removed the blanket from Fred's back. My word! He had a water blister as large as a dinner plate. My Dad held Fred whilst my oldest brother sterilised the needle in the flame of the candle and pricked the blister and poured out about 1 pint of water into a hand bowl. I'm pleased to say that with Mum's constant attention on Fred's back, cutting away the hanging skin etc., and using Boracic ointment, his back healed up splendidly. We often talk and laugh about this incident now, but not at the time of the happening 63 years ago.

When we were all young my mother would make a very large cake and put the mixture into a large round baking tin. A currant cake one week, the next week a caraway seed cake or a coconut cake or a date cake or a plain cake, she would vary the kind of cake each week. When the cake was ready one of children would take the cake up to a baker's shop at the corner of Scotland Street named Gray's. The Baker would put this cake into the oven along with the loaves of bread, and as the loaves baked so did the cake. The same day we would go and get the cake back (all hot) and give the baker 1 penny for baking it.

The same applied to the Sunday dinner. The potatoes were peeled and put into a large oblong tin and in the centre was put a meat stand. (This was a circular metal frame with 3 legs attached.) The joint was placed on the top of this meat stand

(plus the necessary dripping) and this we took to the baker's shop on the Sunday morning early, returned again just before 1 o'clock, paid him the usual 1 penny, and so back home to enjoy it. This was a common sight, to see cake tins and the Sunday joints going up to the baker's on the various days.

My mother, on her way home from the laundry, would call into a baker's shop on the corner of Islingword Street (named Hider's) and buy (a baker's dozen) 13 stale cakes for 3 pence and give us children one each for our afters. But, in our way, we were happy, because practically everyone around you was suffering with poverty.

# *school*

I went to Finsbury Poad Elementary School at the age of 4, spent 4 years in the infants' school and the other 6 years in the big boys school (we started and finished at the same school), left at the age of 14 and then went to work.

Every year before the winter set in the headmaster would come in to the classrooms and ask all the boys with their fathers out of work to stand up. Lo! and behold! nearly all the boys would stand up. A good many boys went to school with no stockings or boots on, quite a common thing and nobody took any notice of this. These would have their names taken down, us other boys would have our boots inspected and if the headmaster considered they were beyond repair he would put our names down.

The next thing was, all us boys were lined up on the pavement (four abreast) and marched out into Southampton Street, down Southover Hill, along by the Level, through St. Peter's Church grounds, over to Trafalgar Street and then marched up to a boot shop (named Lacey's) just above Sydney Street. We would line up on the pavement and into the shop went 8 boys at a time. The assistants would fit us out with a heavy pair of hobnailed boots with metal toecaps and pelts on the heels and then as we passed out of the shop another man would punch a hole in the uppers of the boots. This prevented the parents from pawning them at the pawnbroker's.





These were shops with 3 brass balls - meaning 2 to 1 you never went back. It was quite common those days to see mothers and fathers taking bundles of clothing - boots, watches, clocks, rings etc., to get money for them on the Monday. Then, should they not have the money on the following Saturday to buy back their articles they lost them and from then on they were sold to the general public, cheap, who had the money.

Discipline was very strict at school. We had desks with lift up seats and lift up tops with slots for the slates. The teacher would say, "Seats down by numbers." Number 1: bend with hands on the seats. Number 2: seats down and sit, desk tops down. Number 1: hands on tops. Number 2: desk tops down and arms folded. "Slates out by numbers." Number 1: hands on slates. Number 2: slates on desks and arms folded.

1 desk would seat 2 children. Also in the top of each desk were 2 holes which held a small china inkwell. These were filled each morning with ink poured from a long slim spouted can. Once a week a monitor (or a very good boy) would go around the class carrying a large wooden tray full of holes and collect up all the inkwells, take them into the wash-up room, give them all a good soak and well wash them, fill them with new ink and place them back into the desks.

When the time came for us to use the slates (these were an oblong piece of roofing slate with a wooden frame around same) another boy would go around the class giving out round slate pencils.

When these broke (through dropping them) we were given 5 inch metal tubes to push the short pieces of slate pencil in and so make them usable. With these metal tubes we used them as pea-shooters. When the teacher wasn't looking we'd soak blotting paper in the inkwell and push same into the end of the tube and blow hard and so send the ink-soaked blotting paper away up into the air and sticking onto the ceiling. My word, if the teacher caught any of us boys doing this the punishment was to kneel on the hard rough floorboards, with your back upright and your hands placed on the back of your neck, for a period of about 20 minutes. Should you lop over, aching all over, the teacher would slap you across the head with his hand and shout sternly, "Get upright, will you?"

Another punishment was, hold out your hand and get the cane across one hand and then the other. It didn't 'arf sting. Should you be extra naughty, the teacher would make you go to the headmaster's room and fetch the strap or tawse. (This was a leather belt slit up at one end into narrow strips to make it sting across your hand.) You only wanted this once.

The there was the children (me included) whose parents hadn't got a lot of food for the family. We were given a large white ticket and took this up to Park Street School (Park Street) between 7.30 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. every morning, show this ticket and the attendant would give all the boys and girls a large round of scones plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of skimmed milk, and this was our breakfast. Dinner times (between 12.30 and 1.30) we were given another

ticket. With this, we went down to Richmond Street School (which is now pulled down) and were given a plate of hot soup or stew, followed by a large slice of currant roly-poly, or jam pudding for a change. And this for 5 days a week.

Apart from this, there was in Cobden Road (off Islingword Road) a soup kitchen. This was a tin-hutted building (behind a large wall) with a very large copper (coke fired). 2 hefty homely women would fill this copper with a certain amount of water and boil same and then add potatoes, carrots, hard peas, also some large meaty bones (from the butchers who would give them to the poor free). When all this was finally cooked there was a very tasty soup.

From Monday to Friday children would line up outside in Cobden Road armed with enamel jugs, wash-stand jugs, jam jars, stone jugs with handles, in fact anything large to hold liquid. Their parents would give them all they could afford, perhaps 1 penny or 2 pennies. In they would go, through a rough old door in the wall, and say to the woman, "1 pennyworth of soup please" (or 2 penniesworth). Then she would say, "How many brothers and sisters have you got?" Perhaps he or she would say, "4 brothers and three sisters." The woman would then cut off 8 thick slices from a dry loaf (given to them by the local baker) and say, "There you are, then. See you again tomorrow?" So that's how all the children waiting for soup were treated.

We had a very strict headmaster. Every Friday

evening he would throw up the wooden shutters (which divided the classrooms) and have all us boys (350 to 400) assembled, say prayers, sing a hymn, and then he would say, "Now then, boys. The dark winter evenings are now drawing in on us and this is the time the Devil gets busy. Please don't get into any mischief. Stop indoors and help your mothers and so keep yourselves occupied. When you return to school on Monday morning let's have you turn up early with your boots cleaned and a nice clean collar (and tie straight). Also, remember, a nice clean neck and no high water mark." (Meaning to wash your neck properly - not just down to your collar.)

Our various classes were not called form 1, 2, etc. (as they are today). They were called standards. There were standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and the ex. 7th. As we passed our various annual examinations (educational), comprising 10 subjects, which were Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Spelling, Geography, History, Grammar, Nature Study, Composition, Dictation and Mental Arithmetic, we were given a possible 10 marks for each subject, making a grand total of 100 marks (which no boy ever obtained).

We were given a large folded foolscap paper, with the school name stamped, with an oval ink rubber, in the top left-hand corner. We had to write our full name and address, our age and the date, in our very best writing, as we were taught: beginning to write at a slight angle (bearing to the right) and never taking your pen off the paper until you had finished the word, and then, and only then, going

back to dotting the "i's" and crossing the "t's".

On examination days the teacher would write the questions in chalk on the blackboard (because the whole complete examination would occupy a week) and nearly all of us boys dreaded this. The 10 subjects had to be answered on the foolscap and then on the completion the teacher would go through every boy's examination paper allotting the various marks which he thought your answers deserved. There would be 2 marks for this, 6 marks for that and so on, it all depended on how bright you were. At the end of the examination paper he would total up the marks he had given; perhaps it would be 45 out of the 100 or perhaps 89 out of the 100; and the outcome of this was the boys with the lowest marks would have to remain for another year in that standard until they improved enough to move on.

It was quite a common thing to see boys start in standard 1 and leave school at 14 in standard 1, but after they left school and started work they made good. I am pleased to say that I knew people, and still do, (although they have now retired) who got on well at work and obtained high positions; managers and foremen, etc.

Every standard had a fire whistle hanging on the classroom door-post. Without any warning the headmaster would blow hard on his whistle in the corridor and then the teachers in every class would rush to the doors and open same, blow their whistles hard, all the boys would be hustled out into the playground and lined up strictly. The

headmaster would look at his watch and tell us how proud he was that we had beaten the last fire-drill turn out, by so many seconds.

Here is a true story concerning me. One day I became a bit daring and naughty. I and 4 other boys decided we would pay the dolly (or the truant) instead of going to school. At 9 o'clock we all made our way up to Queen's Park to fish in the lake for some tadpoles. We thought it was fine fun until, without any warning, we were all cornered by a policeman. He asked us why we were away from school. Anyway! He knew what we had done. He gave us a good talking to and then gave us all a good cuff around our ears with his hard gloves.

But this is not the end. I arrived home at about the same time as my brothers and sisters (5 past 12). We were all enjoying our dinner, when the door knocker went bang! Upstairs to the front door goes my mother and I heard a gruff voice say, "Does Albert Paul live here?" Immediately my heart went into my mouth, because I knew it was the School Board Officer. I got up from the dinner table, ran out into the W.C. All of a sudden my mother was calling down the stairs, "Bert? Bert?" Of course, my brothers told her where I was. Out she came to the W.C. (in a temper), got hold of my ear and took me upstairs to the School Board Officer. He put the wind up me with his stern voice, and told me that me and 4 other boys had not been to school that morning. He told my mother to give me a good hiding and then when Father came home to let him give me a

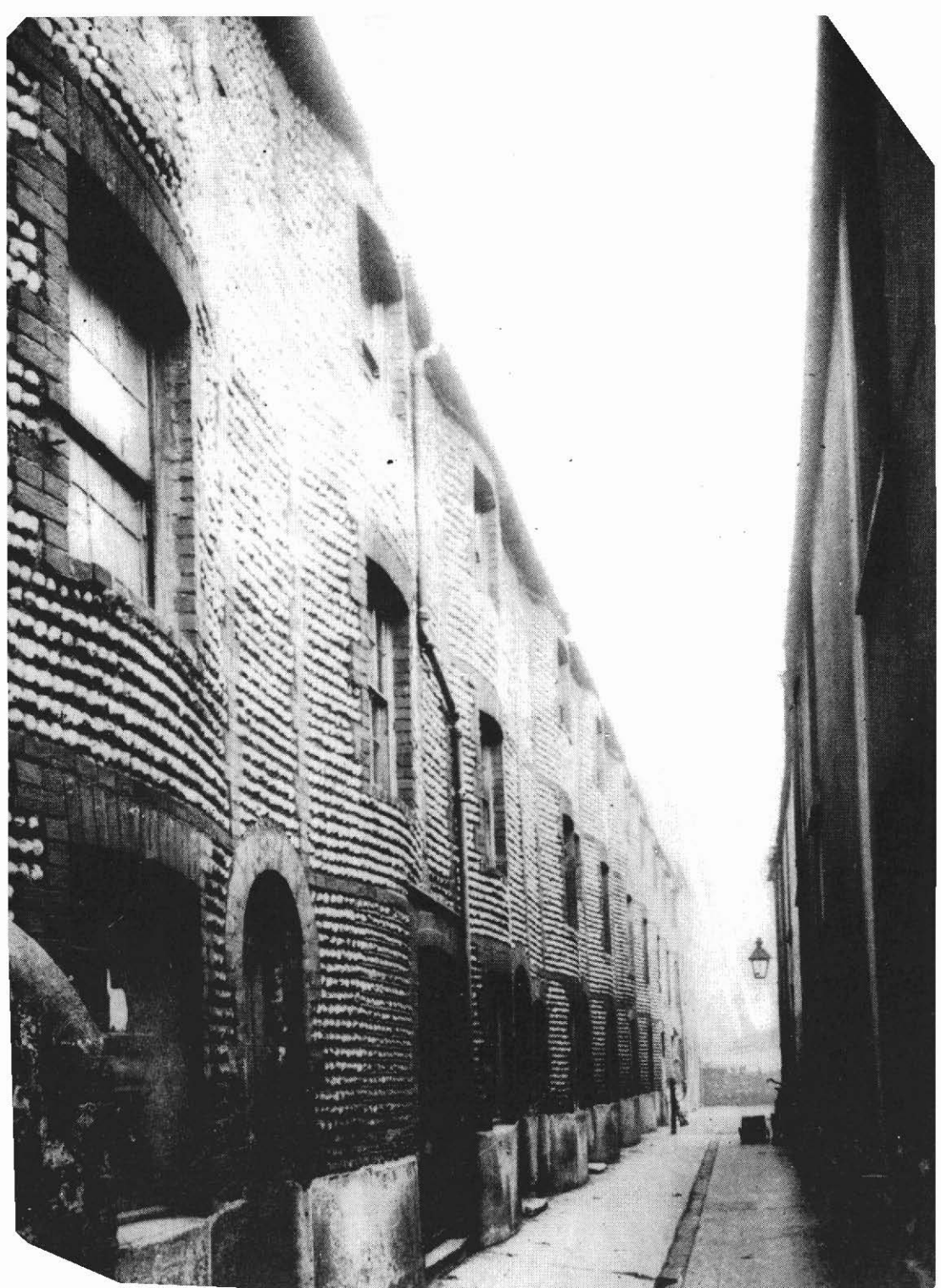
good hiding. Oh! oh! I never played truant any more.

A large bell tolled twice a day, 10 to 9 mornings and 10 to 2 after dinner, and no excuse for being late. Every so often the school doctor would examine you and should he find you had some very bad teeth (or suffering with the toothache) he would send you up to the Dental Hospital (which was then in Queen's Road) to have them pulled out.

I remember, myself, having to have 2 teeth pulled out. One of my older brothers came with me to the Dental Hospital and when the man in the long white coat asked which one was to have the teeth pulled out I said very meekly, "Me Sir!" He then looked at my brother and said, "What have you come up here for - to 'oller (shout) for him!" (Not much sympathy those days) Well, he pulled them out (and no freezing). My word, I can still feel the pain. He then showed me where to rinse my mouth out. It was in a narrow corridor and fixed to the wall was a half-round gutter (like they have on houses) with a cold water tap coming out of the wall. I looked around for a mug or something to put the water in. There was an enamel mug, fixed to a long chain (so that you couldn't pinch it). My brother then had to lift me up, to spit the blood and water out of my mouth, because I was too short to reach the gutter.

(Those were the days).





## *our spare time*

Here now is how we occupied our spare time. All the roads of every street or hill were flints and stone rolled in with a massive steam-roller (10 ton), with black smoke belching out the funnel. After a period of time with the continual horse and cart traffic the flints and stones would break up into fine grit. Us boys, then, would go around the streets with buckets, brooms and shovels, sweep up this grit and fill the bucket, taking same to a house (where we knew they kept chickens in their back-yard). We would knock on the door, then show the lady or man the bucket of grit and say, "Do you want any grit for your chicken?" They would say, "How much?" "2 pence a bucket Sir!" Us boys did well at this game.

The traffic through the streets was horses and carts, wheelbarrows, etc. Well! On every road, in every street, where the horses trotted, was plenty of dung. Out would come our shovels and buckets again and collect the horse dung, fill the buckets up and where a large house had a nice garden, the same procedure. "Want a nice bucket of dung Lady (or Sir!!) for the garden?" Again they would say, "How much?" "2½ pence." (Or 3 pence if the bucket was big). "Yes! Bring it in, and some more tomorrow." Nearly every house in all the working class districts kept 2 or 3 rabbits, chickens or pigeons in their back gardens and these they would kill for the

Christmas dinner.

Sheep and bullocks would arrive in the railway goodsyard (at the top of Cheapside). These were bundled out of the railway trucks, then herded together by the drovers and driven down through the streets to the various slaughterhouses. Several were situated in Vine Street (off North Road). I, myself, would follow the cattle down from the station, see them driven into the slaughterhouses and then bang! would go the gates shut. I would find a hole in one of the gates and stand for 2 or 3 hours watching the slaughtermen kill the bullocks. They would put a rope around the horns and head of the bullock, tie the rope to a strong wooden post, and tie the 2 back legs to some rings in the floor. Then the man would get the pole-axe (a tool with a long handle and a small pickaxe head), take his aim at the right spot on the animal's neck and then with a mighty swipe he would bring the pole-axe down directly into the spot he aimed for and down would fall (on his front legs) the bullock, killed instantly. They'd untie the ropes, put more rope tackle around the head and haul the body upright. Out would come their sharp knives, rip the animal's body open, take out all the innards, etc. This is where I had seen enough, so home I went.

Boys and girls would have hoops. The boys' were metal, the girls' were wooden. We would use long strong sticks to knock them - the quicker and harder you knocked the faster you had to run. If us boys could afford it we would buy a skeller. This was a steel hooked affair driven into a round

handle. We would, as the iron hoop was running, place the hook on to the hoop and push hard. This would make the hoop revolve faster, and the faster we had to run. Many a time we would bounce the hoops up and down the kerbs, and all of a sudden the metal hoop would snap. Then we had to worry our parents for some money to have the hoop welded at the blacksmiths. These were very interesting places, because they would also shoe the horses, etc.

Still on the question of horses, I would like to add that when we were children (aged between 5 and 14) those of us who lived around and about the Queen's Park area went to a Sunday School, situated in Islingword Road and called the Islingword Road Mission Hall (it's still here and going strong). Well, if we all attended very regularly we were given a summer treat. Here is the story. Down Islingword Road on the right there was a coal yard and the owner, a Mr. Hawkins, had 3 horses and 3 coal carts. On the day of our summer treat, he used to polish up the 3 sets of harness and well scrub and wash down his 3 coal carts, blacken the horses' hooves, and then make his way up to the Mission Hall, with these 3 horses and carts.

The teachers would bring out some hard wooden forms which would be roped securely to the carts, and then out would come a pair of wooden steps. About 40 to 45 children would get up into these 3 carts. When everyone was settled and our Mums had given us some spending money (which they could ill afford) there was a good wave, a kiss from

them and away the horses would plod, down Islingword Road, across to Union Road, up Ditchling Road, down Viaduct Road, along Preston Road, up Dyke Road Drive and then into a large house in Dyke Road called Pennies Field (which belonged to a kind-hearted lady and gentleman). Out of the carts we'd scramble, into some lovely large gardens and lawns. Here we would have running races, egg-and-spoon and sack races. There were coconut shies and stalls to buy sweets and fruit (all very cheap for us poor children). At about 4 o'clock a bell would toll telling us children that it was tea-time and weren't we excited to see these long tables laid out with bread and margarine, cakes and jellies, etc. The Minister would call hush, say grace and away we tucked into whatever we could eat, also waited on with mugs of tea, etc. The time soon came to return home, so up into the carts we got and back home, the same way we had come, feeling quite proud with the horses plodding along and arriving back at the Mission Hall tired and excited to see our Mums again.

Bicycles those days had solid rubber tyres and also had no springs under the saddle seat. My word! Peddling along through the streets with pot holes here and there the bike would bounce up and down and what a jar you got sitting on the saddle. Talk about painful and sore! Us boys used to tuck some old rag under the seat to try and make it more comfortable.

Here are 2 of the games we used to play. Us boys used to go around the streets in the town picking

up cherry pips. We would get a big bag full, take them home, wash them well, then dry them in the kitchen range oven. Out we would go, meet the other boys who had done the same, then say, "Play you Cherry Lobs?" "Yes!" "Right. How many up?" Perhaps we would decide 10 up (any number of boys would play together). On a certain rainwater pipe (with a good shoe at the bottom) you would put 10 cherry pips in your hand, and thrust the hand hard up this shoe, which would send the cherry pips well up the rainwater pipe. Then, when they all rolled down again we would take notice where the pip had rolled away from the pipe the farthest. If it was yours you would keep your eye on it. All the other boys would follow, each sending their 10 pips up the shoot (or pipe). Well, at the end the boy whose pip had rolled out the farthest (that's how we used to talk) would pick up all the pips. Should there have been six boys playing, the winner would collect up 60 cherry pips. We called this game Cherry Lobbing.

The girls played Buttons. Instead of the girls collecting pips they would collect all kinds of buttons (any size). They would ask their mothers for old clothes to cut off all the buttons, and didn't you have to watch your sisters. They would cut off your buttons if your coat was hanging up (there was many a fight between brothers and sisters over this). A girl would mark a large square in chalk up near the wall of a house. They would always mark 'OXO' in the centre. The same procedure decided how many buttons each would play, say 10 each. Each girl, one after the other, would place 10 buttons on the kerbstone, in line

with the chalked square. Then they would flick each button (with the thumb and finger) forward until they all went into the square. After all the girls (say 6) had flicked their buttons onto the chalked square, the girl whose button was nearest, or on, the 'X' of OXO would gather up all the buttons, 60 again in all. The girls called this game Up the Buttons.

In the 1900s there was no radio, no television, not the dances, there wasn't any bingo, so we used to amuse ourselves at home. If the parents were good to you they'd play cards with you, or you'd amuse yourselves, or you'd go out with your mother. My oldest sister saved up a little money and bought a second-hand harmonium. This was put into the kitchen. Every so often we would all sit around and have a good 'ole sing-song. Well, everything went well for a few weeks, then Dad got tired of hearing this harmonium. It was one Sunday evening and my sister kept playing songs and hymns combined. My Dad wanted to read his Sunday newspaper (The Sunday News). Suddenly he shouted, "Edie, stop that horrible noise. I want to read my paper." But Edie continued to play, ignoring my father's shouts. He could stand it no longer. He threw his paper down, got out of his chair and over he went to the harmonium. In his temper he pulled the chair away from Edie quickly. Of course, she fell onto the floor and burst out crying. My mother told my father off in more words than one. Peace was then restored.

We had a very good-natured father, but unfortunately he was very quick tempered. As the years passed by

we would sit and recall these past events and combine them with a good laugh. Us children were not allowed to read the Sunday newspapers. If we did glance my father would say sternly, "Put that down, that's not for you to read." Proper 'Victorian' days!

Every Sunday we'd go for a walk. Our favourite walk was the cemetery, which was very funny but that was what Mum used to do, take us up the cemetery. If they used to see us boys hopping over the graves they used to tell us off. We used to go blackberry picking there. You used to get some lovely blackberries in the cemetery. There were three cemeteries in Brighton and we would take a turn, one Sunday Brighton and Preston Cemetery, another Sunday Hove Cemetery and so on. That's what we used to do to amuse ourselves, and used to play ludo, snakes and ladders, and drawing. We used to go to the beach, and there was Brighton Level. Of course, that's better today than it used to be. It used to be very rough in those days. Then there was Queen's Park, where they used to have little boats. We used to go up there tadpoling.

There is one more item of interest I would like to end with - us boys' and girls' visits to the cinema. Situated in Lewes Road (where the Brighton Labour Club is now) was a cinema called the Arcadia. When our parents could afford to give us a little pocket-money us schoolchildren would go to the Arcadia of a Saturday afternoon, line up at the ticket office and pay 1 penny. The lady would give us a heavy metal ticket (square) with a hole in



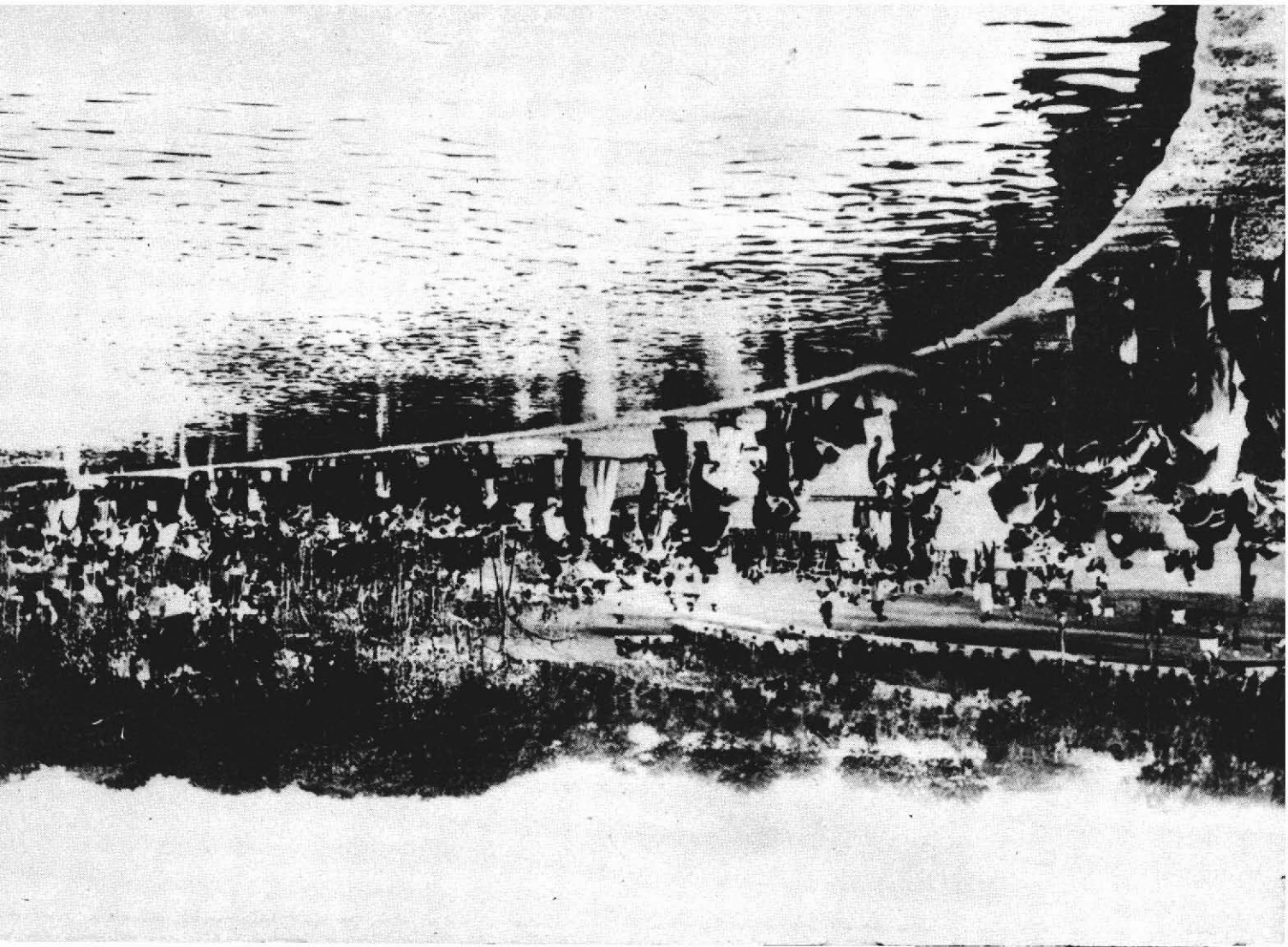
the centre. This was taken from us by the attendant. He would then slide all these metal tickets onto a rod; these would then be taken back to the office and used over and over again. In the cinema we would go, settle into the seats and wait excitedly for the films to start. All of a sudden the lights would dim, the curtains drawn over the windows, and up would strike the piano.

The pictures (as we called them) would commence. Nearly always this was cowboys and Indians on horseback shooting and killing. As the battle hotted up, so the piano would play louder and quicker, making the atmosphere more and more exciting. But tragedy would strike - the film would snap suddenly and the screen would become a blank, with great disappointment from us children. There was great excitement up in the projection room, repairing the broken film. At last, this being carried out, the film restarted amid great cheers from us children. After about 2 hours the show would come to an end with the showing on the screen of the King, the piano plonking away God Save Our King. Up went the lights, the curtain thrown back, and out we all trooped into the daylight having enjoyed our Saturday afternoon at the pictures.

## *poverty*

The public houses were open all day and up to midnight and this is where most of the people's money went, causing misery in the homes and shortage of food for the children. Parents had very little money to buy food and the shopkeepers knew they could diddle the customers, so make a lot of money. They would let the mothers have various foods on the book (or credit). The children would go into the shops and say, "½lb marge, 1lb sugar, pint of flour, a tin of milk." They were given the goods and no money paid, but everything went into a book. At the end of the week when father was paid, these customers were expected to pay - plus the extra they didn't know about. If they did not pay up there were no goods for them the next week. Then, as wages and working conditions improved the shopkeepers would put up a large notice in the shop: 'Please do not ask for trust as a refusal often offends'. Of course, poverty was caused by too many public houses, beer and very large families.

The reason why children and adults died young was because doctors and hospitals had not progressed in science and medicine (as they have today) but the real reason, with working class families, was because the doctor would want 1/6 every time he visited you. The parents could not afford to pay, so the attention wasn't given. Therefore, death would happen.



I would like to mention that when anyone in the street was seriously ill (the roads being hard and flinty), the neighbours would get bales of hay and straw and spread over the road to prevent the clatter of the horses and carts and to try and not disturb the sick person with the noise. Should a person die the door knockers were covered with cloth so that the noise of the bang would be deadened. All the mourners would be dressed in black clothes (men and women). This is where the tally man made a lot of money. All the handkerchiefs were edged with a wide black line. Also the notepaper and envelopes were edged with a black line all round. The dead person would be placed in a coffin. This would be placed on wooden trestles in the front room of the home and every so often friends or neighbours would come in, take a last look at the person in the coffin, and a good many would bend down and kiss the dead person. The day of the funeral would arrive. Up would come the hearse and carriages, drawn by lovely black stallions. Some would be single horse but if one had plenty of money there would be black horses in pairs. So off to the cemetery (how times have altered since). Everyone in the street would draw all their curtains in sympathy.

On the question of doctors. These poverty days, with money being very scarce, some very thoughtful doctors who studied the poor set up some surgeries in various parts of the town so that the patients could visit them, instead of having to go to the doctors' private houses. These surgeries were empty old shops. The doctors would have them painted a very dark brown paint, because this would



not show the dirt or dust and lasted for a good many years. They also laid dark brown lino on the floors, then put hard wooden forms around the walls. There would be one gas light hanging down from the centre of the ceiling or on the wall and this, in the winter time, was very dim and dingy. A paraffin stove used to warm the room. The large shop window (what was) was also painted  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way up the glass, to stop the general public going by seeing into the surgery, again making the surroundings inside very dismal.

I have seen doctors taking up their practices and visiting their patients on foot. Then as they accumulated a little more money they would go around on a bicycle, from this to a motor cycle. As times improved generally they bought motor cars, and from those days to the present days (as we all know) they have the finest motor cars going, and up to date surgeries; bright, clean and cheerful.

The doctor would make up the required medicine himself. There was no such thing as capsules, special pills or tablets. Should there be any particular medicine or ointments that the doctor hadn't got (also knowing that the patient had no money to pay for it), he would give you a sort of prescription note. You would have to take this to the Poor People's Dispensary, situated in Ditchling Road (at the corner of Upper Lewes Road). Here again, when you went into the waiting room, everywhere was dark brown paint and the walls a dark green. There would be long wooden forms to sit on. Let in the wall was a serving hatch. Suddenly this would slide back with a crash, a stern

voice would say, "Next please! Come along now, next please!" (Impatient.) You'd give your prescription to this dispenser, bang shut would go the trap hatch door. Then you would sit down and wait. All of a sudden open would come the trap hatch door, call out the name, give you the bottle of medicine or ointment, and away you would go, thankful to get out into the fresh air again. This Poor People's Dispensary building still stands today - the health people use it for mass chest radiography.

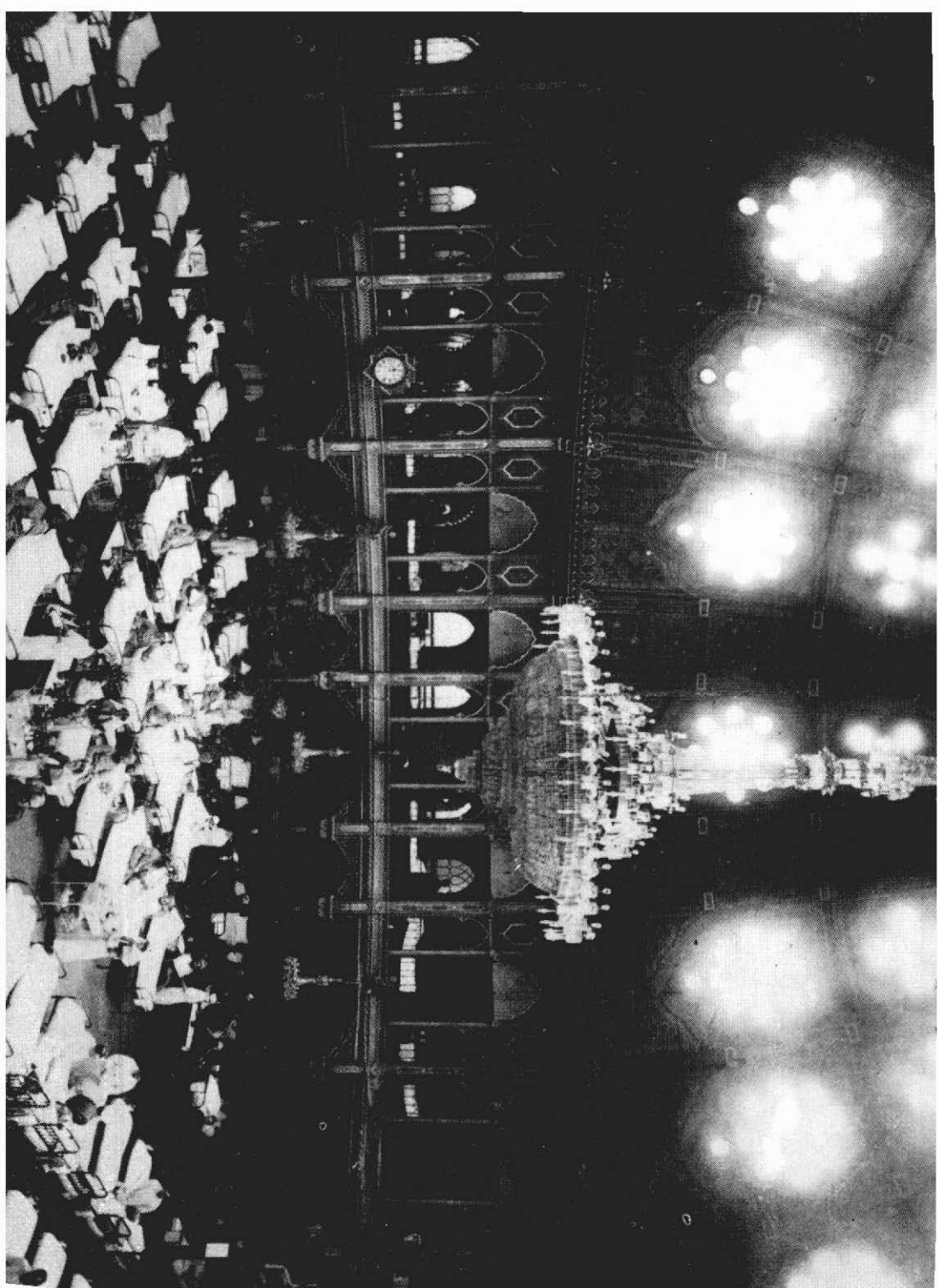
Practically all working class houses were let at a weekly rental. There were so many empty houses in the various streets because families could not afford to pay the rent. To encourage a tenant to take over a house, the owner would show the tenants over the house and say he was prepared to paint, decorate and paper the walls of every room. Then he would accept a week's rent and hand over the door key. I would like to add that, with some families, they would get behind with their rent. Should they owe 6 or 7 weeks' rent they would hire a hand barrow (at 1 penny per hour) from Dawkin's Forge in Marshall's Row and do a moonlight flit. They would put all their bits and pieces of furniture onto the barrow and clear off to an unknown destination, so get clear of paying the arrears of rent. Some were traced, others were not, but this was so common nobody took any notice. The move was always carried out very late at night, this being the reason of being called a moonlight flit.

The Salvation Army were very good to the poor families. About 3 times a year they would give to

about 200 boys and girls a tea-party at the Congress Hall (still there today). We had to take our own mugs or cups. These they would fill with tea, then give everyone a paper bag containing various cakes and biscuits (supplied by some local thoughtful tradesmen). This little outing we looked forward to.

Another fine organisation of ladies and gentlemen belonged to a church in Ann Street (still there today, but ready for demolition) called the London Road Congregational Church. Every Sunday afternoon in the church was held a men's meeting called the P.S.A., meaning a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. My father was a member. Every winter the minister knew (after a few enquiries) the members who were living under poor circumstances. Well, these ladies and gentlemen (I have mentioned previously) would buy a pile of wool blankets. These would be supplied in 1 pair or 2 pairs or even 3 pairs to the members who had large families. The member would pay 1/- for the loan of 1 pair, or 1/6 for 2 pairs. The members would take these blankets home to put on the children's beds, so keep them warm throughout the long winter. When the spring arrived, should the members return these blankets washed and clean, they would have their money refunded. This went on for many years. (My mother and father had 10 children; we were very thankful for these blankets.)





## *the Indian hospital*

The First World War was declared August 4th 1914 (my age then being 11 years). Several schools were converted into hospitals for wounded soldiers, etc., and the children were transferred to other schools. To cope with these extra children these other schools had to go on a half day basis (2 sessions a day). One lot of children would attend 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and the other children would attend 12.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. The old workhouse in Elm Grove (now the Brighton General Hospital) was converted into a hospital and called the Lord Kitchener's Hospital.

Brighton Railway Station was the scene of great activity when the hospital trains drew in (direct from Dover) from France full of wounded soldiers and a great many stretcher cases. Us school children would get as near as we could to the platforms and see the Royal Army Medical Corps attending the wounded and loading up the vast number of Red Cross ambulances with stretcher cases, etc. All these wounded were still covered in mud and filth from the trench warfare. As these ambulances sped on their way to the various hospitals, us children plus the general public, would clap our hands and cheer the wounded.

The Royal Pavilion was converted into an Indian Hospital and a great many Indian soldiers were treated for their wounds. A great many died of

their wounds. Their bodies were taken on to the hills of Patcham and cremated. This spot is known as The Chattri. All around the Pavilion were ornamental iron railings (now gone) and fixed to these was a closely boarded wooden fence about 8 feet high (for privacy), to stop the generall public from peering in. As some of the Indian soldiers got better of their wounds (a good many had arms and legs amputated) they wanted a little more freedom and so it became a familiar sight to see a crutch flung over the high fence and then another crutch, followed by an Indian soldier with one leg scrambling down the high fence. He would gather up his crutches quickly and off he would go (probably to visit some friends he had made or to a hideaway club to have a sly drink).

I would like to add, that all wounded soldiers (British or Indian) were dressed in blue (coat and trousers) and also they all wore red ties. The reason being that they were not allowed inside the public houses and served with drinks. Any publicans found serving beer to any wounded soldier were heavily fined and also liable to have their licences taken away.

Us schoolchildren were all lined up in our playground and then *marched four-deep* through the various streets, down to the Indian Hospital. The large iron gates were opened and in we all marched. We were met by a military guide and taken into the hospital wards and received a great welcome from the wounded Indian soldiers, some very badly wounded, others sitting up in their beds and a good many

pushing themselves around in wheel-chairs. We gave them some sweets and cigarettes. From the wards we were taken to the operating theatre and met some of the doctors who kindly explained to us some of the various implements and gas cylinders etc. From here we were taken to the kitchens and as we passed through we were given a round flat piece of pastry (all nicely baked and rich brown). This was called chu-pattie, or Indian bread. We were very proud of this, also our visit to the Indian Hospital.

And so out into the fresh air once again. Open came the large gates again and home we went, excitedly carrying our round of Indian bread to show our parents and friends. When we arrived back at school the next morning us children had a shock, because we all had to write a composition of our visit to the Indian Hospital and so we had to recall our memories of what we saw. But apart from this, it was a wonderful experience that I have never forgotten.

After the 1914-1918 war came to an end the Indian Government were so thankful to the inhabitants of Brighton for the hospitality we gave to their wounded soldiers that they had built (at their expense) a great magnificent gateway (at the south end). Carved into the stonework on one side of the gateway are these words:

THIS GATEWAY IS THE GIFT OF INDIA IN  
COMMEMORATION OF HER SONS WHO STRICKEN IN  
THE GREAT WAR WERE TENDED IN THE PAVILION  
IN 1914 AND 1915.

(On the other side of the gateway))

DEDICATED TO THE USE OF THE INHABITANTS OF  
BRIGHTON BY H.H. THE MAHARAJA OF PATIALA  
ON OCTOBER THE 26TH 1921.

## *railways, cabs, trams*

The Brighton railway was called the L.B.S.C.R., meaning the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway. There was 1st, 2nd and 3rd class travelling (today there is no 3rd class). Anyone was allowed on the platforms free. Us children enjoyed watching the big steam engines puff and blow and let off steam.

Southover Street being a very steep hill (leading up from the Level to Queen's Park Road) was used by the police for testing the driving of the owners of taxi-cabs. The test was to get them to drive the taxi halfway up the steep part and make them stop. Should the brakes hold well, the police inspector would then ask the driver to restart again. Some would release their brakes to restart but, unfortunately not being fully experienced, the taxi would start to run back (causing a few words of caution). They would also have to back down the hill and turn into a side street. This would go on day after day until the various drivers became efficient, and so making them licenced to drive.

Of course, previous to the above motor driven taxi-cabs we had the horse drawn cabs plying for hire. These stood on hard concrete fluted bases (or cab stands) along the sea front and various parts of the town. Very often one would notice a naughty boy sitting on the back axle, who had suddenly run out into the road and hopped up onto

the back axle (of course holding on with his hands) having a free ride unbeknown to the driver. But should he know there was a boy there, he would lash his long whip right over to the back of the cab, hoping to hit the boy. Sometimes they were slashed across the face - they would very soon hop off and run for dear life.

Public transport was tram-cars that used to rattle along Lewes Road, Grand Parade, Old Steine, Marlborough Place and London Road, and branch off here for New England Road to the top of Dyke Road, or Beaconsfield Road, continue along Preston Drove, then down Ditchling Road to the Aquarium. The trams also ran up Elm Grove to the Race Hill, back down along Queen's Park Road and Egremont Place, then return back the same way. Eventually all tram-cars returned to the Aquarium.

The Tramways Undertaking was officially inaugurated on the 25th November 1901, and by February 1902 the Lewes Road, Ditchling Road, Beaconsfield Road, Elm Grove, Queen's Park Road and New England Road routes were opened. Originally the terminus was at the north end of the Pavilion, but in November 1902 the tramway track was continued from the Pavilion to the Aquarium. In June 1904 the service was extended from the Seven Dials northwards along Dyke Road to Tivoli Crescent, whilst in the following month (July 1904) the route to the station was opened. The linking of New England Road and Elm Grove via Viaduct Road and Union Road constituted the 'cross country route'. This was opened in 1927

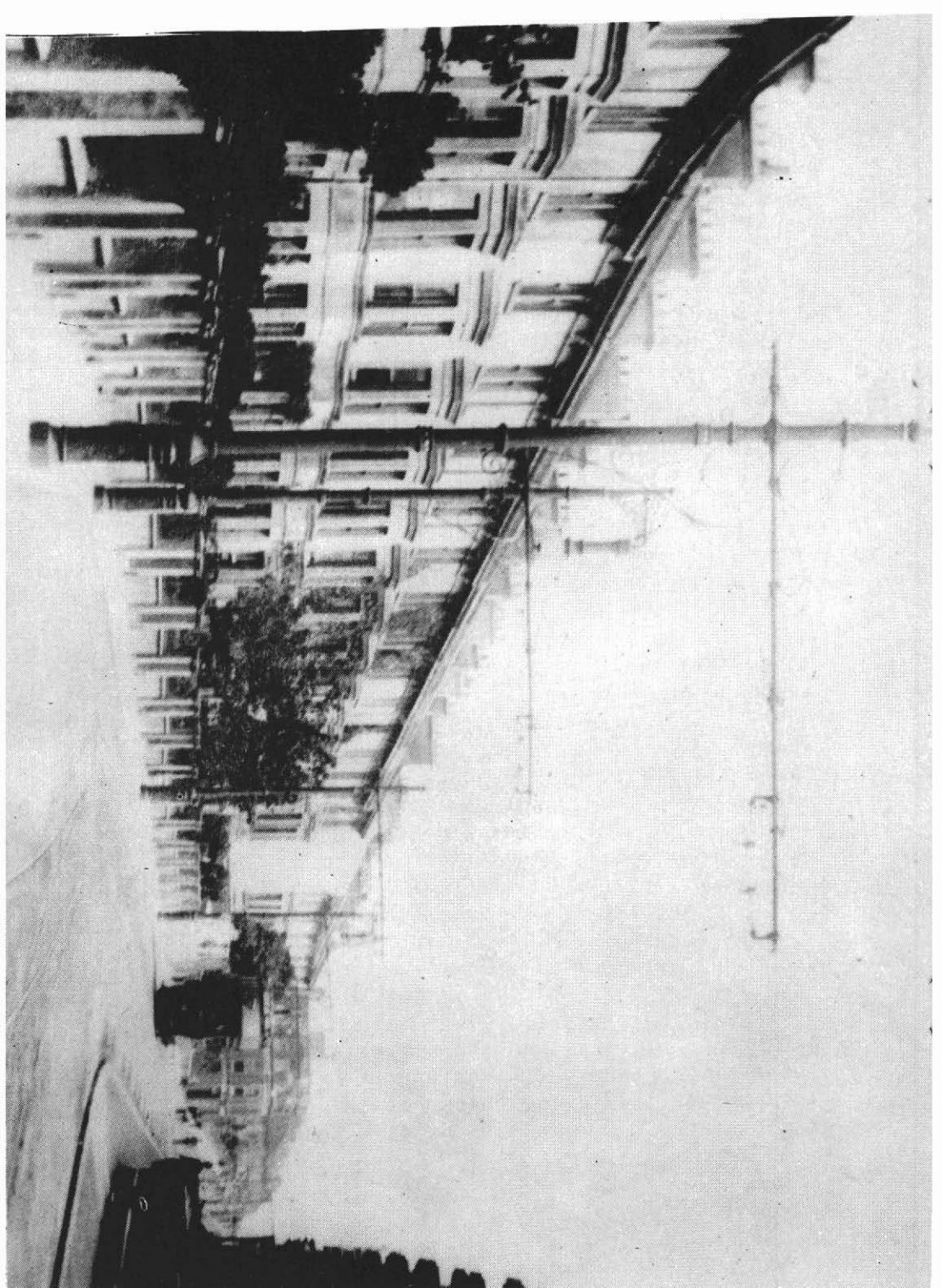
Tram-cars were all of the double-deck type with

open top deck, two axle, 3ft. 6in. gauge, seating 50 to 54 passengers. At the time of the opening in 1901 there were 25 tram-cars. They were subsequently increased and upon the abandonment in 1939 there was a fleet of 80 tram-cars, for which from 1914 onwards the bodies were in the main constructed by the Undertaking. The tram-car equipments were manufactured by the British Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Co., Messrs. Witting Bros. and Messrs. Dick Kerr & Co.

The last tram-cars were operated on the Queen's Park Road route on the 31st August 1939. When the tramcars came to the end of their route they would come off the double track and run onto a stretch of single track. Then the driver or conductor would go up to the top of the tram-car, untie a long rope, throw this down into the roadway and then pull down hard to take the trolley wheel off the live overhead cable. Then he would revolve the arm and trolley wheel the other way round, back onto the overhead cable and retie the rope back into position. The driver would then shoot the track points over with the lever bar to put the tram-car (when returning) back onto the left-hand track, and so back to the Aquarium. This procedure had to be carried out on every route except the Beaconsfield Road tram-cars, because they had a circular run along Preston Drive and then down into Ditchling Road back to the Aquarium.

At the end of every run the driver would take off the starting handle and replace it into position, to commence the journey back, at the other end of the tram-car. At the turn of this handle he could





increase the speed or reduce it and also shut off all the electric current to stop.

As these tram-cars came to the branch lines there used to be a points boy to switch over. He was a boy about 14 to 16 years of age, given tramway uniform to wear. His job was to change the track points over with a steel rod. The drivers would pull up at all these various crossings on the tram track and wait until the points boy had switched the points. On the advancement of engineering all points were operated electrically. Where the driver stood there was a metal knob sticking up just above the platform and when he wanted to give warning of his approach he would put his heel onto this knob and press down several times violently, so striking a loud gong on a bell under the platform.

When the tram track needed renewing the wood road blocks would be removed, exposing solid concrete in between the rails. This concrete was broken up by several gangs of hefty men (5 men to a gang). One would hold a square heavy pritchel (a steel chisel) with some heavy long tongs, and the other 4 men had a 28lb. sledge-hammer each. At the word 'strike' the number 1 man would bring up and swing the heavy hammer over his shoulder and so hit the pritchel. Then number 2 man, then number 3 man, then number 4 man. This hammering went on like clockwork until the men had had enough and also until all the concrete had been broken up and removed, so making way for the new rails to be laid.

At the time of the tram-cars all the Valley Gardens and Victoria Gardens (as we know them today) were

surrounded by iron railings (so was the Level). When the trams reached Grand Parade the track became a single track and the track ran along practically hard up to the railings on the right-hand side of the road. This continued right down to the Aquarium, then continued back on the other side of the gardens until the trams spread out again onto their various tracks for their own destinations.

The tram-cars were open at each end where the driver would drive. Also, the top of the tram was all open to the sky, with waterproof aprons hanging from the back of the seats to place over your legs should it be raining hard. The seats were wooden slatted to allow the rainwater to run through. All the driver wore was a sou'wester hat, a black oilskin coat and gloves to keep him dry.

The ornamental standard-lamps were put up all around the tramway system. They gave the night lighting and also carried the overhead electric cables for the running of the trams. At the bottom of these lamp standards was an iron door. This was unlocked by the lamp cleaner and maintenance man. He would then take out a handle (like a motor car starting handle), place the square hole onto the square end of the spindle inside the door, and then he would turn this handle. Down would come the large round light bowl from the top of the lamp standard. He would then release some clips and the lower half of the light bowl would swing down on hinges. Inside this bowl was the lighting gear, consisting of black carbon rods. These he would replace if necessary. After cleaning the lamp bowl inside and

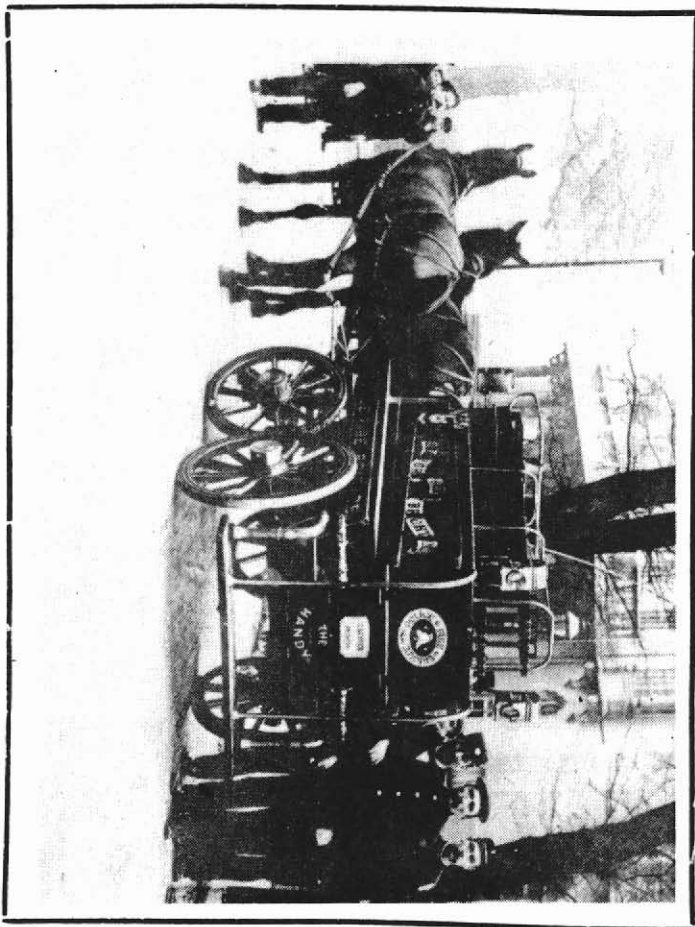
outside he would then close the bowl up with a snap, go to the little door, rewind the lamp up to the top into position, close the door and lock same. The carbon rods combined with electricity gave a brilliant light.

Previous to the tram-cars, for a short time there were horse buses. Each bus had a pair of horses. The driver sat in a high seat holding the reins, with his legs covered with a blanket, and a waterproof apron. After several journeys the horses were changed at the top of Church Street for another pair that had been resting. These horse buses would run from the Brighton Railway Station, down Queen's Road to the Clock Tower, continue along Western Road out as far as the Hove boundary, then return back to the railway station.



Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Bright New Year.

ALWAYS READY



EVER WILLING

LOUIS VICTOR LACROIX, *Paris*

Fire Superintendent.

## *street life*

When horses and carts were going down the steep hills of Brighton the drivers would chain one back wheel of the cart to secure it, then put a skid-pan under the wheel to assist the horse to hold back the heavy cart. A skid-pan was a heavy piece of metal about 16" long x 7" wide x 1" thick, with the 2 long edges turned up, so forming a sort of an oblong box (or trough) for the wheel to lay in. This was secured by a long chain to the under part of the cart, thus allowing the secured wheel to stay on the skid-pan. Being made of hard steel, this would slide on the road as the horse pulled the cart down the hill. These large fine horses were called drays. They used them in pairs, sometimes 3, to pull the heavy carts loaded with beer barrels and casks. Also, the Railway Company would have them to draw their very heavy loads.

The streets and roads became so dusty with all this horse traffic that the Corporation had to spray the roads with water to keep the dust down. This was carried out by water-carts, a large metal tank on wheels (again pulled by horses), filled with water got from a oft. tall hydrant. As the horse pulled the water-cart through the streets the pressure of the water in the tank would force the water out through long narrow containers (low down and at the back), through thousands of small holes, forming a fine spray of

water on to the roads. If the driver had to pass any other vehicle that was stationary he could shut the water spray off (right or left hand as he required).

Before the present large Fire Brigade premises were built, all it was then, in 1900, was a very large high pitched wooden structure, with the heavy wooden doors always open. At the back were some stables with 2 fine grey horses. The harness was fully buckled, in such a way that the whole complete outfit was pulled up in position over the fire engine. When the fire-alarm went the firemen would rush to the stables, bring down the horses to the front of the engine and release the harness. This would drop into position directly onto the horses' and with a few buckles strapped to the shafts away they would gallop, with the brass bell ringing.

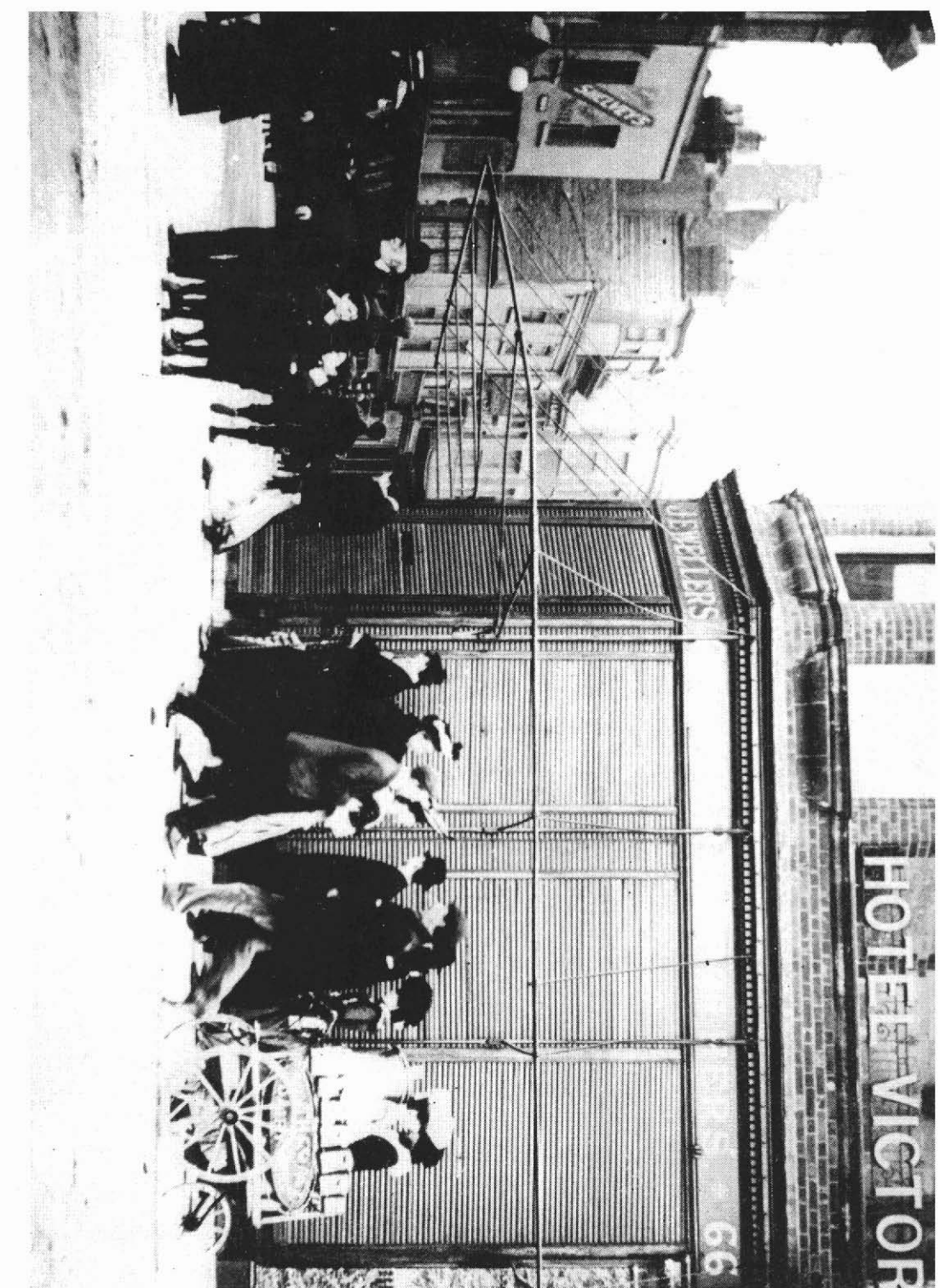
What a sight it was when they galloped by with the large brass water cylinder at the back of the engine belching out smoke, the fire making the pressure to force the water through the hoses. The Fire Brigade was controlled by a man named Captain Lacroix. He was the mad chief, because when he arrived at the fire he would put his men to work, and then out would come his axe, smashing his way through doors and windows. In fact sometimes, it is said, he would do more damage than the fire did.

The dustbins were supplied by the landlords to the tenants. Twice a week a horse drawn cart would arrive at the houses. The dustmen would

put a ladder up to the cart (there would be 3 dustmen). They would open the house doors and shout, "Dust? Dust?" In they would go, out into the back yards, pick up the dustbins, go back through the house, up the ladder, empty the rubbish into the cart and then return again through the house with the empty bin, with the inside covered with disinfectant powder. When the dustcart was full the dustmen would trot the horse away to Black Rock (Kempton), back the cart to the edge of the cliff, then turn a handle and up would go the cart container and away went the rubbish down into the sea. They would turn the handle again, putting the dust container back into position and away they would go for more rubbish.

Milk was brought around the streets and houses by a two-wheeled cart carrying a large metal milk churn which held about 20 gallons of milk. This churn had a tap at the bottom which overhung the back of the cart and this allowed the milkman to fill his smaller 4 gallon hand can. Hanging on the side of these cans were  $\frac{1}{4}$  pint,  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint, 1 pint and 2 pint ladles with hooked handles. The customers would ask for the amount of milk wanted and the milkman then would ladle out the required amount into the jug (nearly everyone brought a jug to the door). The milkman was very pleased when it was raining hard, because, when he was serving out the milk he would leave the lid off the can for as long as he could do so to allow the rain to fall in the can and so make more milk. Although the milk became weaker this was the system and nobody bothered. Besides,





HOTEL VICTOR

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SALTS

there were no Weights & Measures inspectors in those days to keep an eye on them.

There were no window cleaners either so people would shut all their windows tightly, fetch a bucket of clean water, put a syringe (this was like a large bicycle pump) into the bucket, draw up the syringe full of water and point it to the windows pushing the handle in and causing a jet of water to spray over them. This was left to drip. All the windows were treated the same way. The pavements were scrubbed with a hard broom.

Street lamps were lit by gas mantles. A man would ride around on a cycle carrying a long pole with a hook on one side (at the top) and an oil lit flame on the other side. The man would go through all the streets allotted to him, pull down the lever on the lamp in order to release the gas, and then he would twist the pole round and light the gas mantle. The next morning he would return and ride up to the lamps and, without getting off his cycle, push up the lever and so put out the light. This went on year in and year out until we got the present day electric light.

There was a man we used to call the Trotter-Man because every night, about 10 o'clock to midnight, he would have on his head a large wooden tray, filled with cooked pigs' trotters. He would shout out as he walked through the streets "Large tasty trotters! Large tasty trotters!" Out would come the people from their houses or from pubs and he would put his hand up into the tray and bring down the trotters with a jar of mustard as well, hand

the trotters to the customer, take the money and off he would go (but he never took the tray off his head until all the trotters were sold!)

Schoolboy hair cuts cost  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pence. The barber would get his hand clippers and run this all over your head, cutting or nearly shaving off your hair but always leaving a tuft of hair in the front; this is what the schoolteachers took hold of to pull you out in front of the class should you have misbehaved yourself. Men would have a shave (the soap was rubbed onto the face by a lather boy who would start as this when he was beginning to learn the trade. The shave would cost 1 penny.

The Evening Argus those days was known as 'the  $\frac{1}{2}$  penny liar' because a lot of the news was a little false! It was comprised of 1 large sheet of printed matter (advertisements and news) and then folded down the middle, thus making 2 pages but 4 sides of advertisements and news. Men and schoolboys would run through the streets shouting, "Argus! Evening Argus!" with the papers hanging over their arm. Quick as lightning, they would grab the  $\frac{1}{2}$  penny from the customer and hand over the Argus. Why they ran was to get in front of the other boys and thus sell more papers (there were no papers delivered).

The large Whitehawk housing estate was in my day called the Piggeries because there were a great many small pig farms. Several hundred pigs (and they didn't 'arf smell!) were housed in rusty old broken down sheds (or rough stables, because horses as well were kept there).

Practically every house (although the people were poor) was very fond of geraniums and aspidistras. These were placed in pots in nearly all the windows (they did look nice). Well, when it rained hard, the people would put all these potted plants out into the street, stand them all in a row on the kerb stone to catch the rain and so give the plants a good soaking (hundreds and hundreds of them in all the streets was quite a common sight).

The Brighton Fish Market was a very interesting place to be, especially when the large fishing smacks (boats) came into land loaded with fish. The fishermen on the boat got as near as possible to the shore (this was very difficult when the sea was rough) and then they would throw a long rope to the other men on the beach. These men (the more the merrier and sometimes there used to be as many as 10 or 12) would pull and pull the heavy boat nearer until it was shallow enough for the fishermen on the boat to jump off and so give their mates a hand to pull. As the boat was heaved up a little at a time they would then get some old railway sleepers and well grease them and place them on the beach so that the boat slid on to them. A stout wire hawser (or cable) would then be fastened to the keel by a large metal ring. The hawser was attached to a drum on a capstan and through the top of the capstan a long strong pole was forced through a hole tight. Then, attached to this pole was the harness of a horse. When the fishermen down on the beach shouted "Heave! Heave!" the horse would be led around and around, each time automatically stepping over the

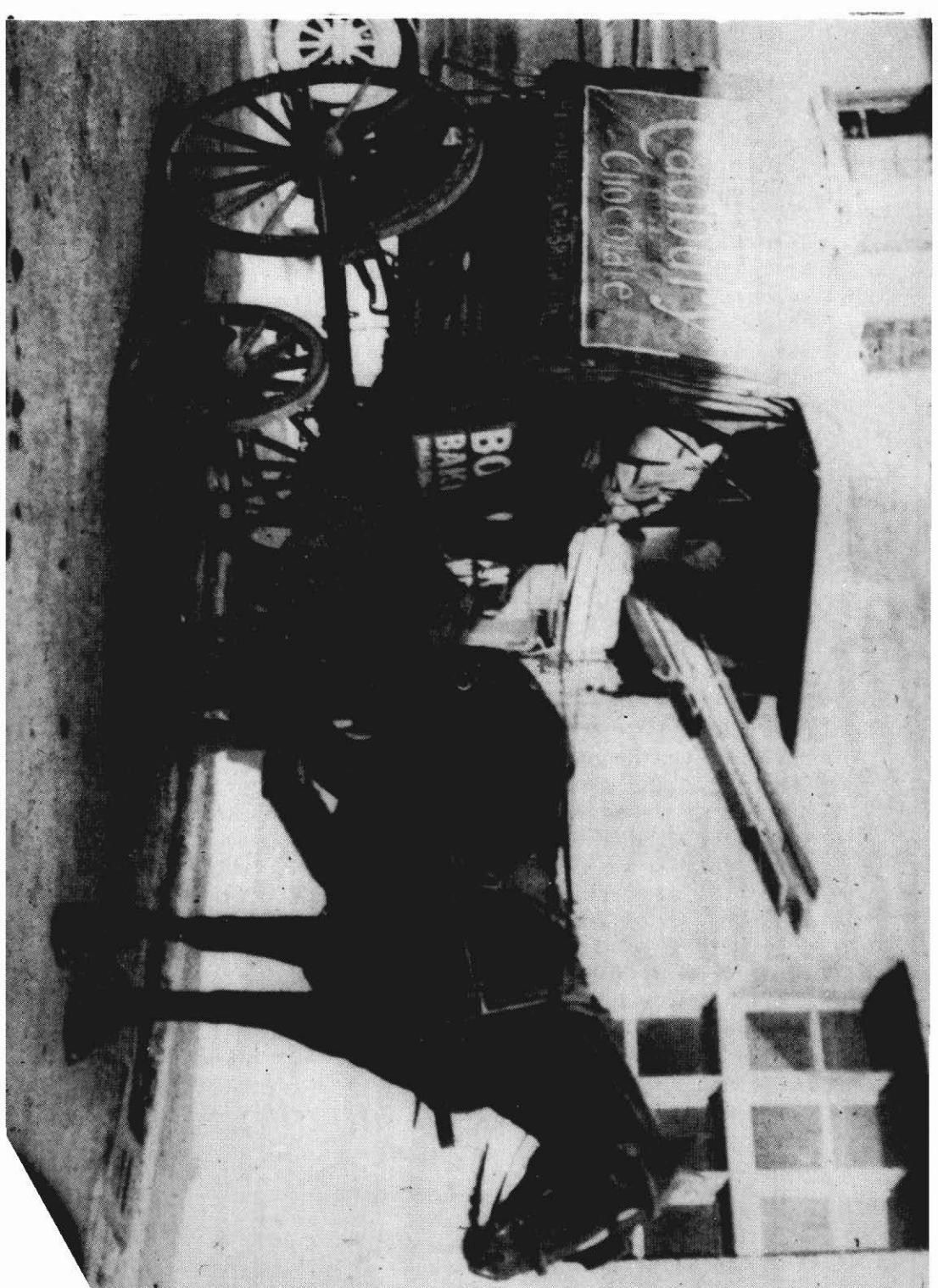
hawser as it came around, and so the boat was pulled up the beach until it was well up and then unloaded of the fish (all sorts and sizes). This fish was boxed up or laid about in piles and sold by auction.

Brighton had 2 open street markets (like Petticoat Lane, London). One was held in Upper Gardner Street (and is still held there every Saturday morning) and the other was held in Oxford Street. All the stalls in both markets were lit up by paraffin flares. These were round tin cans (filled with paraffin oil) and coming out from the cans were long thin spouts with a spray jet on the end. The cans were hung upside down causing the oil to run to the jet. This the stall holder would light adjust the flare and my word! with about 100 of these burning throughout the market the air was full of black smoke and paraffin fumes, but we all accepted it because there was no other means of lighting. These stalls were open until 10 and 11 o'clock at night. As the motor car and motor lorry age came in Oxford Street started to get congested with the stalls on each side of the street as well and so the police and the Council decided to put the market in the Level.

All the shrubs and small trees from each side of the main public pathway (leading from Southover Street to Ditchling Road) were dug up. Then they removed the earth, rolled in hard-core and asphalted where the shrubs had been growing. When this had been completed all the tradespeople moved their stalls and barrows into the Level, each side of the pathway, and settled down happily, again

setting up their stinking paraffin flares for light. This Open Market remained here for several years until once again the Council decided (after a lot of discussion with the stall holders) that they would build them a permanent covered open market. They came to a decision: the Council demolished a large number of small old houses and business premises, also a row of old cottages called Marshall's Row, and this is how the present Open Market came into being. Of course the outcome was, that, the stall holders had to pay rent now. The Market was opened on January 7th, 1960. After they moved out of the Level the Council once again dug up the asphalt each side of the parkway, replaced the earth, replanted the present day trees and shrubs and also a fine array of flowers, etc., which come into season every year.

And now to a different subject: cinemas. Having just recently read that Top Rank are going to demolish the Regent Cinema my mind goes back to the year 1907 when the site where the Regent now stands was called Unicorn Yard, and on the corner of Windsor Street (still there today) there was a very large public house called The Unicorn. There was a massive big yard leading off from this pub (very rough and full of potholes). Around this this yard were stables and workshops. Flights of wooden steps took you up to a balcony all around, and leading off from this balcony were more workshops. Boot repairing, builders, cabinet makers, sun-blind makers, carpenters and joiners, knife and scissor grinders, furniture repairers, chair menders and caners, etc., etc.; all these



various trades went on down below in the yard. Nearly all the farm carts and waggons would come in from the country loaded with hay, straw, potatoes, cabbages, fruit and various vegetables.

The country carriers (because there were no motor vehicles those days), all horse drawn, would leave Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, Worthing, Ringmer and Lewes and all the little villages in between very early in the morning. The horses would plod, plod, plod along the country roads into Brighton up to the Unicorn Yard. The drivers would unharness their horses and stable them here for 2 nights, and unload their goods for the Brighton market, which was down Black Lion Street by the Brighton Town Hall (but not now, it's in Circus Street). The various businesses and shopkeepers who had goods for the country, they would take their goods and parcels to the country carriers in Unicorn Yard, sign a book and their goods would arrive at their destination without fail. I would like to add that all the above activity also went on at the Druids Head. This was another big yard down Brighton Place, at the back of Hanningtons, the name again derived from the public house called The Druid's Head (still there today).

Having twin brothers, one of them, on leaving school in 1914 (at the age of 14) got a job with a local builders, ironmongery and household ware firm. He also got me a job (and I was aged 11). It was a Saturday morning job, sweeping the shop floor and the pavement outside and cleaning the shop windows and green glazed tiles around the shop



front. When the country orders had been packed up I had to load them onto a handbarrow and push this heavy load (and I was only a small boy) down to the Druid's Head Yard to certain carriers, and then on up North Street to the Unicorn Yard to other special carriers, because carriers went to different parts of the country and put up at the two different yards. My hours of work were 8 o'clock to 1 o'clock (5 hours) and the pay was 6 pence. I gave my mother the 6 pence and she gave me back 3 pence for my pocket. The other 3 pence helped her a little bit and I was very happy.



The Unicorn Inn

I now come to the end of the 10 years of excitement and poverty, having done my best to put into words the happenings and the life our parents and us children endured (but enjoyed in our small way, because we never knew any different) in the poverty days of the early 19 hundreds.



This book is the first in a series to be published by QueenSpark. QueenSpark, our street newspaper now seven issues and two years old, grew out of a campaign to turn a disused Georgian Spa into a nursery school. We have now become involved in many local issues in the Queen's Park area of Brighton. Our aim is to enable people to gain control over their day to day lives.

Albert Paul, a 71 year old retired carpenter who has lived in the area all his life, describes in vivid detail the life of a boy brought up in poverty in the early 1900s.

WE WELCOME MORE IDEAS AND  
MANUSCRIPTS

14 Toronto Terrace, Brighton



A street party in Southampton Street in 1938. Mr. Paul is standing outside his front door. He and his sons are ringed. Such parties, in which the families from Hanover ward would get together, show, says Mr. Paul, the community spirit among the poor and the happiness they all created with one another.