

# THE TOWN BEEHIVE

-A YOUNG GIRL'S LOT BRIGHTON 1910-1934

*Fun*



by Daisy Noakes

*QueenSpark Books*

30p

# QueenSpark Books

QueenSpark Books are produced by people living in the Queen's Park area of Brighton. In this area a campaign began in 1972 to have the derelict Royal Spa building in Queen's Park made into a nursery school and community centre, an issue which, 3 years later, still remains undecided. Out of it has grown a street newspaper, QueenSpark which has tried to provide a voice for the community on local issues. The QueenSpark group is open to all in the area.

The main aim of the book series is to publish the autobiographies of working people. Everyone can write a book. We believe that by enabling people to speak for themselves we can make our own history.

Queen Spark Books 1 was "Poverty, Hardship and Happiness - those were the days 1903 - 1917" by A. Paul, published Dec. 1974, reprinted Feb. 1975 and now out of print.

Queen Spark Books 2 was "Out of the Blue - and Blues" by Katherine Browne, published in Dec. 1975 with the present volume.



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Grandfather Jack Brooker - the treeplanter on the left and some of the family about 1900

# THE TOWN BEEHIVE

## - A YOUNG GIRL'S LOT BRIGHTON 1910-1934

*by Daisy Noakes*

### *introduction*

"I wrote it as I thought of it. When I wrote this down I never thought it would get into print. I read Albert Paul's 'Poverty' and thought everybody should write something like this to leave to their children." Daisy Noakes and her husband George have two children, Geoffrey and Gladys and three grandchildren, all in Brighton, but fortunately the rest of us can also read this story of life in Brighton in the early part of this century.

Daisy was born at 27, Princes Road in 1908, the sixth of 10 children. Her parents and grandparents were all Sussex born. Her father came from the Amberley family Hook, blacksmiths, travellers, who added to their income by stripping withies for cane-making at 1/6d a day. Her father John, was also one of 10 children, a shepherd boy who later, with his



brother, went into service with the wealthy of Brighton's Royal Crescent.. There they met, and later married the two Brooker girls, Daisy's mother and aunt.

The Brookers were a Brighton family from Howard Road. It was Daisy's Brooker grandfather, a treeplanter, who at the time being written about was planting the trees on the Level. Meanwhile grandmother Brooker, who could not resist the lure of an empty shop, had set up the home-made sweet shop at 77, Islingword Road, subsequently run by Daisy's aunt and uncle, and open for 47 years (until 1948).

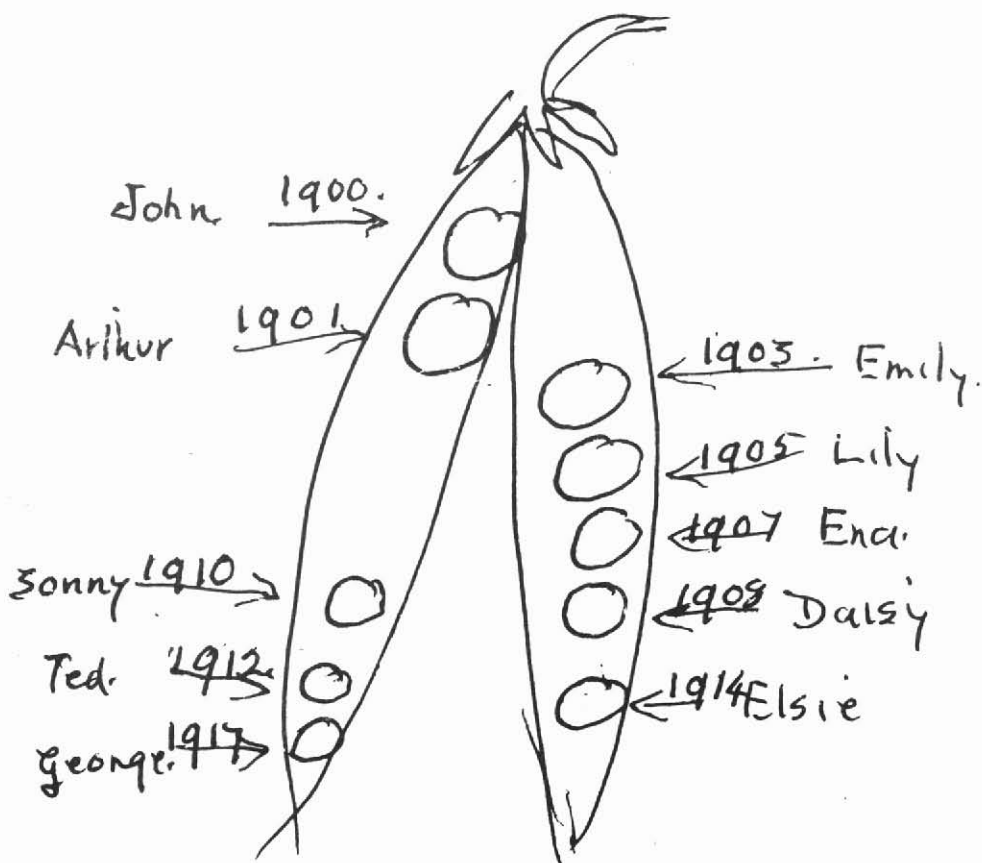
Her mother Emily, was one of 13 children - on her own from 11 years old, in service in Scotland and on the Duke of Norfolk's estate. With her own 10 children she was unusually severe - even by the standards of the time which dictated a strict discipline in all large families. Daisy's husband George remembers it as the most orderly family ever, meals in silence, not a word over the shoulder. When courting Daisy, he remembers being charged 1/- for tea, 6d for Daisy when they visited on their day off. "You don't get anything for nothing", Daisy's mother would tell them.

It is Daisy's paid working life that she wrote, at our suggestion, in part 2 of this book, and it was at Ovingdean Hall that she met her husband George. He came from a farm working background in Lewes. After marriage and a one day honeymoon, they moved about the countryside, leaving one job in 1939, only a week before the decree against people leaving agricultural jobs. From then on they returned to Brighton, and George continued the family tradition of working for Allen Wests, where Daisy's father had worked as a packer for 40 years. Once married Daisy, like other women, left domestic service, since employers advertised only for

"maids without encumbrances".

Daisy's book emphasizes the special lot of a girl in a large family and in the working world which started formally and inexorably for a girl at 14 or before. As Daisy's mother put it, "It's your lot to work. Once you're in the world, there's no room here for you."

Today, Daisy looks after George who is handicapped, at Selsfield Drive - she writes poems, paints, and goes to the Prior House class on the history of the Queen's Park area, but above all she enjoys doing lace-crotchet work for the church. In between she is taking down dictation for George's own autobiography.



# *part 1*

Monday was washday, no matter what the weather was like.

With five boys and five girls, every day was a wash day, but Monday was different. It must have been the original "Day of Steam". Everywhere one looked was water in baths, bowls, copper and puddles on the concrete floor.

The copper was filled by Dad overnight, and when he rose in the morning, the copper fire would be started before he went to work as a milk roundsman. One of my older brothers would go with him to help deliver the cans which were then used.

When Mum arose and had her breakfast the water in the stone-built copper was hot enough for her to start her day. So by the time we children came downstairs, as the quarter to eight station hooter sounded, Mum was already at the washtub attacking the linen with a scrubbing brush on a board, using the Sunlight Soap which was supplemented with soda and Hudson's soap extract, altogether these made a good lather.

Monday was also the day we kept out of her way, unless called to turn the handle of the huge iron-framed mangle which had wooden rollers. The handle was turned several times to make the rollers turn once, which was very tiring to our young arms. There also seemed no let-up in the feeding of it.

We children looked after ourselves most of the time. We could always ask an older brother or sister if we wanted to know anything.

The first child down in the morning would slice and cut bread in squares to be shared among five or six basins, depending on how many were attending school. By this time the brother who had been out with Dad would return, and depending on how much milk was

in our can, we would have milk over our bread or cocoa. This was our breakfast every day. I did not know what egg and bacon tasted like till I left home and went into service at 14 years of age.

We could see through the living room window clouds of steam emerging from the open door and window, where it had found its way from the copper, across the ceiling, to its exit. The rhythmic scrub-scrub sound came to our ears.

We knew exactly what the scullery looked like if we dare look round the closed door. There would be baths and bowls of water, some blue, some with starch, and not much room to walk about, so we stacked our basins at the end of the table and off we went to school.

When we returned midday, one of us would cut slices of meat for all the plates, fry the leftover vegetables and share it. If any trifle was left from Sunday dinner that also was shared. What an elaborate name for three penny worth of stale cakes, with a custard made with skimmed milk. The milk was brought round the streets by a man carrying huge cans in both hands. We took our jug and he used a metal dipper to put the milk in our jug. It was very frothy.

The plates were then piled up by the side of the morning basins, and if Mum found we had a few minutes to spare before returning to school, there was still the mangle handle to turn, or see if some of the clothes were dry on the line, bring them in to make room to hang out more.

By the time we reached home in the afternoon, the scullery door was open and no steam about, also few bowls and baths around. But that did not mean that all work was done.

all the china off the high dresser which reached the ceiling, its shelves full of dishes and plates overlapping on each shelf. These were never used, just made the dresser look pretty. The two vegetable dishes to match were on the flat surface underneath and under their lids a marvellous collection of buttons, rubber bands, pins etc. which we could find no other place for.

When this was done, the copper lid was scrubbed, also the duck-boards which Mum stood on to keep her feet dry. The floor to be scrubbed, copper hearth-stone and yard scrubbed down. Then the place was fit to be in. Mum would then go upstairs to wash, change her dress, and put on her fancy ear-rings and necklace, so when Dad came home she looked as bright as a new pin.

I recall one Monday, when the copper fire was slow to burn, I was sent to the corner shop for a remedy. It was a cardboard box three inches square. The directions were: - Place in the reddest part of the fire, block up the front. In went the box, the door shut, Mum hurriedly placed her large pastryboard in front of that, and a chair to hold the board, which I sat on. Suddenly there was an almighty bang. The copper jumped up out of its socket and the concrete holding it in looked like crazy paving. I looked over my shoulder to see smoke as well as steam going up to the ceiling. I waited no longer. I grabbed my hat and coat, and ran off to school.

Large families were not uncommon in my childhood. In fact couples were encouraged to have children to make up the loss of man-power in the first World War. The "News of the World" presented round willow patterned trays to mothers of ten, and we had one.

I was the sixth child, so there were some older and  
9 some younger, but only one younger girl. She was





Elsie, a fair haired delicate looking child, who seemed always tired. We could hardly wake her for breakfast. Her head would drop almost into her basin like the dormouse in "Alice in Wonderland". When this happened Sonny, who was always hungry, would scoop the bread from her basin to his. I think Mum had her suspicions because one morning she stayed in the room, and no amount of prodding and shaking could make Elsie empty her basin. When we came home for mid-day meal, Elsie's basin was put in front of her, and again at tea time until it was eaten, because Mum would not allow any waste.

I had asthma as a child, and my mother was advised to give me fat off the meat. I hated it. Always a lump of fat on my plate. I would leave it till last, then hold it in my cheek till I could dash out to spit it down the closet.

All our meals were eaten in silence as Mum considered we had plenty of time to talk in between. When the table was laid for any meal, a walking stick was hung on the back of Mum's chair, and at tea-time, Dad's chair. That was the only meal we saw Dad. His other meals did not coincide with ours. Should one of us start whispering, reading comic papers, or looking at cigarette cards under the table, we'd get a stroke with the stick.

Mum was very strict. We were regimented and no one dare put a foot out of place. I expect she loved us in her peculiar way, but she never showed affection, or had time to listen to us. She kept us clean and tidy and fed us and that's about it. I can never remember having a conversation with her. Yet I do remember she remarked to a neighbour that if someone asked to adopt one of us, she would not know which one to part with.

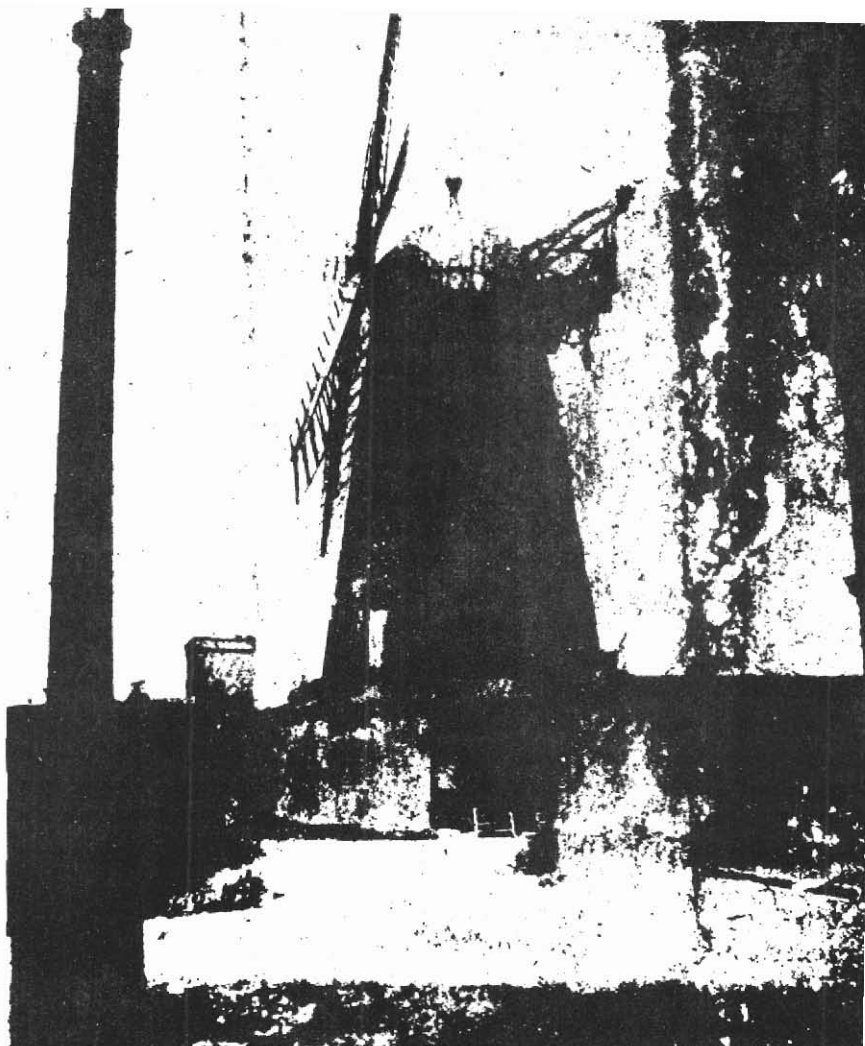
would be alloted our jobs, one to wash-up, one wipe. The boys chop wood, clean boots etc. swapping around daily.

When it came to my turn to wash-up, as soon as the water started running, I dashed to the closet. I think it was psychological, but Mum said that the washing-up always gave me diarrhoea.

I was born in Prince's Road, 1908, and my first memory was when a neighbour's child took me by the hand across the road, through a twitten by the side of a laundry, and we came out in a yard where stood a windmill. I gazed up at the monster while being dragged past it. We then went across another road into a nursery garden where she bought some salad vegetables, then back we went again. I thought I had been transported to the country, and yet it was only a short distance away. The mill belonged to Mr. Cuttress, who also had a shop next to the mill. Of course this has all gone, and houses fill up the space. The laundry was opposite us. The girls who worked there lived in a hostel in Ditchling Road, just below St. Saviour's Church. The laundry girls were good to mother. On Saturday mornings they would clean the laundry and have the afternoon off. They would come and ask Mum if there was anything to iron, as they were cooling down the irons. I guess they didn't go away empty handed.

Clothes for us must have been a perpetual problem, but Mum was a very good needlewoman. Neighbours would give her skirts and dresses, which she would make into clothes for us. She made all the boys' knickers, always lined. And the girls' dresses were not recognisable by the time she had added braids and trimmings.

A neighbour asked Mum to make her boy a pair of knickers. Mum said she would make them for one penny a yard of stitching. The lady said that was too



Tower Mill - Ditchling Road 1905. Built in 1838. Last owners were C.H.Cuttress and son, whose shop in Roundhill Terrace ajoined the Mill. Demolished in 1913. Houses in Belton Road now cover the site. Mr. Cuttress died Oct. '75. He was the last to grind his own wheat.

dear, so that finished outside orders.

The Sisters of Charity from St. Martin's Church brought us up several parcels of underclothes which would always fit one of us, and others passed on.

Boots were the biggest headache. Dad did all the "snobbing". After the shoes were cleaned in the even-

ing, and stood in their pairs along by the scullery wall, Dad would turn them up one by one and put in studs and blakeys where required. One thing Dad found out. If he bought an old motor tyre, he could cut soles and heels out of its walls. I don't know whether the rubber lasted longer on our boots, I only know we could not make sparks by kicking our boots on the pavement after that. We all wore plimsoles in the house. They could be taken to school when we had P.T. or dancing.

I had a lovely pair of boots given to me. They were a bronze colour and fastened by several straps up the leg. I loved them. But one Saturday it had been raining all the morning and cleared just before dinner. Mum said we could go out in the street for a while but don't go away, as it was near meal-time. A neighbour's boy had an errand to run and asked me to go with him. I said I had not the time, but he said it would be alright if we ran all the way. He took my hand and we ran all the way to Preston Circus, but on crossing the road he let go and I stopped out of breath. A motor cycle knocked me down and ran over my foot.

I remember limping to the side of the road, a man picked me up in his arms and carried me into the Police Station in Preston Circus. There the policeman split my boot down the back to get it off and that was to me worse than my injury.

Two policemen lived near us. They were also firemen, and when the alarm sounded, they would dash out of their homes into the middle of the road, dressing themselves as they ran down the road. These policemen knew what a struggle it was keeping us in boots although lots of children went bare-foot, but not us. Mum was told if she applied to the Police Benevolent Fund they would help her buy boots for us.



The entire family - I am in front of John - far left.

An officer of the Force called on Mum, asked to see her rent book. There were no arrears. Wanted to know if there was anything on weekly payments, to which she replied she hadn't. Asked if she had any debts, again no. "Well" he said, "I'm sorry I can't help you." That is the one and only time my mother asked for charity.

Mum took in mangling to help raise a few pennies, but people would fold garments together, to get it done cheaper. Mum would charge so much a dozen articles. Of course we girls did the mangle turning as well as collect and deliver the bundles, and we were delighted if any were generous and gave us  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. We could buy some sweets with it.

15 When my eldest sister Emily reached 14 years of age, she was put into service as a housemaid at Pennant



Lodge, Queen's Park. My aunt was working there at the time and spoke for her. The gardener was leaving, so my father offered to keep the garden going and we then had extra vegetables in exchange for his work. Emily noticed the waste of bread, all crusts were removed for toast, and no end ones used. She asked the cook if we could have them, so twice a week I took a bag to collect them. I would go into the gate of Queen's Park to see if a piece of cake or pastry was among them, before taking them home. They were used for our breakfast basins.

John and Arthur, who were older than Emily, had already left school. John went into a solicitor's office as office boy, and Arthur for a short while was a butcher's delivery boy, then apprenticed to Wallers of White Cross Street as a sheet metal worker. At the end of his training he made Mum a lovely copper kettle and milk saucepan which were her pride and joy.

All roads were grit in those early days, and it was a common sight to see children with their knees bandaged, where they had fallen on the road.

Mum remarked that she had to put 3d in the gas meter to cook Sunday dinner, so we would take it down the road to the bake-house. Along with the joint were the potatoes and a suet pudding mixture.

The weekly cake was also baked there. At the same shop we could take a basin to get jam, marmalade, or pickles. The basin would first be weighed, then the other spooned into it for the weight.

I recall when John was taking the weekly cake to the bake-house, he fell down with it. A kindly person seeing what had happened, scooped back as much as she could and it was duly baked. Mother remarked on how small it was. When she came to cutting it there was

grit and all had to be wasted. When I think of all the horse-drawn vehicles on the road at the time, I'm glad we could not eat it.

In summer when the weather was dry the roads would be very dusty. Then the water cart would come round. It was a large tank, with a sprinkler the width of the cart. We children would take off our shoes and stockings and walk in the flow of water.

The grit at the roadside was useful when we kept chickens. We would sweep it up to put in the chicken run. The horse manure was also good for the garden. No doubt we had the best looking roses and most "stand-offish" neighbours.

We also kept a few rabbits. To get food for them we would go to North Brighton Golf Course and beyond, to get clover and any other greens they liked. We did not treat them as pets - they were for food.

In 1917, when older men were being called upon for War Service, my father was asked to go. My eldest brother John was of age to go, but an accident in childhood left his right arm deformed, so he was exempt.

Mum attended a Tribunal to put in a plea as Dad was the mainstay of her 9 children. She was 8 months pregnant with George. She remarked that she was expecting another shortly whereupon she was asked for a doctor's certificate to prove it. Mum asked if they thought it was a "gnat bite" under her skirt and said she never needed a doctor. A midwife was sent for when labour started and she had never had a doctor in her life. Her words fell on deaf ears. She had to produce a certificate, and Dad was given 2 weeks to find a job of National Importance or join up.

They were worrying days as Dad did not have much time to look elsewhere and keep his job going. When Dad pushed a milk pram, there were 3 deliveries a day. The early morning, the "Pudding Round" at mid-morning, and an afternoon round. When his round was finished there were churns to collect from London Road Station. These were rolled at an angle to his depot in Beaconsfield Road. He found a way of rolling 2 at a time, which saved him a journey.

During those days I heard the only voices raised in anger between my parents, but I'm sure it was due to the situation pending. But things turned out alright, as my Father got a job in the Packing Shop at Allen West's Factory in Lewes Road and there he worked till his retirement.

Dad's new job paid more money, so we were able to move into a larger house to accommodate our growing family. This was in Vere Road, where George was born.

The moving day was dull and must have been in February by what I can remember. My brothers were sent to hire a hand-barrow for the day from the blacksmith's shop in Marshall's Row. On this was laid the bed springs, then piled as much as could be carried on top of that. This shuttle service went on all day and we children were told to stay in our old house till sent for.

The last thing to go was the parlour table, with its polished top. The barrow had been returned to the blacksmith, so this had to be carried by my two brothers. Snow had begun to fall and they were slipping about so much, they decided to turn it upside down and use it as a sledge. Did I say "polished top table"? Not after that.

call. The gas went out, and we were sitting on the stairs, someone started to cry, and we all joined in, until a neighbour came and put a lid in the meter.

Our new house had an attic room which was L-shaped. It could hold 3 single and one double bed. But being just under the roof it was very hot in summer, and bitterly cold in winter. I have known the urine to freeze in the chambers, and we left them on the floor below to thaw out so we could empty them. Mum would fill stone ink bottles with hot water to put in the beds, and a small oil stove was in the room, but the only noticeable thing was the smell. We all seemed to get chilblains on our toes in winter, and no amount of treatment such as rubbing them with onion dipped in salt, or Zam Buk, would clear them. They went when the weather turned warmer.

After we had been in the house for a while Mum noticed bed bugs in our top room. Out we all had to go and move into the lower bedrooms. The beds there were then pushed against the wall and made up sideways. They would then be wide enough for 3 or 4 children to sleep on.

Then Mum tackled the problem by pasting newspaper around all the window cracks, lighting a sulphur candle on a tin plate in the room, and sealing the door outside with pasted paper. This was left for a day or two. It was then opened and the window flung open and left several more hours. I then went in with Mum, and between us we poured boiling water through all the springs of the beds, letting it fall in a large bath. Every bed cover had to be washed and Keating's Powder sprinkled in the seams of the mattresses. In this way it was cleared, and we were able to get back to our own beds.

19 Friday night was hair wash night. I did not say

shampoo because ours was washed with a large square of Lifebuoy Soap. No fancy soap for us. We always used this for washing or bathing. Before the performance could start, all our heads were combed with a fine tooth comb onto a black cloth, because headlice being white would show up on it. If any were found, a wash with Quassia Chips and Harrison's Pomade rubbed in afterwards. If free of lice, after the wash Solidified Coconut Oil was rubbed in. Then we could curl our hair in rags to make it look curly in the morning.

Saturday was bath night. In the morning one of us would take a sack to collect all the cardboard from our Uncle's shop, Hook, 77 Islingword Road. This was to feed the copper for hot water for our baths. We would sit on the chopping block and stool and tear up the boxes before throwing them in. They smelt of chocolates and I always hoped one would be overlooked, but no such luck.

While attending to this chore, my brother found a long white balloon which he fixed on our one and only tap in the house, and turned the water on. Our screams of delight brought Mum out and she knocked my brother across the scullery, as she said, for wasting the water. Years later I knew why, but we were quite innocent at the time.

After tea the kitchen table would be pushed back, and the largest galvanised bath placed in front of the fire. The water would be brought to it by bucket, and in age rotation mother would bath us, and Dad dry us.

As we went in the bath a clean vest and nightie would be hung on the oven door of the kitchen fire, and towels hung at the side of the fireguard.



to the Ditchling Road Baths at the Corner of Rose Hill Terrace and Ditchling Road. Two of us would go together, taking our clean vest and knickers rolled in our towel with our soap and flannel. The attendant would shoot hot water through a pipe into the bath by the bucket-full, according to what you had paid, and cold water was added by yourself. After bathing we washed our vests and knickers in the bath, and hung them out to dry when we reached home.

Before going to bed Saturdays we were dosed with Liquorice Powder and those who did not like it had Glaubers Salts in the morning. I will leave you to imagine what Sunday morning was like, with 12 people in a household and only one toilet. When one felt they could wait no longer they would dart into the nearest bedroom and use a chamber, then they would wait for an opportunity to empty it.



We all went to Ditchling Road School but during the First World War when schools were taken as hospitals we shared half-days at Loder Road School. This was then only made of asbestos sheeting and a galvanised roof bolted on. When it rained water came through onto us and we would move our desks to avoid the drips.

I don't think I was a very happy child. I was so easily moved to tears. If the teacher spoke to me harshly it would be enough. The day of the Exams was one of those wet days, so our desks were in all directions. We were given the large Foolscap paper and question paper to get on with it. I had written quite a bit when a huge raindrop fell on my paper. I took it out to the teacher who put an ink ring





Ditchling Rd. school: Elsie second right front row.

round it. In the margin she wrote "This is a rain splash - not tears." And I have never forgotten it.

To get to school we caught a tram-car at 7.45 at St. Saviour's Church. That took us round to the top of Beaconsfield Villas. Depending on whether the Head Mistress was on the tram, we could dawdle along the road, or walk two by two. We all had to walk home.

At this time the Indians were in the Royal Pavilion which was their hospital. They could be seen in Preston Park where we used to play.

Soon after the War we were playing in the park when the Wartime tank was being driven up Preston Park Avenue. It looked huge to us, so we followed it.

We could not have noticed how the time went because every now and then a soldier would pop up out of it wiping his brow. Then the tank would move a few feet. It seemed very slow.

We waited till it was in position on a concrete base near the Cricket Ground, then went home only to find it was long past dinner time, so we did not get any.

May Day used to be observed by schools in my day. We would have country dancing and plaiting the Maypole in the playground, and mothers would come to watch us. Also St. George's Day, when we would march round and salute the Flag and sing Patriotic Songs.

We were all sent to St. Martin's Church, Lewes Road. St. Martin's was well attended, I've known it packed and people standing on the steps, especially at Festivals, and when the Soldiers from Preston Barracks came. The Vicar used to call us "The Little Hooklets".

A religious play was to be staged. The Vicar asked if one or two of us would stand in as angels, nothing to learn, just wear our white nighties, they would supply wings, but Mum said as it was an evening performance it was too late for us to be out. On telling the Vicar we could not take part, Lily started crying. He asked the reason, she said "I want to be an angel". He said "You'll be an angel soon enough, my little maid." A few years later I was allowed to play two parts in Dickens' "Christmas Carol".

Lily could not bear the smell of burning incense, and when during Mass there was plenty, she would faint. Then the teacher and I had to get her out in the porch and give her water. All we could do then was to go home.

Mum didn't take kindly to this week after week, so on our way home we met the Salvation Army returning from its street gathering, going into the Congress Hall. We followed and had a lovely sing-song. A Lassie asked us if we would care to go in with the other children. So in we went where Bible Stories were told with the aid of large wall pictures. We were asked if we would come again, so instead of going to St. Martin's we went straight to the Salvation Army.

The "Front Room" was opened on Sunday. This was a room of red plush, ball fringes, and large oil paintings, brass fender and fire-irons and a huge mirror extending from mantelpiece to ceiling with its gold frame. In this room were the scrap books, jigsaw puzzles and family Bible. We were allowed in here Sundays only and no nonsense allowed.

Lily and I had been going to the Salvation Army for some weeks, and had learned some of the songs. We were getting the younger ones to join in when Mum appeared at the door and asked where we had heard it. Then we had to tell her, and why. So we were then allowed to go to St. Saviour's Church which did not use incense.

My mother was a Roman Catholic but when she went at 12 years of age to work in Tarbut in Argyleshire, her nearest place of worship was the Salvation Army. She got very interested in them, and saved up to buy her bonnet.

Her father who was a tree planter and was responsible for planting trees round the Brighton Level was then on the Duke of Norfolk's Estates. At this time her mother was taken ill and she had to return from Scotland to help look after her younger brothers and sisters. She was the eldest of 11 children. When her mother found the bonnet she burnt it in the copper-

nole, in case the Duke or Ducness should see it. She said they would all be turned out if they were not Catholics.

On wet days we were allowed to play in our attic room as long as we did not jump on the beds. We'd put our nightdresses on back to front and have Marriage or Christening Services. Tiring of this, we were throwing a ball to each other when it went out of the window. We could see it had lodged in the guttering about a yard down the sloping roof, so we pushed Elsie on her belly down the slates to retrieve it, we others hanging on to her legs.

A neighbour must have seen us and told Mum, but by the time she got to us everything looked normal. But she nailed the bottom of the window and it was never opened again.

The market we used was held in the middle path of the Level which stretches from Southover Street to Oxford Street. The stalls were either side of it and at night they were lit by flares. Any rubbish was behind the stalls and one could walk along the fence and sort it out.

Elsie and Ted, a younger brother, found an orange among the refuse and both had a go at eating it. Elsie said it was awfully bitter but she ate some. During the night she was very sick, her vomit was orange. She was so poorly Mum decided to take her to the doctor, as she could not afford a doctor's visit. So Mum held one hand and I the other, and Elsie was almost dragged to the Surgery. Mum wore a large fur round her shoulders and under this she carried a large enamel mug as Elsie was continually sick. She had gastro-enteritis and was very ill for some days.



As I had joined the Girl Guides at the Church, Mum said I could try out my skill looking after a patient to get my Nurse's Badge. I would wash Elsie and try to coax her with food, but not much else. I was pleased when she recovered. I am sure it was due to that orange.

At Christmas time we had a bran tub, we could get that from the market because the grapes arrived in tubs, packed in cork dust. Another item my mother bought in the market was sugar bags, they were large white sacks, closely woven. When the seams were unpicked and two stitched together, they were large enough for sheets for a single bed. We had these on all single beds. The printing came out after one or two boilings.

I recall during the latter part of the First World War the ration books we had. They were oblong in shape and had a sort of faint paisley pattern on the pages.





lie

Rationing was not so good then, as the shops were not open all the time. When the word spread that Maypole had margarine, everyone would queue outside, for one portion per person. When all sold out the shop closed again. Police would stand by to see to law and order.

My mother would give 2 or 3 of us 6d to buy it and we were told to space ourselves in the queue so as not to appear to be together, or we might not get two lots. But with our sized family, it did not go far. There was also the Plum and Apple Jam in tins when we would queue again.

Next to the Police Station in Preston Circus was the National Kitchen where one could have a meal or take food away. As you entered, your money was exchanged for a metal dice with a hole in the middle. Then you would pass along between a rail and the counter to where your food was being served.

Faggots which was put in the large dish I had taken and covered with a cloth to take home. How I hated it. The faggots were so full of pepper, and the Pease Pudding so dry it was agony to get it down my throat. I vowed I'd never buy it when I had a choice. I have tried it since, but still dislike it.

I recall going to a butcher's shop regularly in Islingword Road to get 3lbs. undercut of bullock's cheek. The whole head was on the counter and sliced off in front of you. It was cheaper at that shop, that is why I had so far to go.

That year we had no presents, but were buoyed up by being told we were going to Allen West's Christmas Party in a few days, and would get plenty there.

That Christmas morning we went to Sunday School and Church, and it was depressing for us just listening to the other children speaking of what they had. I realise why. Allen West hold one week's wages in hand, so one must work two weeks before getting the first week's pay. One can have some to start off, but it must have only covered our daily needs.

We would have tea and entertainment, then draw papers out of a hat for prizes. The most coveted prize was Mrs. Allen West's doll, which she gave each year.

I drew a lucky ticket and was given a velvet-lined box, with several little gadgets laid in it. The only thing I recognized was a pair of scissors. My eldest sister gave me 6d for it, and I was delighted, as I did not know at the time that it was a complete manicure set.

We enjoyed days out during our holidays. Mum would fill bottles with cold tea, and make some sandwiches and we would be gone for the day.



Sonny

One of our jaunts was to Devil's Dyke by way of Preston Park, Patcham, Saddlescombe, Poynings, and so to the Dyke. By the time we had only reached Preston Park we had drunk all the tea, so we re-filled our bottles by a drinking fountain and Horse Trough which was alongside the road. On we would go to Withdean Farm and fill the bottles once more, then to the Black Lion and another filling. We would knock at the door of the Waterworks and ask to fill our bottles. Up the hill to Saddlescombe, knock at a cottage door for more refills, on to Fulking where we could help ourselves, and so on.

Another place we liked for picnics was the Ditchling Road end of Surrenden Road. There were no houses, just a leafy country lane, with a bank on the top side, no more houses above this lane. On the bank grew wild flowers and the violets which had a scent. We always took a bunch back to Mum. Above the bank stretched farm land, and there I saw my last field of trefolium with the long red blossoms, which was then grown for cattle feed.

On the bank my brother Sonny saw a few wasps round a hole, some seemed to be coming and some going, but he thought if he poked out the hole he would know how many were in there. This he did, and we jolly soon found out there were too many. The swarm flew after us as we ran away, stinging us on all parts of our exposed bodies. A man picnicking with his

John



wife took off his jacket and threw it at the swarm.

We were all stung except Sonny who caused it. A very sad lot of children returned home early, and Mum was very busy with the blue bag, thick lips, ears,

cheeks, arms and legs. We felt the stings for days.

John and Arthur living at home had time for hobbies and recreation, where the girls had no opportunity. John and Arthur joined the Brighton and County Harriers for cross-country running. They would run round the cricket ground in Preston Park for training; if the weather was bad they skipped in the scullery. They both won trophies. John also played the concertina and mandolin. Arthur preferred woodwork using plywood, and later played the euphonium in Patcham Youth Band. Sonny liked football and fishing - never did anything spectacular at either. George did cycle racing, enjoyed it, but some bad falls put him off work for some time. John and he were very interested in collecting stamps. Arthur also took up wireless-set making. With so many pastimes needing a table, Mum agreed they could build a shed along the top of the garden, and many a happy time was held in that with a dart board, benches and treadle fret-saw. A paraffin lamp gave them light and the galvanised roof got a bit hot over it. Arthur was doing some french-polishing on a finished article, when a cat jumped on the roof, and down came some dust on the polish. Before he could voice his thoughts the cat must have walked over the hot piece, he heard a spit and another jump. The cat did not come our way again.

When George was almost due Mum bought or had given to her an apple box. She removed the middle section, gave it a good scrubbing and when dry she lined it with a layer of cotton wool padding, covered the outside with white sheeting, and over all this a frilly cover of spotted muslin, a blue bow one end completed it. The inside was just the size of a pillow so what better crib to welcome just one more in our family.

The baby clothes carefully saved were newly washed and on the clothes line, so all the neighbours would see another little one was expected but as this was the longest gap between us, I don't know whether Mum was pleased or not. Long gowns were worn by babies then and long flannels underneath, one called a barras which was a cross over garment and when in place the bottom was turned up to the waist and pinned either side, under this a cotton chemise, then the napkin pinned to the vest (no protective pants then). The last garment was the flannel binder, which was wound around the baby a few times, then stitched in position. Underneath all this one found the baby.

Clothes did not end there. Should one want to take the baby out of doors, then a large Pleecan Cape was wrapped around it, and a long shawl, a bonnet tied under the chin with a veil pinned to the top, which was draped over the baby's face to keep out the light. If one wanted to see the baby, the veil was raised an inch or two, but no more. I have often wondered why all the padding and the length. Were they all disappointed with the size of the baby?

Our house in Vere Road was near the end of the railings which are on the top side of the road. The railings were ideal for somersaults and if someone held a hand, we could emulate tight rope walkers by walking on top of the rail.

World War One was in progress when we moved there, and prisoners would walk through on their way back to Lewes, via London Road Station, about a dozen of them with two warders, each one carrying a small cloth tied bundle in his hand..

Monday mornings, cattle would pass on their way to the Abattoir, and if we had finished our breakfast we would run to Ditchling Rise, stand on the lower side to prevent the animals turning down the road.

Plenty of street vendors and callers were about those days. One would bring oranges and if he had a bad time was known to throw the lot in the road. We called him 'Shylock'. Tea merchants called at the door, rag and bone men would call and ring a bell, give you a windmill in exchange. The fishmonger had herrings, 24 a shilling. Mum would take out her washing-up bowl to get them. At tea time, we would eat them as fast as she could cook them.

It was amusing to see the cats following his barrow, all with their tails erect, he would throw a fish head every so often, and when he had gone the cats were sprinkled in the road eating those heads, no traffic to disturb their feast.

In front of the Alms Houses in winter a man had his hot chestnut barrow. In summer he sold 'Hokey Pokey' a forerunner of icecream. It was a square of white ice mixture for 1d., if only a ½d. to spare, he cut it cornerwise. I expect many a coin bound for Church collection finished up here.

Mum and Dad would go out on a Wednesday evening, being the only early night Dad had off. Sometimes it was the Duke of York's Cinema in Preston Circus, or the Church Army Hut which was in St. Peter's Gardens. It would be concert parties or local talent, was always well attended, just a collection was taken up. The

M.C. would say, "Make it as silvery as possible and put your heart in your hands, and give them a hearty clap ", which of course they did.

It was getting near Christmas, my sister Emily was taking some of us to 'Sopers Emporium' which was near the Clock Tower at the corner of Western Road. It seemed a very long way as we wound our way through the streets. We were very interested in looking through a window, seeing people eating what looked to us like long worms. We were telling other children in the street about it, of course they disbelieved us and dared us to show them. So, off we walked with a band of children following us. We went through all the streets we went previously and the other children heckling us at every turn, when we reached the Clock Tower and still had not found the shop. So down West Street we went, and the smell of onions and sausages from a shop gave us hope, but no worms. Down at the bottom of West Street we looked at diagrams of heads in a window which invited you to 'come in and have your bumps felt'. That was Prof. Severns who had the power to tell if a child was to be successful or not, by the bumps on his head. We crossed over and there was a shellfish shop, and in the centre of the window was a glass case with an ugly looking fish, which was supposed to be a mermaid. The children had become so interested in this they forgot all about our mission, and we went home full of talk about the supposed mermaid.

One of the times we were all together was Armistice Day of the First World War. With young George in the pram, we all walked to Brighton Sea Front and along to the West Pier. Everyone seemed to be singing and dancing, and I remember soldiers and sailors in uniform, the worse for drink, staggering around. We then walked back through the town to New England Hill, and all went in a cafe, where Dad bought a



large jug of tea and one cup which we took turns in drinking out of. I still remember to this day how my legs ached with walking, and longed to have a ride in the pram if only someone would carry George, but no, it did not happen.

The other time when Dad came too was to Hollingbury Camp, when they took a methylated stove and teapot full of water, and we had a cup of tea on the hill that day. There I saw my first hairbells.

During the 1914 War it was no uncommon sight to see a buff-coloured envelope taken to a house which told of a loved one either wounded or missing.

I had a girl friend across the road, and went to her birthday party held in the greenhouse in the garden. Her soldier father was on leave at the time and we sat in a ring round his feet playing "Simon Says"; if we did it wrong he tapped us with his swagger stick. I remember looking at his puttees, and wondering how they were put on. He went back next day to Long Eaton munitions factory. I saw an envelope delivered, ran in and told Mum, she ran across just to see her running down the road, and they ran together, while Mum heard "Why". The factory had been blown up and her husband was missing. He was never found, and until the day she died, she believed he was about suffering from loss of memory. She took in holiday guests to earn money, and I helped her by washing up the crockery, as I was still quite young.

Lewes Road Station was still in use in my young days. If we had plenty of time to get to church on Sunday we would choose the long way round, just for the novelty of going down the steps under the tin roof. It would have been a hill climb all the way back, so we went Park Crescent way home from St. Martins.



Lewes Road. 15th August 1909, looking south

I first was shown that way by a publican's son who had The Allen Arms, Lewes Road, at the time. We would write notes to each other on the fly leaves of the hymn books, and pass them to each other. Love's young dream, and I must have been 11 years old at the time.

On a very wet Saturday morning, while we girls were turning out the bedrooms, a knock came at the door. Ena answered, and there he stood, my boy friend, dripping wet, and he had some cold sore on his lips. Ena shouts upstairs "Daisy, scabbybeak wants to see you". Out pops Mum's head "Who?", goes down to investigate. She asked him to stand inside the passage till the shower passed, then told him to go home, as I had other things to do.

I heard Mum telling Dad of it and felt it was not right, so next Sunday wrote my last note on the fly leaf of the hymnbook which said "We'd better wait till we are older."

We did go out to play in the street at times, when we did not have a lot of time, otherwise we went to a park. There was Preston Park which was nearest, and across the London Road, The Rookery, which is now The Rockery after all the landscaping had been done. Before that we had many a Roly Poly down the bank. All was safe because there were iron fences round all the Parks and gardens then. They all went for the war effort, same as people's fences round their gardens in the second World War.

There was Blaker's Park with its large Clock Tower, Queen's Park also had a large clock and lake. St. Ann's Wells gardens at Hove, which had a bandstand on a mound, and Military Bands would come to play there while people sat in a circle in deck chairs. Bands played on the Pavilion Lawns, bands on the Sun Terrace, in fact there was music everywhere. Errand boys would whistle the latest tunes while delivering, and street players and singers were very much in evidence. There was a Hurdy Gurdy man, with monkey, a man with a donkey pulling his barrel organ, Alexander and Marcantoni playing harp and violin. All this was noticable then because no motorised traffic about, and therefore there was less noise.

Some games we played in the street were skipping with a rope that reached the width of the road. All in together, and we could tie one end to the railing, so allowing one more to join us.

Hoops of all sizes we had, wooden ones for the girls, and rounded steel for the boys. The girls' hoops were propelled by hitting them with a wooden stick. The boys had a 'Skeeler', a large metal button hook which they held low down on the hoop, it made a lovely sound. Should you mislay your Skeeler, the blacksmith in Marshall's Row would bend an old poker for you for 2d.

Three kinds of tops, the wooden stubby one, a mushroom and a peg top with a whip which you would wind the string round the top, then pull it quickly, while holding it upright on the ground. The boys had a special way of throwing the peg tops but they had a long spikey end which seemed dangerous and many a top has gone through a window through misjudgement.

There was a marble game played by means of a piece of wood, with semi-circles cut out at the bottom, every archway was numbered and one would roll the marbles to score.

We played "Gutter Alleys" all the way to school, just throwing in the gutters all the way, trying to hit your opponent's ally, and overtaking soon got us along.

There were stilts, long battens of wood with wedges, pull on the top of the batten to get upright and balance, then walk with them if you can.

There seemed to be seasons for these games but I cannot remember which was which.

If you were a bit "posh" and had a "scooter" you were the most popular child in the street. We had one offered to us. I fetched it from a distance, it needed a backwheel, so I had to carry it home. Dad would not repair it, as he said we wore out our shoes quite quick enough.

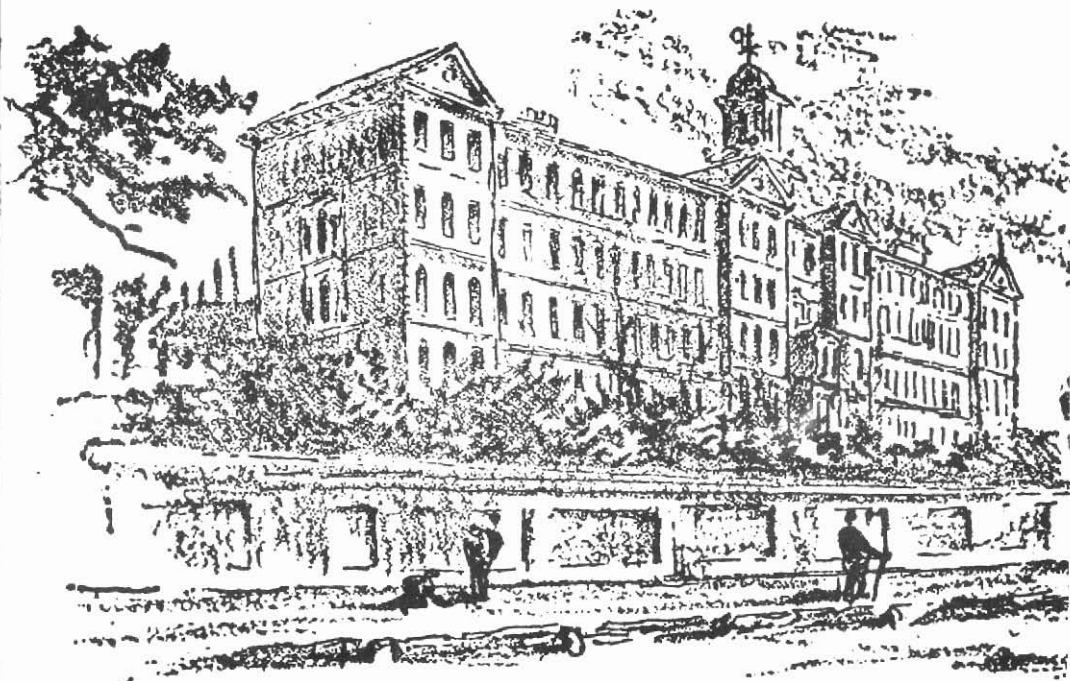
The Brighton Race Days were an attraction to us when the Fair was permitted on the Race Course. Coconut Shies, Hoopla, Roundabouts, Switch Backs, you name it, it was there, also the side shows, Boxing Booth and Freak Shows.

We had no money to spend, but enjoyed watching people spend theirs. We were not a bit interested in the Races. Every so often, one could hear hoof beats

thundering by and plenty of cheering, but we turned our backs on it.

The walk up Elm Grove did not seem tiring. We mixed with excited people who were going up to have a flutter, but by the time we had walked around for some hours we discovered our legs were getting tired. So when the Race-goers were leaving and piling on the trams, we would wait till it was ready to go and sit on the step. The conductor was mostly hemmed in, taking fares, so we had a lift down the road. Only once did the conductor discover us and we rolled off in the road and no harm done.

When walking down Elm Grove from the Race Course, the pavement runs by the Workhouse Wall. There would be



seen a row of old ladies holding their aprons out in case some lucky punter would care to give a copper or two. A little farther down the wall, the men would dangle their caps for the same purpose.

Depending on the time of day, you might also see the pony and trap, taking the toddlers back to Warren Farm School after being cared for during the day by the ladies in the Workhouse.

It seemed like the "Haves" on the pavement, and the "Have Nots" the other side of the wall.

The man on the gate had the unhappy task of splitting the families when they arrived. The men were sent to one block and women to another. The children were sent to Warren Farm School at Woodingdean, where they would stay till 14 years of age, then the boys were sent to work on farms and the girls put into domestic service.

The seafront had plenty of attractions. There were bands that played on the Pier, two Concert Parties, the one near Black Rock was called Jack Shepherd's Entertainers, the one near the West Pier was Ellson's Entertainers.

At this one, talent contests were held on Saturday afternoons, but one was only eligible to compete if sitting in a paid seat. The cheapest was 6d.

I had earned 5d that morning, and after a lot of persuasion my sister Emily gave me the other 1d if I would sing her favourite song at that moment "God send you back to me". She had been friendly with a South African wounded soldier, and he had gone home. So we walked there and back but happy because I won a Teddy Bear for first prize.

sympathy because I went in my weekday clothes. She said I looked like a "Sal Hatch", whoever she might be, but I was quite pleased, and entered again at a later date. I only got third prize, which looked like a tin bucket of pebbles. They were humbugs, but a bit disappointing as there was only a layer on top, the rest was paper.

Nigger minstrels played their banjos at low tide on the sands, and would get the children to join in the choruses, I remember "Oh Moana" and the action's.

People on the Pier would throw pennies down to the sands, and boys would scramble for them. All sorts of vendors were on the beach with newspapers, Brighton Rock and the Whelk Stalls where one could buy a small plate of Whelks, cockles, mussels or winkles, and one could leave the plate on the beach to be collected.

Between Palace Pier and Black Rock was to be seen the sand artist who had his square of sand on the beach but near enough for promenaders to view his work. On this large square of sand he would scratch likenesses of England's stately homes, and in relief he would do a very realistic wounded soldier lying down. Each day he would renew it. Then sit with his cap waiting for an appreciative passer by to give him money. He had his own rhyme in the sand which read: - "Some carve their name in stone, I carve mine in sand, and I hope to carve my dinner with the aid of a generous hand".

Plenty of deck chairs for 2d. but one could sit on a wooden seat which sat 5 persons for 1d. each. This was painted on the back of the seat for one to read. And on Dalton's Beach kites would be flying, their strings attached to the back of one of these seats.

On the Promenade were the goat carts and large





Aquarium 1902

carriages which were pulled manually between the piers, where ladies holding parasoles could ride in comfort.

Sandwich board men would walk behind each other, inviting you to "Dine at Joes", or some other place they wished to advertise. The boards back and front were held on the shoulders by straps.

Men on the beach would ply for hire of boats, for a jolly ride out, mostly row boats, but there was "The Skylark" between the piers which was motorised, and I had a ride in it, while a man with a concertina sat in the bows playing "Over the Waves".

If one went in the Kemp Town direction, what better than a ride on Volks Electric Railway. He was the first man to have electricity in his house in Brighton. He tried to sell the idea to Brighton Corporation, but they were not at all interested.

In the 20's my mother had her left eye removed, because a cyst was causing her great pain. A previous operation had proved unsuccessful.

Mum knew she would have to wait for her artificial eye, because she was told servicemen were given priority, in the meantime she wore a black eye shade.

As time went by she inquired how much longer she would have to wait, and was given a shell eye which was all white, but it looked worse than wearing the shade. With negotiations they arranged to loan her an eye on payment of £3, this Mum did as she and Dad were going for a few days to Reading to stay with relatives and she wanted to look her best.

On returning from shopping, she boarded a tram, after a few minutes she gave a terrific sneeze. Immediately she was on her hands and knees groping under the opposite seat. The conductor said "Lost your teeth, Ma", she said "No, my eye has jumped out". She thought the conductor was going to faint. Thank goodness the eye was intact. But at night she would put it in a small paste pot containing a little water and one day forgot the water, the eye smashed in that short distance and apart from the loss of her £3, she went on holiday wearing her eye pad.

Mum and Dad would go for a short holiday to Reading and stay with relations. That's all one could afford at that time. We would be left to look after ourselves which we did very well, and our reward when they returned was a big slice of Lardy Cake which was made in Reading.

When I was in the Senior School at Ditchling Road, I was always called upon if anyone had been sick in a classroom. I don't know how this started.

when asked to go to a certain classroom for this purpose. I knew the drill. Go to the cellar, take a shovel full of saw dust from a sack, bucket of water and cloth. First sprinkle saw dust on vomit and collect same in shovel, wash floor. Take all to toilet, empty shovel down the pan, wash shovel, empty water, return articles from where I found them.

Another job I was called upon to do was make teachers' tea during playtime. Set out cups, put biscuits on a plate, and when they had finished, wash the cups and put away.

One teacher I disliked always asked me to collect her mother's medicine from the Surgery after school. I did this several times, thinking she must like me in some way. But one day she made me stay behind to correct a spelling mistake, and then asked me to go for the medicine. I did not, because I knew if I was late home I would miss a meal. She did not ask me again after that.

The scout master's wife had a fall and the fancy comb she wore in her hair cut her head, she also had slight concussion. The scout master asked if one of us girls would do a bit of domestic work till she was able. Mum sent me.

I had to scrub wide front tiles, hearth stone, the edges of the steps, also the flight leading to tradesmen's entrance, scrub yard, clean brass on front door, and storm door. Wash up crockery, and clean the knives. For this I earned 6d.

I must have been good as I was recommended to her friend a little farther down the road. I did the same for her. But they also had a Pork Butchers Shop at the London Road end of the market, and in the afternoon I would go there to help, and make tea for the men who served. I got an extra 3d. for this. I



Lily my older sister 1922

would leave there at 3.30 pm., go to the Edburton Avenue to take a bundle of washing to a hand Laundry in Caledonian Road. It was so heavy I would rest it now and again on garden walls. When I got it there, a bundle the same size had to go back. The woman gave me 3d.

This was a Saturday when I was 12 years of age. I did complain to Mum about it being hard, but she only said "If you want money, the only way to be sure is work for it". I was lucky as she only earned 2d. a month when she was 12 years, taking out teas at the Black Rabbit at Arundel. And now that I was earning, I'd better start banking, so I joined the Co-op Penny Bank, and weekly deposited my huge wage.

When I was 13 years old, my eldest brother John was junior clerk in a Solicitors' office. Next my brother Arthur had finished his apprenticeship and was doing things one could look up to such as cowells on chimneys, but more artistic was the Cross on the top of St. Bartholomew's Church, and the weather vane on St. Mary's Church, Surrenden Road. Next Emily, who tiring of domestic service was now a waitress in Jesmond Cafe, West Street. Lily was in service at Ovingdean Hall Boys' Preparatory School, Ovingdean. Ena, who was slightly epileptic, stayed at home. I was next to be launched on the world.

A dormitory maid was wanted at Ovingdean School, so my sister Lily spoke for me.

This was November 1922, and I would be 14 in December, so an appointment was made for the interview.

Yesterday in blouse and gymslip, today unrecognisable in a costume my mother bought from a neighbour.



The coat reached my knees, the skirt my ankles. Around my shoulders a wide fox fur, its ugly head grasping the tail. On my head a large brimmed black hat, fitted with several foldings of newspaper inside to make it fit, and every wisp of hair out of sight.

We had a penny train ride to the Pier terminus, then proceeded to walk to Ovingdean by way of Sea Front, Kemp Town to the back of the East Brighton Golf Course, behind Roedean School, and down to Ovingdean. Although it was November, I was so hot with all the unfamiliar clothes I was wearing.

Mother told me to always add "Ma'm" to every answer, and stand up when spoken to. By now I was getting a bit nervous, but knew I had to face it. We went round to the back door, as staff were never allowed to use the front door or the front drive.

The butler was called, and said "I'll see if Madam will see you". Yes, she would, so we were shown into the large drawing room. I was bewildered. I did not want to be in all this elaborate surroundings. Madam entered, and asked us to sit. I perched myself on one of the chairs, while Mum was asked if I was honest, hardworking, reliable, an early riser. (I did not know that would be 5.30 a.m.). To all this Mum replied that I was.

I was asked to stand up, and Madam said "You will look taller when you have a longer skirt and hair done up in a bun". She asked me how old I was. I replied "14 next month", so she said my wage would start at my age, £14 a year, with a 2/6d. a month rise at the end of a year, and I could start work as soon as I attained my 14th birthday.

Now began the preparation for my leaving home. I would need servant's uniform and a box to pack it in.

Mum and I went to the market where she bought a light coloured tin trunk. The lid was dented in, and between us we carried it home, taking a handle each. Dad got a plank of wood and a hammer, and banged the lid till the dent came out. Then Mum painted it with stove black paint all over and it stayed out in the yard several days, because of the strong smell the paint contained. When it seemed fit to bring indoors, Mum pasted wallpaper over the inside, and then it looked quite smart.

With materials wanted for my uniform I had to draw all my money from my Penny Bank. I had over £3 which seemed an enormous amount, but it was not enough for what I needed.

Mum made me two blue dresses for morning wear, half-lined, one black dress for afternoon wear, and four

large bibbed white aprons. Fancy white aprons were not worn at the school till later. I had two Dorcas type caps for morning wear, frill caps for afternoons were supplied, one pair of ward shoes for mornings, one pair high-lows for afternoons and three pairs of black stockings, and lastly a pair of corsets. Oh, the agony, getting used to them after a Liberty bodice, and quite unnecessary as I was so thin. My other underclothes would have to do. No new hat or coat, but I took my Sunday one, (and, as our time off duty was so small, there was no chance of wearing them out). Celluloid collar and cuffs.

My hours were from 5.30 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. and no let-up anywhere during that time. How I stayed awake I do not know. My off-duty time was Tuesday 2.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. and one afternoon a fortnight for the same hours.

Mum helped me carry my trunk to the tram, and helped put it on the bus to Ovingdean. The bus then only stopped on the Coast Road, and my sister Lily should have been there to meet me.

The conductor helped me off with it and there I waited at the roadside, as one person cannot carry a tin trunk with any dignity. It was not long before Lily came into view and between us we reached the school and what was to be my bedroom, which I was to share with three other maids.

How bare it looked, a rail divided each section but the curtains were all pulled to the centre, four beds with one mattress on each, and a red blanket top cover, four washstands with jug in basin on top, mug and toothbrush dish underneath, and a chamber in each of the cubby holes at the bottom, bare boards with a small slip mat at the bedside. My sister was not one of my room-mates and I felt so miserable. At night I was afraid to completely undress. I put my nightie





George and mother, who is wearing the hat I wore at my interview in 1923

on top of my vest and knickers, and how I was going to use that chamber in the night if I needed it, I did not know.

I was nearest the light switch so it was my privilege to turn it off. I felt my way to my bed, and lay there thinking about running home, but I knew I would only be sent back, so cried at the thought when something went "BANG" under my bed. It was my tin trunk reverting to its original shape, and from that moment my childhood ended, and I realised I had been launched on the world to earn my own living. 1923. I vowed no more tears but a "stiff upper lip" was needed from now on.

49 Tomorrow started a new life in new surroundings and I'd prove I was somebody instead of one in a crowd.

## *part 2*

I was aware of someone shaking me and saying "Get up". I could not open my eyes because of a bright light. It was my sister's voice and the electric light was new to me. At home was a gas light downstairs, and candles in the bedrooms.

"Hurry up," she said, "It's half past five. I'll leave my bedroomdoor open, you come along to me when you are dressed."

I felt dazed and very tired. I had hardly slept all night. The mattress was so different from the "shake-up" beds at home and the pillow was hard. But I got out of bed, pulled the tin trunk from under it, and dressed myself in my maid's morning uniform, blue dress, large white nurse's apron, celluloid cuffs and collar, and lastly the "Dorcas cap". The last item took longest as I had to do my hair up in a bun, or somehow put all strands out of sight.

As my hair was only a "long bob" I used two packets of hairpins and even they were not successful as during the day they dropped out, sometimes down my neck or tinkling on the floor, so adjustments had to be made with the pins not lost.

I went to my sister's room, carefully switching off my light and together we walked along the uncarpeted corridor, down the bare twisting stairs, along another passage, across a concrete yard, through a squeaky swing door, and we were in the school quarters. My sister could now leave go my hand as we were in the light again.

Ovingdean Hall had its own electric light generator, but we had to go very carefully or it faded out. We maids were always accused of wasting it if ever there was a failure, although we were conscious of the problem. But who knew that after "lights out" we were reading our paperbacks in bed. Only when a voice

from outside shouted "Put that light out," we'd switch off till the footsteps retreated and switch on again.

My sister and I went to the housemaid's cupboard, loaded ourselves with broom, brush, dustpan, duster, polishers and a "swinger". This was a heavy contraption for polishing floors. Too heavy to lift, it was dragged. It consisted of thick bristles in a block of wood about 10 by 14 inches, on this was a layer of lead for the weight, another piece of wood on top of that, then a long handle was fixed to a bar so that it could be swung from side to side, following the lay of the floor boards. There was an art in using this which did not need so much energy but for a while I felt my whole frame was being torn apart.

The polish for the floors was beeswax and turpentine which we put in large stone marmalade jars. We asked the cook's permission to stand them on the large kitchen range when no food was about. The kitchen was her holy of holies and all knocked on the door and waited till told to enter, but mostly she answered one at the door.

My duties as third dormitory maid were before breakfast, clean and polish two classrooms, one flight of stairs to be scrubbed, go up to the dormitories to fill washing basins with hot water for the seventeen boys in my dormitories. It was carried from the bathroom in two and a half gallon cans, one in each hand, along a long corridor as mine were at the other end. Weren't those cans heavy. They were as much as I wanted to carry, then stand one down while I lifted the other to pour water in the bowls. Three or four journeys were required before all had water. There was no early morning cup of tea. Breakfast was at 7.30 a.m., and we took our seats in our station of staff.



Me next to Mr. Buller - with Edie on the right. Gladys and Doris in the front row.

The Butler sat at the head of the table. On his right was, in order, Under-Matron, Parlour Maid, Sewing Maid, Matron's Maid, Pantry Maid, Master's Maid, Pantry Boy. Then first, second and third dormitory maids - the latter was me. On his left were head laundress and four laundry maids which completed the house and school staff. In the kitchen was cook, two kitchen maids, kitchen boy and "Tweeny", always considered the lowest of the low as she was at the beck and call of kitchen and house staff. We were also served in that order, so I soon found where I fit in.

There was half an hour for breakfast, then upstairs to make beds and empty the slops in the dormitories. I had seventeen beds to make, pyjamas to fold, dressing gowns to hang up and wash basins to attend to, chambers to empty and lock away. Every boy had his own square wash stand, a basin and jug let into a hole on top, under this a shelf on which was tooth mug, soap dish,



Edie, Gladys and me

a dish for tooth brush and flannel and a small medicine glass. In a cupboard underneath was the chamberpot.

Armed with two slop-pails and cloths we daily went about the emptying, rinsing and cleaning of each one. It was a bit of a rush for the pails as there were only four and if the other two maids got them I would have to start making beds. Then I seemed to find the toilets occupied when I wanted to empty mine but in time I was as artful as them, I'd hide a couple when I took up the early morning washing water.

All morning work had to be completed and everyone washed and changed into their afternoon black by mid-day when it was our lunch time. Then we went into the school dining room to wait at tables on the boys. I had two tables and it was journeys from the kitchen hatch, backwards and forwards, fetching and carrying for an hour. Then all set for washing up silver and glasses in our pantry. All dishes and large plates went back to the kitchen to be washed in large wooden sinks. In the afternoon we had jobs according to the day. Mondays was all Sunday suits to be brushed and marks sponged off before putting away. On other days there was sock sorting and darning, linen mending, silver polishing, etc. We always had something to help keep us out of mischief.

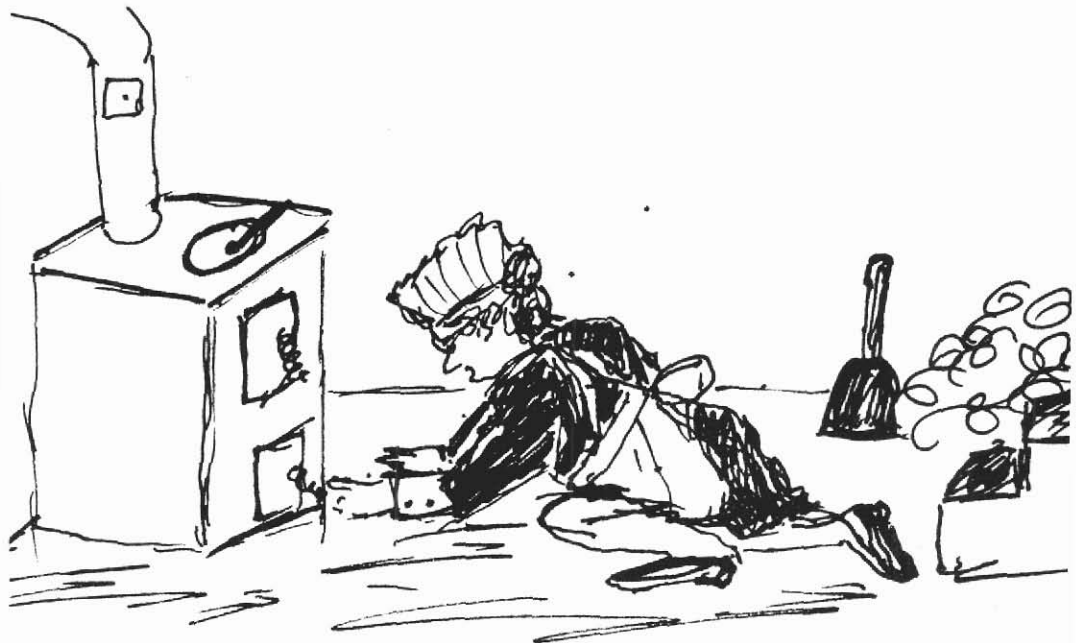
Tea was a more leisurely meal for us and the boys, but at ten minutes to seven each evening we had to go to Chapel. Then the Headmaster's wife would be behind

us to make sure we were all there. She had a way of knowing what staff were on or off duty and if one were missing she had an uncanny sense of knowing where they were, and almost dragging them in.

This is how life went on daily, but as I got used to the atmosphere of the place, I felt more confidence in myself, and more happy than at first. The girls were alright when I got to know them and we had fun at times.

In the evening a fire had to be stoked to make hot water for the boys' baths. The caretaker would rake it out and lay it and it was lit about 4 o'clock. Sometimes it would not light and we had no access to any wood, so would hunt out polish cloths and roll paper to make it catch alight as we only had coke to keep it going.

Edie, who was the caretaker's daughter and second dormitory maid, had an idea when we were desperate about the stoke. She went to her father's workshop and brought back some paraffin, emptied it in, and threw in a match, - then "Woof," she fell back, with her hair alight and lost her eyebrows, her face was scorched. She managed to pull her cap on each day to hide her hair, and borrowed another maid's cosmetic to mark her eyebrows. She also dodged her father for a few days, so as not to give any explanation. Sometimes the fire clinkered and we would have to rake it all out and start again. Then when we heard the swing door squeak, we knew it was matron coming to shout at us because the water was cold. We were so worried we would sit on the stone steps near it to keep coaxing it with whatever would burn. I've almost fallen asleep by it as we couldn't leave it till 10 pm.



It's gone out again!

when I started in 1923, it was a boys Preparatory School, their ages from 5 years to 14 years. They then went on to Public Schools. There were 104 boys, seven masters and mistresses, and the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Marshall who both taught. I got to know all the boys by name, where they slept, where they sat at table, their lockers, playboxes, etc. It was a must if you wanted to get on. It was a bit difficult to know the parents when they visited, but twice a year on Speech Day and Sports Day we saw quite a few.

The memories of Sports Day were the delicious strawberries grown in our own kitchen garden and cream from our own farm. We served them, hoping there would be some over for us. We always had a taste of the lovely cream cakes. One temporary maid put a couple up her bloomer leg to make sure she had some, then was given the task of picking up piles of plates from the ground. I only hope she enjoyed the cakes, she never mentioned them to us afterwards or offered us one.

Most of the maids had higher heeled shoes than me, but I have always kept to low ones because of an accident



when young. They told me I would look so much taller than my 5 ft. if I had a higher heel, so when I was paid on the first of the month with the rest of the staff, I bought a pair of "high lows" with patent toe-caps and lace fronts. They looked very smart and cost 6/11 $\frac{3}{4}$  - that was quite a lot out of my £1.3s.4d which had to last me the month. My bus fare on my half day was 6d each way into Brighton by Tilling's solid tyre bus, which stopped on the coast road, and 6d for mother for my tea. When I took a friend home that was another 6d. The rest of my money had to buy tooth-paste, writing paper and envelopes, and renew any clothes when needed. It was a real pleasure to buy a chocolate bar if a few pence were left over.

The only village shop at Ovingdean was on the top road, now known as Longhill Rd., but then was only a rough track of ruts and puddles when it rained. So if we wanted anything there it was best to climb over the school wall right opposite the shop. Edie and I went up that way many times but one unfortunate day she turned her ankle as she jumped, and cut her leg on a bottle which needed six stitches. Then we were forbidden to go that way.

The "Village Shop" was a very elaborate name for it. It was a wooden bungalow whose front room had a chest of drawers and marble washstand, side by side with backs towards us, covered in advertisements to disguise them.

The washstand was used to display butter, margarine and cheese. On the chest of drawers stood jars of boiled sweets and bars of chocolate, while in the drawers were elastic, cottons, tapes, etc. and tins of food in the lower drawers.

The lady who ran the shop had three children to bring up and she also gave piano lessons. If something was

asked for that she hadn't in stock, she would get it by the following day. I forgot to say that cigarettes and tobacco were also bought there. Our stamps and postal orders were brought by the postman who came from Brighton on his pushbike twice daily.

I was wearing my new high heeled shoes for mornings as I was not very happy in them. They made my ankles ache. Then when I changed to afternoon uniform, I took my low ones for the rest of the day.

I was hurrying along the dormitory corridor soon after the boys had gone down to breakfast. I was carrying a slop pail in either hand, full as much as I could carry, to save too many trips from dormitory to toilet, when I turned my ankle and down I went and two pails of mixed toilet water swirled along the corridor, cascading down a flight of stairs, round a bend and down the next flight.

I had no time to rub my bruises. I shouted for the other two maids to help me in a race against time, as Matron always went up to her room before the boys left the dining room.

We mopped with everything we could find when Matron appeared and remarked it was silly to wash the stairs so early as the boys would be using them. Why not leave them to my last job of the morning?

I would never wear those shoes again and have never worn a shoe with a high heel since.

It was always a problem with toilets. I thought in my own home one between twelve was bad enough. But the boys only had two between fourteen dormitories, and we maids had one for all the staff, including the butler and two boys, and being in the staff's quarters, it was a bit of a jaunt during the morning to keep

running from the school to the staff quarter, hoping to find it vacant. It was hopeless for anyone once the butler got in there. He took his daily paper and pipe, and even when he vacated it, the smoke was so thick it was unusable for some time.

I told Mum about it and she advised me to use the pail in the dormitory and then I need not run to and fro. This worked fine when no one was about. But in another situation I had with a titled family who entertained a lot, I waited till all were at breakfast, rushed up to do the bedrooms, put the pail in the middle of the room, relieved myself, went to the window, pulled the curtains and opened the window. Down below the gardener was busy. I called out a few cheery words to him, turned around to do my work and there lay a man in bed. I dashed from the room and it was not long before a bell rang to ask if the maid would come up and shut his window. That was the last time, as I had quite a shock. I guess the visitor did too, but no one mentioned it.

As girls left the school for other jobs we moved up a place. It was not much of a promotion - only more work to do, so therefore a bit faster. It meant 2s 6d a month rise. So when my sister Lily left to work at Roedean School for Girls, Edie and I moved up. We were then expected to show the new maid her tasks and whereabouts and help her if she could not get finished in time.

I was getting a bit tired of succesions of third dormitory maids and temporary parlour maids and thought I would make a change when the butler asked if I would care to go over to the private side and be parlour maid. If so, he would put in a word for me, and it all worked out alright. What a lovely lift up for me. No more dormitory work or classrooms - that was all behind me. I had the highest job under the butler



and when he was off duty, I took on his responsibilities. I liked answering the large front door and receiving the visiting cards on the silver tray, then taking them to the Master or Mistress, all untouched by my hand. I wonder sometimes if we always had some contagious disease as all letters were delivered in the same way. Another noticeable thing was when waiting in the private dining room. They had so much food. There was the entree, where they picked about at small items of sardines, olives, tomatoes etc, while waiting for soup. After that followed - fish course, poultry, meat, sweet, savory and dessert. How they got through it all I do not know. I came to the conclusion they were hollow to start with. After that the "Grog Tray" was taken to the drawing room while they had coffee and a chat and at 9 p.m. a tray of tea was taken in. Thank goodness that was my last chore of the day with all the washing up of silver and wine glasses which had been used for every course.

While they had coffee I would go up to the private bedrooms to put away clothes that had been changed during the evening, empty washing water, turn the corner of the beds down, lay out night attire, shut window shutters and draw curtains.

The front staircase divided each side into a staircase, either side a lovely sweeping bannister followed the stair curve and continued along the top landing .

I did the usual bedrooms one evening and the banister looked so tempting I decided to slide down them. No one around, so cocked one leg over and away I went, down round the curve, off the end right into the butler's back as he was carrying the Grog Tray across the Hall.

It's hard to say what happened next as my back was towards him, but glasses and bottles were broken and the dining room door was opened in a flash to know

what had happened. The butler said he caught the edge of the tray on the door so he covered up for me, but said afterwards he thought I was a little old for sliding down banisters and "don't do it again."

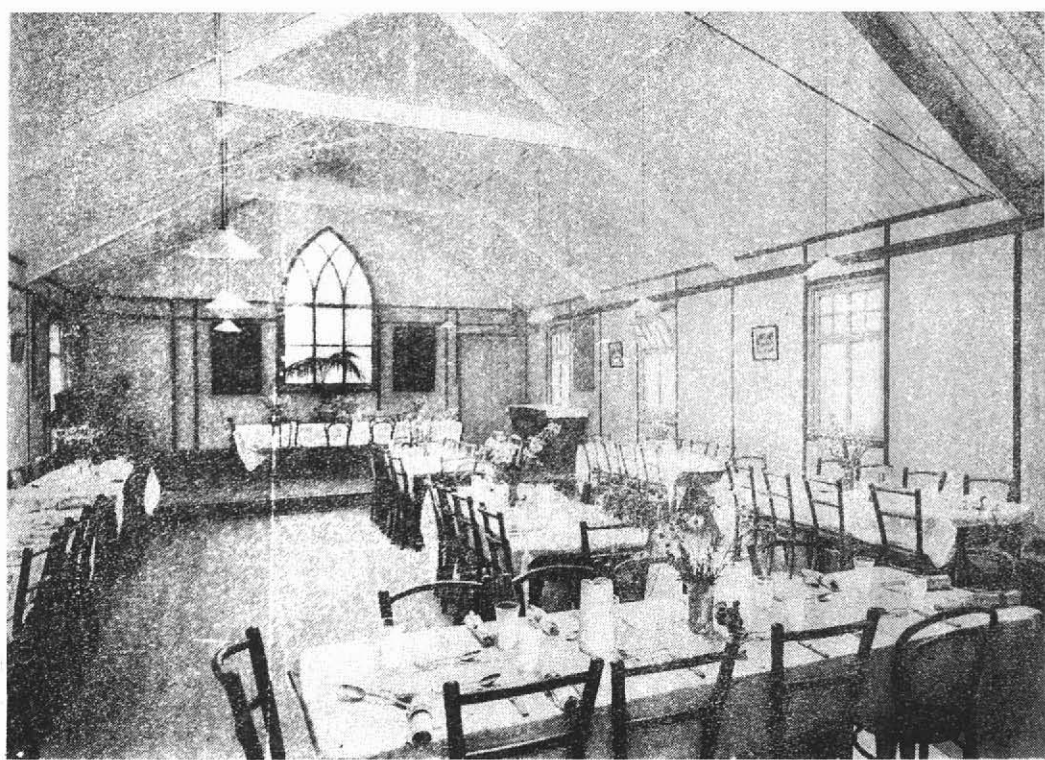
While waiting at table the butler told me to leave the chicken in his pantry, instead of taking it back to the kitchen. He cut off some for his lunch next day and asked if I would like a piece. I said I had never tasted chicken, so he cut me a small piece - it seemed very grizzly and oily and I said I didn't care for it. He laughed and said it was the parson's nose but gave me some more which seemed quite tasty. He always saved bits for his lunch and when decanting the wine, always had a bit over for himself.

During school holidays we had time off, but not enough to get into Brighton. We would go down the road to the Village Pond where the boys seemed to meet for gossip. They would sit or lean on the wall, watch the ducks or sheep in the field, and we could have a chat with them.

One had a bicycle and would do all sorts of tricks on it, such as riding on the back wheel or picking up his cap with his foot to make it land on his head, or maybe riding backwards. Then the other would all take turns. It made something to watch.

The village boys were also useful at meeting any of the staff coming off the bus on the main road and escorting them up the lonely gap, as it was then. No buildings until one reached McCullum's Farm at the foot of now Beacon Hill, then only a few scattered bungalows, till the Lodge gate was reached.

We were not supposed to use the long front drive. We had to walk round the village and go in the side gate up the road. But nature being what it is, we sometimes tried it, and although it was a shingle



### Ovingdean Hall

drive we would take off our shoes when passing the front of the house so as the two dogs would not bark to give us away.

On a cold half-day off I went home as usual, but snow began to fall and by evening it was quite thick. Some of us were waiting in front of the Y.M.C.A. Old Steine for the 9.00 o'clock bus, but it was cancelled because of the weather.

We had to get back somehow, so walked up through Kemp Town to Arundel Road. Then decided to leave the road and go over the East Brighton Golf Course, behind Roedean and back that way.

Everywhere was white, and we all had our own ideas of where the path should be, so spread out in different directions. Then someone suggested we ought to pair-up so as no one was lost. So we trudged and stumbled our way home, sometimes not too bad, other times into



a snowdrift up to our waists and even falling over. We were quite happy under the circumstances and did not mind unduly about getting soaked, but when we eventually got back we were grumbled at for being late in.

On a Christmas holiday, the school had an epidemic of impetigo, so some boys were left behind. We maids could not go away either. We thought the cause for the spread of the epidemic was contained in a note passed between the sick-room and the school. Apart from the message it said: "I have rubbed the bottom of this note on my face, rub it on yours and you will then get it and come over to keep me company".

We did paint-cleaning, shaking blankets during the day, but evenings seemed dull so we bought a second-hand portable gramophone and a few records from Woolworths, 6d a time, and we did a few dance-steps round the servants hall. But the butler said there were complaints from the private quarter that we were too noisy, and although the large baize-covered door was closed, they still complained. Any laughter was too noisy as well, so we took it over to the barn behind the stables, where some of the boys used to meet, and sitting on bales of hay it was quite cosy. When daylight went there was the lantern.

We did this each evening for a bit of relaxation, till one evening we forgot the time and found we were locked out. We tried all windows on the ground floor till we found the scullery window over the large wooden sinks was open.

We climbed in, removed our shoes, and tiptoed through the kitchen and corridor leading to our bedrooms. Every board seemed to creak and every stair squeak, which I had not noticed before. In the darkness we



reached the top of the stairs, when a light was switched on, and there stood the Under-Matron. She was absolutely livid, she called us everything under the sun and said she was reporting us to the Matron in the morning, and it would most probably mean the sack.

I trembled as I stood there, shoes in hand, not because of her, but one could not get a job without references, and I knew I could not go home. That had been made clear by my mother when she took me there.

I did not sleep much that night and when I passed Matron in the morning, she gave me a smile. So she had not been told yet. But it was not long before she came to my room and, shutting the door behind her, asked me to sit down with her. She then spoke to me kindly about the previous night and the oversight about the time, and asked if my mother knew I was friendly with the village boys, and was I ashamed to introduce them to my mother should the occasion arise? I assured her my friendship was quite honourable, and would not mind my mother knowing. She then told me to write a letter to Mum about this and show it to her before posting, also ask if one of them could come to tea on my next day out. I did this and posted it, and all the while Matron did my work till I returned.

My mother's reply was quick to say, yes, bring your friend home, but keep Pure. That letter I kept for many years. It was written in pencil, and although the other words faded, those two underlined still stayed. It was good advice, and I took it as such. On Christmas Eve some of us walked into St. Mark's Church, Kemp Town for midnight mass. We had to walk both ways, because near the end of the month no-one had much money. We got back in the early hours of the morning, but out of term-time it didn't matter.



Dining Hall, Ovingdean

We were up for 8 o'clock breakfast on Christmas Day, everyone happy; when the Under-Matron appeared at the door and told us to get upstairs to do spring cleaning. We said: "What, on Christmas Day?" and she shut the door.

We grumbled among ourselves and someone said "Do you think Mrs. M. knows about it, let's go and ask her."

We asked the butler to get permission to speak to our mistress, then gathered outside the study door. He said O.K. I knocked on the door. A voice said "Come in", and I was pushed inside. The door shut behind me and there I stood on my own.

Mrs. M. asked what I wanted, I said did she think it was right that we should do spring cleaning on Christmas Day. She replied we could not sit with our hands in our laps all day, but as a special treat, cleaning till 10.30 and then go to the Village Church.

We were glad to get away from the school if only for a little while, so did as she said and found our way down to the Church. I had not been inside before as our Chapel-going was quite enough. It was every evening, Sunday morning and evening.

The Church had a musty smell like all old churches have. The lighting was a ring of candles round a hoop, hanging from a beam. The organ was at the back of the Church and was pumped by a bay. When the pumping started I thought the organist had bad asthma, then found it was a leak in the bellows. I had to turn round to make sure. I caught someone's eye who was smiling and I felt like laughing as the wheezing kept on all the while the organ played and sometimes louder than the tune.

You notice I mention Edie a lot. She and I were good friends and as we were the same age and started the same day, we had quite a bit in common. She was a tom-boy, but not a wayward girl. Being the caretaker's daughter her father was always around and I have known him to hit her with his belt if he disapproved of what she was doing.

She was friendly with George, one of the boys, and he wanted to take her to the pictures. She knew her father would not approve, so we thought of a way round it. I would invite her to my home for tea, we would meet George, I would be chaperone, and all would be above suspicion, as we were a three-some.

Everything went to plan, and I sat one side of George in the pictures, while he had his arm round Edie the other side. We caught the 9 o'clock from Old Steine, walked the Gap, and when we reached the lodge, her mother was standing silhouetted in the doorway. She called, "Is that you Edie?", but Edie didn't answer. We all walked on. Her mother must have

known because it was the time we should have been back.

We walked on round the stone wall which surrounds the school grounds to go to the side entrance, when there was the light of a lantern coming towards us, and by the uneven step we knew it was her father. He had a surgical boot which was noticeable in his walk.

What could we do? Mother behind and Father in front. George and Edie darted off somewhere, and I could not stand there as I would have to account for Edie. I ran towards a farm gate and edged my way back into a cart lodge. I trod on someone's toe. It was George. I said "Where's Edie?", but he did not know.

When Edie's father had passed we came out and went back to the school. Edie came in a little later. She had jumped over the Vicarage wall, but it was too high to jump back from the other side, so it took her longer to get out.

Her father took her to his workshop next day, and gave her a terrible thrashing with the buckle end of his belt. Poor girl, I felt so sorry for her, as she was too old for such treatment. He said it was for being deceitful.

We were all against Chapel every evening and all at some time tried to avoid it. If we did not attend, Mrs. M. knew where our rooms were and found us, and maybe gave us a minute or two to get there.

Edie had an idea. She had heard if one put powdered soda up the nose, it caused sneezing. She said if she put a little in her handkerchief, then soon after the service started she would sniff some, which would cause sneezing and she could come out and stay out.

The service had started, we'd had the first hymn, then as we knelt to pray, she undid her hanky to get a pinch of soda. One sniff did nothing, so she tried again. Then she started to gasp and almost choked. The rest of the soda tinkled on the floor as she put her handkerchief to her face, her eyes were pouring with water, and she did everything else except sneeze.

We had to get her out and Mrs.M. came out too, as she was concerned as to what had happened. Edie went a funny colour with choking so much. When she could eventually speak, she said, "Sorry madam. I think I've got a cold."

One day we heard there was to be a concert in the Village. Although there was a small hall belonging to the Church, it was very rarely used. At one time the sisters of St.Mary's Convent came over to take a Sunday School in the afternoon but attendance had dwindled, so they stopped coming.

This concert would be held in a Shearing Barn behind a row of cottages by the Pond. We sat on trusses of hay. There was a piano from somewhere which three or four men were trying to stop from rocking while being played. The lady from the shop accompanied the Mother's Union songs. Mr. Baird, one of the masters from the school, played jazz. A Mr. Brandilero played his mandolin, we all joined in choruses and anyone else who could do a party piece was invited to do so. All the village seemed to be there and it helped to make friendships all round as there was no other get together. This was such a success. We were granted the Village Hall next time. It was packed as it was smaller than the barn, but everyone enjoyed it.

I seemed to finish my work early one evening, so went to my room, put on my pyjamas, got into bed, and

settled down to a "Who dun it" book, when the butler called up the stairs "Have you forgotten the tray of tea" - I had.

I did not want to disrobe again, so put my black dress and apron over pyjama top, rolled up the legs, pulled on stockings giving them a twist at the top to stop them rolling down, and complete with shoes no-one would know I was not properly dressed.

I took my tray of tea to the study, knocked, then opened the door. The room was only lit by a standard lamp, the flex of which trailed across the floor to the light socket.

I did not think of this and caught my foot in the flex, which in turn pulled out the plug and the room was plunged into darkness.

I had not reached the table, and even if I had I noticed at first glance a place would have to be cleared before I put down the tray. So there I stood.

The master said - "Don't move", and he was down on hands and knees groping for the flex, round about my feet.

This was not too bad, but when I felt my pyjama leg slipping down, I held my knees tightly together to save it falling any farther. When the light came on I did a funny walk with the tray, and also out of the room. Just in time, as one leg dropped to my ankles as I closed the door.

My pay now was £1.13s 4d, it looked an awful lot, two notes, and some loose coins. I always started the month by resolving to save a note, but I had to break into it for something, and once gone, never saw it again. There was always something each month - shoe repairs, undies or uniform to be replaced, or tooth-

paste, black shoe polish etc., and the money just went. Near the end of my time at Ovingdean I did manage 2s.6d a month, but when holidays came around, this had to pay for them.

Great excitement at my home. Emily's boy friend in South Africa had sent an engagement ring, and said he was coming over in six months to marry her. He had kept up correspondence ever since he went back to Africa, after hospital treatment in the First World War. My sister met him on Brighton Sea Front.

Emily was still working in Jesmond Cafe in West street as waitress. The money was not high, but tips made it up. So now she started to get her Trousseau together. She also decided about her dress and bridesmaids' dresses. Mum made us three girls dresses in pink, that was Lily, Ena and I. Then went to the shop and bought three hats all alike. I don't know why she thought all our heads were the same size, so mine had to have padding inside, like every other I'd had. One day I would buy a hat to fit, by going to the shop myself. Emily's dress was pearl satin with little pearl beads stitched round neck and sleeves and one blue bead sewn in for luck.

The Wedding was at St. Saviour in Ditchling Road. The reception at home. They went off on their honeymoon somewhere in London, then back to South Africa. It was a big venture for Emily, but she was quite happy. Her mother-in-law was very good to her and helped her in her new home.

Now Sonny was due to leave school, and Mum thought she was doing right by letting him go as a van boy for Carter Paterson's - the carriers. He would jump off and on, hanging on to a rope to deliver the







parcels, while the driver stayed in the driving seat. The money was good at 23s a week, and Sonny enjoyed it. Till one day, he was sitting on a box at the back of the van reading a "Penny Dreadful", when the van swerved throwing him out on the road and the box on top of him. He was taken to hospital with some broken ribs and bruising. He was not in there long. His injuries did not worry him so much as losing his book, as he said - "I will never know who dun it now".

This type of job only lasted till the boys were 17 years old, then they were sacked. At that age they were too old for apprentices, so it was a bad choice after all. Sin went from job to job, till finally got in the Sheet Metal Shop at Allen Wests, Lewes Road where Dad was employed.

Arthur was also a Sheet Metal worker, but he did an apprenticeship and worked for Wallers, Whitecross Street. He helped make and erect the gold cross on top of St. Bartholemews, Ann Street, and also the weathervane on St. Mary's Church, Surrenden Road. He too went to Allen Wests to work.

John was still at office work for Solicitor Graham Hooper and Betteridge, Grand Parade. He had further education for shorthand and typing and became junior clerk, later senior clerk, then went to another solicitor to become county court clerk.

Elsie was next to leave school. She came to Ovingdear with me, firstly had a job helping in the kitchen, then later in the school.

When Christmas came around, we had a gift of 10s for every year of service. My first year, my money was given to Mum for being home the week. The second year I had £1, nearly another month's money. I felt rich. I scanned the Sale adverts after Xmas, and Arding and Hobbs of London advertised hat and coat to match for



Me in my first  
hat that fitted.  
Hat and coat  
cost £1.00.

£1. I was quite excited. I measured my head with a tape measure and stated plum colour and back it came. The hat was soft and rolled in with the coat, the brim was floppy but it fitted, so I turned the brim up and fastened it with a brooch. At last, a hat without padding. The next half day I had my photograph taken in

it. Now, on looking at it, I think - "What a sight. Never have a photograph taken with a hat on, it dates one and always causes a laugh."

There was no access to the beach at Ovingdean, the cliffs were not sheer, but a bit dangerous

There was no access to the beach at Ovingdean. The cliffs were not sheer, but a bit dangerous to attempt to climb up or down. So, if we wanted a sea bathe we walked over the Windmill hill to Rottingdean.

We often saw the boys bathing there, but did not pass them on our route. When I got more friendly with them they invited some of us to come their way. This was via a waggon rope, tied to a cliff top post, and find what footing one could to get down and up. The rope stopped any fall.

We did this as it saved us quite a walk and so had longer in the water. I could not swim, but tried to by remembering how we were taught at school, laying tummy down across a chair, doing the breast stroke, while the teacher counted - 1,2,3,4, 1,2,3,4. I found after a while, I was really swimming. I could float as well, and did a side stroke, enjoying every minute.

We had gone this way, two girls and two boys. We girls, being modest, wicket out on the sand as far as we could, and undressed behind a wooden breakwater. The boys undressed on the beach. Soon, another boy slid down the rope, and when he came out to the water the moths had not left him much costume. The other boys told him to keep at a distance, as he was not respectable.

We had a lovely time, and made our way back to our clothes. To my horror, my knickers were floating in a pool, where they had blown off the breakwater.

I just could not go up the rope. It meant the walk to Rottingdean, and over the hill!. The boys insisted on coming too. They thought I had lost my nerve to climb, and I just could not tell them. Also the naughty wind was having a D. Day with my circular skirt. I was trying to hold it down all the way home. I was very relieved to get indoors and get fully dressed.

All breakages had to be reported to Matron as she gave the replacements. Edie had had a bad spell of these, and had been reprimanded. So, when she went to stand the large water jug in the basin and it fell through, breaking everything else on the shelf underneath, she was nervous at reporting it.

We were changing the sheets on the boys' beds, and pushing the soiled ones in the tall linen baskets with lids attached. These we would lay on their side and roll down 10 flights of stairs. Someone stood at the bottom to stop them and stand them upright again.

Edie said - "Quick, here comes Matron." She jumped into an empty basket, and I shut the lid. Matron came by and asked - "Where's Edith?" I lied - "I don't know, Matron". She said - "Don't hang about, get that laundry downstairs." So, I had to turn the basket on its side, and with Edie inside it hurtled down the stairs, almost knocking down the maid below. As soon as Matron had gone, I ran down to see how Edie was. She was not bruised, but so dazed she could not get out of the basket. We pulled her out and waited for her to recover. I did her a favour by telling Matron it was me who did the breakages, and she said - "Be more careful in the future."

I got very friendly with one boy named Jess. He was an only child and seemed quieter and more sensible than the others. I singled him out to walk

with, on returning from my half day, and when I had an hour off in the evening I knew he would be round about his father's stable. I would help clean his horse brasses, and I grew quite fond of him.

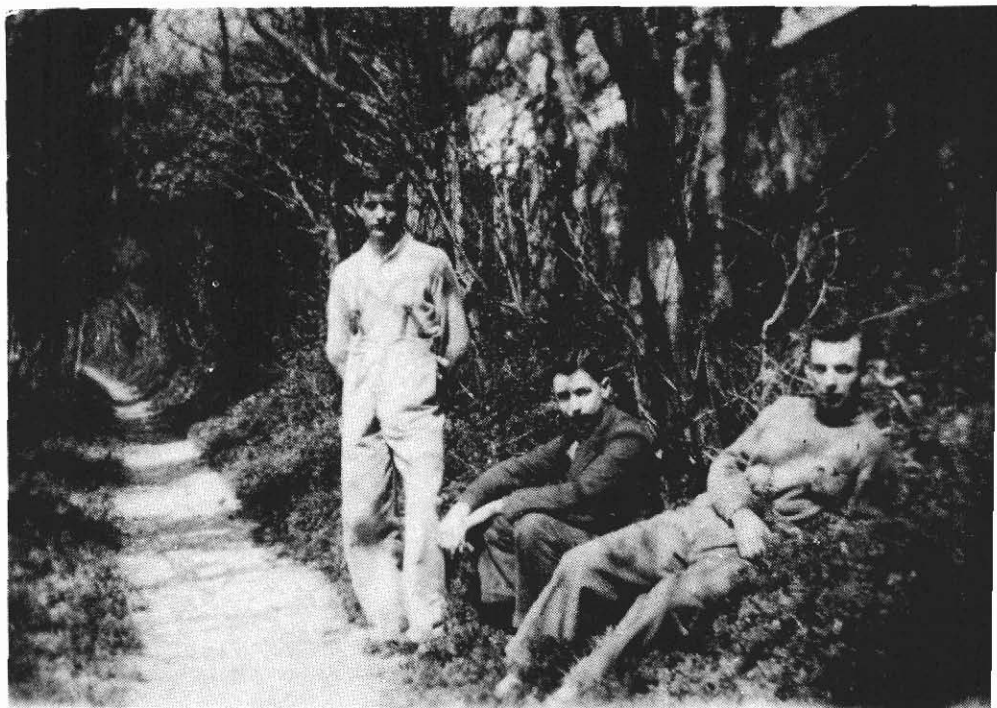
When I was leaving him one evening, he put his arm round my shoulders and gave me a kiss. I shall never forget the feeling I had. I could never explain it, but it was the first sign of affection I had ever had, and I was walking on air. I was sure this was real love, and became more friendly by asking him to come home to tea with me.

I was sitting astride the bottom half of the stable door, one Sunday morning, when Mrs. M. went by on her way to Church. She gave me a scathing glance and passed on. I was summoned to the study on her return, to be told that when I was off duty on Sunday mornings I am to go to Church, and not flirt with village boys.

My friendship with Jess came to a sudden end. I knew his birthday was near, so bought a pair of military hair brushes in a case, and had a silver J put on the backs. I knocked at his cottage door. No one came, but his mother popped her head out of an upstairs window to inquire what I wanted. I told her I had brought Jess's birthday present. She accused me of running after him, told me to stay away, if he wanted me - he would come to me.

My heart sank into my boots. I could not see at the time that I was over doing things. I went away and cried and cried. In fact, I cried off and on for days. Something had happened to Jess, he avoided me. So that was the end of Love's young Dream.

There were other village boys to talk to, so I consoled myself that he was not the only pebble on



Village boys, George in the foreground who I married.

the beach, and after all I was only 15 years old. But that is a very impressionable age.

Then George seemed to sort me out from the others. His father was a shepherd. They lived in a small cottage facing the pond, but both pond and cottages are now gone. The boys from Brighton College were always throwing their funny boaters in it, when they passed on their Sunday walk.

When I had been at the School two and a half years, the Rev. Mr. Marshall and Mrs. M. were retiring. They had both taught there for seventeen years. The School was being taken over by Mr. and Mrs. Chinneck from Bradfield College, Berkshire. We were all asked if we would stay on, to give the new people a start. But after a while I'd had enough. Mrs. Chinneck did not teach. She lay in bed nearly all the morning, and I could not get in to do my work, then she expected me to carry on after dinner. Even on my half day, she

appeared about noon, and she said she wanted her carpet up and beaten in the afternoon. I told her it was my half day, but she insisted. I went off duty at 2.00 p.m. and gave notice to leave next day.

Elsie was not happy either, so I gave notice for her as well.

I suppose, really, I missed Edie who had left with her father to follow the Marshalls in retirement to East Grinstead.

Then I had to think of another job. I thought I would try private service, so took a post as house parlour maid with Lord and Lady Mercer in Dyke Road. The pay was £3 a month, and I did not have bus fare on my half day.

I had no references to show when I applied for the job. Although I had been at the school five years, Mrs. Chinneck would not state this, so I said, "Don't bother". But Lady Mercer took my word for it, and I was really happy there. Just the Cook, housekeeper and myself. Far better than school work. More leisurely, and lots of time off when I took the dog for a walk. For six months we were in Brighton, and six months in the country house in Burgess Hill.

Lady M. was not a lady in her ways. She did not bother about dress. She loved gardening and would don Sir William's cap and Norfolk Jacket when she went into the garden, the pleats in the jacket billowing out on her fat frame, shoes always undone and down at heel, or looked that way, because she was so bow legged.

If a call came to make up a bridge set she would drop her garden tools, take off cap and jacket, powder her nose, then tell me what clothes to bring down as she went out the door. I had to run after her with hat,



coat and cheese sandwich, while she was on her way to the station. The mud on her hands she removed on arrival at her friends' house. I don't know what they thought or said about her, but I always say I was more of a lady than her. I would never think of going out like that, and she would be the first to correct me if I did such a thing. But the housekeeper and I got on OK. She taught me how to crochet lace which I still do to this day.

At Christmas time the Mercers had a big family gathering. Then I would have to give up my bedroom, and go up in the attic. I had a step ladder to go up, and under the sloping ceiling I had a mattress on the floor. A wooden cover over the watertank was my dressing table. I could only stand upright down the middle, so mostly I was crawling on my knees, for doing my hair and getting to bed.

Trying to go to sleep was almost impossible. There were so many people in the house, and every time a toilet was used or water drawn off, the tank had to refill. It was gurglings and hissings nearly all night. Just the time when I needed rest to cope with the extra work, and I had to do with less. I was always glad when they all went, if only to get a night's unbroken sleep.

Lady Mercer always arranged the Bridge Parties when the housekeeper was off duty. She would then occupy the kitchen to make cakes. Left entirely on her own, she would run away and forget the cakes in the oven. Then, she would grate all the burnt bits off, cut it into chunks, roll in jam, and then in dessicated coconut. This seemed to happen every time. She told all her friends she was a good cook. The housekeeper and I had many a good laugh over her efforts. I said they were either Burnt Offerings or Sacrifices and thank goodness the sandwiches were wholesome.. .



cooked the chicken. Sir William had said he liked the gizzard, so she cooked it, put it on his plate, and when she tried to cut it she had left all the grit inside and had not emptied it. She said she did not know it had to be opened. But Sir William did not know one piece of meat from another, and would always ask - "Do I take mustard with this?", and Lady M. would reply - "No dear, mint sauce, this is lamb." So, no mistakes were made in front of visitors.

As I went to Lady Mercer's, Elsie went to Brighton College. She worked in the Annexe in Lewes Crescent, which was one whole house, and two top floors of next door. The access was only through the front door, so when Elsie went to her room, she walked to the top of the house, through a door, and downstairs.

Outside her room, which she shared with another girl, was a fire escape -metal spiral steps leading down to a yard at the back of the house.

A private hire Taxi would sometimes call to take out mistresses or boys, and Elsie answered the door to him.

After several calls he asked if she would like to go out for a drive on her off day, which she did. She enjoyed his company, and started going out regularly. But, love being what it is, the time to go in came round too quickly. She devised a plan. The housekeeper would check her in at the right time, she would go to her room, and out down the fire escape, where he was waiting round the back. Then, they could have a few more minutes together, and she would ascend the fire escape to her room, by knocking the door for her room mate to let her in. This she did each "half day", and the Housekeeper was none the wiser.

On one such day, when the weather was colder, she ascended the fire escape, knocked the door, but no one came. Then she remembered her room mate had a late pass.

She could not go to the front door again, or she would have to admit what she had done. It was no use going down the escape either, because her boy friend would have gone. So she curled herself up as near the door as possible, and had to wait till a light appeared inside. By then, she was stiff with cold. She vowed she would take more notice of her mate's movements, as she would hate to go through that again.

Their friendship ripened, and they married at St. John's Church, Kemp Town.

A few years later found Lily, Elsie and me at the Diocesan Training College for Teachers, in Ditchling Road, now used as Army Records Office. We were not there long. The whole set up was poor, for students and staff alike.

I was dining room maid, and it was my place to lay and clear tables, put out bread, marmalade and butter at breakfast. Other maids helped serving at midday meal.

It was the food that put us all off. To go to the larder and find a cat asleep on the loaves, a mouse floating in the milk can, ants had got in the sugar, then when thrown out, the cook said it was waste, she could have used it for cooking. The large stone jars of marmalade had dead wasps in them. Then when it came to Jam Roly Poly, when cockroaches were in the jam, we left for our health's sake. But I felt sorry for the students who had to put up with it.

more of a party for the students. They had plenty that day.

Elsie did the Board Room, she had laid the table for about twenty people. The food which was salmon and salad was put on the plates, which were put in the service lift, and wound up to the Board Room. There was only room for a few plates at a time, and it was going to take several lifts to get all the plates up from the kitchen, so we put four plates on and one in the centre. This would save time.





Dining room,  
Diocesan Training College,  
Ditchling Road

Some went up alright. Then, a plate caught as it reached the top, and plate and contents fell down to the bottom of the lift shaft, all among fluff and accumulated dirt. I went to the kitchen to ask cook for a replacement. She said she had divided it all out, and there was not any more. She fished all the bits out, washed them under the tap, and up it went. Elsie knew which plate it was, and asked me if I would go in and switch the plates around, so she would not know who had it, as she had to stay in the room.

The final item that decided me to leave was giving 40 boiled eggs between 100 girls. They were all asking me for more, as they had done many times before. So, I said - "Go to the kitchen, that's where the food is". Cook sent for the Housekeeper. She turned on me, and I did not hold my tongue. I said what I thought of them, and left.

Elsie was having trouble with her feet, a sort of rheumatism, through being on the concrete floors. The doctor said if it did not improve she should find another job, so that decided her to leave as well.

I went to an agency in Castle Square for my last job, the first one I had ever been to. There was a situation to suit me at Rottingdean at St. Aubyn's. I was quite pleased to go there as I knew the district and I had met and renewed a friendship with George at Ovingdean.

We would meet every evening, if possible, by meeting somewhere over the Windmill Hill, even in winter, when it was dark. I could find my way to Ovingdean by the path. There were no lights, but by feeling as one walked, whether the grass was short or long, and the hardness of the ground, it's a sort of second sight.

When the weather was too cold and windy for the hill, we would use the undercliff walk, which had been made by now. I bought George an alarm watch, which he would set, to tell us when to retrace our steps.

St. Aubyn's was a good place. On Sunday evenings we all had our boyfriends in to supper, with cookie at the head of the table. We had plenty of food and good conversation. But one must eventually get married, and George and I married in 1934. He had improved his job by getting a Chaffeur, Gardener, Handyman's situation at Lowfield Heath. There was a bungalow that went with the job. Decision and all wedding arrangements were made in three weeks. We married at St. Saviour's, Ditchling Road.

I let Lily know when I was leaving and she stepped into my job. Lily did not marry. But I know she was happy to work at St. Aubyn's.

Ena was having epileptic fits, so stayed home with Mum and helped run the home. Ted did an apprenticeship at Wallers of Whitecross Street and also works at Allen Wests.



Brother George

My brother George went as a typewriter mechanic, then into the RAF. He now has a stamp shop in Cowes, Isle of Wight. He liked stamp collecting as a boy, so is in his element. He has also had success in photography and has written a book on "The Isle of Wight - Then and Now", with his photographs in it. So here we all are, making our way in the world, but still as close as ten peas in a pod, and all so busy just like Bees in a Beehive.



Lily and Ena

Lily, Elsie, Ted and myself live in Brighton, Emily still in South Africa, but the others have now passed on. Lily is not married. Elsie has three daughters, one in Bermuda, two in Australia with families. Ted has two daughters. I have one son and one daughter, so none of us has a large family like our own. We were happy together, but I would not wish any daughter of mine to work as hard as I had to as a child. But it was accepted, because it was the only job for girls, apart from Shop Assistants. Their pay was not large. They always were expected to look smart, so new clothes were almost a must, and walking to and from work daily must have worn their shoes more than ours.





Arthur's wedding. I am second row on right

The two wars brought about the change. Near the end of the First World War, when older men were being recruited, women took over their jobs. Bus and crane drivers, Women's Land Army, machine operators in factories, and working on munitions. The pay was so much higher, they left service to do their war work. Then when the Second War started they were ready to do the same.

The gentry finding no staff to run their large houses, had to get smaller ones they could manage themselves, and so - "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good", as the saying goes. It has definitely evened the classes. Servants are not down trodden now. They are respected, and are referred to as "Treasures" now. One is lucky to find them, that is why. The hours are now far less, more off-duty time, own sitting room, T.V. etc. - but not for me now. I've had my share. I only wish it had been like that when I was 14 years of age.





Daisy Noakes' story covers her childhood years as one of a family of 10 in Prince's Road and Vere Road, and her working days in service in different parts of the town. It takes us through the first third of this century and gives us a special insight into the life of women brought up in working Brighton.