

DCWIV  
MEMORY LANE



DOWN MEMORY LANE.

To Gladys,

My Wife and Companion

for

Fifty-two years.

*Cecil George Harwood*

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*To*

*Douglas + Brenola*

*with love*

*1978*



PREFACE.

I was born at No.7, Whitehill Cottages on October 9th, 1894, but when I was about one week old my parents moved into No.8. It was more suited for a large family and there were 9 of us, though not all living at home. The garden also was larger.

My father was gardener at the Frythe, working the head, a Mr. Joseph Fitt, a very kindly man as I found out in later years as I grew up. There was always an apple to be had when in season.

Squire Wilshire lived at the Frythe with his three daughters, the Misses Edith, Alice and Eva, all three died spinsters.

The living at Ayot St. Peters belonged to the squire and the Rev. Jephson was Vicar as I remember it, Mrs. Jephson was organist and the two daughters were Sunday School teachers. They also held a Guild for boys one evening and for the girls another evening, we didn't get the chance to mix. More of these folk later.



## SCHOOL DAYS.

I began my schooling when I was three years old and it cost twopence per week. For the first year we had just picture books to read and sometimes the teacher read to us. To break up the day for us we were given a book and crayons to draw what we liked, flowers, birds, etc. and colour them. From that we learned to distinguish the various colours of each.

As time progressed we were taught to read and write and for an afternoon class we were shown how to knit. The knitting for boys was making part of strips of knitted wool about 1 foot long and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. When these were completed they were sewn together to make a harness. The best set made was given to the brightest pupil. Needless to say I never had one.

In the Autumn the teachers decided to hold a concert for end of school term and some were chosen to recite or sing. I was told off to sing a duet with one of the girls "Where are you going to my pretty maid". All went well until the dress rehearsal and I wasn't to be found. I must explain here that in this room for infants was a gallery, seats rising one above the other, about six tiers and underneath was storage space. To cut a long story short, I hid myself underneath until school finished only to be informed that I would be expected to do my part or be punished. I gave in and the next day all said what a good show it was, after all was said and done.

We had a treat that first Christmas after our little concert. A tea was given by several gentry living around and after tea we had games. A present was given to each child according to age, then to wind up we had an orange, apple and a bag of sweets. After three cheers were given it was home and bed.

In the Summer a treat was given by the Miss Holdsworth at Ayot Bury. Tea was laid out on trestle tables on the lawn and we were waited on by the Miss Holdsworths and the Miss Jephsons, the Rector's daughters. Before tea, we had games, Blindman's Buff and many others such as Hunt for the Treasure, etc. Towards the end of the games a bell was rung and it was a mad scramble for a place at the tables. There were sandwiches and all kinds of cakes, but the one I liked was the sponge, but even I had had enough and had to refuse each time it came my way. The Miss Holdsworths kept pressing me to have another piece but I had to say "No, thanks". Well, she said, put it in your pocket, then I had to say "There is no room as my pockets were full already". I was provided with a paper bag and told to ask for it at the end. There were also presents for all. They were hung on a long cane suspended from two supports and each person was blind folded and stood about 10 feet from the suspended presents and facing them. One walked forward and the first one you touched was yours.

The boys at school wore knickerbockers and jackets with a jersey underneath, or maybe a waistcoat, depended on what ones parents could afford. The girls wore dresses and pinafores well below the knees.

For boots, most of us wore hobnails. For those of you who have never seen one, it was a nail with a rounded head and there were four rows in each boot, one each side of the sole, two down the centre and on the toe. On the heels we wore iron tips. They were heavy to wear but lovely in the Winter for sliding on frozen ponds or large puddles, for in my early days there were only deep ditches to take away the water off the roads. Girls mostly wore button shoes or boots and they had to be fastened by using an implement one seldom sees to-day, a button hook, almost a collectors item at the present time. Heavy boots at that time, my size, cost around 2/- to 2/6 per pair. Lighter shoes cost slightly more and with better leather. Clothes were never a problem. One could go to a shop but they wanted ready cash. On the other hand, lots of folk did the same as my Mother. A packman came round each Tuesday and would collect around 1/- or more, make an entry on a card and when something was wanted he would bring it on his next journey, cross the amount off the card, therefore one was never in debt. This man came to his clients in a horse and trap, and if as sometimes happened, he had a cold, he would call in and beg a few small onions. He would devour them when his round was complete and he was homeward bound to Luton (distance 12 miles). He said the onions always cured his colds.

Another chap who called, also from Luton, was a salesman in straw hats, such as panamas, boaters or sunhats for men, especially for working outside in the sun. For ladies there were hats of all shapes and sizes and colours, all costing 6d. to 1/- depending on the plat. Hats like those would sell in the shops to-day for £2. of £3. One could also buy a bunch of flowers or a birds feather for 2d. or 3d. This salesman called periodically as his trips radiated from Luton to Ayot. He would ride in the guards van of the train, as his sack of hats would not be carried in an ordinary compartment, it was far too bulky. He would arrive at 9 o'clock on the day and proceed from there to call on the different houses and hope for the best. His hats were well-known and his rounds must have been remunerative, for he came round for several years.

Early Spring was a favourite time of the year for most youngsters born in the country, as at this time one could walk by the fields and see lambs frolicking about, there were the first flowers by the side of the lanes. The celandines were the first, they prefer damp ditches, then came the hedge violet, very sweet to smell and in the woods the common violet, primroses, wood sorrel and anemones! Then to see the trees beginning to break into leaf and see the blue sheen of bluebells like a huge carpet, it was a sight to see, and to pause and think what a wonderful thing is nature. The same things happen every year and no earthly gardener to tend them. Looking for birds nests was another occupation. What birds you would find, blackbirds and thrushes were always first and then the robin in a mossy bank, the first two in a shrub or a hedge somewhere partly hidden, sparrows and finches followed on. In

between we kept an eye open each day to see if we could find either a partridge or pheasant nest, for each one pound we received a 1/- from the keeper of that estate and when he thought the bird was about to sit he would collect the eggs and transfer them to a broody hen and hope for the best.

I think I was about 6 years old when I was asked to join the choir. I think that was the beginning of my mishaps. We were rigged out with a cassock and surplice, but it was stipulated we wore a celluloid collar as that was easy to keep clean, also a black bow. Choir practice was every Friday evening. There were about 10 boys and 8 men. The Rector's wife and 2 daughters were always there to see we behaved and the Rector's wife was the organist.

During the Summer Church services were at 11 o'clock in the morning and 6-30 in the evening, and during the Winter at 3-30 p.m. The Church was lit by oil lamps, on the lectern and in the Rector's pew were two candles, in the pulpit two also and on the Altar two tall candles. When still early Autumn and quite bright no lamps were lit and when the last hymn was given out it began to darken and the hymn "The people that in darkness sat" had hardly begun when it became quite dark and no-one could read their books. It struck me as funny and I began to giggle. A boy opposite came over to get a book and find out what I was amused about. He went back, passed it down his side and that was the beginning of my mishaps. The Rector turned round and called out "Cecil, leave the choir". I felt just about as big as a clothes-peg as I went out. After the service was over and we were assembled in the Vestry I received a telling off by the Rector. He told me I should blow the organ for the next few Sundays, also for the choir practice, as a punishment. I wasn't very pleased as the organist needed a lot of wind to play the organ. I also had a telling off from my Mother. She had been in the body of the Church and she couldn't see why I was sent out. I didn't tell her the whole story.

While out for a stroll on Sunday afternoon, there were four of us, we decided to have another go at climbing the wire stays supporting a telegraph pole. We had made several tries but failed, so this was to be the last try, or so we said, and it really was as you will gather from what happened. I think it was Jack who went first and he almost made it. I should explain this particular pole stood half-way up a steep bank, two wires, one on either side and one at the back. The object was to go up hand over hand, then transfer to the other side and descend the other side. The second to go was myself, so up the bank I went and after a struggle reached the top and transferred to the other wire. It was easy coming down and as my feet touched the bank I shouted "I've done it", but instead of congratulations a voice said "Now I'm going to do it" and when I looked down I saw Constable Farrer waiting for me. He helped me down the bank and before I could think of something to say I was across his knee and he gave me a few of the best and said "I don' suppose you will do that again". What puzzled me was where were my mates. As I left the spot they came through a gap in the hedge on the opposite bank. They saw the Constable coming and scattered into the brickyard close by.

We all took a long time to get to our various homes and when I opened our front door, who should I see by Constable Farrer. I almost had a fit. My Mother said "What have you been up to?" The Constable finished his cup of tea and said "Its alright Missus, he's had his punishment" and told them the tale. My Mother said "Alright, now its my turn". I was escorted into the back kitchen and rewarded with another hiding. The way of the transgressor is hard, but I firmly believe that if police were given back the licence they once had to chastise a wrong-doer, instead of hauling him up in a police court, it would be better for society as a whole. A policeman was looked on as a friend in the early days of this century, but to-day his hands are tied. Oh! this permissive society. After that little fracas it was back to organ blowing and there I fell in the soup again. All went well until about the hymn before the sermon, I don't know if I was wool gathering, but I stopped pumping the organ and there was an almighty groan from the organ, that pulled me to my senses and I pumped for dear life. It was too late, however, and I had another telling off, this time from the Rector's wife. Things were a bit quiet after that and I was allowed back in the choir.

Some Sunday afternoons we played about in the sand pits. We would see who could jump the furthest into the sand from the ground level, and when we were tired of that, we would stroll along the railway lines to a place, Waterend, it was crossed by a ford for carts and by a wide plank for pedestrians. It was a good place for bathing in the nude in the Summer time.

I don't ever remember being hungry for want of food, as the employees were privileged to catch the rabbits as they did quite a lot of harm in the grounds. It also helped to swell the wages, 18/- per week and 2/6 taken out for rent. For my family we were never without a joint on Sundays, two veg. and a Yorkshire pudding. If any vegetables were left over, it came in a bubble and squeak. On washday, Mondays, another thing we were never short of callers, otherwise tramps, cadging some hot water or a piece of bread, but hoping for more. One day, my Mother brought out a large crust and handed it to a tramp, he took it, then said "This is stale and threw it across the room". The worst thing he could have done, Ma simply grabbed him by the neck and seat of his pants, ran him past four cottages to the gate, put her foot behind him and he found he was flying across the road. We saw the regulars now and again during the year, but never that one again.

Fish was brought round to the door once a week. It was much cheaper than in the shops for the simple reason the man had no rent or rates to pay on a shop. One could buy fresh herrings around hay-making time for 1/6 per dozen, bloaters when he could get them much about the same price, sprats when in season, bought by the pound. What a feast we had when they were about. We also had a chap around who sold oranges and lemons, muffins and crumpets.

Rags and bones also brought in a few pence as did the rabbit skins, if in good condition would fetch 6d., moleskins would bring in 1/- for a good skin. The moles were difficult to trap unless one knew where there was a run, then it was possible to trap up to a dozen or more before they gave up using that run.

Outside our school was a three cornered piece of land belonging to the Frythe which was sown with grass and white clover. One day a fishmonger from Luton passed by with his pony and cart. He asked one of the bigger boys if he could have a bagful of the grass and clover for his pony. If he could he said he would bring us either winkles or shrimps. The outcome of this was, we would have a bagful ready for him next time he called which was on the following Friday. The day came round and those who helped pull the grass would get a share of whatever he brought. During afternoon playtime he arrived and duly collected his grass, but he said "No winkles or shrimps", Sorry". One or two of the boys had brought along pins ready for the winkles during lesson time. This happened again but one of the boys saw shrimps in a box covered up. Anyway, we let the man go and promised a much bigger bag the next time he came round. We had one ready for him, it was half full of hedge trimmings and the rest grass. When he put it on the seat beside him, he jumped into the driving seat and off he started, but the boy who had spotted the shrimp box was left with it in his hand, when the pony jumped off it jerked the box off. The sequel to this was that the next week as we were in the playground, up comes our fishmonger, looks around, spots the boy who had pulled the box off. He had his whip in his hand, he jumped over the wall and made for the one he wanted, but Billy was well up out of reach climbing the large elm tree growing by the Church wall. We never did get our shrimps and we never pulled any more grass.

The games we played were simple but often needed a certain amount of skill. There was the card game and marbles, each played by a brick wall or the side of a barn or house. The former was played with cigarette cards with two to four players. If two are playing you decide who starts first. A card is held against the wall about 3 ft. up by the thumb and flutters to the ground, the next player follows the same procedure and so on until a card is covered. The winner picks up all cards but one, and then you carry on until all cards are won or you need to play another game. Marbles are played in much the same way, only that you pitch at the wall from about 4 ft. and the marble rebounds. If several marbles are on the ground, the first one to hit a marble picks up all and you begin all over again. Other games which were popular concerned boys and girls, iron hoops for boys and wooden ones for girls. The boys used to have skimmers for theirs, a length of thin iron about 1ft. and turned over at the end like a half hook. The girls had a short length of stick. Another Spring game was whips and tops, but this needed a fairly smooth surface to spin on. There were two kinds of tops, Tom thumb, a squat one and Long Tom, anything from 2" to about 3" when in use. It was a competition as to who could keep the top spinning longest. The whips were just a foot or so long, and a piece of string, not too thick or it would not curl around the top.

Tip cat was a popular game, it was played with a round piece of wood about 4" long and sharpened to a point both ends, the tipping stick was about 18" long. The object was to make a circle with chalk about 15" across and an inner circle that would take the cat when tossed into the ring from a distance of about 6 ft. If the cat fell in the centre ring you got three strikes, if in the outer circle one strike, if outside the ring you lost your go. If you made a strike, the thrower would ask how many strides will you give me. For example, if he had struck it about 12 yds. he might give you 10 running steps, if you failed to make it the striker has another try. I wouldn't recommend anywhere near windows for play. It was easy to play in those far off days, the only traffic was a farm cart or a tradesman's horse and trap.

In Summer evenings there was never any problem to find something to do. There were about four boys in our gang, and one evening we were playing about in school lane, often called Bogey Lane. It ran between Prodggers Wood on the Frythe land and AYOT Bury a private estate on the right. On this bank was a pollard oak tree, the top part had been removed years before, it was quite hollow inside and if one climbed up about 8 ft. it was easy to get down inside the trunk, on the road side was a split and it was just possible to see what was coming. No-one had any idea what we were doing, it just happened. The two smallest were let down into the tree trunk and we hardly had time to turn around when a voice said "Someone's coming". It was a courting couple, and as they drew opposite we gave a groan, the pair stopped dead, and then the girl said "Did you hear that?" We had hard work not to giggle, but somehow it came out as a small explosion and the two just disappeared up the road. We were soon out and joined by the others, they saw more than we did I guess.

One Friday evening we thought we would play a trick on the cowman. He worked on the home farm but was always trying to put us on the wrong side of the fence and we were often blamed for something we did not do. For instance, a window was broken in the cowshed backing on to the road which everyone used and the cowman swore it was one of the boys who had done it. We were not guilty, he couldn't prove otherwise and it all passed over. We thought he should have a shake up, but we didn't expect to get the laughter out of it that we did. First, we unravelled a golf ball and measured the distance we wanted with the stretched elastic, on one end we tied a ball of newspaper the other end was held by one of us, with an easy get away. We waited until the Friday as that was the night the cowman went to Welwyn for his week-end pint. Two boys were down the drive leading to the Frythe and the other two were in the entrance of the private road opposite. One was a look-out and then as our victim was almost to the taut elastic, just imagine a tall thin man, almost 6 ft., head erect and puffing away at a long clay pipe, with not a care in the world. We let him almost step on the elastic when the boy let the ball of paper go, it just went Whoosh!!! He jumped in the air and bit the stem of his pipe in two, and by the time he recovered, the two boys down the drive had gone as also had the others on the opposite side. Next day we heard all about this thing that had rushed across the road almost under his feet. After that we let things go quiet until harvest time, and as we had a full six weeks holiday we used to give a helping hand to the farmer, such as leading the horses between the lines of stooks (these comprised of about 10

sheaves stood up with the majority of the heads inside). After fields were cleared small clumps of branches of hawthorne were stuck in the fields which indicated it was free to glean. As most folk kept a few chickens it came in very handy to help feed them later on in the year. When the harvest was gathered in the farmer gave a Harvest Supper to his employees and their wives and their older children. The tables were laid down the centre of the big granary barn. Everyone who could helped carry the food to the tables and when all were seated Grace was said. The huge joint was set at the head of the table ready for the farmer to carve. There were dishes of potatoes peeled and others baked in their jackets, dishes of brussels sprouts and cauliflower. There was also cold meats, beetroot and pickles as well as jellies and trifles. Ale or cider was supplied for either sex, also home made lemonade for those who preferred it. After supper and a short speech from the host and hostess to thank all concerned for the labour put in during the past 12 months and hoping that as one big family we would pull together during the next 12 months, we would meet again for another supper, thank you all. Fun and games were the order for the rest of the evening. There was old time dancing for the majority, such as the polka, barn dance, two steps, quadrills, lancers and waltzes, interspersed with games for the younger ones. It all came to a head at 9.30 p.m. when we all joined hands and sang "Auld Lang Syne". Those days are now passed and gone forever, more's the pity, and whatever walk of life one is in, it is spoilt by the fact that all and sundry have the complaint of "Gimme, Gimme, Gimme".

Seasons have changed a great deal from the early 1900's. I remember hard frosts, ice and snow well before Christmas. Late September used to be a pageant of colour reds, golds and fading greens. From the middle of the month acorns began to fall and farmers paid 1/- for every bushel he received. My sister and young brother used to go straight from school to certain trees, previously marked by father during the day, in the Frythe Park. We would pick for dear life and get a bushel before dark. Father would tip them in a sack and carry them down to the farm. It would be booked to us for payment when all acorns were picked. The money when paid out used to be spent on boots for us and as we could get a pair for 2/6 it left a few shillings over to spend. After acorns, we took a sack, broom and boards and the wheel barrow, filled the sack and barrow with leaves and horse droppings. All good for the garden when rotted down and when father finished work he would wheel it home and deposit it at the bottom of the garden in a shallow hole. By the time all leaves had fallen we had quite a pile ready for the garden in the Spring. On Saturdays, when acorns were falling the farmer would get someone to take charge of a few pigs, he would have them driven into a field near home and whoever looked after them until early afternoon received 6d. It only lasted until the acorns were gone. The fields were all named such as Hedgecrafts, Seven Acres, Chalkpit field, School field, Griggs and Prodders, the last two named after Vicars of Ayot St. Peters, Workhouse and Kingsleys and many more belonging to the Frythe. All these names bring back memories of far off days

It was about Summer in 1906 I sat for an exam, called Labour exam, and if one passed with top marks it was possible to leave school at the end of the Autumn term and which my parents decided I should do. A job was found for me as errand boy in a Chemists shop in Welwyn, as I had passed the exam. Before starting my first job, however, I had several weeks of schooling to complete and during that period we had the Annual Fair at Welwyn. It was a 3 day event, there were the usual attractions, roundabout, swings, coconut shies, also rock stalls, darts and shooting gallery, etc. etc. The stalls stood all up the High Street and on the plain, the rest of the fair was housed in a meadow at the back of the White Horse Inn, Mill Street. It cost 1d. for a ride on the roundabout or swings, the same for a throw at the coconuts. Almost everything cost 1d. pergo and a stick of rock 1d., those were the days.

It was at the fair I saw my first motion picture with the words written underneath, Pearl White in a train Drama, wonderful.

After the fair was over, as boys we had to find our own amusement. One of these was "pin a button". Pin a button the end of a thread about 3" long, the other end was held on to, with that in your hand you moved on a few yards out of sight and then by gently tugging it caused the button on the window to vibrate and it would tip tap on the window until someone would come out, then we would be gone. I remember doing this one ~~xxx~~ man's window, he was a gamekeeper for an estate close by. He lived with his sister in a cottage provided. He came to the door, and lucky for us, we were hiding behind a barn. He let fly with his gun and we retreated in a hurry. Sometime afterwards we saw the spot where the pellets landed and the marks were still to be seen years afterwards. "Pin a button" was out after that.

I think our last prank before I began work was on the lodge keeper. When it was getting dark he would saw and split logs ready for the Winter, also chop wood for kindling. This he stored in an outhouse just inside his back door. Now, outside a few steps away his chopping block was a large tree stump sawn off sometime ago and just behind was a large yew tree 12 ft. or more from back to front. For our part all we needed was a long bamboo cane about 10 ft. long with a piece of thread, black, so it would not be seen. One the end was tied a small object, just enough to cause it to jump up and down when the other end of the cane was touched. You see the cane was threaded through the branches of the yew tree and could be pushed out to cover the block and lifted or dropped at will, or could also be withdrawn at any time. We had everything ready for the chap when he next came out to chop his kindling wood, couldn't do it when he was sawing as he moved about too much. Our opportunity came quite soon, he came out with his hurricane lamp and stood it on the block, it was getting dark and just right for us as between lights it was difficult to see what was going on. As soon as he settled down to his job, every time he bent down we touched our end of the cane and our object just brushed his neck. After a bit he began rubbing the back of his neck and muttering under his breath, until at last he called his wife to the door and told her, "Every time I bend down something hits me on the back of the head". Her reply "Don't be daft, man, theres nothing out heze and you have the lamp".

She went back indoors and he picked up a handful of logs and carried them indoors. When he came out again he said "I'm sure I left my lamp here. He went indoors again and said "Missus, did I bring the lamp in? "No, you didn't, it must have gone out, have another look". In the meantime one of us had turned the lamp down and put it behind our tree and covered it with an old bucket used for putting over rhubarb. Well, when he eventually came out there was his lamp alight and standing on the block. That was enough for him, he picked up the lamp and went indoors. We pulled the cane out of the tree, said "Goodnight" and made for home.

Postmen from the very early years, that I remember, were always spick and span with their uniforms of dark blue with red piping down the trousers and around the neck and lapels and cuffs, also around the peaked cap. Yes, they were smart in those days.

Telegraph boys wore similar uniform and rode a red bicycle, this was the pattern up to 1914. The postman's journey was done on foot and come wind and rain, frost or snow, one could rely on the letters arriving. He would collect any for posting. His signal to let you know he was coming was three loud blasts on a whistle and all for ld. post. Much has altered since those early 1900's.

It was just before I left school during that Summer steeple jacks were about to do something about the weather cock on the steeple, don't know exactly what, but ladders were clamped to the first upright wall at the base of the steeple. Several of us were having a good look at it when someone said "There's only rope from the weather cock to just below the top of the ladder". I don't know how it all came about, but before long it was "I bet you daren't go up the ladders". This was to all and sundry standing around and we were out of sight of the Vicarage. Anyway, one or two had a go, but only one got as far as the ladder top and then it was only ropes to grasp so he came down. They then turned to me "Now its your turn". My tummy turned over, I had never done anything quite like this. I'd climb a tree with anyone, but this was different. Off came my jacket and if only I cleared the top of the ladder it was an added challenge to the rest, so here goes, I thought. It was simple until I reached the top of the ladder, it was not too bad, a few inches at a time and I was going up. I don't know how far I went up as I just could not look down. I know one thing, the Canon had seen me from his study window, but I did not realise this until a voice from below in very loud tones said "What are you doing up there?". Believe me, I came down quicker than I went up. My poor hands were burned from the friction of the rope. I managed to grab the top rung of the ladder, that was easy, but it wasn't so easy explaining how my hands got into that state, and although I was 13 I caught it good and proper.

That Autumn, when the acorns began to fall, our thoughts turned to pop-guns. These were made from Elder wood, not too mature, about 8" long and plenty of pith running through. When cleaned out it left a good outlet for a missile, acorn. The rammer was a piece of Hazel wood about 2" longer than the barrel, that end was used to ram the half-acorn well in. To fire it one had to grasp the barrel and hold the rammer to your chest, insert the end of the rammer about  $\frac{1}{2}$ ", hold firmly and push.

This happened to a new bowler I was wearing. One Sunday we were out for a stroll, one of the boys had a pop-gun with him, he was just popping off at anything and everything, when suddenly my bowler jumped on my head. I feared the worst, an acorn had hit it plumb in the centre front. Luckily for me it didn't do any damage, but I think things could have been much worse, especially had it been lower it could have been in my eyes or face. After that it was off the game to aim at anyone, one learns the hard way. Schooldays were carefree and happy, we had little money, but we enjoyed life to the full.

#### MY FIRST JOB (At Chemist's shop) ERRAND BOY.

I began my new life at the end of Summer, 1906. It was all very strange at first. My first duty was to sweep out the shop, also the pavement outside and pick up the rubbish and put it in the dustbin which was in the yard at the back of the shop. After that was done the shop floor had to have a damp mop all over. Then it was time to go round all the glass cases and clean the glass inside and out. The next job was to dust bottles and shelves. Apart from the cleaning and dusting there were errands to be run, sometimes to the boundary of Burnham Green. The house was Bierswood, a six mile journey on foot. Thank goodness it didn't come too often. A good 1½ hours waling fast. I remember one visit there. The folk kept a large Dane, it was loose, and on this particular day I had some medical supplies to deliver. Halfway down the drive, a good ¼ of a mile, we met, I was scared stiff until he came and put his two paws on my shoulders, his weight sat me down in the drive and he set up barking. He kept this up until someone appeared and called him off. As soon as I could I delivered the goods, made off as fast as I could. After that I said it would be the last time I called there, but I went several times after that. One thing I couldn't help doing was smelling the contents of the bottles. Some had pungent smells, others had sweet smells as I found out. After dusting the bottles at the back of the dispensing counter, it suddenly crossed my mind, I had read about folk being made unconscious in detective books and I thought I would like to try it for myself. While the manager was 'phoning I took a bottle down, took out the stopper and had a whiff or so. The next thing I began to feel giddy. I had sense enough to replace the cork, but I couldn't place the bottle on the shelf. I was hanging on to the counter, but my legs wouldn't hold me up, I sat on the floor, and in doing so knocked something on the floor. The Manager came out and soon saw what I had done, and did he tell me what I was, I never knew I had so many names.

Once or twice a week a meeting was held in the shop, one was a Pastor from Codicote, one the Doctor, another was the late owner Owen, and Jones the Manager. When they met it was like bedlam, all Welshmen, and to make it worse, all I could understand was, Yea, Yea, Verily, Verily. Soon after this, Mr. Higgins the owner of another shop at Stevenage sold the one at Welwyn to a Mr. Downing. He wanted

the shop and the living accommodation as he was getting married. Mr. Jones left and it was left to me to show Mr. Downing where things were kept to the best of my ability. Apparently he had been informed of my weakness for smelling bottles, for he said to me "Please keep your nose out of the bottles". Anyway, things went well for a time until one day he handed me a large stoppered bottle and said "Keep your nose out of that". I did not ask him what had been inside, but I no sooner got out of the shop to take it where we stored the empties than I had the stopper out and I was gasping for breath. The bottle went down with a crash, out comes the boss "What did I tell you, not to smell it". After that he decided I should serve sundries in the shop when I was not on errands. I was far more content but being small, I couldn't see over the counter so he found me a shallow box to stand on. I also learned to wrap bottles and small purchases. No sellotape in those days, sealing was the order of the day, very little string was used. One of the jobs I had was to pulverise a substance called Devils Dung. It was used by Gamekeepers to mix with corn. A small portion went a long way, it smelt like rotten garlic. Its proper name Asafoetida is used by gamekeepers towards the pheasant shooting season and the smell attracts the birds from one estate to another, and my job was to take a lump and with a pestal and mortar pulverise it until it was a powder. I can almost smell it now. I don't think I mentioned this job was from 8 o'clock in the morning until 8 o'clock at night for 5 days and until 9 o'clock on Saturdays, all for 2/6. I had almost completed a year with my new boss when, one Saturday night as he was about to pay me, I said "Mr. Downing, don't you think I'm worth a rise now? He said, What do you expect to get? I said that depends on you. He looked at me and then put his hand in the till and brought out a 3d. piece and put it alongside the 2/6 and said "There you are". I didn't pick it up and say "Thank you", I just pushed it back and said "Can you wait until it grows bigger". He said "You're a cheeky little so and so, but he opened the till again and put 6d. up, for which I said "Thank you". I never mentioned money again, but I kept my ears open for another situation. It was a surprise when it did come. After that I was given a cycle on which to do the long distances, but punctures were frequent as the roads were flint, no Tar Mc.Adam in those early days. When the roads needed attention crushed flint or granite was spread on the roads and then covered with a layer of gravel. The roller was then used on it, at the same time a water cart sprayed on water. After the roller had been over it a few times it was inspected by the foreman to be passed or otherwise. While the steam roller was at work one of the men walked in front with a red flag to warn all and sundry that a steam roller was at work. If a threshing machine was travelling on the road the procedure was the same. It was just before the 1st world war that Tar Mc.Adam was used extensively.

One day in early Summer medicine was wanted at one of the big houses and as the cycle was out of action it meant walking. I decided to go via the Warren, it was more pleasant than going by the road and

being country bred I could see and hear things a town person would never notice. This morning happened to be the one and only time I met Kit Nash a notorious woman poacher. She was always dressed in an old pair of trousers and over them she wore a skirt with large pockets and over all a large apron to hide whatever she was carrying. We met at the swing gate (nicknamed kissing gate). As only one person could go through at one time, we met at the gate and I stood back to let her pass. When she was through she looked me up and down, then said "You're Kitty Arrads son". Why my father was so called I don't know as his name was Alfred and was never called Kit by anyone else, Arrad must have been meant for Harwood. Be that as it may, Kit had quite a lot to say and she told me that my father's sister Sue married a Nash and his name was Blucher. What relation he was to her I never found out and her name was seldom mentioned in our house. After that little encounter I went on my way to Harmer Green and delivered my goods and came back by road. I had a lift back in a horse and trap and the boss wondered why I was back so soon, until I told him. Sometimes I had a lift in a coal cart if I was going towards the station. It was better than walking and as quick. At other times, if I had to go in the direction of the station after dark I would go to the White Hart and wait for either a cab or a mail van. As one or the other came along I ran behind and as he slowed down to turn into Station Road I would spring on to the back axle. Not a comfortable ride, but better than walking. Roads were not lighted up as to-day, they were gas jets, few and far between. Before I started work, a bunch of boys would wait until the lamp lighter went round with a hook on a pole, and as the lamps were on pilot jets, we would follow him round and with a piece of thick fencing wire bent over into a hook, put them out when he was out of sight, then make ourselves scarce. We didn't do this too often or we should have been rumbled, but now back to the shop. In the evenings we would have someone in to spin a yarn and one evening a gamekeeper was telling the boss something that happened one time. It appears a big shoot was to be held at Brocket Park and an important personage was to be there. He requested that if possible he would like to meet two more renowned poachers, no less than the Fox Brothers, Ebeneza Albert and Albert Ebeneza. These were identical twins and it was said they had the same number of convictions, to do this either one would take the blame of the other to keep the tally the same. To cut a long story short, they were presented at the lunch break and after chatting to His Majesty for a short while they were both recompensed by the Aide present.

Back to the other notorious poacher Kit Nash. She at one time was besieged in the little cottage they owned because she had not paid her just dues. A policeman was told off to hand her a summons, he pushed it through the door and as he was leaving she shot him in the pants. Legend has it that previous to that she dug a trench around the cottage and if it was left open for seven days she had won the day. Anyway, she was there until after the 1st world war and was buried in Digswell Churchyard.

During the time I was errand boy there was unrest at Jarrow Shipyards and a march was organised, the marchers eventually came through Welwyn. They had begged food and money on their way to London and what a sorry crowd they were to be sure. There were several handcarts and on these some of the marchers were laying, unable to walk further, poor devils. For them it was Hobsons choice, starve at home or on the march. Thank God, those days have gone, no-one need starve to-day.

We had one other character in Welwyn. He was employed by the Council to do all sorts of jobs, lamp lighter during Winter, keeping streets clean, also road drains. His was a tragic life. He began as a student doctor in one of the London hospitals, but he started on narcotics and finally got hooked on opium and laudinum, whichever he could get. I have known him go down on his knees in the shop and beg for it. Sometimes he had had his ration, so he would go to Stevenage and then on to Hitchin to try to procure some. He had to walk miles at times unless he could cadge a lift on the way. Hitchin was 9 miles from Welwyn as was St. Albans, often a fruitless journey. Just about closing time one Saturday evening, about 8.45 p.m. a fellow strolled in and asked for a small piece of cyanide. As my boss was at that moment engaged in booking the takings I kept him talking. He said "I only want a small piece for a wasps nest (it was used fairly freely at that time and could be purchased by signing the poison book) Anyway, I told him I didn't know of any other nests around, I thought it was too early (and for another thing I didn't recognise him as a customer) I told him I couldn't serve him, so I called the boss who came out and after a while he told this chap he must bring a witness who could vouch for him. With that he went out of the shop, but on Monday morning following, the police came in and told the boss a fellow was found drowned in the river by a grating as it flowed into the Guessem Gardens by the bridge leading to the village of Kimpton, so the boss told him about the visit on the previous Saturday evening.

There was a Barclays Bank just over the road from the shop on the corner of Church Street and I was allowed to pay in the takings once or twice a week. It was fascinating to watch the clerks weighing the gold pieces on scales, not troubling to count them, for there were no £1. or 10/- notes at that time. The coinage up to 1914 was ½d., ¼d., 1d., in silver a 3d. piece, 6d., 1/-, 2/-, 2/6 and a 5/- piece called a crown. After the gold was called in, paper money arrived in £1. and 10/- notes. While we had sterling £1. was worth 240 pence., and a 1/- = 12 pence. After the £1. was devalued years later everyone was crying out for more money and at this present day 1977 if they want more money its the public who suffer, but as far as this narrative goes we are still around 1910 and living at a much slower rate, the only things rushing along were the railways. These were run by private companies and it was a pleasure to ride on a railway and if one had luggage there was always a porter to help one.

## SECOND JOB (Garden Boy)

It was towards Autumn 1909 that I left the Chemist's shop as I was asked if I would like a job as garden boy. It was Lady Clement Smith, living at the Grange on the Codicote Road who asked me as she knew I wanted to leave shop life, not only because of the long hours. I was to ask my parents and if they agreed I could start after giving my present employer a weeks notice. Naturally they jumped at the opportunity and so did I. I was to receive 10/- per week wages, my mid-day meal, besides a break at about 10.30 a.m. We had to go down to the kitchen for that. A week later I left the Chemist's shop and looked forward to my new one. I spent about 2 years there and learned a good deal. In that first week I learned what my regular duties were each morning, such as brushing up the yard by the tradesmen's entrance, emptying dust bins, saving the cinders to burn in the greenhouse fire and papers on the bonfire in the kitchen garden. Drains were cleaned out every Saturday morning and flushed with Jeyes fluid. This was a ritual carried out every week. At other times it was work in the garden according to season. Winter time there was digging and manuring ready for the frosts to do its work to help break up the soil and fine it down ready for planting in the Spring. There were shallow trenches about 1 ft. deep, manure put in the bottom and turned over the loose soil laid each side and levelled off ready for lettuce and radishes to be sown and planted for a catch crop. No ground wasted. The same for celery and leeks but the trench a little deeper so that when grown and finally earther up one had a good long, bleached product for the kitchen. The rest of the garden was dug as crops were taken out. The raspberry cane beds were mulched and the old canes cut out and burned. In the strawberry beds all the old runners were cut off after taking enough young plants to make a new bed. The old plants were then forked through and cleaned before putting on manure for a mulch. All this was interesting work and rewarding in the following year. There was also the pruning of fruit bushes such as black and red currants, also goosberries and wall fruit in the walled garden. One day towards Autumn a few leaves were falling and the gardener told me to take the barrow and the broom to the broad walk and sweep up what twigs and leaves were there. This was when I arrived at 8.a.m. His last words were not to wheel on the lawn. I chose to go down by the dining room and the only way I could see without getting on the lawn was the narrow cement each side of the steps. All went well until I reached the bottom step, then the barrow slipped off the cement strip and over went the lot, right outside the dining room where the family was having breakfast. The wheel had come off, the bracket holding the wheel on had broken away from the wood. I felt about 2 ft. tall until his Lordship came out. He had seen what had happened and said it wasn't my fault, find the gardener and get him to mend it. I don't know what passed between them but I didn't get into trouble. Instead I was told to go via the side gate, pass by the front door, if that was being used to take one of the boards we used for picking up leaves and rubbish, prop it from the lawn to rest on the path and that would make a bridge to wheel over. There was no such thing as a rubber tyre, only an iron band

around the wheel, just the same as on all kinds of conveyances, dog-carts, cabs, etc. Solid rubber tyres came a bit later. There was a small meadow attached to the grounds at the back of the croquet and tennis lawns and when the leaves were off the trees, it was raked with big wooden rakes, consisting of wooden pegs and if one broke as they often did, one had to find a piece of wood, cut it to the length required and force it through the hole where the broken one came out, put a blunt point on it and carry on. When the leaves were raked into heaps they were wheeled down to the enclosure with the stable droppings and later were thrown into one large heap to make a hot bed. This was used to force rhubarb and seakale, also put under a garden frame with glass lights to bring on early carrots and lettuce, etc before the outdoor crops. This walled garden had a 9 ft. wall bordering the main road to Codicote, on the South side a wall ran the length of the Church. The other two walls were built in the grounds of the house and entered by a door leading into the potting shed from one end and at the other end an entrance from the other garden. Outside this wall was a built up flat piece of ground from the ashes collected from the house fires during the Winter. This was used in the Spring to stand pots of chrsanthemums grown outside in during the Summer and then taken into the greenhouse to flower ready for the house. Most were disbudded, some for large single blooms, others three blooms to a plant. Some plants were grown outside for sprays. One end of the greenhouse was used for raising annuals in the Spring, bulbs in the Autumn and tomatoes in the Summer. My part in all this was washing pots and mixing soil. I only did odd jobs in the greenhouse when wanted. About June was a time I really liked, as then I helped with the bedding out of plants grown under glass during the Spring. It cannot but give one a sense of well being to see ones labours coming to life and to tend them during the season was a labour of love. I think all folk are gardeners at heart or the thousands of people would not visit the parks and gardens as they do. During the two years or so I was working at the Grange I was learning and as my father spent best part of his life in the gardens of the Frythe he was a great help to me. By this time I intended to make gardening my career, my father gave me invaluable advice "Do all things you have to do well". I have tried to do this in many stages of my life. As proved later I was not to do what I set out to do, as will be shown later. The Summer was taken up with mowing, weeding and edging the lawns as well as staking and tying up plants to prevent them being blown about by the winds. Another job I had was cleaning out and swilling down the pig sty in which there were always two pigs to be fattened up for the house. The gardener took on the job of feeding them, the rest was left to me. As they were feeding so I cleaned out their sleeping quarters, cleaned the pen and emptied the drain pit. Doing this every day saved over an hours work on Saturdays as that was the day for kitchen drains and a general clean and brush up around the house. I was given to understand that as soon as I had finished this chore I was free to go, but I never could get away before 3 o'clock. One day Sir Cecil came walking around and asked me why I was at work on a Saturday afternoon. When I had explained all to him, he said he would see about it, and ever after I was finished at 1 o'clock each week-end. I was then able to do as other youths, go to football on Saturdays during the Winter and Flower Shows

and Sports meetings, etc. Two or three of us palled up and as we had cycles we spent a good many Saturdays at Hendon watching the flying. More of that later on. I didn't know it then but this was to be my last year at the Grange. January was extra cold that year and the two meadows along the Codicote Road were steadily freezing over. The daughter of the house came into the garden and asked me if I could skate. I told her I had never had the chance, she said "well you have it now, I have a pair of Canadian runners and you may borrow them until the thaw sets in. It was sheer luck to be having hard frosts and moonlight nights. It was a bit of a nightmare trying to get ones skates on, as soon as one was on and upright, down you went, until someone suggesting using a chair. There were one or two around, but I didn't know to whom they belonged, but someone suggested I use the one he had been using. After that I made a bit of headway, so before we packed up for the night I had a last fling, but my luck was out, there were tree roots bulging up and I struck one. I hung on to the chair but I spun around and then collapsed right on the chair. It just crumpled up under me, so all I did was collect the pieces and put them under the tree. Next evening I stood by a fence running between both fields and got my start from there. By the end of the week I could really skate and enjoy it, but a thaw set in and that finished my skating. From that day to this I have never had the chance to skate again. The skates were duly returned and life carried on as usual until late Summer of 1910. It was rumoured that the family was about to be moved as they worked for the Government or at least held a fairly high position in the Foreign office, or so I was told. Shortly afterwards her Ladyship came into the garden to see me and said it was no longer possible to keep me on as they might be moving on. She had spoken to a friend, however, Col. Alfred Dyke Acland and he was willing to take me on in the kitchen garden department on her recommendation and as soon as they released me I could join his staff. It was a bit of a blow as I had been working from 8 o'clock till 5 o'clock and now my hours would be from 7 o'clock till 4 o'clock in the Winter and from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the Summer. So it was goodbye to the Grange.

### THIRD JOB (kitchen Garden Boy)

In the Spring of 1911 I joined my new workmates at Digswell House until 1914. The head gardener was a Scot, but soon after I joined the staff he resigned and emigrated to New Zealand, where he bought and ran a sheep station with the help of his wife and three sons.

He was replaced at Digswell by a much younger man, married with a small son. The foreman of the glasshouses was a chap named Weaver, he had three journey men under him (a journey man is an improver). I was under a Mr. Handley in the kitchen garden with two odd job men. In the pleasure grounds was a Mr. Lyle, son-in-law to Mr. Handley; and two under gardeners. So much for the staff. The greenhouse chaps were housed in the boothy attached to the gardens and was kept clean by a

cleaner each week, they each put som much into the kitty each week for food, laundry, etc. There was also a resident carpenter and electrician whose job it was to run the plant for electric for lights, etc. at the house. There were two acres of kitchen garden including a range of glass at the back which were frames, hot and cold. There was also an office for the head, a messroom for men living off the place and bringing their own food. We had a boy to light the fire, also to boil the water for cocoa or to make tea. He was employed there for that job and also to do odd jobs. After a while we began to find our tea, etc. going down rather fast, one of the men thought of a plan to catch the culprit. A tin with about a quarter left in it was put in the cupboard, also some tea and sugar dosed with salts. Believe me in a day or two a message was received to say the boy would not be in for a few days as he had a stomache upset. This plan had cured him, we didn't miss any more tea, etc. Rats were a pest during Winter months, they scoured gardens and sheds to get at the vegetables stored for the Winter. We were not allowed to put poison down because of the animals around, so we had traps and cages. The traps were placed in a run used by rats, covered over with soil and pegged well down. Gloves were worn when placing a trap or cage as the rats have a smell for humans. If one was caught in a trap it was killed with a club, but if in a cage it was drowned in a tank of water. The biggest catch I ever saw was by one of the farm hands. He caught the parent and several others, but how they all got in without springing the door of the trap was a mystery. For every tail produced we were paid 6d. at the end of the week and it was not unusual to pick up a 1/- of two extra each week. We were also paid 1/- for a Queen wasp and several of these were caught during hibernation in odd corners of sheds and towards the Spring in greenhouses as the weather warmed up. After the days work was done it was a pleasure to be at home with a good log fire some evenings. Our family joined in playing dominoes or whist and other card games. At other times when we were seated around the fire Mother would read aloud to father. He had never been to school and therefore could neither read or write, but read him something out of a book and he was a happy man. Often the whole family would drop anything they were doing and enjoy listening to someone reading. I guarantee if a night's reading had been missed, my father could tell you where one left off and also what it was all about. That was what made him a good man in a garden, he remembered what he was told. Sometimes we would have the gramophone on at home, it was "His Master's Voice". Each one of us would chose a record which was played in turn so we all had what we wanted. The gramophone was owned by all the family as we put an equal share in the kitty, records were bought by those who could afford the money, 1/- for a two sided record, 100 needles for 6d. It was good value for money. We had a good collection of old time songs and ballads, some of which can be heard to-day on T.V. from "The Good Old Days" from Leeds. One evening a week the boys and a few older ones would walk to Ayot Green. . On the corner by the then Great North Road was a building

Ayot St. Peters reading room. It was used for concerts, Lectures and various other activities and on Friday evenings for a club room for games, such as rings, darts, etc. There were only about 20 members from 14 years of age upwards, but out of those older members were 4 who hogged the fire. They were first in every time as one of them held the key for Friday evenings. One was a blacksmith, the second his assistant, the third the Rector's gardener and the fourth a county road foreman. We tried moving them with sneezing powder and stink bombs, all to no avail, until one member hit on the idea of putting a piece of cobblers wax on each seat. It wasn't noticed and they sat as usual by the fire, the wax on each chair was doing its work, the longer they sat the more pliable did the wax become and when it was time to close down the four tried to rise out of their seats, but they were truly stuck and the chair came up too. Oh! what a sight they looked, each one of them trying to release the other. At least one was let off the hook as his trouser seat gave way. No one was censured because they didn't know who to blame.

Now back to garden work for a spell. As the leaves fell from the trees it was deemed time to go into the woods and cut the best of the young wood to use as canes for various pot plants such as chrysanthemums, carnations, etc. It was a pleasant interlude from being under supervision in the gardens. It usually took two days to collect all we wanted. They were tied in bundles of 25 and picked up by one of the carters next day and then stored in one of the small sheds in the gardens.

Another job was to string up the onions that had been harvested and dried. They were strung into 2 lb. lots and hung up in an airy frostproof shed and used from there as required. Every bit of food stuff was weighed when taken to the kitchen or pantry. All items were entered in a book with a printed list, vegetables, and fruit from the garden and other fruit from the greenhouses such as grapes, figs, strawberries, nectarines and peaches. The Colonel marked them all at market prices, from that he knew whether he was getting his money back on what he spent.

It was around 1910 - 11 that Handley was taken ill and had to stay at home for a few days. I was put in charge to see if I could carry on without help. It turned out my foreman came back after two weeks at home and that Autumn I was put to the test as regards pruning the various trees. I had to be with him best part of the time and he would walk around the tree talking all the time to it, wondering what it would look like in the Spring if he left that piece or cut it off. All of this was a help to me for as I pruned I could see for myself more or less what shape it would take. Afterwards I was given the task of cutting out old fruited wood in the black and red currants, also saving a few young stems to strike for new stock. As this job progressed there was a rumpus on the path where my barrow stood. It was in the way of the Colonel, who had a habit of riding round on a bicycle to see what work was being done, he had unfortunately run into my barrow and fallen off his bike. He swore a bit and said in future would I keep the barrow off the path. I told him that was not

possible, when doing the work I could not have the barrow amongst the currants, also it was not customary for gentry of the house to roam around the garden on bicycles. I never heard any more about this incident, so suppose it all blew over, but one thing we all noticed after that affair, he was not seen riding around the garden on his bicycle again.

Everything was much the same in the Winter, there were the ends of coconut mats to cover the frames at night to protect the plants from frost. We also made besum brooms from silver birch, which we did under cover when the weather was too bad to work outside. There were also hot beds to make consisting of grass and leaves collected from under the trees in the park, manure and straw from the stables all put into one big heap, several cartloads. It was left for a day and as it generated heat after a day or so, it was then turned every other day until ready to put around rhubarb, seakale, etc. These roots were covered with old teachests with a large hole in the bottom. This was then placed upside down over the root, the hole exposed covered with board or slate and the prepared hotbed is packed between teachests. The heat generated starts the rhubarb into growth. At the end of each year we would be told if the results were good or bad according to the season.

I don't remember anyone being made redundant, there was no such word at that time and all that happened was, if anyone department did not come up to standard it would be expected to do so during the next 12 months.

It was in the Spring of, I think 1912, that my foreman was taken ill again and had to be taken home. He was a very small man and getting on in years. The bailiff was sent for and as there was no conveyance it decided he must be taken home and a Dr. sent for. The only transport we had was a wheel barrow. Sacks were put in the barrow for him to sit on and one of the men volunteered to wheel him home to Welwyn. The foreman never recovered. The bailiff sent for me and told me the Colonel had decided to give me the responsible job of being in charge of the kitchen garden. I suppose it worked out alright as I held that position until September, 1914. More of that later.

In the Spring of 1913 an early swarm of bees arrived in the garden and settled on a fruit tree. The bailiff was responsible for the small aviary of 6 hives so he was sent for to remove them if possible. The only thing I didn't like was that I was to help him to take the swarm. He said it was valuable to capture a swarm so early in the season. He instructed me in the drill, he would stand on a pair of steps where he could comfortably reach them. I was to stand directly below holding a skip above my head. It didn't go according to plan, because, as he clipped the twig they were swarming on, instead of falling into the skip, it hit the edge and only part fell into the receptacle which I quickly dropped on to the path and beat a retreat. The head jumped off the steps, stood clear a short distance away, he was already protected by hat, veil and gloves, etc, but what happened to the swarm? The Queen must have fallen into the skip for the bees gathered around again and we were later able to hive the swarm, a really good stroke of luck.

During the remainder of that all things went according to plan, chiefly owing to the efforts and support I received from my two helpers, without whom I could not have managed. At that time I was early in my

18th year, which was very young to be able to hold down this position.

The Winter of 1913 was much the same as other years.

One amusing incident comes to mind. We were in the woods collecting hazel branches, etc, and we met the head keeper. He asked us to keep a lookout for traces of foxes. One of our chaps said he practically came face to face with a fox at one time. The keeper said "What did you do?", he replied "I made myself scarce", to which the keeper said "ones never cum at ee as em, I reckon ee was more frit o ee than ee o thee".

As I said that Winter followed the usual pattern, but one thing I was complimented on the way things were going since my late foreman's demise. We were still short of one man and had to rely on occasional help from the firm. The only thing I had to guard against was helping oneself to the fruit in season.

An incident occurred during the late Summer. It was a pastime of the hunting fraternity to release a captive stag and then hunt it until it was caught again. This time it was released and it found itself cornered down by the lake almost at the foot of the viaduct. As the hounds gathered the stag went further out into the lake. The head of the hunt decided he needed help so two or three of us went down to see what was to be done. The stag had already injured one or two of the hounds swimming too near. The plan was to lasso the stag, we were to pull on the rope and drag it ashore. It did not work out as planned, the nearer it was to the bank the more the hounds harried it and finally three of the hounds were killed by kicks. Eventually the stag was pulled out of the water, its legs roped. The helpers were paid 1/- each and told we would not be wanted again. I never want to see another stag hunt.

During the Summer of 1914 three or four of our old gang used to go to Hendon and see the flying displays on Saturdays. They were red letter days as we were allowed to help turn the planes around to face into the wind. We saw all sorts and conditions of monoplanes and bi-planes and tri-planes. I don't remember any of the planes coming down out of control, although we did see a lady parachutist come down on the railway which ran around one side of the airfield. The last time we ever went to Hendon was to see the Frenchman Gustave Hamel arrive, which we never di, and according to reports it was a mystery and remained so. Rumour had it that he was a German spy as that August war was declared on us by Germany, 4th of August, 1914. For a time it did not effect our jobs, everyone was sure it couldn't last long. The day war was declared we at Welwyn were enjoying a Bank Holiday Monday with sports on the football ground. The declaration took the enjoyment out of it and the festivities closed early.

After the holiday we went back to work it was to be told by the head gardener that the Colonel had given us an ultimatum. There would be no more work and if we were fit we were to enlist. The following Monday 7 of us walked to Hertford. There was no other way of getting there apart from the railway, which meant a journey from Welwyn to Hatfield, thence to Hertford. We were not able to fix a return journey as we didn't know if or when we would be allowed home. We were kept there by the drill hall until the afternoon. After we had been sworn in we were instructed to be on the parade ground at 9.a.m. sharp on the following Wednesday and bring only toilet articles and the

clothes we stood up in. We were then allowed to go, but were we hungry and we had another seven miles walk in front of us. We had plenty to talk about so we didn't notice the miles pass by. Before finally making for home we reported to the head gardener to say we would not be in any more as we had to be on parade in just over 24 hours. This was the end of the old life.

LIFE IN THE FORCES From September, 1914 - March, 1917.

On the Tuesday following enlistment I cycled to Ware where my brother Charles was living. He was in the Hertfordshire Constabulary. If I stayed there overnight there would only be 2 miles to walk as against 9 miles from home at White Hill, Welwyn. Having arranged accommodation for the night I made for Welwyn and home to pack away clothes, etc., also a new cycle I had just bought. It was a racing type with cane rims, these had to be bound up with strips of rag soaked in raw linseed oil to prevent them splitting, and I didn't know if ever I would want it again. I did not know it was going to be needed at that time. I drew a veil over that evening, it was rather painful at the time. So on Tuesday evening I arrived at Ware ready for a 2 mile walk, knowing I had to be on parade by 9.0'clock sharp. Going by way of the canal, it led me to the Hartham which was going to be our parade ground for the next 10 weeks or so. I left Ware at some minutes to 8 o'clock allowing ample time to walk the distance to Hertford, 2 miles or thereabouts. It didn't work out, when I arrived, there were two or three lines of men lined up. Naturally I went to join them and a voice roared out "What is that man doing walking among the ranks, who are you and what's your name?" "Harwood", I replied. "Say Sergeant when you address me and stand to attention. Now what the ----- do you mean by being late on parade. You were told 9 o'clock sharp, its now past 9, remember you are in the Army now and if your name or number is called you spring to attention and if called from the ranks you come at the double and that doesn't mean walking". I think that day was taken up standing to attention, standing at ease and trying to take in all the do's and don'ts. By the time our first day was over we all wanted to lay down as in the afternoon the time was taken up finding a billet to stay for the first few weeks. I was lucky as each month a 4½ gallons of ale was bought by my parents for consumption at home, chiefly at supper time. This was delivered from Mc.Mullins brewery and by a strange coincidence our landlord was to be the man who delivered the aforesaid beverage. That evening we became know to each other and he kept my parents up to date with news, as it was almost impossibel to sneak home as police, known as red-daps, were always on the lookout for any-one breaking bounds. Welwyn was out of bounds and a pass was needed to get there. So ended our first day.

The following day was taken up with forming platoons, or as first known, squads. There were 60 men in a platoon and 4 platoons to a company and 16 to a baatalion. From formation we were known as, for example No.1, 2, 3 or 4 platoon, A Company, 1st Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment. The next few weeks saw us equipped with a full outfit of clothing and necessary articles for toilet, etc. There was a kit inspection every so often, never a regular event, and heaven help you

if anything was missing from your kit. One day we were issued with putties, these were about 4" wide, I never determined the length. We were told we were going on a short route march and putties would be worn. We fell in at 2.p.m. and proceeded up Bengio Hill and after marching for about 50 minutes practically all of us were complaining that our putties were tight. The Sergeant explained we should not wear them too tight as it restricted the flow of blood in the legs. I think we were all trying to look smart, but it did not take us long to find out that they could be worn fairly loose and the tapes sewn on the top prevented them slipping if tied properly. This was one obstacle surmounted and so we made slow progress in our training.

Friday afternoons each week were taken up with pay parades. My first one was amusing as there were two Harwoods, but of the two I was the senior by 2 days. Out of the 7/- received each week, 3/6 was deducted, that meant I should have had 3/6 but I only received 1/6, to cut a long story short my namesake had drawn my money and I, his. The mistake never happened again.

During our training at Hertford saluting was drilled into us, to salute at all times wherever one met. I remember at one time turning to look into a shop window just as an officer was almost up to me. I should have turned and saluted, but I continued looking in the window until I felt a tap on my shoulder and as I turned to face him I saluted him. Instead of telling me I should be reported he called me on one side and told me never to try and miss an officer by looking in shop windows, it did not pay, don't let it happen again, you may not get away with it next time. I think he was right and from then on I did my best, as it was pointed out there was a good chance for promotion just now. We were soon issued with rifles, Lee Enfields 33 and from then on rifle drill was included among other things, such as lectures on the care of the rifle and learning to drill with same. I think the weight of a rifle at that time was approx. 9 lbs. and we also had to fix and unfix bayonets in the shortest possible time for ceremonial drills. There were friending competitions between the four platoons in a company as to which one was the smartest in turn-out and drill overall. There was not a lot of difference between them and the Colonel (Col. Longmore) decided that our company was way ahead of others and he gave us a long week-end pass from Saturday morning until 10.p.m. Sunday, but he warned us (in our words) not to blot our copy books. Including all drills we had been instructed in were incorporated in our route marches and these were longer each week until we reached marching orders, that included rifle, pack, haversack, including all items that would be carried if one was evacuating a place, not forgetting one ground sheet. This served two purposes, as ground sheet or to drape around ones shoulders as the order was given. I believe our longest route march during our training at Hertford was around 15 miles carrying marching order around 96 lbs. To march 15 miles one would do fifty minutes marching, then rest for 10 minutes and so on until the end.

September and October passed, when during one afternoon we were dismissed early and told to prepare to move next day. No hint of where we were going was given, but to a place unknown and our orders were to parade as usual at 9.a.m. That night we were all busily preparing for the move, and our billets were told to be prepared to take others in after we had left. Next morning we paraded as usual and no time was lost.

As soon as roll call was over we formed into our own companies and marched off with the Regimental band. I fancy we all thought we were off to France. The band only played with us from the drill ground to the Railway Station. We were gone from Hertford soon after 10 a.m. It was no use looking for place names, they were unknown to most of us, as we had had very little chance to go far from home unless one could afford a bicycle. (It seems ridiculous to older folk, as at that time one could buy a good cycle for around £5.), but it was difficult to save that amount out of 15/- to £1. per week when there were also clothes, etc. to buy as well. To-day one spends £35. for a cheap cycle. I knew the places up to London but after that I was lost. I know we had a sandwich or two, but I think one had to rely on what he carried in his water bottle for a drink, I don't remember what was in mine. The journey was very interesting, the changing landscape was great and a lot of it was Horticultural and Agricultural land. We seemed to be travelling for hours. Two or three in our compartment had never travelled on the railway before and one was clutching his seat. We passed several thatched cottages, I was never sure whether he really meant it but he said "Did you see that haystack, it had windows in it?".

At long last we arrived at Thurston station where we alighted. A company first, then B. C. and D in that order. We filed into the road. At last we got under way and to our surprise we moved off with the band at our head, to our destination "Stowlangloft Hall" 5 miles from the station., and this was our home for the next month or so. That night we were allocated to our rooms according to size, I was in No.10 and I think there were 12 of us in one room. It was a large country house where His Majesty, King George 5th stayed on Shooting occasions in peace time, we learned later.

The village of Stowlangloft was about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the mansion house and the extensive lawns were ideal for drills and physical jerks. One could drill a whole battalion at one time as was proved afterwards. The first thing was fatigue duty for all available ranks. One of the platoons was asked if anyone could ride a bicycle, they would be wanted as messengers. The next wanted were gardeners, three others and I stepped forward. Could we use besom brooms? Yes, we could! Right, go round to the quartermasters stores, get 4 brooms and sweep the drive from front of the house to the front entrance gate. It was only a mile long. The next ones were to sweep from house to back entrance drive. Not much difference in length. I seemed to have most experience, so we began and I laid out the work, two to sweep the drive from centre to side and one each side to sweep the gutters. They each had a pair of boards to pick up the rubbish and fling in into the shrubs at the side. My mates soon found, the lighter they swept, the less they had to stop and pick up. That was where our saluting came in, as a group of officers came up the drive and we sprang to attention and saluted. When we had finished this job and reported to the sergeant in charge, he said we had been reported to him as having done a good job and was glad to see we had profited from our earlier training.

That evening we were told that the guardroom was to be established at the front of the house in an ante-room just between the main front door and the inner one. Also the Colonel's room would be right above the front door. A balcony ran the length of his room. One sentry was stationed directly underneath and another in the courtyard on the

left of the house. There were large trees growing around the perimeter, and when I was on guard duty I tried to explain to others what to expect in the way of night sounds in the country, to those not used to these sounds, but I could not foresee what really did happen. Guards were visited about every half an hour, and this particular night was a night of nights. The first thing to happen was a screech owl, in just about scared the sentry in the courtyard stiff. I was about to visit him when he met me halfway and he was almost dead with fright, but I calmed him down, and I think he got used to the sounds.

On another occasion, I had a sentry outside and under the Colonel's window, when there was a yell and a clatter and when I went out I found the sentry several yards down the drive and wiping blood from his neck. At first we couldn't guess what had happened until there was a faint "me-ow" and we found it was just a kitten. All I know it was a good thing the Colonel was a sound sleeper. Of course I had to report the incident next day, but when it was explained, case was dismissed and forgotten.

I received my 1st stripe about then. My duties were altered, no more fatigues, except in charge. We were doing physical training now. It was Reveille at 6 o'clock and parade at 7 o'clock, 1 hour physical drill and then breakfast. Often it was frosty when we went out, in just trousers and singlet, very cold, but when we had been put through our paces we were well and truly warm. It was a quick cup of coffee, then breakfast, then get ready for parade. For the first week or so we had to be ready to fall in at any time, it was just to keep us on the alert. After we settled down there were fresh ranks to be organised and other promotions to be stabilised. Up to now I had been an unpaid Lance Corporal but from now on I was paid 3d. per day extra. I received an extra 3d. for physical drill. I was often chosen to lead the company as I was considered to be consistent. I do not think I was that good, but I was in the army and I was resolved to succeed and hold my rank, humble as it was.

On our time off I had palled up with a recruit from Stevenage. We liked much the same things such as a good walk around the countryside. One of our walks was to Ixworth, there we had a special shop to visit each time, they sold brawn and to us it tasted like no other. If it was fine we would get a roll or two, stroll along the river bank and devour or bread and brawn. We would then make for the village of Stowlangtoft and find a cup of tea and possibly a paperback to read back at our billet.

At week-ends most of us would go to the small town of Thurston. It was a good round trip of 10 miles and being Sunday all shops were closed, but there was one bright spot, there the Salvation Army played, and it was surprising the number of folk who gathered there. The playing lasted about an hour and then they marched off to their Meeting house and we as troops were invited to join them. Out of curiosity we did join them. There were the usual prayers and exhortations and a general get together. It wasn't our last visit to their hall, as one Sunday we arrived and with us was a new chap who had just joined our company and it appears he was a drummer with the S.A. in Hartford. It was sheer coincidence the S.A. group were making an appeal for a new drummer. This new chap, known as Tubby Pearson, volunteered to

take over. He could not promise to do it every Sunday, but the next time we went there he joined with them. So we went again and for several week-ends.

In the meantime our training went on as usual, route marches grew longer and the drill more intensive. So far we had not had target practice, but after a series of lectures on the speed of a bullet and the effect of penetration (at 200 ft. it would penetrate wood or light steel shield) but a person could stand 100 ft. away holding a doubled blanket at arms length, and the bullet would strike and fall. The instructor asked if some-one would volunteer to fire at him, to prove his point. No-one stepped forward, so he called on one in the squad to fire the rifle. To prove his point the instructor held the blanket in front of himself and said "When I give the order, fire". After he fired, there lay the bullet at his feet, point proven. He was not a colour sergeant for nothing. Colour Sergeants went out with the 1st world war and are now known as Company Sergeant Majors. Times change!

Soon after that little episode we were told we would be having firing practice and during the week arrangements were made for us to travel to Bury-St.Edmonds by train and from there we were marched to the firing range. A bulls eye was signalled by a disc on a pole held stationary, an inner by the disc held upright and an outer by waving the disc from side to side. I was pleased with my results, it meant another 3d. per day on my pay. Apart from that I was asked if I would consider being rifle instructor under Colour Sergeant Coggins. I couldn't be forced to take this, so my reply was that I would rather stay with the Company and follow their fortunes, whatever they were.

The next bit of intensive training was for a Brigade Cross Country race. One morning on parade we were assembled on the parade ground for an announcement from the Colonel, who told us arrangements had been made for the four battalions to produce 100 men each and enter them in a cross country race of approx. 10 miles. The winning battalion would receive a trophy to be held for 1 year, on which would be a regimental inscription. I never found out if it was run for again or if the scheme fell through. Suffice it to say, our first obstacle was a hedge. I was running with others of our batt. (jumping was never my strong point) The two front runners away were a Southern area champion and a Lieutenant of the Herts. regiment, our Company. They just flew over that hedge and we only glimpsed them for a short while. When we next saw them was when we arrived at the end of the race. The two mentioned earlier were 1st and 2nd in that order, from our Battalion. The next 6 I didn't know, but what I do know was the 9th place was mine. To come 9th out of 400 was not bad going. I never heard the position of the other brigades.

It wasn't long after our cross country effort that a rumour went around that we would soon be moving on but never a hint as to when or where. Training went on as usual, but there were signs, such as the transport section being extra busy. There was plenty of speculation and it came one afternoon parade, quite terse, Battalion will move off at 9.a.m. in full marching order, still no hint of where we were going. We just marched as usual, 10 minute stop every hour, we carried on until 1 o'clock and broke for our mid-day meal. Were we ready for it! We didn't have a field kitchen for every company for nothing. At 2.p.m.

were off again, and we had no idea where we were going to spend the night. During each 10 minute break it was a common sight to see practically all lying on their backs with their feet resting on a bank, an idea passed on to us in one of our various lectures. After a good day's slogging along hard roads we eventually arrived at a town named Attleborough. There we were split up and marched to our billets, which proved to be schools, chapels, etc., with nice hard floors. We were issued with one blanket each, which was collected next morning ready for a next stop. I don't think there were many who took advantage of the stop to look around. Boots had to be cleaned, also buttons on tunics and not forgetting one's cap badge. Washing facilities were crude. Next morning one bucket of water was supplied for several to use, also cold water in which to shave. It was something one had to get used to but it was hard on the face at first. At Stalangtoft we used to scrounge a drop of hot water from the field kitchen. There was no bugle to wake us up but the orderly on duty had to go around the various billets to remind everyone to parade after breakfast as yesterday, full marching order and all billets to be cleaned before leaving. So it was goodbye to Attleborough and on to our next stop. We still did not know where we were making for. The day was a replica of yesterday until late in the afternoon when we arrived at Wymondham in Norfolk. I can say very little about it. I remember a church there with two steeples and on the base of one was a notice warning folk it was dangerous to climb the steps. It was there some of us slept that night, others stayed in schools and chapels. The drill was as before, after a meal we were allowed to walk around for an hour or so, but not much fun walking around looking at closed shops. Battalion orders were:- Breakfast 8.a.m. parade as before full marching order outside billet at 9.a.m., and so for our days march. Someone thought we were off to Norwich, which proved to be correct. We arrived mid afternoon and then it was a trudge around getting everyone settled into their quarters. When we arrived on the outskirts of the city, one lad asked "How do they cars keep on the rails and what pulls them along?" Have they got pulleys and where are they. I don't think he had ever been outside his village before joining up. He had never been on a train in his short life and this was the first electric car he had seen.

Nowadays people take everything for granted, they cannot visualise what travelling was like in those early days of the 20th century. From the moment we entered Norwich it was Slove arms, march to attention, look straight ahead and no talking in the ranks. We marched from one side of the city to the other and by degrees dropped a company off. Ours was the last to be settled in and as luck would have it we were almost within a stones throw of Mousehole, a large expanse of rough ground covered with gorse bushes at first sight and a big engineering plant on one side of it. We found afterwards there was ample room for manoeuvres and that was where we did our training for the next few weeks. It was chiefly extended battle drill carrying a rifle, but never loaded. It could be fun at times, the company would split into two sections and placed at opposite sides of the drill ground. A referee was appointed on each side, the object was to get into the enemy line without being seen. In after years the same sort of game

was played by Cubs all over the Country. I suppose it was to be an advantage to us in real warfare, maybe it would, but this war developed into trench warfare for the first year or so, and then from that time it was give and take. To get back to our training, we did a few route marches and physical training on the heath but then were told we were moving on again. I don't know if "Rubela" German measles had anything to do with this move, but several of our lot went sick and when we moved on there were several in quarantine left behind. After sick leave they would rejoin the battalion in the place we had reached. Later we arrived in Peterborough and once again we were in billets, but I don't remember much of Peterborough as I contracted measles and was confined to one room for two weeks or so and only a medical orderly was allowed in to bring my meals each day. I reckon that was the worst time I ever spent. I wasn't allowed to speak to any other person in the billet. All things come to an end, however, and I received a voucher for 10 days leave to Welwyn and back to Peterborough. I really enjoyed my leave, I think I saw everyone who mattered. The only thing was I couldn't travel out of Welwyn to see some folk at Hatfield and a few at Hertford. Anyway, I enjoyed myself and was sorry when I had to return to Peterborough. I arrived back well before my time and enquired from the Regimental Police on the station where I was to report. It was the same billet I had left and the same chaps were still there. I received a lot of information from them, also told that almost all drill took place in Milton Park, a large estate on the outskirts of Peterborough and that the Regimental Sunday service was in the Cathedral every Sunday. The Cathedral was filled as we had the Regimental band to play for all with the organ. The weather was good and I palled up with a chap from Borcham Wood. We used to do the usual shop gazing and as we were living on the borders of town and country, it was easy to get away from it all. I think it was here that two of our platoon were out for a stroll and crossing a meadow with a little brook running through it. Coming in the opposite direction were two young ladies. Across the stream were a couple of planks but no handrail. At any other time it would have been simple to cross, but man and girl met half-way, neither would give way, so they tried to pass each other, but they parted company in the centre, one went over one way and one the other and both finished up rather wet. Now my pal and I saw all this happen and our part was to help them out. There was nothing else we could do for them so we went on our way. The sequel to this episode was that the four became firm friends before we left Peterborough, and the couple who fell in the brook were married. More of them later.

One day in Milton Park we were supposed to repel the enemy. We were detailed to hold a steep bank and along this bank was a line of trees, under one of which was what looked like a rabbit hole., in front of this hole lay a soldier, that hole fascinated him. Said he to his next man "I'm going to put my arm down there, I bet there a rabbit there". He pulled up his sleeve and reached in, what a shock he got to be sure. He said to his mate "There's something there", but before one could say "knife" a grass snake came out. I don't know who was most scared, he kept away from holes after that. We finished our stay here not long after, but we did a good deal of night marching and sleeping in the open

intended to harden us off. Just for the record, one of the chaps involved in the brook incident applied for leave to get married. He was granted 10 days leave and his return ticket to rejoin his unit at Newmarket. The whole battalion moved out within a few days and so to new billets again, this time not far from the Heath where racing and exercising of the stables were held. We did a great deal of early manoeuvres but we hardly ever saw the horses at work, always in a different part of the Heath. We were told this might be our last move before going overseas. We carried on with intensive training until a few days into August. Until then we had more free time and were allowed to go to some of the race meetings still held there. Incidentally the 1915 Derby was held here and this was the last meeting until hostilities ceased. Our Colonel was a race fanatic and I think this was why we were off drills in the afternoons. Our Sunday parades on the Heath with a full band was a sure sign that all who could gathered around and joined in the service with us. This happened every fine Sunday until we moved out. By the way the chap who was married from Peterborough left his wife with his parents until such time as they could get a house or until he came home again, which he did eventually, I heard from his pal in the brook affair. I met him in or around 1920 in Hoddesdon, but to come back to our newly wed, it appeared his parents lived in Stevenage before it grew, and I suppose one day I let out I was going to hire a bike and cycle home one Saturday or Sunday. If I did, could he come with me and he would stop off at Stevenage and be ready to come back with me around 6.p.m. So it was arranged, I didn't know what I was letting myself in for, anyway in for a penny in for a pound. After Church we were free until 7.a.m. on Monday, so off we went to collect our cycles and we were on our way by 1 o'clock. We were taking a risk, if found out it would mean being reduced to the ranks and confined to barracks, but at the time it didn't seem to matter, as if and when we went overseas it might be a long time before we saw home again. I didn't get home again until February, 1916. To get back to this trip, all went well and I left Chummy at his home at Stevenage and I went on to Welwyn and Whitehill. I sort of gave them a bit of a shock until I told them all about it, and when I told them I must be off again before 6 o'clock it was all hands on deck, tea had to be brought forward. We were able to catch up with the new round and about. Believe me I have never known time go so fast. The next thing was sandwiches to eat on the way back, I expected to be back before 9.p.m. I reached the chap's home at the agreed time and asked if he was ready. All I got was "I won't be long". I began to get fed up and said it was time we got a move on, but it was over an hour before he finally broke away and no earthly chance of us getting back by 10 p.m. or so. Sentries would be out and if we got back without being stopped we would be very lucky. We were still miles from Newmarket, we came back via Baldock, Royston and on to Pampasford crossing. There I called a halt for a drink and a sandwich. They were pork sandwiches and to enjoy them called for a seat on a bank by the side of the road. If I offered to share with my companion, but he said "I'm not hungry and I couldn't drink wine as I am a teetotaler", and what I had was rhubarb wine I brought from home. When we were ready to move again we made for Six Mile Bottom and making our plans for making our way to our billets. When we arrive at

the end of the High Street there's a slight slope down and at the bottom a guard is always posted. We have got to pedal like heck and take him by surprise, be sure your lamp is out, keep doing until I say "Now" then go like the devil and hope you arrive at your billet. Put your bike away and take the lamp off, I don't think anyone will see you turn off. When we arrived at the top of the hill, we started downhill as if the devil had kicked us sideways and as we passed the guard our tyres made a noise like something passing over a rough surface, a singing sound. The Sentry was silent as if he had lost his voice, but on we went. I went straight up the hill and down to Exning Road to my billet, took off the lamp and pushed my cycle into the wash-house. The landlady was up waiting for me, she said "Upstairs and into bed, don't put any lights on, see you in the morning when the other two aren't around. Nothing was said on Parade so the sentry hadn't reported any soldiers out after hours, a lucky escape for us.

One evening the landlady told us a niece of hers was getting married, the couple were staying overnight before going away. We told the landlady we would give them a welcome, she enquired what we meant, we told her she would know tomorrow. That evening we stayed in the billet and we arranged our little surprise. First we found a cocoa tin, we punched a hole in the centre of the lid, in the bottom and one half way down the side. That done we inserted a reel of black thread in the tin with the thread just protruding through the side. We pulled enough to reach across the passage to the couples room. Our next tricky bit was to suspend the tin with the reel in it under the bed which we did after several attempts, it was then a case of wait and see. Eventually the newly weds arrived and were installed in their room and all we had to do was wait until everyone had settled down and then the fun began. Just a slight rattle at first to test it and as my mate wound his end of the thread on a piece of stick it caused an intermittent rattle under the bed. There was giggling coming from over the way and our thread broke and vanished. Nothing was said at Breakfast, but that same night as we shook our pillows up we began sneezing and our eyes were running. Our pillows had been dusted with pepper, but worse than that our beds had been interfered with, itching powder had been dusted under the sheets. I still reckon we had the worst of that little lot. There were plenty of laughs out of it all, no ill feelings, all were good sports.

As the weeks went by there was much more activity. For one thing we were all inoculated and the battalion was told to stand by. Within a day or two we moved to just outside Southampton under canvas. That evening we marched to the docks, but for some reason we did not board the ship, and marched back again for another night under canvas. The following day we were drilled in full marching order and as the previous day marched down to the docks again. This time we embarked, for what, only time would tell. We were shepherded on one company at a time until we were all aboard. No smoking was the order and guards were posted to be relieved at hourly intervals. What time we sailed I don't know, I slept through the dark hours. Eventually we found ourselves entering the mouth of the Seine. The morning broke clear and warm and as it grew light one could distinguish odd groups of people on the far off banks. It will always be unforgettable experience sailing up this

beautiful river with cheering crowds lining the banks in places. I wonder what their thoughts were, was this to be the start of an offensive or just another stop gap, who could tell? Suffice, for the moment our trip up the river Seine, a lovely Summer's day and the passing panorama of chalets, farmlands and cottages, quite different from those we had left behind. I for one was sorry when our journey came to an end. Before we disembarked we had to assemble on deck in companys ready to move off to our next resting place which proved to be on the outskirts of Rouen. There we were marched into a field, split up into groups of 8, given a bell tent and told to erect same on a spot marked out for centre pole. It took some time to sort out and erect. An officer came round to inspect and pass it correct. Most of us had guide ropes too tight and were told to loosen them on retiring at night as the night air would draw them tighter as the damp air came down. We need not have worried as we were called to the cookhouse to collect a meal. We were gone about 10 minutes and when we arrived back almost all the tents had been let down. We sat on our packs, devoured our food and then set about re-erecting our tents. The same officer came around whilst we were doing this, asked if we had any idea who had let the tents down. We of course had no idea, we presume it was a practical joke carried out by someone unknown, and that is where it was left during our short stay in that camp. Newcomers, however, were served just the same as ourselves.

After a day or so we were told to be ready to move, at short notice. We did not know when or where, but all that day we were drilled in full marching order. It wasn't until we were roused around 6.a.m. and we were washed and shaved, cookhouse was sounded, we had breakfast in our tents, the order came "Dismantle tents, fold them for inspection and stand by". When this was done it was fall in ready for off. In the meantime all tents had been removed and we had the order to move off. We soon found ourselves in a siding of the railway, carriages were pulled in where we were standing. 10 to each compartment was the quota and when all were settled, off we went, destination unknown. On leaving Rouen we wondered what the next thing was likely to be, no-one could have guessed that inside  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr. we would be broken down inside a tunnel, the windows would not close and we were breathing soot. I don't know how long we were there but when we were pushed or pulled out, the Kentucky Minstrels had nothing on us, black soot everywhere and no hope of cleaning up until we reached a junction, Abbyville, where we had a stop of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour to get cleaned up.

Whatever is written from Autumn 1915 to 13th November, 1916 will be authentic, but I will leave out as far as possible most of the gruesome side of war and try to explain some of the lighter side, of which there was plenty. After we left Abbyville we next found ourselves near to Armenterres where we disembarked and marched to a place named by the troops as Circus. It was a fairly large place for a camp and there we were shown our quarters, all tents. Luckily the weather was good for the time of year, but the nights were nippy, but with 8 or 10 to a tent we could keep fairly warm. We stayed there until the beginning of October when we moved to Gaudecimp and there we joined an entrenching battalion. It was here in a barn I spent my 21st birthday. There were 22 of us here, I had several food parcels from home, so we somehow made tea, spread everything on ground sheets and had a 21st birthday party. We had to clear it all up or the rats would have had a feast, the place was infested with them.

One night one of our chaps had almost all his hair nibbled away, how they did it without waking him, we shall never know.

In less than a week a section of us were told off to return to Circus. We did not relish the idea of sleeping under canvas again as the weather had taken a turn for the worse, we were getting snow showers, when we awoke next morning we found snow on the ground, earlier than we would normally have it back home. Anyway, we set off for Armenterres where we had to pick up a load of leather jerkins. It was getting dark when we were ready to move again on our 15 kilometers journey back to Circus. The driver didn't like the state of the roads as it was now icing over. We covered the first few miles without mishap, but the roads were steadily getting worse and suddenly there was a skid and a lurch and we found ourselves on our side in a dyke. The driver scrambled clear, he stopped the first lorry passing to get back to the depot we had just left. He told me to take charge until he brought help back. When he had gone we set to and unloaded the lorry, packing it on the side of the road ready for reloading. We had just about unloaded when the breakdown gang arrived with chains and muscle power. The lorry was soon on the road again, loaded and ready for off. I must say we were a good deal warmer. It was fairly late when we reported back, but no-one was blamed, we were sent down to the field kitchen for a hot drink and so to our tent. We slept that night, and when it was time to roll out, couldn't understand why the tent was sagging until we looked out on to over a foot of snow, and it was cold. We were told afterwards it had taken all and sundry by surprise. We returned to our battalion later in the day. Believe me I reported sick one morning and was rushed off to an isolation camp with scabies or the itcha, there I was in isolation as were several others. In the morning paraded with others outside the Doctors tent, was given a jar of sulphur ointment, told to use all of it. To do this I had to strip, smother myself with the ointment, re-dress in same clothes and return the empty jar. By doing this the orderlies knew if you had carried out instructions. I spent 3 weeks there and as I was allowed out after the first week I was looking around when I spotted a solitary figure. We were within a dozen yards of each other when we stopped short, called to each other by name. We were pals at home and had not seen each other since I enlisted in 1914. In the evenings for the next fortnight we met and talked of days left behind. Between us we got up-to-date on things happening at home. It was a great fortnight, we were real pals, I never met another to whom I could confide in as a brother. Little did we know that we should not meet again on this earth. He was killed almost at the same time as my brother, somewhere in France. My brother was blown up in Mailley wood, he was in the cavalry.

Everything that came up to the line was brought by teams of mules, food, water, rations and guns all moved that way. We had very little transport in those early days. We eventually joined our own Regiment, 1st Herts at the latter end of 1915 and from then on, for the next 12 months, until I was knocked out, we moved from place to place, ready to back up whoever was in dire straits. We were attached to the Guards brigade and that in itself was an honour. Our first encounter with the enemy was at Gevinchy, there it was all min craters, so big that the Germans held one side of the crater and our troops the other. The way up to the front was by way of trenches 6ft to 7ft. deep, except where Jerry had blown a hole in the side. It was absolutely uncanny, pitch

black apart from verry lights sent up, and as one struggled along the trench, the whiz of passing bullets un-nerved one at the time, but as one old soldier put it, "Those you hear have gone, its the one you that hits you, you don't hear. Hand grenades, rifle grenades and bullets were directed on that spot hoping to disledge one or the ether. You see both sides were at it, ready to take over should one side give way under it.

There was always a lighter side to these situations, as in this case:- It all began with a sapper from the R.E's. He was very dark and could have been born in Africa, be that as it may, he was wandering about in our sector, a stranger, so it was natural to send for an officer to interrogate him. When the offeric arrived the first thing this chap did was to draw a big knife from his belt, drop on his knees and plunge it into the earth under him. He motioned us to keep still and pointed to the knife, it began to quiver. He then tried another place a few feet off and repeated it. He then saluted our officer and said someone was mining beneath us. The officer then told him to follow and he went, but it left us with a queer feeling inside and wondering what would be done about it. We were not left in doubt for long, the order came to evacuate the position, but be prepared to retake our old positions. We were deployed in small groups, almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away waiting and wondering if or when would it go up. We were used to waiting and began to think we would soon be going back and finding it was a false alarm, when there was an almighty explosion. Lumps of rock and earth began falling around us. When it was safe to move, back we went, to retake our positions, but we found ourselves in the trench the Germans had been holding and dead bodies everywhere. I think we have blown up their mine first, thanks to providence and the unknown sapper. Now comes the strange bit, a roll call was taken, only one was missing, Tot Turner. A search began which didn't last long, in a large recess where we had hand grenades stores for quick access, there on top of these cases lay Tot Turner, held down by fallen earth. When he was released, all he would say was "What was all that noise about". I crept in there for a doze and must have gone off to sleep. After two weeks spell of duty Gevinsky we went back to Bethune for a rest. We marched off and took up our new positions at Festoburt, they were called sap heads. Trenches could not be dug owing to the nature of the soil, if one dug down just ever 1 ft, water seeped in. These sapheads were about 12 ft. long and yards apart, the ends were built up with sand bags turned inwards to stop cross fire. Our sleeping quarters were the same as for meals, sitting with our backs to the inside of our saps. Apart from gunfire the days were quiet and we filled sand bags to pass the time away. As we only had one sentry on every two hours, his post was the right of our sap, and he had to crawl about 3 yards along a ditch from where he had a clear view of the enemy position, to get back one had to move slowly. I know what it was like as I took my turn, even so, I lost 2 men, I put it down to being well built. It was no picnic there as regards defending it, but it was some time after when the Allies made a move. From there we were moved to the right of Neauve Chapel and it was there I first saw aeroplanes in action. I saw one of our brought down, this was a busy part of the line. It was here we first heard of the Bantam Brigade, they

were short fellows, not dwarfs, and full of grit. They were moved in to the left of us, and the first we knew of this was at stand-to at dawn. As it got light we would see in front of the Germans line a Bantam tethered to a line. Their intelligence service was good to be so quick off the mark. This was one of the quiet spells and we did about three weeks there all told. From there we went back to Bethune for a clean up, from there we had a long march to St. Pol. What took place there is authentic, it was there when it took place. One of our chaps asked to be allowed to fall out, he could hardly walk for blisters on his feet. I was detailed to put him on one of the waggons following. When the rest of the Battalion had passed we had a long wait, so we sat on the side of the road waiting for transport. What happened was unbelievable. Coming along the road was the Brigadier and his staff. I stood to attention, but the other chap just sat. The Brigadier said to him "Why did you not stand", he replied "I'm tired of marching" the Brigadier "I'm not tired", to which the man replied "you ought not to be you have a horse to ride". The result was I had to put him under arrest for insolence. The others passed on, we were picked up later and joined the rest of the battalion. I informed our company officer what had occurred and the prisoner was taken away for detention. As he was taken away he said to me "Don't worry about me I shall be back in Blighty soon" I couldn't take that in as refusing to obey would mean one of two things, No.1. field punishment (that was crucified on the wheel of a heavy vehicle) or No.2. Taken away and shot. The next day he was brought into a Military court and when he was asked if he had anything to say he merely replied "I am only 16 years of age so you can do nothing to me". It was proved he was not yet 17 years old and had seen over 12 months service, he was "Honourably discharged".

One night as I came off fire step duty, I had just got down for a sleep, when my name was called and when I went to answer, I was handed a free pass home for 10 days. There were two others who were in my charge until we arrived at Kings Cross, London. What a journey we had, from the trenches to the transport depot to get us to the railway, it was like a nightmare. The Germans chose this night of all nights to strafe our lines, it was only a miracle we reached the depot in one piece, and we were away in a very short time. I don't know what we looked like after over a week in the firing line unwashed and caked with mud. We were taken to the railway station and seen on the train, we arrived at Boulogne around 8 o'clock. We found a Salvation Army tent where they were doing meals. We had egg, bacon and fried bread, also a mug of tea, all for 1/-. We then asked if we could have a wash, etc, and they even provided that. Feeling much better, we then waited to be put on our leave boat. It had been waiting for the tide, or so we were told, the passage over was really rough, no-one was allowed on deck and everyone, almost without exception was sea-sick. I was very relieved to get on shore away from the stench and fill up with good clean air. We were in Folkestone harbour and being herded towards the station, from where we soon ran into Victoria. There we had a mug of tea and a sandwich and directed to the underground for Kings cross. It was getting late and a few were for staying the night in a hostel, also some were looking for easy money. I was determined

to get my two on a train for Hitchen where they were bound and luck was with us, a train was just about to leave, first stop Hitchen, and that was the last I saw of them until we met up again at Kings Cross on our return journey. There wasn't a stopping train to my station, Welwyn, but there was a through train to Hatfield and a 5 mile trudge home. I worked out that if I did the walk in about 2 hours it would be about 5 a.m. when I arrived home. It wasn't far out and as I walked down the asphalt path with my heavy boots it sounded loud enough to awaken anyone. I need not have worried people were stirring preparing for work, and by the time I reached our door a window opened and my mother called down "Is that Cec", "Yes", I replied. The door was unlocked and flung open in no time, but before I let anyone get near me I wanted clean clothes. All my gear I would leave under the porch to be seen to later. The only thing taken in was my rifle. I went into the back room and had a good wash down. After that it was all talk for an hour or so and then to bed for a sleep. I couldn't sleep for long and was soon up again. What I did during those few days I could never remember, they were gone like a dream. One morning I collected my chatels and walked to Welwyn Station and there I hoped to meet up with the other two I had come on leave with. They were there right enough and like myself wondering where we would find ourselves next. On arrival at port Boulogne we made for our S.A. hut. There we had a good square meal to tide us over for a good few hours. I don't know where we were going but on the way we stopped by some open trucks, in them were what we thought were coaleds, and knowing it would be cold in a barn anywhere else for that matter, we had an idea we could have a fire, and if these were what we thought, they would be alright for fuel. We finally stopped at a siding and we got off. Outside the station stood a lorry evidently waiting for us. The driver asked to see our passes and directed us along a road to a group of buildings. It was pitch black and we lost our road. We knocked at a door to ask the way, we were invited in and given a round of bread and jam, also a basin of coffee. Then we tried by various signs and showed our cap badges, and all at once it struck home. They pointed to the badge and directed us to the place we wanted. When we arrived we were told to report to the police (Red caps) as we were reported missing. They then 'phoned to someone, he came back, we confirmed what we had said and were told to rejoin our company right away, which we did. After being told where we were to sleep we unloaded our haversacks by a brazier. There was a chorus of "Where did you get these", when they saw what we thought was coaled. We explained and someone promptly put some into the brazier, we watched them beginning to glow red. It was a good thing he didn't put many one, just a few to try. All at once there was a small explosion. Someone dragged the brazier out of the barn where it went up with a bang. That was the end of coaleds for us, we stuck to wood afterwards.

It was impossible to put everything in chronological order as it was forbidden to keep a diary, in case of being taken prisoner of war. From early 1916 until November we were in and out of the trenches, seldom returning to the one place, but relieving other troops to give them a break they deserved.

The next move was to a place miles behind Equequedec, behind a small farm. We had to make our own shelter as there was no accommodation such

a barn or a shed. Three of us laid our waterproof sheets on the ground with one blanket on top. When we were ready to lay down we took off our shirts for comfort as they were alive, and hung them up where we could till the morning. The spare ground sheets and two blankets we used to cover the top half of our bodies and only removed our boots. Huddled up together we slept fairly warm, but in the morning our shirts were like stiff boards. In the night there had been a sharp frost and it caught quite a few of us really napping. When we tried to take our shirts off the boughs, they hung on, they simply split, so we paraded without shirts. It was only after parade the incident was mentioned, the shirts were to be collected, new ones, at least fresh ones, would be issued but the cost would be deducted from our pay. I think we were let off lightly, it could have been wilful destruction of government property, depending on the officers in charge.

It was in that same billet another incident took place. One night a lean-to shelter full of hay caught alight. It was fodder scrounged from the roadsides for the goats later on in the year. It suddenly blazed up and the alarm was given. An officer came along shouting "Where's the fire" and waving a large torch. In the meantime the fire engine had arrived from somewhere, it was one of these manual affairs, one had to fill the trough before any water could be used. The nearest pond was a good 80 yards away, so a double line of men was formed from the engine to the pond, back to back, and then the water started to arrive. Empty buckets down one line and full buckets along the other, but the trough never had enough water to keep pumping going. At last someone shouted it out for the simple reason while water was coming in small lots, another gang was moving the hay from the back thus preventing the fire from spreading. It was all over in less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour, but it cost those who were sleeping there a small amount each. That was twice we were unlucky, but that was the lighter side of war.

Our next move I think was to Mailly-Mailly woods. There had been some heavy fighting there and it was our job to clean up as far as possible. There were many dead to bury, so several squads were told off to dig a communal grave. It is one time I shall never forget, the whole time we were at work we were being shelled with tear gas, our eyes and noses streaming as well as difficult to breathe, but somehow we did the job. The Padre was sent for and a short service was held over the bodies, and then came the task of filling in the huge grave. From there we went behind the lines for a days rest and sleep and I pray now as then, that wars may end and common sense prevail.

There was much speculation of a large offensive in the near future, but we could only sit and wait for orders as to when and where it would be. We were on the Somme front and we moved to Thiepval, there to take if possible a redoubt which was holding up an advance to the river Ancre. When we arrived it was a shambles, old brick buildings and more recent ones in course of erection had been pulled about and bricks scattered around. It looked as if the Germans had left in a hurry. We found out when clearing up that the wall extended back into a huge mound of earth which contained bodies of German soldiers. They had been buried and the front was being bricked up to contain the earth. Our lads finished covering them up and erected a cross on the spot. That wasn't all, as we cleared more soil to build

a trench two openings were disclosed, like an entrance to a long dug-out. We cleared away the soil so that we could move around and then began to rig up shelters for ourselves ready for the night. Someone investigating these openings discovered it was one long dug-out, it went back from the entrance about 10 ft., and inside it looked like a gangway, in front it looked for all the world like a long raised platform as if it had been used for sleeping on. It would have housed 30 or more men, but several said they would rather be outside. After sentries had been posted we went to our various places to sleep, but not for long. First one and then another came out and complained of the smell inside the dug-out. In the morning we investigated to find out where the smell came from, horror of horrors, they had been sleeping on dead bodies. The place was sealed up again and we were moved out of that position. We moved on again, but not far, we went a few at a time. From there we were moved closer to where we made our offensive shortly after.

The day came at last, we only went over with water bottle, extra ammunition, haversack and gas mask. Our full pack, overcoat, etc, was left in the care of the quartermaster until such time it would be collected by survivors. Some would return, others we hope would travel to that land we have never seen, but taught to believe in. As we took up our positions a generous tot of rum was handed to each man, just to make one feel good and give Dutch courage. There was a thick mist that day 13th November. Order to go over in single waves at short intervals. The signal for the first to go would be three distinct firings of a 15" gun. That signal came all too soon, over the top and into no mans land and the mist. We soon lost each other and the only guide we had was bursting shells in front of us. It was like all hell let loose and it seemed like hours before we struck the first line of trenches. This appeared to be a dummy trench, we didn't find a single one in there. So one we went, with smoke from bursting shells and the mist it was like walking through a grey wall. Nothing but the glare of shells bursting in front of us and the rattle of machine guns told us we were getting near the Germans. Suddenly, and without warning I found myself in enemy lines. I don't know who was the more surprised, at any rate the enemy I think was looking for more to follow me. As for myself I was hoping and praying for more of our boys to appear. In the meantime I motioned for them to give in, but to my surprise the German officer said "We surrender" and on that statement I told him to pile guns, etc. in a corner in this part of the trench. When I had time to look around I saw two entrances to a dug-out. Sporadic firing came from inside and one of their men dragged himself along. The officer said he had been hit and they had no dressings, could I do something for him? Yes I would, but he must keep the rest away from their arms. To cut a long story short I did all I could for him and was about to resume my position when it happened. I felt a stunning blow in my face and down I went. Then my prayers were answered, two chaps came round the corner behind me, took the scene in and let drive with a Mills bomb, and that was all I knew about that offensive. It was a blank. When I came round someone told me I was out of the trenches, a stretcher had been called for, so all I could do

was lay there until they arrived. I could not move a limb and all I could do was gaze up at the sky. I saw a dark object coming down, which turned out to be a large piece of shrapnell. When the stretcher arrived the chaps showed me the size of it, as big as a tea plate, but jagged, and it had landed flat in the groin. I have often heard it said that when a person is in danger, his former life goes through his brain as if it were a film. I can now fully endorse that statement. Incidents from the past went through my mind as I lay there. One was when at Ham-en-Artois, we were at a homestead, just a small farm, when I met a chap from Hitchin. He stopped me one evening and said my name rang a bell. Did I have a sister who could dance, as he had met a girl just before he joined up, at a dance and she lived at Welwyn. I said that must have been my sister, the outcome was we had a night out. We went to a cafeteria where for 4d. one could buy coffee laced with rum or brandy. I suppose talking made us thirsty, we sat talking and drinking until around 9.p.m., when we decided it was time to quit and get back to our billet before 9.30.p.m. We were O.K. until we came out into the air, then it was another story. Everything was going round and the road would come up to meet us. Eventually we arrived, narrowly missing falling into the river just outside the farm. This farm was a large square of buildings with the house on one side and the buildings housing the cows, pigs and chicken, etc. on the other side. Fodder and tackle were housed in other places. Right in the centre of the yard was a large pit, square, and about 4 ft. deep to take manure, etc. I have tried to explain the outlook as it has a bearing on the rest of this yarn. On reaching our billet we thought a cup of coffee would go down well and as the other chaps made a habit of having coffee there most nights it was O.K. by me. So in we went, ordered the usual and found a seat as we were not fit enough to stand. By the time we came out, we thought the shaft of light from the door was the road out, we followed it and landed right in the dung pit. Someone pulled us out, ran us out of the yard and into the river. Our trousers were taken off and we found ourselves in the billet and wrapped in a blanket. We didn't remember anything that had happened overnight, but as we got up, there were our trousers all clean and dry. The farmer's wife had done this for us. When we left she certainly had our thanks. My day dreaming ended, I found myself on a stretcher, being taken out of the line of fire to the dressing station. We travelled down on a light railway, flat trucks to take two each. On arrival we were laid in rows ready for examination.

Casualties were coming in fast, doctors and orderlies were rushing about attending to the lighter casualties and a doctor looking after other cases. When he got to me he asked "Where is the wound? My jaw was closed tight, I tried to answer him talking through my teeth. The orderly explained I had been hit in the face, there was just a spot of blood where the bullet went in, nothing else to show. He said "Try to stand up" and was surprised when I didn't stir, "Put him on his feet" he said. The orderly tried to get me up, but I was dead weight and when they got me on to my feet, I promptly fell over again. The pain was as much as I could stand and I think I passed out. I don't know how or when I was passed over to the casualty clearing station, as the next thing I remember being in a real bed, after having had a bath. There was not much rest during the night as everyone was busy attending to patients coming in. I was taken to another hut in the early morning,

put to bed and not long after an orderly came in with a card to hang over my bed. On it was a large "E", that meant evacuation. Breakfast of a sort was brought round. I couldn't open my mouth so a feeding cup was produced, the spout inserted between a gap in my teeth, and I did my best to drink whatever it was. Soon after we were taken away in whatever vehicle was available to a railway station and there put on a train for somewhere. All I had was a blanket wrapped around me, all my treasured possessions were in my pack somewhere behind the lines on the Somme, a German helmet, a pair of field glasses given to me by an officer (later killed) and various other things I had carried with me through a good many tight corners. At last we were off, I have no idea where we unloaded, and put on a Hospital ship for Blighty.

We landed at Folkestone I was informed. There stretcher cases were laid out in rows. We were asked if we had a preference for being sent near to any particular place. When it was my turn I tried to state North London, I think they only heard "North" as instead of North London I found myself in West Vale Hospital, Halifax. After a journey that could have resulted in tragedy, arriving at Peterborough Station we stopped for a while for walking patients to go to the toilets. Someone came to my bunk, lit a cigarette and put it between my lips and went on. Soon after it fell out of my mouth and on to the blanket. I could do nothing but try to make a noise. Eventually someone came by and glancing down saw smoke. It was panic stations for a while, blanket was changed and I don't know if I was given a lecture, but I reckon my copybook was blotted again. There was a heavy snowstorm when we arrived at our destination. I soon found myself in a large circular ward with 50 beds, one of which I was put in.

First thing I know was having a blanket bath and made ready for the doctors visit. The staff must have worked all night, no chance for much sleep if one felt like it. 6 o'clock in the morning we were roused, wash or be washed. At 8 o'clock breakfast came around. I was propped up with pillows and a tray was put within reach. I was unable to do anything about it or enlighten the nurse in any way, I could still only mumble between my teeth. The House doctor was sent for, there was a consultation between himself, the Sister and a nurse and once again the feeding cup came into service. At least I had liquid refreshment, food was not my worry. I was afraid for the bed, but at last an orderly arrived with the utensil needed. I made him understand I could not call out for anything I might want at any time. 10 o'clock was the usual time for the doctors visit, when he arrived at my bed he introduced himself as Dr. Robertson and said I would be in his hands until I was discharged. He proved himself a real good man and understanding as I found out during the next few months. I owed a lot to him as regards my partial recovery. Before he left the ward, later on, he came back to my bed, told me not to worry and he would be bringing another doctor in next day for a long look at me. They wanted to find out the real cause for the paralysis, but I must be x-rayed first, to-day if possible and if they were positive it would be helpful. My bed mate next to me was also a spinal case. He told me it could be as long as 2 more years before he really

walked again. After breakfast the ward was tidied up ready for the morning visit. The previous afternoon I had been taken to have my X ray and this morning it was brought up and put on my locker by the bed ready for the doctors visit. As the time for inspection drew near I did wonder what was going to happen to me next. As the Dr. and his assistants got to my bed, he asked for the Xray 'photos, he didn't look at them right away, finished the round and came back to me again. Screens were put around me, another doctor arrived. He said "Shall we make the examination now", my doctor agreed, and the sister sent for to take notes if any. First I was propped up with back rest and pillows. I was then ready for whatever was to come. It wasn't anything terrible. One had a pin and the other an indelible pencil. I could not speak so I was told to blink if I could feel a prick. This went on for some time. When they finished they produced a glass and showed me what they had done. Every time I blinked a dot was put on my face and when joined up my face and all around looked like a map. The next move I was interested in as the Xray plate showed clearly a round object resting on my spine and a small object of irregular shape, which they were sure was a piece from my jaw bone. The Dr. was good enough to let me see the photo. They gathered between them that I was in quite a lot of pain and by putting their fingers in various marked places on my face and neck found where the seat of the real pain was. The only thing to ease it was to change my position every 2 hrs for the present. I was to be fed on solids if possible by getting it in between my teeth. This went on for several weeks, my jaws gradually eased open and I could begin to talk again, which was one big relief. The rest of my limbs remained obstinate. My feet were inspected every day almost, until one day when the Dr. came around I told him I thought there was movement in my toes. He had a good look and then said "We're winning, now I will see Matron and you will be free to try to get out of bed when you can, and one day I shall find you in the day room". Before that came off, however, I had a full time job trying to get my hands and arms to work for me.

The time spent in hospital was pleasant, one was apt to forget wounds and the nurses without exception, we ever so kind and gentle. Visitors came most days and entertained us with music and song or just sitting by the bedside chatting. The chap in the next bed to me, although always on his back, would sometimes sing for us, he had a baritone voice, it was sheer heaven to listen to him. The songs he sung were:- The Trumpeter, Ora Pro Nobis, The Volunteer Organist and many more I can't recall just now. Two girls used to come in, one was engaged to a postmaster, he was in the army, the other was engaged to his friend. When I was able to move around more they took us out to tea and often to the theatre on a late pass. Harry Rhodes was the name of the chap next to me and the two girls were Anne Tempest and Winifred Leach. Others who took us in and gave us a good time was a band of girls who had formed a club to give the boys in hospital a good time. Their boy friends were in the services. As I couldn't use my arms or legs properly I was spoilt and almost carried about. I still have a very soft spot for West Riding as that is where most of

the nurses and friends of the soldiers came from, Halifax and district. All Blue boys as we were called had free passes on the buses serving Halifax, Leeds and Huddersfield. Wherever we went we met with warmth and kindness.

Just after Christmas my parents were able to come and visit me in hospital any afternoon or evening. The next thing was to find accommodation for them, that was soon resolved, however. I mentioned the matter to Harry Rhodes, he said "Leave it to me", I did. When I knew what time they were arriving I was given a pass until 8 o'clock. Harry said "Miss Tempest will call for you this afternoon, will come with you to the station, take you back with her and there your parents will stay until they return home. They really enjoyed the change and were taken out almost every day in the mornings and in the evenings it was either with Miss Leach or Mrs. Baums. I was sorry to see my parents go and I'm sure they were sorry to leave such kind-hearted folk behind. They did come again when I was discharged on March 17th, but to get back to hospital again. After Christmas I began to make a bit of headway and that was owing to the good offices of another patient. I believe he was in the retreat from Mons. He had long silver locks, and his build and above all he was from Wales, so the boys in the ward nicknamed him Lloyd George, he could have been his double. To me he was a God send. One evening he came to my bedside and said "I don't like seeing you in bed so I am going to try and help you to walk, first you want a sling to support your arm, I will put your arm around my neck and support you by putting my other arm round your waist and from to-night we will see how far you can walk. We will start from the foot of your bed to the next and so on until we do the 50 beds". What patience that man had and what faith he also had. I'm sure it was handed on to me because before I left I could walk around the ward, though taking a long time over it.

In this ward we had a real mixed crowd, Scots, Irish, Cockneys, etc, you name them, we had them. At times we had impromptu concerts. One chap gave bird impressions or whistles "In a country garden", he could also do cockney rhyming slang in verse. Then there were the Harry Lauder songs, which to-day, 60 years on are still sung and enjoyed by many. Harry Rhodes singing his ballads, it was no trouble to fill in an hour in the evening s providing all the patients were in a fit state to take it. One night I was told I was to go down to the electric massage room between breakfast and the doctor's visit, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. I was taken down bright and early, I was finally placed in a chair, one pad was placed somewhere on my back and another on my left arm. The nurse said "You will possibly feel a slight tingle", but neither reckoned on what did happen. When the current was switched on I found myself propelled out of the chair and in a heap some feet away. It was panic stations for a while but I was none the worse for the shock. I can only say it was just like a hefty kick in the back. Soon I was in the ward again and in bed. When the doctor arrived everything had to be explained to him, but that was the first and last visit for massage. There was improvement each week in all parts of my body.

I could begin to use my right arm and the right leg was stronger but my left side remained stubborn and I could not keep my balance. My jaw began to loosen up and I could just feed myself with the right hand. Dr Robertson was pleased with my progress and told me that in time I would be back to normal, but he thought the bullet would have to move. The surgeons would not operate as it was in the nerve centre, if such a thing was tried it was a 100 to 1 chance I would never walk again, not a very comforting thought.

As time passed I gradually managed to be more mobile and as my parents wanted to come again it was left until March to decide what date they should come. In a round about way I heard that several casualties were to be discharged and I was among them. During the next few days the rumour grew and one day the doctor told me I would be going out shortly. I told him about my parents wanting to visit again, he said that would be fine for then they could see me home which would simplify things, as arrangements would have had to have been made for someone to see me safely home to Welwyn. I wired to my parents to come the second week in March ready to take me home. The same friends as before put them up at their homes. The last weeks I was at the hospital I was able to get out more as the Wintry weather was slowly coming to an end. One trip I made with another chap in the ward was to Ovington, just out of Halifax. We went by tram just to see the tallest chimney in Halifax brought down. It was at one end of a brickyard, a marker was placed where it should fall, nothing happened for a while, then my chum said "It won't be long now they are getting busy on it!" The fellows working on it disappeared and then it began. We first saw a cloud of smoke and dust and then heard the explosion. The tall stack fell dead on the mark and for a time everything was blotted out in clouds of dust. As we moved away my companion was hailed by a lady in one of the houses opposite. He looked over and waved to her "guess we are lucky" he said "This person comes from near where I live in Lancashire, I have been here several times, we are good for a cup of tea before we go back". How right he was, we spent a good 2 hours there and then caught a tram back to West Vale. Altogether it was a good afternoon out and enjoyable.

My parents arrived on time and during that last week it was visit after visit saying "Goodbye" to all kind friends I had made during the short time I had been able to get out. First it was Janet and Eileen, they had a stall in the market place, a covered market by the way. They had taken us to the theatre once a week of out to tea sometimes. They both had boy friends out in France, I never heard whether they returned safely. There was also the lady who kept a cafe in the market, she was a kindly soul, and when I said "Goodbye" to these three it really took the shine off going home. My mother and father had a really good time and hoped that after the war was over we would see them again. It was about 2 years after when they paid us a visit, also Harry Rhodes. I was walking up White Hill and there I met him. I could hardly believe my eyes, he was walking without a stick. What happened to him afterwards I don't know after he left hospital, he seemed to vanish. Its like

ships that pass in the night, you see the lights and as you pass it leaves a vast empty space.

The time came for me to leave hospital and I was given my Xray plate to keep and was told by my doctor that I had been recommended to hospital at Acton run by the War Office for soldiers injured in the war. I would be notified at my home address the day and time I would have to attend. So "Goodbye" to all friends in and out of hospital and on to the next period of my existence.

My first appointment was to the local branch of the Ministry of Pensions where my injury was assessed at £1. per week until I was free to work. That seemed a long way off just then. I also received a small amount from the Ministry of Pensions paid through the Oddfellows to which I belonged, so cash did not worry my parents. I had been at home a week or two when a letter arrived telling me to be at the Ministry Hospital (with a voucher for my journey to Acton). The hospital was situated almost opposite Wormwood Scrubs and easy distance to Shepperds Bush Empire and market. I arrived in good time and taken to the Sister's office where all details were taken. From there I was taken by a nurse to my ward and introduced to my future ward mates. At first I felt sick as there were chaps with legs and arms off, some with no legs at all who were getting around on their bottoms and propelling themselves along with their hands. None of them were complaining, but were joking amongst themselves, my injury was a fleabite to theirs. Like the rest of walking patients I was up and dressed by 6.a.m. and it was the practise to help with beds or any other job until 8.a.m. breakfast, after which we were expected to help clean up the ward and to be ready to stand by our beds for the doctors visit around 10.a.m. After that it was up to what the doctor decreed as to what one did.

There were about 20 bed occupied in this ward by men with all sorts of complaints, several were not too severe and soon received attention. Others with amputations took longer, like myself, I had a short examination and was told by the sister to get ready as soon as the doctors had gone, to prepare for the Xray department. That meant undressing and sitting in pygamas with dressing gown on, which was more like a white shroud than anything else. I didn't have to wait long and I was soon in the Xray department and there was the Dr. ready to explain just what he wanted. It was soon over and I was back in the ward and dressed again. I was told not to leave the ward before the Sister had spoken to me and given me what information she had. There was another visit from the Dr. with students to study my case, it was the first of its kind up to date. I think myself that the skills in surgery to-day were born during and after the First World war, before that it was in many cases Kill or cure. In many cases now it was cure, skills were given to the doctors and nurses and through them life and hope was given to countless numbers, I myself included. When I left hospital I was given hope of 10 years of active life. I am now 83 and still able to get around on my own. Please forgive this digression and I will get back to those days of long ago.

This is only my second day here in Acton and still wondering what it is all about. The next day was of interest to students and Dr. only as I had heard it all before, the only difference being, the Dr. also had

an Xray plate and telling them its history. He then let them examine the area of the wound, asking them what steps they would take in the event of an operation. I cannot possibly relate all that was said, but in my own mind I was all cuts and bruises. After this the Dr. told them to give it thought and tomorrow he would examine their replies and also discuss what and how it should be done. In the meantime I had another interview with a nerve specialist, this time in his private office. He had a long chat about the West Front, asked innumerable questions, then set about examining my face and neck. I had to take off my shirt and I explained about the bullet and the Xray that had been taken. The Dr. said "Thank you" and I was dismissed. When I returned to the ward I was bombarded with questions. Were they going to operate on me, I told them I knew nothing at present but the doctor was examining me again next day, if they kept their ears open they might glean something. Next day I had two doctors to see me as well as students and they stood in a group while the two doctors discussed the best way to tackle this problem. They could not agree as to the best way so it was left for the time being. I had been here for just on 3 weeks before I heard any more of operating, when unexpectedly the Dr. came in to see me and asked if I would consent to an operation. I said I would like a 2nd opinion, he agreed and said "I will be along in a day or so for your reply". In the meantime I asked to see the nerve specialist again as soon as possible. When I saw him he told me that if I let them operate in all probability I would never walk again, but he would give me a note to give to the Dr. and that should clear up the matter. On the following day Dr. V. arrived and I gave him the note from Dr.G.O. and after reading it he said "What a pity, it would have been interesting", so that was the end of that episode. I was back to square one again.

It had been a pleasant stay as we were allowed two free passes per week to Theatre or Music Hall. I had never been to one before going to Halifax and this trip to Acton was a bonus as I saw many of the old stars in their heyday of success, such as Will Hay, Harry Lauder, Wee Georgie Wood and a host of others, the unforgettables of the early 1900's. Their songs and sketches pop up occasionally in "Old Tyme Music Hall".

Back home it was a hum-drum existence as I was unable to help to any great extent, until out of the blue came a chance to attend the London Hospital through the good offices of St. Alfred and Lady Reynolds of Ayot Bury. They were patrons of the London Hospital, and if the pension board agreed, they would get me in as an out-patient. One day off I went for an appointment with Dr. Woods, who was also a friend of Sir Alfred and Lady Reynolds and it proved I had fallen into good hands as you will see from the following exercises he gave me. First I was stretched and then massaged for about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour and after that assisted with arm movements. This was the run of things for about six sessions. After that the Dr. asked a most extraordinary question "Do you dance", he asked, I said "No, I didn't fancy it". He said between now and your next visit I shall hope you will find some-one

to teach you". I promised to find some-one. After I arrived home I had to relate all that had taken place and I had three days in which to find some-one to teach me to dance. It was during the week-end somebody mentioned a Mrs. Smith at Hatfield who taught dancing for 1/- per hour, so on the Monday over to Hatfield I went and eventually found the place. It was a fried fish shop and the back room was used for dancing lessons. I was asked in and I explained what it was all about. After a while Mrs. Smith consented to try me out saying "I have had many pupils but never a challenge like this, try not to let me down". The following day I had an appointment at the hospital and I was able to tell the doctor I was fixed up to learn dancing. Then he said "Do you cycle?". I told him I was able to once, but not now as it was a racing machine with very low grips on the handle bars. He then said "Leave the grips and use the upper part, hook your left fingers over the bar, that will straighten the arm, your right arm will do the steering for the time being. Now, I will see you from time to time to assess progress". The following weeks I was kept busy with my dancing and cycling, but to do it I had to get a letter from the hospital doctor to say that what he had prescribed was necessary to the treatment. It was plain sailing after that, otherwise I would have had to be home by 8.p.m. Inside of one month I was able to walk better, also my left arm began to have more movement. I cannot count the times I fell off my cycle, but even the falls became less as time wore on until one day I rode to Newmarket to see my old landlady, what a chinwag we had! My instructress at Hatfield said if I did not mind helping with the children, as I was getting on so well, when Autumn came I could help her and stay for the evening dance. I fell for her offer and all through the Winter about 8 of us went over and really enjoyed ourselves. The Dr. at the hospital was satisfied with my progress and I was discharged, but his last bit of advice was:- "Don't just sit around, keep yourself occupied and use your limbs". I never saw him again, but I believe he was the Violet Ray specialist who attended H.M. King George V in his illness. I really thought I was finished with clinics, but I had to go to Hitchen twice a week for electrical treatment for my left arm. That lasted 6 weeks but no real results. I didn't mind the journey as it coincided with Market day and as I had started up pig breeding the cattle market was my interest. Incidentally, that was my last treatment so now it was up to me to do what I could to help myself.

#### MY FIRST VENTURE (After final discharge from hospitals, etc)

How I began keeping pigs was on the advice of a butcher. My brother and I bought a sow in pig. We purchased it at Ware, 9 miles from Welwyn. A sergeant in the police was selling one, another brother who was under this sergeant heard of this and passed the information on to us, the price £25, and if all went well it would be a good buy. After we got it home and unloaded it in its new home, we began next day to enlarge its sty, putting stout rails inside to prevent it laying on its young after farrowing. All went well and one morning I went down to feed them and there were 9 piglets waiting to be fed and so was the mother. When the pigs were about 8 weeks old we had them doctored. The chap who did the job was also a butcher and he offered us £3. each for the young piglets. We decided to sell 7 to him and keep 2 gills for breeding. He agreed to fetch them at the week-end and said if we

had others to sell he was in the market for them. I used to collect the swill from all around, collected it and boiled it the same day. Next day it was mixed with bran and the pigs had two good meals a day. The time I spent at home was well occupied building a good store shed and a second sty, so that when the old sow was sold I had two stys in which to keep the gilts when they were ready for breeding.

In the meantime I went back to Digswell House from where I left to join up in 1914. It is now 1917 and I only stayed there a short while, 10 months to be exact. I was restless and didn't know what I wanted. Just then I couldn't stand discipline, I had to re-adjust myself to a civilian way of life. It was hard going, but after changing job quite a few times, I began to settle down again. From Digswell House I went to Englefield Green in Surrey ostensibly to take charge of the kitchen garden. I found that every Tom, Dick & Harry did a bit there and Haddow was boss of farm and garden. One day I would find myself cutting down Alder trees, cutting them into 6ft. to 8 ft. lengths, then carried out of the wood to where they could be loaded and taken away. (By the way, the cores of these trees were used in the making of gun powder) When not cutting trees we were all sent up to the farm for threshing corn, etc. I don't envy anyone that job.

My lodgings were with the coachman and his wife. On the first day I was met at the door and requested to take off my boots before going inside. This I did, then I found I had to walk on paper to my place at the table, to cap it all paper was placed on the seat of the chair for me. This went on for two or three days, I could forgive it during the day but when it came to the evening the paper was still put on the chair, so I said to the lady "I don't mind sitting on paper during the day, but back home we have cushions to sit on". The food was not sufficient for a working man, also my shoulder was raw with carrying logs of wood on it. I decided I had had enough, so I went down to see Mr. Haddow to give in my notice. He asked what was wrong with the job, I told him I wasn't brought up on Oxo's, he replied in broad Scotch "you may not have been brought up on Oxo, but you are working for the Oxo firm Levi & Gunther". The next week I was back home and walked straight into another job. The day I went to Englefield Green was on 11th Nov., and as I went to Waterloo Station all was as usual, then the bells rang out and all was in an uproar. I wished I could have stayed, but I had to get to my new job and believe me they had heard any news. I must now digress, but get back to this new job at the Guessens, Welwyn. It was a job I would have stayed at, the the employer was on the local pension board. One day he sent for me, I asked him if anything was wrong, but he was quite satisfied with my work. The fact was, he said, "As I was getting £1. a week pension he suggested I work for him at £1. per week and my wages would be £1. less but bringing the total to the same amount. I saw red and refused point blank, I told him just what I thought of him. In fact Mrs. H. came in to see what all the noise was about, I said Mr. H. would tell her the news and gave in my notice. Another short lived job. Also about two weeks later my pension dropped to 8/- per week. My next move was to see our Member of Parliament. I explained what had happened, he was very helpful, said he would go into the matter, which he duly did and my pension was restored to its old rate and Mr. H. was removed from the Board.

My next job was at Stanmore, Middlesex. There in the Spring of 1919 I took a job as groundsman, 15 tennis courts and a Lacross field, also a large lawn in front of the school to be kept in trim. The flower beds and bases here and there were wallflowers for Spring and geraniums for Summer display. The greenhouses had been neglected during the war and a rumour was going around that the place was being sold. It was Bently Priory as I knew it, now it is run by the R.A.F. Soon after I arrived the boy who used to get the coals for the kitchen left. One of the others was asked if he would fill in for a while, but he said his time was taken up on the farm. As I couldn't do much before breakfast, I volunteered to do the job. You see 4 of us lived in the bothy. I struck a lucky patch most mornings, I received a hot breakfast and later on I had my dinner supplied as well, which made a big saving on my wages. The head of the school of 750 girls, aged from 5 to 18 years was reported to be a bit of a dragon. (A French aristocrat, Madame de Tenach, but I found her to be charming if one did ones work well. For instance we were mowing the lawn, the boy was pulling on the rope and I was on the handles. The head gardener said "Don't let her see you standing still, she won't like it". We had cut almost half and were getting really warm, so I suggested to the boy that when we got to the back of a big vase to hold up for a minute to cool off, which we did. We had hardly stopped, when the boy said "Look out, here she comes". Well we waited for her to get to us and said "Good morning Madame", the greeting was returned and then to our surprise Madame said "There is a seat in the laurels, if you smoke rest there until you have finished it, you will feel refreshed" and away she went. As she went on her way, the head gardener came along "If she finds you smoking it will be a reprimand or more like the sack". The boy said "Madame sent us here for a rest and a smoke", which the head said he couldn't believe, nothing like that had happened before.

Another incident which proved her to be human. One morning some of the girls were going up to the tennis courts, as they passed I wished the leaders "Good morning". I didn't think any more about it until Miss Laing came out to see me "Did you not know it was forbidden to speak to either the Mistress or pupils? I said "Yes, but surely in these days its better to be pleasant than rude". After all I had done nothing wrong. Later on word came out from the housekeeper that it was quite in order for all to be pleasant at all times. Things certainly changed for the better from then on. To mow the courts I had the use of a pony to pull the machine, orders being not to work it too hard as it was more or less retired and Madame had a soft spot for it as she had had it from a foal. All went well until haymaking time, the farm foreman had orders to use "Dolly", that was the pony's name, sparingly. Madame herself was going on holiday as there were very few pupils left behind after the rest had gone home for the vacation. The weather was fine, the chaps on the farm prepared for haymaking, the grass was cut and ready to pick up very soon owing to a good days drying. The foreman came to tell the head gardener he would use Dolly in the field with a small cart. We tried to dissuade him but to no purpose. All went well until the afternoon, when the foreman reported that Dolly had dropped down dead. All the head gardener would say was "I've never known her do that before", and after a pause said "You had better see Miss Laing, she will know what to do". The upshot of this was, when Madame returned, after hearing all about the incident, gave the foreman notice to quit, and warned others to

listen when orders were given and to carry them out. Soon after this we heard that the whole school would be moving, so once again I was looking for a job. So far I had not needed to draw dole money, but I went to the exchange in Watford. There I was given a green card to go to a factory in Chorleywood and see if they could put me on in just over a week. Well, I got the job and lodgings to start as soon as possible. My next move was to see the housekeeper at the school and give in my notice.

The last weeks of Summer found me at Chorleywood. My lodgings were 10 minutes away from the factory, the hours from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. drilling holes in a case to contain an aero engine for an unspecified destination. The war was over but aeroplanes were still a priority. Screws were set in the holes firm enough to keep it together and as they were finished they were taken away. I was expected to do two of these per working day. Some days I had no holes to drill and I was sent out at times to help either remove or put in new fireplaces in a large mansion. I sometimes wondered if the owner had something to do with the factory. There was a large staff at the factory and I met one of them not long after, as I had to go sick and the local doctor sent me home. How I got home safely I shall never know, I cycled around 20 miles and almost collapsed when I arrived home. The reason for all this was the food I was getting at my lodgings. It was bread and jam and a can of cold tea for breakfast, the same for dinner and when I arrived back at night I had some watery soup and a potato, some greens and a very small piece of meat. My mother sent for the doctor who wanted to know what on earth I was thinking about to let myself get into such a state. He said it was under-nourishment and he gave me a letter to send to the firm. That was the extent of my job at Chorleywood. Now it behoves me to get another job as soon as possible, better luck I hope.

Friends of ours told me there was a gardener wanted at Lockleys, the home of Sir Evelyn and Lady de la Rue. At this time I went to see Mr. Cooper the head gardener who took me on. He proved to be a knowledgeable chap and we got on very well together. It could have been an ideal place to stay but it wasn't to be my luck just yet, as towards the latter end of 1920, Mr. Cooper was offered a place up North at Burnley as Parks Superintendent. There was also a spare place for an under gardener if I would care to take it. I was well pleased with my job at present and before long I took my turn arranging the flowers in the house. Her Ladyship wasn't interested in that, she was more interested in the home farm. About now they were getting potatoes out and into clamps for the Winter, two of us from the garden were told to meet her Ladyship to go to the farm to help with the potato picking. Just before 1 o'clock her Ladyship enquired if one of us could light a fire to sit by as it was chilly. I was the one to go and by the time they were ready I had a good fire going in a deep gully and a log for her Ladyship to sit on. I think she really enjoyed it all as when we went back to the gardens she said what a lovely day it had been. It wasn't the last trip we made with her, and it was no effort to converse with her. That Autumn I helped the head put in one or two thousand daffodil bulbs and didn't they make a lovely show in the Spring among the shrubs by the side of the drive towards Welwyn station. It was Sir Evelyn's custom to drive himself

to the station with the groom behind. He drove a pair of coal black ponies and the groom drove them home again. The same procedure again in the evening only in reverse. It was a lovely sight to see them stepping it out. There was also a chauffeur and when he turned out it was a sight to see, just immaculate, no other words.

The only drawback at this place was a pair of Australian black swans, they were vicious. One day the groom went down to the river, it flowed by the front of the house, and as she bent over to fill her bucket one of these swans stretched its neck and pulled her into the water by the lapel of her overall and began thrashing with its wings. Luckily Miss Ruby saw what happened, rushed down to the river, grabbed the swan by the neck until the groom was out of the water, then let it go and it swan away. Miss Ruby was the only one who could handle these swans. A similar incident happened when the head and I were planting flowers in the two vases on the lawn. I had just filled two 2 gallon cans from the river and was making my way back to water the flowers, when the head shouted at me. I turned my head to see one of the swans making for me. I hung on to the cans as that was all I had to keep him away, his wings bashed the sides of the cans in. I threw the empty cans at him and dived into a rhododendren clump and there I stayed until the blighter went away. That was the only encounter I had with them.

In all I spent a very pleasant time at Lockleys, altogether it was a good year. Mr. Cooper left for his new job and I hoped it would be my lot to carry on, but not my luck. Another head was advertised for and I looked elsewhere for another situation. I was certain the new man would not be as tolerant as Mr. Cooper. You see, my left arm was still practically useless and no-one really wanted to employ a disabled man. Then an advert. appeared in the Gardeners Chronicle, it read "Man wanted for pleasure ground, ex-service man preferred. It was for the estate of Knibworth House, the home of the Earl of Lytton, at that Viceroy of India. At last I was sure I had found a permanent place to work until I was fit enough to really do a days work. I was taken on by the head gardener, a Mr. Shufflebottom and like Mr. Cooper was easy on the hard work. While at Knibworth House my arm began to improve, I put it down to the amount of clipping I had to do. During the latter part of Summer I was put to clipping the maze. I found it intriguing at first, but soon found may way about in it, but it took two of us to clip and tidy it up. The maze itself stood in roughly  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an acre, the hedges just over 6 ft. in height, innumerable hedges and paths inside, only one leading to the centre. There stood a small pedestal and a statue about 18" tall on top. Outside was an avenue of Yew trees and at the South end was a Judas tree. The layout was a long stretch of lawn, 60 ft to 100 ft long and roughly 40 ft. wide. The Judas tree was central of this small lawn and on each side was a tall conical Yew tree. This was called Judas and the twelve apostles. About June this tree was a blaze of red blossom, but the branches had thorns quite 2" long. Now these Yew trees were about 20 ft. high and it was nearly all ladder work, one could only do about one tree and part of another each day.

When that chore was done, the next session were the umbrella trees down one side of the big lawn. These trees were Portugese Laurel and cut to the shape of an umbrella and over 8 ft. across. One could stand beneath in a heavy shower and remain dry.

In between the clipping there were odd bits of mowing and weeding to do. Knibworth Church was not far from the house and it had a good peel of bells and campanologists used to come quite often to ring peels practically all day. Lots of folk cannot stand the bells. Myself, I don't dislike the sound and still like to hear them when possible. I have the privilege of knowing one band of bellringers (North Tawton, Champions for 7 successive years, and in this year of our Lord 1977, the sound of those bells went around the World at Christmas).

During the potato harvesting all hands possible helped to gather crops. We had only just begun to re-adjust ourselves after the war years, and since I had been at home I had started pig-keeping again. After the potatoes were gathered in the head gave me permission to have the chats (small potatoes) if I picked them up in my own time. I used to do this and carry them home on the handle bars of my cycle, about 3 miles, and unload them into the shed. I don't know how many I had, but they saved me a bit of cash. I also used to call in at Charlie Thody's fish shop, he would let me have his fish refuse. It was all boiled down in a copper with the household waste, etc. While I was away from home my sister and parents looked after the pigs and I always tried to be home on Saturdays to clean them out and give them clean bedding.

The Winter months were spent doing all the odd cleaning up jobs, and my evenings were spent at home mostly. I joined the Welwyn Social Club. It was suggested we apply to the Church Council to hold dances there. They agreed to this for a small rental and each Friday we held a 6d. hop as we called it, from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. We had as many as 100 on some nights, and as it was so popular we decided to hold a Ball with a real band to play for us. We managed to get Moony's band from Hertford. They were fine chaps from the 1st Herts. Regimental band, all demobbed men. The dances that Winter were a great success, so it was agreed to hold them again the next Winter.

So into 1921. Work went on just the same as the previous year, the only difference being the weather. We had very little rain in Spring and by June it was dry and scorching. At home the garden had been planted with potatoes, but only a little spindly growth to show. My father said he would dig a row just to see what happened to the seed. When he dug them out they were like parchment, no hope of them recovering. We decided to try and buy some more. At the Knebworth Home farm they had 2 or 3 bags over, I bought  $\frac{1}{2}$  a bag and got them home. It was just coming up to June, but between us we made a trench and put a thick layer of manure on top of the potatoes, earthed them up and hoped for the best. I then bought several bags of cavings from the farm (the dross from threshing) and put that in between the rows. Meantime, back at the gardens a pint of ale was given to us each mid-day while the heat lasted. All of us had a dose of sunburn by the middle of June. I was burned from my neck to halfway down my back, but one day when I went home, my father said "We are in for a storm,

look at the sun". It was just like burnished copper, but we did not get it till the week-end, and then we had a cracker of a storm. In 24 hours there was a transformation, leaves filled out and everything began to perk up. We all hoped crops would not be ruined, far from it, everything took a new lease of life and by the Autumn crops were late but good. Our spuds turned out fine, it was a good gamble which had come off.

That Autumn the dances began again. I still sent over to Hatfield almost every Saturday. My sister at home had kept me on my toes as she was a good dancer. I also still helped with the children on Saturdays with Mrs. Smith. My thanks for all she did. It was September when we started our 6d. dances and this year 1921 began well, good attendances and many came along from outlying places. So much for pleasure, not so good at Knebworth House.

Word came from Lord Lytton to say, owing to his duties in India it would be impossible for him to look after the estate, so those he had appointed to do so must let the House and reduce staff as it would be run on a commercial basis. The next thing was who would have to go. Bates, in charge of the pleasure grounds was one, Steve Isson, the odd job man also. Now why I was left out I don't know, but this I did know, Steve had a wife and 3 children, and I was not married. In the end I persuaded the head to reinstate Isson and let me go. As I told him I only had to put my hat on and I had got my furniture with me, so it was decided.

I left and went to work at the Beehive Works at Welwyn Station (or High Welwyn as it was named). Some months after I met Steve Isson and his family in Welwyn at the hospital parade which was held each year in aid of the Welwyn hospital. Steve and his wife were doing well and gave me a big "Thank you" for being instrumental in keeping him in work. There were enough unemployed around just then. After the war jitters ex war chaps all looking for work. So far I had managed to go from one job to another and never on the dole. My job at the Beehive was only tempoary. It was painting hives, and Jennings was away sick, so once again I was lucky. My predecessor could paint 8 per day, so that meant I must finish at least 24 every three days. As each had three coats it wasn't easy, but I held the job down all the Winter. 25/- per week and glad to have it. So much for my work, I still had my pigs to bring in a few extra pounds, to get an extra £5. was a fortune.

Now back to ppeasure and dancing, it was the highlight of the week and one could make many friends this way. I think I said before we did not allow wallflowers, if possible we found them partners. One evening two girls came in, one was from the Beehive Post Office and a complete stranger. She was just sitting waiting for a partner, the dance being and no-one had claimed her, so I went over to her and asked her if I might have the pleasure. We were soon waltzing round the room. Afterwards I sent two or three more chaps over to her and there weren't many dances missed by this young lady that night, or at the weekly dances that followed. I never enquired this young lady's name, but her face haunted me. Week after week she came and it was a work of art to claim her for a dance. After all she was a free agent. Just before the

dances ended for the season, I was determined to find out her name and where she lived. One day I saw the postman and it flashed through my mind that he would know as he came to our dances. "Oh! Yes!" he said when I asked him. "she is cook housekeeper for Mrs. Balfour, Harmer Green End, her name Mrs. Woodward, she is a "Miss" really, but they always call housekeepers "Mrs". That was enough for me, I wrote to her, and to my surprise had a reply. From then on it was I who saw her home after the dances, before I had been quite happy for others partners to do so! Our friendship grew stronger and one day before the dances had come to an end, her sister and her husband came from Kent to see her and I was introduced to them. From then on events moved fast and as Spring came along I asked Gladys (that was her name) if she would marry me. The answer was "Yes", but I must be earning as much as she herself was getting, also I must have a steady job. In the intervening time we agreed to become engaged. During the Summer I was invited to stay the week-end at Gillingham. We spent a lot of time looking for a ring. I saw one about £12. which was a lot of money in those days, but quite innocently Gladys said "I would like one priced in the teens" and I had had to say we would have to wait in that case as I hadn't that amount on me. Gladys understood and was quite willing to wait until things improved. One day in late Summer my brother in the police force from Ware came over and told us the boss or one of them had got into a jam. I never was told exactly what it was, my brother was a sealed book about his job, but this chap Harvey was a partner with a Mr. Burrows in the Hertford & district Motor Services, and through my brothers evidence, he was cleared of blame for whatever happened. He was told that if at any time they could do him a good turn, he, my brother only had to say. Knowing I was looking for another job, he mentioned this and the result was an interview with the partners and I was given a job. At the week-end I saw the boss at the Beehive, told him how I stood over the new job, he understood and told me I was free to go. I thanked him and off I went to Harmer Green End to tell Gladys the news that I was on the payroll of a bus company, and I would keep her informed of whatever job I was given. For the first three days I was under a conductor learning all about his job, issuing tickets, keeping waybill correct, etc. At the end of these three days my tutor was asked if I was able to take charge of a bus, he replied "Yes", so the next day I was sent to Scotland Yard to get my licence for conducting. I had my photograph taken, also finger prints, given my licence and back to Ware. I was lodging at Ware for a while until my brother moved to Tewin Waters as night watchmen for Sir Otto Beit, a diamond magnate. The next day I was called into Harvey's office and asked "Have you made any friends among the conductors?" When I replied "No", he said "Good, what I want you to do is this, I want you to be timekeeper at Waltham Cross, time the buses in and out". This will be a six day week and long hours, but it will be to your advantage if you carry the job out. Your wages will be £3.10s. per week, one day in seven free, but not always the same day". So ended my first week and I was soon off to Welwyn with my news. Gladys came up for tea and I was able to tell them all about the weeks progress. I had been time keeping for several weeks when the boss

gave me a letter for a tailor in Hertford and then told me I was to be made Inspector, a man from the London General was coming to teach me the ins and outs of inspecting waybills and tickets. Also how to discover several means of ticket fraud for evading payment of fare, all very useful tips. I duly received my uniform, I felt like the fellows outside cinemas, a proper Charlie, but I soon got used to my clothes. It was chocolate brown in colour with gold braid down the sides of trousers, round the collar and cuffs, also around the peak and crown of cap, couldn't be missed in any crowd. At any rate the uniform guaranteed respect for what it stood for, to help the travelling public at all times.

Besides running buses on different routes, private hire was catered for. As a new company it was a novelty and also ran to places which the railway missed and all at competitive prices. The main difference was that the railway trains ran on rails, smooth travel, but on the buses it was often very jerky as they had solid rubber tyres. Also on the trains the carriage windows could be opening when the weather was hot, but not so on the buses. Also double decker buses had open tops as they were in the early trams and the drivers of either were open to all weathers, just with an apron below the chin to the front of bus or tram. Maximum speed on the roads for buses, was 12 miles per hour, over that one was liable to be caught for speeding. It was 3 years or so after I joined the bus service that pneumatic tyres were tried on saloon buses, but more of that later. Back to the training on the buses. All went well and my instructor returned to the London General. My next venture was to learn to drive a car, but before that I scoured the jewellers shops to buy an engagement ring. I found one, a half hoop of diamonds, well in the teens, and on my next trip home I sealed our fate for the future. I don't think either of us regretted the step we had taken and looked forward to the day when we would be married.

Now back to driving a car. The firm bought a second hand Rover, 2 seater. The idea was to get from one route to another as quickly as possible for checking on buses. Neither driver or conductor would know when or where I would be at any time. It was the same for inspection, spots were employed to watch and report on the way inspectors went about their work. A spot, by the way, could be anyone, a girl, fellow or woman. They were there to report any discrepancies taking place. It was instant dismissal for anyone caught out. When the car I was to drive arrived, I had to go to the Tax Office in Hertford for my driving licence. The chap to take me on the road was named Evans, the head fitter. He chose Sunday as there was very little traffic on the roads. First I had to start the car, then move off without a jerk. It took me best part of an hour to do this and when I had mastered that part, we set off on the road proper. I'm sure he was bored stiff as I only crawled along, he suggested we went on to Welwyn to my home. We arrived and surprised them, all just sitting down to tea. We then joined them and after tea went back another way. We arrived back all in one piece, the boss was there to hear Evans report, it was favourable. The boss then asked if he thought I was good enough to drive to Tottenham next day, the answer was "Yes".

so I knew what I had to do, find out just where this place was. Mr. Harvey was running a pirate service between Tottenham and Waltham Cross. After that I was allowed a free rein, more or less to go wherever I fancied. I had changed my lodgings by this time as my brother had moved to Tewin. My new landlord was a retired wheelright, next door to my brothers house when he was residing in Ware. These folks, who were an elderly couple, were very good to me and as my work entailed my comings and goings at varying times of day and night, I was allowed the key of the door. They had previously lost their son, and I think I filled his place while I stayed with them. Another thing required of me by the boss was to join a First Aid class. I had already got my certificate for a junior class, so I joined, had a six weeks course and at the end of this time received another certificate, which pleased Harvey.

At one time I had a scare with the car. We used to change the driver and conductor of the bus at Ware crossing, as it was most convenient for most crews. This particular day both of them had missed their bus. I got the car out and started off with one of the crew sitting beside myself and the other on the boot of the car. It was a gamble, and off we went to try to catch the bus and change on the way. We got as far as the crossing, the gates were about to close as we were passing over, when down went the car, the back axle had broken and a train was due. We scrambled out and between us we got the car off the rails just before the train came through. Very lucky for all concerned.

Once when I was checking the last bus from Hertford we picked up two or three folk outside the Halfway House. The conductor was taking their fares when I went upstairs to check and he followed me. There were no passengers on the top so we went downstairs again. I said to the conductor "How did that chap in the corner get off?" We were just getting into the Ware crossing, the bus stopped and I got off to walk back. I hadn't gone far when I met the missing man stumbling along the road. His explanation was that he didn't know he was on a bus, he saw what he thought was a doorway, went through it and finished up on hands and knees. We took him back to the depot and there he had to sign the necessary forms which have to be completed regarding accidents, however trivial.

Here I must relate two or three incidents which happened on the bus I was travelling on at the time. One concerned a very large woman carrying a basket with all sorts of ware in it. The conductor went to her to collect her fare. He asked her if she wanted to pay for one or two seats, Madam, as her basket on the seat beside her. She reported him.

Another one was a retired gentleman who travelled on the bus frequently, but his house was some yards beyond the bus stop. One day he got off the bus, walked round to the driver and said "Why can't you stop outside my house instead of here, it would be more convenient for me and save me a few steps". The driver replied "Widen your gates and drive and I will drive you to your door". He was reported and in this case the driver had to apologise to the client.

Then late one Sunday night on the last run which was always rowdy, the boss had previously wondered what could be done about these rowdy folks apart from getting the police to act. Someone suggested serving out the same treatment to the offenders and it was agreed to let Burgess

and his conductor take the last run on the following Sunday. Now both these chaps were boxers. As Sunday came around the same crowd was picked up. I was going to travel on the bus but the two chaps said they didn't want any witnesses, but from an eye witness travelling inside the bus we learned that those on top refused to pay the fare, so the driver stopped the bus at the Anwell stop, he and the conductor mounted the stairs. "Now what about these fares, are you paying or be thrown off the bus?" They still refused to pay, so our two lads grabbed one each and over the top they went. After two or three more went the same way the others gave in and were pushed down the stairs. The driver returned to his seat and took the rest of his passengers to their destinations. The rowdys were left by the side of the road and as our two chaps returned they met the gang straggling along the road to their homes. Sunday nights after that were quiet for a while. Burgess and his mate were rewarded with extra time off.

Towards the end of 1922 my boss asked me to meet him outside the Fox & Hounds in Puckeridge, I think that was the name of it, but name doesn't matter, but what transpired did. Harvey told me he was negotiating for the Anlaby Motor Co. This was run by a trawler skipper, but as the fishing industry was going through a bad patch he wanted to sell out. The only vehicles he had were two charabancs and one 64 seater bus with open top, and 2 old saloons. It was a golden opportunity to buy according to Harvey, but what he wanted was someone to go with him to help run it. He had already approached one of the fitters here at Hertford who was willing to chance it, also one of the conductors and with me that would be 3 of us to join him. Anyway, I agreed, and I was to meet him just outside Cambridge the next day around mid-day. However, instead he picked me up at the garage and took me to his home to stay the night to make final arrangements for travelling North. The result was to go home and pack my belongings and be prepared to stay. My fare and incidental expenses would be paid later but my wages and an extra £5 I received now before we parted. I was to meet him outside the railway of Hull station on Monday, a week from now and he would have fresh instructions for me. Back home I went to say "Goodbye" as it would be some time before we all met again.

That evening Gladys and I began making plans for our future. We would save up until we had a £100 or £200 pounds in the bank, then we would fix a date for our wedding. It is a good thing we cannot see into the future, for I'm certain, had we been able to, our lives would not have turned out such a testing time, as will be proved later. On the Monday morning I caught the 9.0'clock train for Hull via Doncaster & Goole with a weeks work in front of me ready for Harry, the following Monday. First I had to find somewhere to stay for a week. I asked an outside porter if he could give me an address where I could stay for one week. He said "I'll take you for a bob (1/-) and your trunk to a place, it isn't a posh place". This I found out when I arrived there. It proved to be a lodging house, but the bed and room were clean. The landlady warned me to lock and bolt my door, as she sometimes got some funny customers there. Another thing "its a weeks payment in advance, will you want meals?". "No, thank you" I said. "Then that will be 10/- you come in when you feel like it". Wasn't I glad when that week was over.

During that week I had been checking the number of passengers carried by the buses on what would be our run in the future, times of running and if punctual, number of passengers at varying times of the day. Also checking likewise on the country run Hull - Willoughby and Hull and Brough. Working from both ends kept me busy and the week flew by. For my meals I went to an oyster bar just across the road from the bus stop outside the station, a Mrs. Hewitt was the owner and she proved a good friend during my stay in Hull. At any rate I had my breakfast, dinner and odd snacks there all that week and after when it was possible. It was there I met another fellow who proved a very good friend indeed, his rank and name Detective Sergeant Bashford of the Hull police, also one other Detective Willis. I paid them many a visit and interesting ones at that. Once I was shown over punishment quarters, the place where the 'cat of nine tails' was used on real delinquents, also the 'birch' for bad boys. I'm sure to use it now would be a deterrent for football hooligans and others in similar cases. Sergeant Bashford had a boy under his wing, he acted as father and mother to him. He was a youngster he picked up and looked after and when we took over the Anlaby company he was taken on as a conductor and later became a driver, and a good chap he was. He had been brought up to do the right thing. I've digressed again.

I was waiting outside the station making notes regarding a bus I had just left when a voice said "Come round and get in the car, its more private there", it was Harry. Round I went and we sat in the car. He took my notes and went through them with a fine tooth comb with not a word until he had finished reading the notes. Then he said "We'll go and have lunch now then on to Anlaby common where the buses are housed. I think I have found a place for you to stay, and by the way you have done a good job on your own". I said I had been helped over several things by Sergeant Bashford. The boss said "So you have made his acquaintance, then keep on the right side of him". We then went off to have a meal, I was almost starving. After having lunch we went on to Anlaby Common to look over the garage and meet what staff was on duty. I was introduced as the inspector and met the late owner, a Mr. Clarke. From the garage we went to a small general shop on the opposite side of the road and Harvey told the lady behind the counter that I would be her new lodger for a time, until the villas next door were complete.

He then left us to arrange terms, etc, and in the course of conversation she told me a Mr. Talory was building the two semi-detached villas for his staff. My new landlady was elderly as was her husband, a retired railway official I believe. The shop was just enough to keep them in comfort. While there I lived quite well, also the lady took on doing my washing, which was a great help, all for about £1. per week. In my bedroom the bed was shut away in an alcove during the day and to let it down one had to press a spring just below the ceiling and support it with one hand to lower it, in getting up one had to be wary not to bang ones head, which I did a few times before I remembered to rise slowly.

I commenced duties next morning and met the first shift when they arrived, two drivers and conductors for the Anlaby run from Willoughby to Hull. The first one left the garage at 7.30.a.m. for Willoughby 7.45 a.m. the second one 7.45.a.m. to follow the first, leaving

Willoughby 8.a.m. The other company running on that route was Binningtons, father and three sons. They started at 7.a.m. and 7.15.a.m. and finished  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour before ourselves at night. The other run was Hull to Brough and the first bus out was at 7.a.m. and the second one at 7.45.a.m. Archbutt and Wilson were the drivers, the conductors were often changed around. These two drivers were very good drivers and very reliable, always ready to help out if we were pushed.

At that time we did not belong to any union, but one driver was for ever trying to form a branch among the different small groups running buses. It was over two years before he succeeded in so doing. In 1923 we took on another inspector just before Christmas, as we did not run that day I spent it in my lodgings, I don't remember much about it, I was really a stranger in a strange place and I was glad to resume duty the next day.

1924 began cold and misty, a different cold from in the Southern counties, a dry cold. One had to keep moving to keep warm. One day a double decker left the garage to commence the days run Brough to Hull. They had been gone some 45 minutes when the telephone rang. The message was could we send another bus, they had run into a steam roller. Another bus was sent out and then I informed the boss. All he said was "Have my car ready, you stand by to come with me and someone inform the police. When we were nearing Ferriby we ran into a thick mist and as we rounded a bend in the road there stood the bus with the bonnet under the boiler of the steam roller as the impact had pushed the roller under the boiler and forced it up at an angle of 45 degrees. The boss instead of going off in a tantrum, grinned and said "Wilson, stay with the bus until I get back, I may be an hour or so". Anyway, in the meantime the police arrived. There wasn't much they could do, except control whatever traffic came along. Well the boss returned, not with a break down gang, but a photographer. By this time the mist had cleared and he took a photograph of the two machines. Then we set about getting the bus out, the boiler could not fall the roller was holding it up. A wedge was put under it, the boss got into the cab, started the engine and backed it out. The bus was only scratched, but it was the biggest advert Dennis Motors had for a long time. You see, all but one of our buses were made by that firm. I treasured that photo for a long time, but in moving about from place to place it got lost. There were only three copies, the boss had one, I had one and the Dennis people also had the other.

Early in 1924 we had two new buses with pneumatic tyres, the first in Hull. No more rough rides on solid tyres and Harvey had ideas for pneumatic tyres for double deckers. One day a show bus arrived and the salesman tried hard to make a sale. Little did he know it was just the vehicle that was wanted, the only thing was how much headroom had it for passing under bridges. The salesman said there was a bridge at Willoughby, would he try there. The boss agreed, and off they went. I wish I could have been there, the front of the bus went under, but when it came for the rear to follow it just got stuck. To get it out the rear tyres had to be let down until clear of the bridge, it then came out quite easy. The only damage was that at the rear end the roof was a bit scratched. This was the forerunner

of buses with pneumatic tyres.

During 1924 a new route was started Hull to Bredlington 4/6 return, just over 60 miles the round journey, it was a huge success. At first we ran two buses each day, but before Summer was over we ran extras on Sundays, and in 1925 we were running a 2 hourly service throughout the Winter and a double service until the end of Summer in the peak time, that was from Whitsun until after school holidays finished about the second week in September. By that time all our buses had pneumatic tyres and double deckers had covered tops. We now had three other inspectors on the routes and the Anlaby Bus Co. was now officially known as Hull & district Motor Services. The number of passengers grew, also our private hire service grew and the boss bought bigger and better saloons for that part of the service.

During the Spring of 1925 a firm who specialised in chara's for outings sold out their stock as buses were taking a lot of their trade. They could only do private work and in wet weather it was none too good for their clients. Harvey went down to make a deal with this firm and finished up with about 20 vehicles at £28. each. Believe me he brought one up for show outside the garage and in about a week he had sold the lot, and from his secretary we understood at a good profit. All that Summer we were kept busy, not a lot of time to take things easy. I did manage to get a few days off during one slack period and Gladys, my future wife, came up for a break. The fitter was living in one of the new villas so Gladys was put up there for her stay. During that few days I approached Harvey about the other villa. If it wasn't taken we would like to have it as we had set the date for our wedding for December 12th of this year 1925. He agreed that we could have it, rent free, as he would like the top front room for his office. So that was settled and I could get on and put a few things in as soon as the builders were out. During those few days together we looked around, we had a good idea of what we would require, and when Gladys had gone back to Welwyn, on my rounds I picked up quite a few things through Sergeant Bashford's advice. He showed me one or two places where one could buy bankrupt stock, but he warned me not to pay the price on the label. For instance on an Oak table the price was £7. or £8. I removed the top label and under was marked £4.10.0. I drew their attention to it with the result that was the price I paid. The rest of our furniture came from a store in Beverley Road. Utensils for the kitchen and bathroom and all furniture for the bedroom and lounge. The hallway was covered with coconut matting. The stairs had just a roll of stair lino laid, as when we get into the house we shall have a lot of traffic up and down to the new office. I was released from duties for about 10 days, but before I left I made arrangements for drivers and conductors, in fact all of the staff, to have a drink, etc, at my expense at Mrs. Hewitts at the Oyster Bar. Sergeant Bashford would be in charge of food and drinks with Mrs. Hewitt and I would foot the bill on my return.

That being settled, my next move was to Welwyn where I had a surprise. It appears that when Mrs. Balfour heard of our intended wedding (my future wife was cook housekeeper for her) Gladys was called in for an interview regarding a replacement for her post. First she wanted to know whom Gladys was marrying, did she know him and the family. When she heard who it was she said "In fact I have

nursed your future husband as a baby. Now I will tell you what I have in mind. To begin with I will supply the wedding breakfast, loan you my car and chauffeur for the day, the meal will be booked at the Wellington Inn, so that when you leave the Church you cross the road straight into the room, and apart from this I shall be responsible for your outfit. This is just to say "Thank you" for the splendid service you have given me during the time you have been with me at Harmer Green".

During 1925 Harvey was away a good deal, but we heard later he had inaugurated a new run from Cambridge to London, two runs each day. The new company was Varsity Coaches and proved a big success. He also went over to Osten a lot, there he and a chap named Allen between them ran a company called The Ostend Chara Co. Allen was manager and Harvey was boss I think. More of the Ostend Co in 1926. A day or two before 12th December I arrived home to help with whatever was to be done. I wouldn't see Gladys again until we met in the Church. After the ceremony was over we were driven to Welwyn Station en route for Sheerness where we spent our honeymoon and at the week-end we made for Hull and a new life. When we arrived at Anlaby Common, we were given a key as the secretary held one to get into the new office without disturbing anyone. The top rooms were open to all and sundry coming up the stairs, so the first thing I had done was a Yale lock put on our bedroom and bathroom doors. The main office was used for a while to let the conductors pay in as they came off duty, but when we took the rooms over we made the back room into a dining room. At night when I was out on the road Gladys was able to take the money and tickets and the person paying in signed his name and amount paid in on his waybill.

My wages with a rent and rates free house was not bad going in those days. The hours were long, but there was a lot of unrest in the labour market and it was no trouble to fill an empty place. Most of our conductors were between 15 and 16 years of age and as sharp as a needle. They were always ready to help a laden passenger. Buses were always loaded, five people were allowed to stand on the lower deck. In the twenties one never allowed a lady to stand, but to-day in the 1960's and 70's seats are only half taken. In the twenties it cost a ld. per mile on average, now in the seventies it cost around 10 p. and with a devalued pound that is 2/- in old coin. Give me the twenties, things were reasonable and no-one was really in a hurry and pleasures were cheap. Men were men and women were not so easy as they are to-day. Also they were not married until they really knew each other. Oh! Yes, mistakes were made in those days but far less.

By the New Year 1926 it was not good on the Country runs. The previous Summer a new short run had been added from Driffield to Wetwang via Garstang and on one of these runs found the bus stranded just outside Wetwang. A blizzard had swept across the moors, the bus lost grip on the hard surface, the driver scrambled out of his cab and he and the conductor sat inside the bus until I arrived with help. This help had to come from Hull with ropes, tools and extra men. The snow had eased off, but one side of the bus was a wall of snow. Many hands made light work however, and after we had cleared the wheels with just a little help from the engine and chaps pulling

on the ropes we got in to Wetwang. The driver then prepared to drive back to Drifffield. It was a slow journey and it was its last run for several days as that night more snow fell and we had heard from Drifffield it was not possible to go by way of Nafferton Slacks. Anyway the boss told the driver to try to get through, but if he couldn't make it, to return to the garage. Well, the driver tried it, one side of the slacks looked fairly good (the slack by the way is a sharp decline going down and a sharp incline to get out, at the bottom it just flattened out each side of the road and when the wind blew crossways in a snowstorm it just piled up the snowdrifts). This was what had happened this time, the snow had blown towards the bottom and the weight of the bus carried it down to the bottom. The driver started the engine to help him up the other side, but alas he drove right into a huge snowdrift. The bonnet and windscreen were more or less buried up front and to get the driver out the glass panel had to be removed to let him out the back. I'm glad I wasn't inside the bus at the time, anything could have happened. I marvel at the drivers escape, though he was shaken up a bit. That service was closed for a day or two.

The next mishap occurred about the middle of January. We had a private hire for the band of the Royal Engineers to take them to a concert at Hornsea. They had to be there by 1 p.m. and it was stressed they wanted buses with pneumatic tyres. All went well until we were within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of Hornsea, we saw the front bus skid and it almost left the road. We were just behind and our bus hit the same patch. The back of the bus swung round and we found ourselves with the back of the bus in a dyke and the front wheels on the bank. There was just room for the passengers to scramble out, and thank goodness it was hard and dry for them. I happened to be on that bus so I rang Hornsea to see if a bus could be sent from that end to pick up these folk. All was well for them, they were picked up. Now it was up to us to get our own bus out of the dyke, so we got on the telephone to Anlaby, explained what had happened and told them we required planks, two jacks, a few bricks as a stand for the jacks and a rope might help. After that we had to sit and wait till help arrived. It was a good hours wait, but the job proved fairly easy, we used the bricks as a stand for the jacks and when this was high enough it was slid on to the planks they had brought along. They were stout and could take the weight. Without going into details, we were on to the road within an hour of starting the job. The garage gang went back home and we went on to Hornsea, found the other bus, and over a mug of tea the story was told. Eventually we picked up the band, I think they were surprised to see us again, but we arrived back at the barracks safe and sound. Was Gladys pleased to seeme back in one piece. She had heard about the incident from the breakdown gang. Gladys had seen some of the conductors and when I arrived home and after a snack, we check in the rest.

It was about now, one of our conductors, Boylance, always paid in short and would never say why, his tickets and waybills were always out. I told the boss and suggested what I should do, he agreed to my suggestion so I had a few words with Sergeant Bashford. He used to ride on the same bus when Boylance was on late turn. One night he saw our No.3. Inspector get on the bus and after he had checked and signed the waybill he got off presumably to go off duty. Bashford got up from his seat and as he went

to get off, he said to Boylance "What did he take out of your bag when he got off?" The conductor didn't or couldn't say anything so the sergeant said "Before you pay in I want a word with you", so when they got to the garage he tackled him again. Boylance said the inspector had been doing this for some time, helping himself out of the bag and he had done the same thing with other conductors. Bashford told him to carry on as if nothing had happened, then he went over to the garage and had a few words with the boss. What they cooked up I never knew, but one day No.3. didn't show up for duty and the next thing we heard was that he had opened a green-grocers shop in Hessle Road.

After that little episode all went smoothly for some time and Gladys was a great help to me at the end of the day as I seldom got in for a cooked meal mid-day. At one time Clarke, the late owner of the Bus Co. gave the boss a whole fish, but the fitter's wife didn't know what to do with it as regards cutting it up and cooking it, so Gladys volunteered to do it for them. The boss said we could have what we wanted of it, so that little problem was solved.

Later on the boss suggested we dug and planted the small garden at the back of the house. I managed to get mine dug and sowed Onions, runner beans, beetroot, etc and watched them grow.

In the meantime a General strike of the nation began. The oldest of the buses had their windows boarded up and we loaded them with fish, etc, for the London market. We still did not belong to any Union so we were black legs. Pickets would try all sorts of tricks to prevent us carrying passengers, they even rode on the bonnets of the buses until it became a hot seat. One day I was riding on the platform of a low step bus almost level with the pavement, when it skidded into the curb. It shot me off and I landed in a shop doorway just as the owner was opening the door, sharp as you like he said "Good morning, Sir, is there something I can do for you?" I hadn't a reply to that. The bus had gone on to the station so I walked round to see if I could do anything. At that time a large crowd gathered in the station front and someone said they were preparing to march to the city centre. I took refuge in a shop doorway, I had hardly got there, I was in my ordinary clothes, when a policeman grabbed me and flung me out into the road, he followed me and I just managed to gasp Hall & district and he said why didn't you say before. Just then there was a great surge forward from the station. I never want to get mixed up with strikers again. Everyone I should think went mad and strikers and police were battling it out.

After the strike was over came the reckoning. Nearly all of our buses needed attention and put in order ready for the Summer season. I had to go to a place called Hodsons Court, there I found the painter and put the proposition to him to take on the job of looking after the inside as well as the outside of the fleet. If he thought anything of it he was to contact the boss and arrange terms and so it was settled. One day he turned up late and said there had been a little excitement at the court. It appeared that two brothers had married two sisters, they now found out they had married the wrong ones so they decided to change over. There was no reason for fuss as they didn't have to change names. I never heard the result of the change over, at any rate Gladys and I were never short of conversation, there was always

something fresh to talk about. My wife often went into Hull to do her shopping, she could travel free on the buses as could also the fitters wife, but she preferred the smaller shops of Anlaby Common.

In the Spring I was called into the office to see the boss. That was the beginning of a bad patch, in the interview that took place the boss asked me if I would like to take over the management of the Ostend Chara Co. At first I jumped at the chance, but his proposal afterwards put paid to it all. I said a house would have to be found and arrangements for furniture to be sent out. His reply to this was "You will leave your old woman behind and you could have the other chaps quarters, we have a chateau, you could also have a paid woman". In other words I could live with a prostitute. At that, I lost my temper and told him what he could do with his job and I gave him a months notice, which he refused to take saying "You might yet change your mind". When next I went indoors Gladys wanted to know what had gone wrong and when I told her she said "We won't stay here, we'll find somewhere else to go although that might be difficult". I wrote to the Thames Valley Co, Reading, but when they wrote to Harvey he refused to give me a reference, so we carried on as if nothing had happened, until one morning a letter arrived from my wife's sister telling us to come to Sheerness when we were ready and we could all talk things over. They had an idea to put to us. We had already written to Peacehaven for particulars of building plots for sale. We didn't do anything about that until we had talked things over with my wife's sister and her husband. Whilst waiting for our notice to expire, someone had been into our vegetable plot at night, they had scuffled among the root crops and pulled up the marrows and beans, in fact everything was destroyed and useless. It didn't effect my wife or I as we were determined to move as soon as possible. Once again luck was against me and it could not have happened at a worse time, depressing times were here to stay. If a situation became vacant there were plenty to try and fill it.

Our plans were made at last, while I was out on duty my wife arranged at the station for a truck to take our belongings to Gillingham, there to await collection. Also arrangements were made to get our things out of the house which took the man three trips as he only had a small waggon which he used for delivering coal. All this was done early in the morning before the garage opened for service. My wife and I cleaned up the rooms, handed in the keys and were off by mid-day. We took sandwiches with us and bought a cup of tea on the station. At 1 o'clock we departed from Hull with a mixture of relief and worry about the future. What a start to our first year of married life, now it was not only one but two to think about. However, we were determined not to let it get us down, we had each other and the will to work as we proved in later years. It was evening when we arrived in Sheerness where we made our way to 10, Maple Street, the home of my wife's sister. After a meal we sat talking it all over. It was a relief to tell all we knew and what had been the last straw, about living abroad, etc, also Harvey's last words to me on leaving "I hope one of these days to meet you with the backside out of your breeches". Now we intended to put all that behind us and meet whatever was awaiting us. It was good that we had saved some money, we had some to fall back on. That evening we heard

all about a piece of land my sister and brother-in-law had bought at Wigmore, between Rainham and Bredhurst, and would we like to go to see it at the week-end. It had been a glorious Summer so far and this week-end proved no exception. It was the week before August Bank holiday and it was suggested that after seeing the plot perhaps we would like to camp there over the holiday. We were ready to fall in with anything suggested, so a tent, etc, was packed on the back of my brother-in-law's car and on Saturday off we went to Wigmore to inspect and decide on piece of land. On arrival we found that the roads were unmade, but at that time we were not thinking about roads or building, but after a while we had a bungalow there in our minds eye and making plans for the other part of the ground, which was an acre and had possibilities. We decided that the four of us would camp over the week-end and that would give Gladys and I all the time we wanted to make up our minds. As a matter of fact we had decided as we were about to start a new life somewhere it could just as well be here. As Gladys's sister and her husband, Alice and Ted, had often camped out, everything had been planned and as I had never camped out, apart from my army days, it was an eye opener as to what one wants, even to morning ablutions. That day we settled about the ground, we were informed that if we would like to purchase it and build on it, the price would be £90. the same as they gave for it. We agreed terms and after the August holiday we got down to work. First we had to get a building permit from Hollingbourne, as we were just about 120 feet beyond the Gillingham border, that meant we would not have water, gas or electric, but that did not put us off. The next move was to find a builder and some-one to draw up plans. If we could get this done through the month of August a start could be made by September. It was a good thing we hadn't second sight or I think we should have delayed our plans until the Spring. As it was we carried on with our plans, found a builder with a good record for building and we left it to him to start as soon as we had the go ahead. The lovely weather continued and it was rather fun camping out, but we had a word of warning from the few folk around us as to the state of the roads in Winter. Most people who were building on this land lived in huts while the building was in progress, they were on the spot then to deter prowlers from lifting timber, etc used in the building.

Our builder told us we would be housed in about 4 months and the cost together with a Government subsidy would be £575.00 (Subsidy £75). As soon as we got the go ahead footings were laid and the first load of bricks was on the plot. By now my wife and I had changed our camping habits, we now had a small marquee and in it we had a table and chairs besides our bed. For warmth in the evenings we had a blue flame heater, a primus for making tea and a Tilley lamp for light. It was comfortable in comparison with the small tent. Outside we had a small tripod with a hook to hang over the fire to cook our vegetables. Oh! Yes, we lived like gypsies during those early weeks, yet we enjoyed the novelty of it all and no ill effects, in fact just the reverse, I think the life agreed with us.

During the last days of August I paid a visit to a timber yard that had sprung up since building began on this new estate. I bought enough timber to build a hut 16 ft. x 8 ft. We did not expect to live

in it for any length of time as the footings were almost ready for the breeze cement to be put down inside the footing walls. I won't bore one with details as when that was finished the weather began to break up. We still had the marquee and Gladys and I began to push on with the hut as we were feeling a wee bit desperate. The hut was up and a roof on by the 1st week in September, it was made of weatherboard and we lined it with thick brown paper to keep out all draughts. The small range we were having in the kitchen was installed in the hut until the bungalow was built. The bed and table stood in the hut which did not leave much room for moving around. All we could hope for now was fine weather, but our luck was out, the weather grew worse and the builder informed us he was unable to carry on owing to the state of the roads. This meant we would have to live in the hut until the Spring or until work could be resumed again.

Now it was up to me to find work of some kind, build a sty for some pigs I had offered to buy from a man in Wigmore Road, not far from where we were going to live. It was a sow and 7 piglets, at the bargain price of around £20. In just over a week I had cemented a pen, built a make shift sty with a wooden floor to sleep on and a guard rail for the piglets to run under. When the pigs were installed we made the sty stronger by putting another wood lining inside to prevent the outer boards from being pushed off by the sow nosing about. By now we had made one or two helpful friends and often in the evenings we spent an hour or two in their company. Opposite us on the other side of the road a retired butcher and his family lived. The 3 sons worked in the dockyard at Chatham and after work their hobby was livestock. Fred the eldest went in for poultry, Tom the next went in for cows and the youngest believed in enjoying life, a don't remember him with a hobby. One other family about 300 yards further along the road was a Mr. & Mrs. Pearce, she was the daughter of a Cornish farmer and her husband was a retired Master Mariner. His life had been spent sailing 4 masted schooners, until during a violent storm a piece of rope struck him across the eyes and he lost the sight of one eye and was retired. The evenings we spent with them were very pleasant ones. They had two daughters, Winifred the elder one was a teacher of music and Ethel was a school teacher away from home at Northfleet, Gravesend. Now both these families helped Gladys and I to settle down to our new life.

I had managed to earn a little cash during September pruning trees for various people for 1/- per hour, then it came to a halt for a while as someone else was going around pruning and charging 6d. per hour. At that time, just after a general strike in early Summer folk would do anything to get work, who could blame them, there was no Social Security in those days.

Bread in 1926 was 4d. for a large loaf, coal 1/9 per cwt., milk 1½ p. per pint. Our coalman was telling me one day that he was delivering an order to a house in the bottom half of Bredhurst Road, it was on a Saturday, he knocked on the door, but when the man answered the door he said he couldn't take delivery of the coal as it was his Sabbath. He said he was a Seventh Day Adventist and do

not work on the Sabbath. After a few more words the coalman left and delivered the coal elsewhere, but early on Sunday morning this customer of yesterday knocked on the coalman's door and told him he could deliver the coal now, but he told the man that as Sunday was his Sabbath day, he didn't work that day, so he would deliver the coal during the week.

We were getting well into September, and I had only been able to pick up a few odd jobs and our savings were running out. The pigs had to be fed as they were our insurance for the future. The days up to Christmas week were critical and funds grew scarce. I was ready to give up, it wasn't the sort of existence we had planned, but Gladys said "Wait until after the New Year, times are bound to change". How right she proved to be. I draw a veil over those weeks and just before Christmas, we had paid the corn merchant, building Society, also the grocer and baker, etc., and it left us with very little. I went over to see Mrs. Pearce, who said "Whats wrong, you're down to-day". Well it all came out, we were broke. She was silent for a moment, then said "You have pigs up in the sty, see Mr. Porter and get his advice as to whether you have one fit to kill, if there is one, let me know and I will take orders for it". The outcome of that was Mr. Porter not only agreed to kill one if I would help scrape the bristles, but he would cut it up as well. I let Mrs. Pearce know and by the end of the week the whole pig was sold and the second pig was killed and all orders were delivered and paid for. It was a miracle, a week previous we hadn't two  $\frac{1}{2}$  pence to rub together and a day or so before Christmas we had money and to spare.

After that we never looked back, we were able to pay our way from then on. We had to be patient about the house. We saw the builder in the New year and he promised faithfully to proceed as soon as the roads were dried out a bit.

One of my first jobs came strangely enough from our own builder. He had a contract to build 4 detached villas at Huntsmans Corner just out of Chatham on the Maidstone side. They were to be Georgian type houses. He thought he would have a lawn at the back, each different and a gravelled terrace. He was talking to me about this one day and I asked him straight out, if he would supply the turf could I cut and lay it for him. He agreed for me to do this and then told me he had a large piece of grassland near Woodlands Road on the outskirts of Gillingham. I could go there and cut what I could, he would send a lorry to collect it as wanted. So I had two jobs in hand, one to clean the land at the back of the villas he was building and the other was cutting turf on the new piece of land for the new houses at Huntsmans corner. I had several requests for turf to lay small lawns in front of houses just and as I had permission from our builder to take what I wanted, but not in his time. This was O.K. by me and at 30/- per lawn I had a profitable side line while I was working for the builder. To buy turves 3 ft x 1 ft the price was £1. per hundred. Our luck had turned but there was no time to stand about. I was unable to do much on our own land as I was kept fairly busy jobbing gardening and at 1/- per hour I could soon earn 48/- per week, but some weeks it was a job to earn £1, but as the days grew longer, so did my working.

In the Spring my working days gradually altered and fell into a pattern. One day I was walking by the Nursery just down from us and I saw one of two brothers standing at the entrance (the other brother had been knocked down by a car as he was cycling home). I enquired after him, he said he was not in great shape at present, he was suffering from multiple bruising and concussion. It was going to be some time before he came back to work and he was wondering how he would get on alone, some of it would have to go unless he could find someone to carry on outside with digging and planting. I told him I was on the lookout for odd jobs and we came to an agreement. I would do what I could for three days Monday to Wednesday for 5/- per day if he would pay for my Insurance stamp. So that was settled, it suited me, and if we had rain I was found a job inside. I had never worked on a nursery before and I soon found the difference between this and private gardening. The days when I was not at the nursery were spent on other folks gardens.

I this particular time I heard that a Mr. Tyler in First Avenue wanted someone to tidy his garden, so I found his address and called to see him. He turned out to be a councillor for Gillingham Borough. He was at home, a quite pleasant chap, not a deal older than myself. After having a look around he asked me if I could tackle the job. I replied that I could and agreed to work for him from Thursday to Saturday each week until it was done.

At this time Gladys found time hung a bit heavy on her hands, so her sister suggested she should spend a bit of time at Sheerness with her and her husband. So it was arranged, and as we were expecting our first child it worked very well. By March the builders were busy on our bungalow. After a long lapse the walls were going up and window frames and door frames were in position. Given good weather the builder said we should be installed by June, and that was good news. Week-ends I worked on a chicken house as Gladys was set on keeping a few chicken for our own use. Instead of me going to Sheerness, they came to Wigmore for the day, and Ted, my brother-in-law was able to give me a hand on various jobs.

The lawns had been laid at Huntsman's corner and I had planted Lavender and Rosemary at the edge of each lawn by the gravel drives. The builder was well satisfied and had paid me for the work. That left me free after I had finished my job in First Avenue, but Mr. Tyler wanted me to continue for 1 day a week if I could spare the time. I didn't want to refuse as he and his wife had been good to me before so I went again. It was just to keep the place tidy. At that time they were very worried about their 4 year old son, each Spring he had trouble with his eyes. It had started from the time he was put outside in the garden in his pram and about the time the big early perennial poppy began to show, the huge red ones. One day it flashed through my mind, before the war I remembered someone telling my mother about a similar case. I was only a budding gardener then, but whoever it was talking said some folk are allergic to this particular poppy and it should not be grown in the garden where people are allergic to them. Now the Tylers had several clumps of this species and I spoke to them about it

and finally it was decided to eradicate them, as Mr. Tyler said something else could be planted in their place. It all sounds like hoodoo, but even the doctor had to agree it would have been the cause, for the boy never suffered again with his eyes in all the years I knew them.

When I had finished cleaning his garden I told Mr. Tyler I had a regular job in view. He expressed regret and said "When you go to-night, my wife and I would like to express our thanks in a practical way and it is something you will need shortly". It was the pram their boy was pushed around in, I suppose in conversation with Mrs. Tyler I had told her of our coming event, anyway it was thanks enough for what I had done.

The bungalow was ready for the roof by the end of April, the builder had certainly kept his word and things were moving. At the rear two men were digging a large hole, that was to be our main water supply in the future as we were not on the mains, also not eligible for gas or electric. It was oil lamps for us and coal for cooking and heating.

About this time the owners of the nursery asked me if I would work for them full time. Well, I did not want to be tied down so between us it was arranged I work from 8.a.m. till 4.p.m. Monday to Friday for 31/- per week, that left me free to do a job in the evenings and all day Saturday on the plot at home. I found out why there were heaps of stone outside the plot occupied from Mrs. Pearce. It appears that in the Spring when roads were negotiable a Foden truck would pick up all the stones one had at 4/6 per yard for road making. I also found that under the surface of the plot was all stone and nothing could be grown there until these were removed and plenty of manure was incorporated in the soil. That at first was a problem but was solved at a later date.

Gladys had settled down again and with the better weather approaching, and as we had purchased a few pullets, it was left to her to feed and water them and it was my job to clean their house of droppings each day. At the weekends I began to open up a trench preparatory to cultivating a plot of ground and removing the flint stone. It was hard going, a garden fork was hopeless, it was pick and shovel all the way. The only consolation was to see the flint stones filling the barrow. It took 8 barrow loads for a yard and if one could get 2 per day, you were lucky. In my reckoning it would take me a month to collect a yard.

During may it was arranged that Gladys should have the baby at Sheerness, it couldn't be at Wigmore, and at the moment there was no doctor at Rainham, and in no way was it convenient. The baby was due in June. Now I had to get the builder to get a move on, the plastering was finished, ceilings and walls. As far as I know these were the last houses to be done with cow hair, lime and lathes. Today it is plasterboard on the ceilings. The well and filter and cess-pit were completed, drains were ready for inspection. Inside two fireplaces in bedrooms and one in the sitting room and the range to be transferred from the hut to the kitchen, when that was done and all fittings to sink, bath, etc, it just remained for the painting to be done.

At the nursery all was going well, the brother who had had the accident was back at work, but I am getting ahead of myself. Before

I went to the nursery full time I had a job to do in Woodside. A mother and son bought a house there and I was recommended to them to fix their garden. I was still charging 1/- per hour. Well, I arrived on the Monday, but the mother was peculiar, she wanted a certain thing done, but by the time I got started on this she would change her mind and half-way through the morning she would bring out coffee and biscuits and I would have to sit down with her. She would read from tracts to me and I discovered she was a Jehovah's Witness and one day she brought out three books and asked me if I would buy them. I was between the devil and the deep blue sea. I didn't want the books but I did want the work. She said I could pay for them when I had finished the job, the money didn't matter just yet, but at the end of the first week I paid her a £1. out of what I owed which was £3. It may have been dishonest, but during the two or three weeks I was there I saw to it that the books were paid for but not by me. I soon finished what I had to do there. Jehovah's Witness was not for me, there were 3 familys in Wigmore who Gladys and I knew well and we saw the harm that was being done in all three homes. In one case the wife left her home and two children, in another the husband left his wife and in the last case the old man's daughter was spending his money to help foster the Jehovah's Witness Branch in Chatham.

To get back to material matters, by June our bungalow was ready for occupation and we were just awaiting the building inspector's permission to take over. He arrived, looked it over, and believe me he found fault with a downpipe from the bathroom, that had to be put right first, it wasn't exactly as he required it and had to be rectified before we could move in. That put us back another week. Gladys had to be taken to Sheerness for the event and Alice and Ted arrived with the car for transport. We loaded all we thought would be needed, and as the roads were rough with ruts Gladys and I decided to walk to the main road and avoid the bumps. We were taking no chances just then and I arranged to go down to Sheerness at the week-end.

As soon as we were allowed into the bungalow we transported our furniture from the Pearce's. The two sons of Porters soon made short work of carrying in the furniture. They were not working in the dockyard on the Saturday, so were at home. Most of the furniture was put into the from room, this being the biggest room, the bed went straight into our bedroom and the table in the living room. I won't bore you with details of floor cleaning, etc., enough to say it couldn't all be put right before Gladys came home again.

Our son was born at 10.30 p.m. at the week-end and everything from then on went well from June 12th, 1927 and it was towards the end of June Gladys was brought home again. It was great to be together again and in a home of our own. We named our bungalow "Tweenwoods". Many enquired why it was so called, was it because it was between woods, and indeed it was, between Harwood and Woodward. We soon settled down, Gladys had her hands full with Douglas, the home and all that entails, and of course the chicken. Not content with that Gladys wanted a hobby and seeing an advert in the paper one day started us off. Wanted, Matlock Mills require any amount of Angora wool, plucked, clipped or matted, best prices paid per pound. We wrote for details

enclosed a S.A.E. for quick reply, it came within a day or two giving details of their requirements and prices and that set us off. The first job was to get a buck and two does to start on the venture. We bought a pedigree buck from a rabbit farm near Dartford, also two does, all with registered pedigrees. Now the next thing was the making of hutches and our old hut that had proved its worth was to be home for the rabbits and their progeny, if we were lucky. Nearly all my spare time was taken up for a while making hutches, then a pedestal with a good platform on which Glad could put the rabbits for brushing and combing them. Like all animals they had to handled often to get to know them and they you. Hutches were made 2 ft. front to back, 2'6" long and 2 ft. high. The floor was  $\frac{1}{2}$ " wire netting to let the droppings, etc through and under the floor a waterproofed tray was installed. These could be removed every day and fresh sawdust spread over. It sounds a bit of a palaver, but it was a quick way to keep them clean.

With the long evenings we were able to do a bit of stoning, next morning up and out doing another job for someone until around 7.a.m., then it was breakfast and down to the nursery until 4.p.m. This was the general pattern until the end of 1927. As the evenings drew in so we had time to recover from our labours.

That Autumn we sold the sow which we had bought earlier in the year. A butcher from Rainham bought it dead weight, that means he had it killed and hung for a day to let it drain. I went down before it was weighed to see for myself, as the butcher said we were new to each other at that time, but he hoped we would do business together in the future, which we did. I also did business with the Rainham Co-op during the next few years.

During the Summer of 1927 Gladys bought several pullets to come into lay later, also she invested in a cockerell, a Rhode Island Red, in preparation for the Spring of 1928. This was entirely Glad's venture, whatever she made was all hers, all I did was to keep them clean. Perches and dropping boards were disinfected each week to keep down Red mite, which could upset a whole house of birds if not destroyed.

Douglas was growing fast and he was put on Glaxo for some reason and thrived on it. I was allowed to change and bath him periodically, as Gladys said it was as well to be able to take over. It wasn't all work for us, we had been here long enough to have someone in to keep an eye on Douglas if we were out. This particular night, Miss Pearce, daughter of the folk over on the Wigmore Road, offered to come in as we were off to an Old Tyme Dance. It was to be fancy dress and Gladys and I were going as the Pearly King and Queen. It had been nights of work sewing on pearl buttons, but it had its reward. We were awarded 1st prize for originality, worth the trouble.

We had moved quite a lot of the chalk which was piled up on the ground by the cesspit from which it had been excavated, also from the well, our source of water for the bungalow, but as it became too wet to wheel away it was left until drier weather in the Spring. When it did become drier Glad and I made short work of the pile left over from the previous year. Glads time after that was taken up grooming the Angoras preparatory to plucking and clipping. By the Autumn Gladys had over 2 lbs. in weight of good clean wool and it was duly despatched to the mill up North and in a few days we received a cheque for just over £6.

We also received a letter requesting us not to send any more until we heard from them again. We thought perhaps as quite a few Angora farms had sprung up, the mill couldn't cope with small amounts. Be that as it may, we decided to get rid of all the rabbits but one, that was the one and only buck we ever bought. He was treated as a pet and had a free run about the place, sometimes he would travel quite a distance but at the first sign of danger he made for home. He lived for a few years like this and the people around used to look for him when passing.

Going out to work each day only gave me a few hours during Spring and Summer to do extra work away from home, there was no dissent there, it was understood whatever we did was for our own good. Thank goodness we neither of us had the inclination to go out drinking, but we did not set ourselves above those who did, for so many it was relaxation at the week-end.

I think Mr. Pearce had the right idea about retirement providing one had the means. Now he had a plot of woodland, he cleared it a bit at a time taking out old tree stumps and running chicken on it. He said he was quite happy on a fine day to sit on a log and look about him at all the work that could be done, but knowing that he need not do it. He was over 70 years of age at that time. As a Master Mariner he could tell many tales about sailing ships and the countries he had been to, it was a pleasure to listen to his yarns.

The Church we adopted when we first went to Wigmore was in Woodside, one part of the estate that had a made up road and half of the new Bredhurst Road leading into it, we were in the part not made up. The curate in charge was the Rev. Maclenahan and what a splendid chap he was in all ways. I learned more about him later on when I fixed up his garden for him. He was fairly well off, apart from his living, and one day he called on us, we all had tea together, and during the conversation I mentioned the time I sowed what I thought was beetroot. He suddenly said "That has given me the text for my sermon for the Harvest service, As ye sow, so shall ye reap". A garden party was held in the Church grounds each year and Gladys and I helped in various ways until we were known better.

To get back to our own affairs, we, that is Gladys and I had decided to get rid of the rabbits. We passed the word around and one day we had a caller who was willing to buy them and when he saw the hutches he made us an offer for those, so in one fell swoop we sold all but Andrew, and as I mentioned we gave him the freedom of "Tweenwoods". We concentrated on poultry after this until 1940 when we moved to Box in Wiltshire. You will hear more of that later, but back to 1928. Down at the nursery three houses were being erected for cucumbers, also a hot water system had to be installed. That meant a lot of hard graft. When I first started at the nursery they had a pony and cart to take their produce to town, but soon after I arrived they bought a Morris van. As I could drive it was my job to take the elder of the two brothers into town to sell whatever they had. It was a good move on their part, it was quicker and a bigger load could be carried. This went on for a time until this brother thought he would like to learn to drive, then he could do the two jobs, drive and sell. For an hour or two each day I took him out on the road. In those days there was no such thing as a

learner driver, and far less traffic on the roads. All went well for a few days and he said he would take over. We were going down a lane when just in front of us a horse and cart pulled out of a gateway. My driver panicked and we found ourselves pushing the cart from behind. The carter stopped and came round to us and what he said is best forgotten. All I know is my mate forgot all about driving and we carried on as before until this brother began to be ill at times, so I was given the task of selling the goods I carried, in fact after a spell they admitted I was getting more for the produce than they ever expected. I don't take all the credit for a good season on the round, because the produce wasn't sold to the shops unless it was good.

A fresh hand was taken on to help out as the brother who had been ill was no better, and somehow or other he took my place, I was taken off driving and helped more in the houses. The brother grew worse and eventually passed on. The atmosphere at the Nursery grew a bit tense, so when a chance came my way to take over a cream round at a dairy, I took it. The dairy was almost opposite the nursery. My wages were £3. per week 5.a.m. to around 2.p.m., This was £1.10s. more than I was getting. I found I had more time at home to cultivate our own plot.

By this time we had bought two cars, one an open tourer and our first trip was to Guildford taking a friend of ours to see his parents. On the way back we had a continuous clicking at the back of the car, I shall never know how we got home. When I took the car into a garage, after investigation it was found that a tooth had broken off on the crown wheel. We had it repaired and the chap we took to Guildford said he would like to buy the car, he was setting up as a builder and it would do for transport. We made a fair deal and I was not sorry to see it go. Soon after this we were given the chance to buy a Morris 10, it was almost new, only 3,000 miles on the clock. It belonged to a valet, his boss was going abroad and he was going with him. All he wanted was £50. in cash and the next night it was delivered to us. This meant building a garage and Glad even helped me with that.

When Gladys was almost 5 years of age Gladys tried to find a school for him and eventually through a ruse we managed to get him into a school at Hempstead, about a mile from our bungalow. When he left that school, through other friends Gladys got him into Napier Road school where he took up woodwork. His hobby was making models of aircraft and large ships. There we must leave him while I tell you of our leisure time joining in Fetes and Social events.

By now we had begun breeding budgerigars, also canaries and just outside our kitchen we built an aviary. There budgies and canaries flew together. The budgies nested in boxes in their sleeping quarters and the canaries in any odd corner, it was interesting watching them build. Gladys would put odd bits of wool, moss, fluff, etc. on the floor and out of that the birds would extract what they wanted for the nest. It was a sight to see them skuffle around the next to keep it even. When finished it was a perfect nest, a wonderful piece of building and done almost entirely with the beak. We began breeding with a Norwich cock and hen and after the first birds were hatched they were allowed to stay. In the following Spring it was only a guess who

was father or mother. We couldn't at first find which was male or female until they began to sing and by the next Spring we marked the songsters ready for the next Church fete as we intended giving them as prizes. Gladys had to help me with the making of cages for them as my left arm was never very good. Anyway, the birds were a great success. We gave one for the highest score at darts and one for the highest score at bean bags, and believe me I think the birds enjoyed it too as they kept up a chorus until evening came.

In November, 1934 Brian our second son was born, so far as Gladys was concerned it put a stop to anything outside for the time being. Everything by now was under control, Douglas was by now a real schoolboy, the only thing he disliked was getting to school, but once there he got down to whatever he had to do, this we heard from his teacher.

Now I would like to go back for a year or two and tell you about my first visit to Bath. My wife, Gladys, was born in Queenwood Avenue and Christened at St. Stephens Church, Lansdown., and went to Snow Hill school for her early schooling. One day after we had settled in our new home my wife was recalling the time she spent in Bath and said "Do you know, Cis, you will have to visit Somerset one of these days, you would love it and the countryside around". Just at that time it seemed just a pipe dream as we were then short of cash. After that we put the idea out of our minds until Glad's sister Alice one day said "How would you like a week-end in Bath, it won't be until next year, perhaps at Easter". Well, the following year it was arranged we would go down on Good Friday and stay until Easter Monday, have bed and breakfast, so we could be out all day. It was a long till Easter week, we had another Winter to come first and just before Good Friday we had a few snappy frosts. The day we started off for Bath was really cold. Ted, Alice's husband took the road via Oxford to Bath, said it was a more interesting run. Well, when we reached Oxford it began to snow and it lasted until we left the Cotswolds behind. By the time we reached Bath it was clear, the Hotel could put us up, but we must be out in the mornings by 9.a.m. and when we came in at night it was straight to our rooms. The days soon passed and in that short time we visited Nunney Castle, Ted's cousin was Lord of the Manor at that time, then to Batcombe where other members of their family had connections, and the next day it was Cheddar and Wookey Hole. On Monday before we left Bath we looked over a house at Bathwick near the Canal, that used to be the home of the Woodwards. It was for sale for £200., how I wished we could have bought it, but in those days it was a lot of money to lay out. We also visited Butt Ash another place at the top of Lyncombe Hill where Gladys's people used to live. From there we made for home again, but during the Summer we were able to pay another visit. Then I told Gladys that one day we were going to live there and the years 1940 - 1945 made it possible. 1935 saw us back again, but this time we camped at Batheaston in a small field opposite the George & Dragon on the banks of the Avon. We took along tents, blankets and cooking equipment. Sleeping bags were not heard of then. The weather was kind and we really caught the camping bug. We went somewhere different every day. Douglas spent a lot of time fishing but he never caught anything. It was ones work to stop Brian falling into the water. On the way home

after a real good holiday Ted called in at Alresford as Gladys used to work there during the first world war. It catered for wounded Tommies and was later bought by the Mothers Union for a home and offices. Now its called "Mary Sumners House".

In the months between holidays work went on in the garden. Friends came over if we went away to look after the livestock. In June 1936 our garden was looking good, we had annual stocks with spikes of double flowers just beginning to open. The beds under the windows at the front had just got established and in the kitchen garden everything was flourishing. I mention this because we were really proud of it.

On this Sunday, we had finished tea and as it was very warm we walked around the garden again before Brian went to bed. There hadn't been any breeze all day and without warning it began to gust and from the East ominous clouds appeared. We moved into the house and none too soon, it turned into a tornado, trees were bending, cracking and crashing, incessant thunder and lightening with hail the like of which I had never seen before. Outside we had a Shumack tree (Stags Horn) its common name. Gladys was holding on to the curtains and Brian holding on to her skirt. I was at the other window trying to hold the curtains across, but it passed as suddenly as it had arrived. All we could smell was onions and when we went outside everything was gone, and I mean gone. It was as bare as a ploughed field, all had been cut to pieces by the hail. In the front pieces of ice were stuck in the bark of the Shumack tree, flat but thin like a shale of rock and on the lawn were hailstones much bigger than the coloured marbles we used to buy. One could only sow some of the seeds one had left and hope for the best. This storm was about one mile wide and we were more or less in the centre of it. One cannot describe the chaos it caused. A greenhouse just below us was a shambles and folk returning home after evening service were caught on the open road with no hedgerow to shelter them. We heard of one girl taken to the doctor for shock and bruises. What it must be like abroad when they have these tornado's is past our comprehension. The only thing for us to do was to repair any damage done and plant all that was possible.

I am not sure but I think it was the following Winter we had frost and snow, we had what is called black ice, it was dangerous to go out, the roads were covered with it and the only way to travel by car was to have chains fitted to the wheels. After the frost came snow and one morning I drew the curtains in the kitchen and believe me, there was a wall of snow some 12 ft. or more where it had drifted up the North wall of the bungalow and when I opened the back door there were drifts of snow 2 ft. to 3 ft. deep. The amazing thing was, the canaries were looking for food and drink, I don't know what I expected to find.

After that Winter things seemed to get back to normal, but for one thing I had been doing a good deal of odd jobs for a man who in his spare time kept cows. His daughter helped to tend them with a young cowman., also pigs tended by a lad of 15 or so. It was an awful job to get paid for the work I did and it mounted up until I said it had gone on long enough. J.C. hated paying out in cash so I suggested he paid me by letting me have manure to the value. He agreed and lent me a horse and

cart and the lad to drive it. In the end I had a large heap of manure for use in the Winter.

It was in the middle 30's that an order came out the all pigstys must have solid floors and also a drain connected to the main sewer. This I could not do as we had our own cesspit, so we had to get rid of our pigs. They had been useful to us but we really did not mind. I had plenty of work to do working for others and on our own plot, but each year we have a fortnight's holiday. In 1937 we travelled to Scotland with Alice and Ted. We did it in easy stages, first camp St. Neots, second Hatfield in Yorkshire, third Dryburgh Abbey and the fourth stop was at Stirling where it was too wet to camp and we finished up on the floor of a garage. Hotels were full and the last lap took us to a small village, Spitalfields, Nr. Blair Gowrie. It was here that an ex Royal Marine who served with Ted for years, ran a bus service, and we stayed there for one week, Alice and Ted at the house and Gladys and myself and the two boys slept in a caravan. We had to join the family for meals and a nightcap before retiring for the night. It was a lovely holiday until our last day but one. Bill Armstrong suggested we made an early start and he would show us as much as possible in a day out. We made a start by 6 o'clock, it looked like being a glorious day. We visited places like Glencoe, Fort William, Loch Ness, Loch Tay, Balmoral and the little church the Royal family attend when in residence. Loch Tay was the last place for us and coming to Killing corner at one end of the loch we ran into a bank of thick mist and Bill missed the road. The next thing we knew we had struck a stone wall, bounced off and hit the other side, from there the car careered back to the other side again and came to a halt. We had done the journey so far in two cars, Bill Armstrong, his wife, myself and Douglas at the time of the crash., Alice, Ted, Gladys and Brian in the second car. The real casualty was Bill's wife, she had hurt her thigh and we could not do anything about it as the nearest place was Dunkeld about 30 miles further on. Bill and Ted fixed up this car as a temporary measure and we set out for home at a snails pace and arrived back at Spitalfields at 5 o'clock in the morning. We had been out just on 24 hours. Mrs. Armstrong suggested we all went to bed after a snack. Douglas was none the worse for the bang on the head he received. Bill said he would run his wife into hospital for a check up. Later on when we were awake, Bill had taken his wife to hospital and on his return we learned the verdict was bed for his wife, she had an injury to her pelvis. A sad end to a wonderful holiday. The next day saw us on our way home and routine jobs.

Earlier in the year we had purchased a piece of ground on the Rainham - Bredhurst Road, opposite the Wigmore estate, for around £90. It was woodland 500 ft. in depth and approx. 120 ft. frontage. We had the brushwood cut and sold for pea sticks and bean rods, we made a £1 or £2. out of that. Later I was asked if I would sell for building, so Gladys and I agreed to sell it for £250. The offer was accepted and so we parted with it. Soon after this we were offered a sum for a plot of our ground by a naval chap. He turned out to be a diver in the navy, he was soon to retire and wanted to build a house on the plot. He bought a 40ft x 200ft. plot and that left quite a large three cornered piece with quite a lot of frontage. This chap also offered a good price to include it with the piece he already had, so for an extra £10. making

£65. in all. Glad and I decided it was a deal and so it changed hands.

1938 was not a settled year as Hitler was gaining power in Germany and our folk were not too sure what would happen, so the Government appealed for volunteers to join the special Constabulary. Quite a few in Wigmore joined and we had special classes once a week as to what our duties would be in the event of war. It was a tame occupation, for company we were sent out in two's, just to get used to patrol routine. Those not on patrol stayed behind for instructions on Police procedure. In 1939 it was report each week, otherwise it was carry on normally until we were told different. That year we went down to the West again for our holiday. We took with us a chap whom we had got to know well when I was working at the nursery. His mother had recently died, so Glad took him under her wing. We camped as usual, but we made our headquarters at the George where we had camped 3 years before. From there we took him to the many places we had seen when Alice and Ted had taken us around. We spent a glorious week and would have carried on but for the news. It seemed war was inevitable and Glad was anxious to get home. We had a good look around Bath that night. We all stood by the Parade Gardens admiring the floodlit Sham Castle and as we gazed it was cut off, but what we didn't know was that Poland had been invaded. Next day the news was in the papers. So it was home for us right away. We arrived home in the early afternoon to hear that schoolchildren were to be evacuated to Herne Bay and parents would be told when and where to meet. In a day or so we met up with the rest of the schools at Gillingham Station. It was a very moving scene, but I think it was the parents who felt the parting most. I was reminded of the day I said "Goodby" to my folk at home in 1914. Prayers were said before the children entrained and soon they were off. Douglas had a stamped addressed envelope to send us his address, and if we could we would be down to see him at the week-end. When we heard from Douglas it was to say they were at a farmhouse in Sturry a mile or two outside Canterbury and they were settling down. We went down each week-end to see him and take him out for a break, but the weather was like the new often clouded over. Almost the last visit to him was in a fog, we were about a mile out of Sittingbourne when we had a puncture. We had to pull into the side of the road and by that time it was dark. People in cars travelled with hooded lights, someone brushed by our car and moved the hood over our offside lamp and instead of it keeping the light down it was facing skywards, showing a yellow beam of light into the sky like a searchlight. Believe me it was a nightmare changing that wheel, but at last we made for home, but not to rest as the sirens went every few hours for a suspected raid. The sound of sirens at night was uncanny. By the next week-end, however, Douglas was back home again, the South East coast was thought to be unsafe. The children returned to school for one week only and evacuation began all over again, this time saw them in Resolven, Wales. There we could not get to him so it was letters only for the time being. Gladys was sure he was not happy there but there was little we could do about it at that time. Gladys and I agreed that if we could get a job in the West country, at least we would be nearer to the boy. My wife had a cousin at Kingsdown just outside Bathford. We wrote to her and asked if she would keep her eyes open for any job that might suit me, until then we would hang on. It was a long time before we heard again

around about the end of May, 1940.

In the meantime I had to do my stint in the Specials. One or two incidents occurred which I thought were humorous, such as armbands, during the Winter nights everything was blacked out and in the dark the armbands glowed with a greenish light. If they happened to get damp it was a different proposition, one could be located yards away, the aroma from them was nauseating especially in an enclosed space. If one was returning home after a spell of duty the first thing to do was to remove the armband and leave it outside. They were soon discarded for a disc about the size of half-a-crown to wear in the lapel of ones coat. They were quite effective as regards being able to miss colliding with other pedestrians out walking.

One evening I was out patrolling with another chap, a dark and wet night it was too. We had almost reached the road we were to patrol when we heard voices. It was a man and his wife just making for the Smallholders Club for a drink. The conversation went something like this:- "How much farther have we got to go?" the man replied "Can't be much farther now", then his wife said "I shall be glad when we get there I keep slipping off the pavement", he replied "Keep one foot in the gutter that will help", she said "Its alright for you, you have fences to help you". Just then they came to the corner where we were sheltering from the rain, the first thing they saw were the two luminous discs my colleague was wearing. I really thought the man and his wife would have a fit. She yelled out "It's the devil", what have I done". The man was speechless, so we broke the spell by asking them where they were making for. They replied "The Smallholders", so we helped them over and continued on our beat.

Work meanwhile went on, it was a nerve-wracking job early morning and until it got light one had to guess where to turn off. One day driving along Watling Street there was a ground fog, it was really uncanny, we were in a thick mist and all one could see was head bobbing up and down and that was the only guide as to where the pavement was. I only had that one experience of this, but I have met others who have had the same experience. Winter changed into Spring and the war was spreading. On the coast there were skirmishes with aircraft, altogether it was disturbing.

My wife and I had forgotten all about moving until a later arrived from Ada, Gladys's cousin and enclosed was a cutting from an advert in the Bath paper Chauffeur-gardener wanted and the address to write to was "Heleigh House, Middle Hill, Box". After my wife and I had discussed the matter, I sat down and wrote for further particulars and in due course received a reply, would I meet them on a certain day, the fare was enclosed and times of trains. I then made arrangements to meet Mr. Skrine on a certain day on Box Station at 1.p.m. There was nothing more I could do until I had met Mr. Skrine and found out from him whether I was to be employed by him or not. At last the day arrived, I was dead on time and as I stepped off the train a very tall gentleman came up and asked my name. In the next breath he said we must hurry as he had to be in Corsham by 3 o'clock. The house was about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the station and he soon stated the conditions of the job. The wages would be £3.10s. per week, rent and rates free in a brand new cottage he was having built, to be chauffeur when wanted, to look after the garden at other times and to keep his boots and shoes clean. Apart from that my wife would be expected to give the cook a hand for 2 hours per day. After we had

everything, he said "You will do me fine and if your wife agrees we will expect you in a fortnight, that will be the end of June". I promised to let him know our arrangements as soon as possible. The outcome was that Glad and I would accept their terms and would arrive by car around 6 o'clock on the Monday following. That meant getting our household goods removed. We were lucky as Pickfords were looking for a load near Bath and they could do both jobs in two days.

After our goods had left we arranged with a Mrs. Rombold to rent the bungalow for 15/- per week until such time as it was sold. We could not according to law sell it with a sitting tenant, so we left it in the hands of an estate agent who would advise us if anything turned up. It was sold to a dairyman about two years or so afterwards, he was living in Gillingham but wanted the bungalow to live in. The folk who were renting the bungalow moved into his house so altogether it was a good move on his part. Later on he died and the bungalow was sold for £2,000.

Now to get back to our trip to Box to begin a new life in new surroundings. There were no signposts so we had to rely on memory to get us there. All went well until we came to Kings Clere corner, the camber of the road sloped the wrong way, the road was wet from a recent shower and suddenly we found ourselves doing a right about turn and we were going back. We pulled up under a hedge and a head popped up and a voice said "You be the third one just lately, but council say they are going to alter that bend". We lost a wheel disc, goodness knows where it went, we tried to find it but failed. We turned round and made for Box again and arrived at Glad's cousins' around 6.0'clock and we should have been at Heighley House. Anyway we had a quick cup of tea and off we went to meet our new employers. I am afraid we did not take to Mrs. Skrine, but as Gladys said we would have to do the job we had come to do and make the most of it. Brian was getting on for 6 years of age and had not been to school as yet, so it was to Box school he went for a time. We had applied to have Douglas home, as now we were in a so called safe area.

To get back to ourselves, however, our goods had arrived during the day and were stored, some in the cottage, and as the rooms were not ready for occupation as yet, arrangements had been made for us to stay in the house for the time being. Our mattress had been put on the floor and our bedding dumped on top for us to make up ourselves. Gladys took a dim view of that and it did not help our opinion of Mrs. Skrine the short while we had been here. If it had not been for the consideration shown by Mr. Skrine I really think we should have gone long before we did. We stayed on for three long years. Brian was settled at Box school and took to it like a duck to water, also Douglas was coming home from Wales. Gladys went to see Mr. Swan the headmaster at Box school. He was ready to take him in and when he read his school report he said "In two weeks time we are holding an exams for Bath Technical School", so would we like him to put Douglas in for it, Gladys said "Yes", so Douglas did his schooling at Box chiefly in Mr. Swan's office. He was the only boy to sit for the exam and when results came through it was to say he had come through and was awarded a place in Bath Technical College.

He used to travel back and forth by train from Box and he palled up with another lad going to a school in Bath. After losing sight of each other after the 1940 war they were eventually brought together again by the efforts of Gladys around the late 1950's and they are still pals in 1978 when this was written.

Mr. Skrine had a constant companion, a Corgi, and no-one could get near his master until he had been warned. After a command from his master he would lay down at his feet and wait until, whoever it was turned away, and then settle down again by the door of the workshop. Mr. Skrine by the way, was no mean carpenter, that was his hobby, and if at home one looked for the corgi and there sure enough one would find his master. He once said to me "Harwood, I don't own that dog, he owns me". By the way the Skrins I believe had interests in Ceylon under the name of Bosanquet & Skrine, tea planters. The family was well known around Bath, especially at Warleigh Manor, the gamekeeper there was a cousin to Winston Churchill, a real down to earth country chap.

Our first Winter passed off fairly well, my boss said he was well satisfied, but his wife took a lot of pleasing. It was, just do this or just do that, until one day I really got fed up, and when she came out and said "just do so and so", never "can you spare the time", I told her she had a just complaint, she said "What do you mean?" I told her it was always "just do this" and just jobs were never done, did she take me for a coolie. At any rate it put a stop to her just jobs.

My next encounter with her came during that Winter. As a good chauffeur should, I stood by the car door waiting for her to get in as I had done many times before, when she had sat down, she held up her arms for me to put the rug around her. I did so far and then left her to finish off the job, she said "Aren't you forgetting something Harwood?" I replied "No! as when we move off the first thing you do is to grab the rug and then do it yourself, why can't you always do it?". Oh! Yes, she was furious and I drove to Bath and back again for lunch and she hadn't spoken a word. The next time we went to Bath she brought out a pair of overshoes and when she was seated, handed me the shoes and held out her foot for me to put them on. I simply handed the boots back and told her "The days of slavery are past, I'm sure you can manage to put them on". I also told her she had two good hands and I only had one good one and if she was not satisfied with me, she only had to say and I would make way for someone else. I think it did a bit of good, at any rate she was more amenable after she had slept on it. I had been transferred from Gillingham Specials to the Box contingency and that involved a long beat in the country with very few houses. My beat was from the Northey Arms Hotel to Shockerwick Bridge and on to Kingsdown and Ashley and back home.

It was on one of these beats I heard news of my late boss at Hull. At the side of the Northey Arms and a garage was a plot of land where a chap we used to call Johnny had a transport cafe. In there one night I was drinking a mug of cocoa when a driver walked in for a snack. I remarked to him on the weather and asked him if he had far to travel. His reply was "I expect I am going to a place you have never heard of Harston, in Cambridgeshire". I then asked him if Bert Harvey was still there, the chap who ran the Varsity coaches to London, I used to work for him myself years ago. He then told me that Harvey had lost a lot

of money and had been working as a jobbing carpenter, but had passed on some time ago. We had a long chat before he went on his way and I made for home and was able to tell Gladys quite a lot of new.

Before the Spring I had to give us the Specials as I could not walk the distances expected of me after a days work. In short I was invalided out and excused all duties.

In 1941 we had to get rid of our car, up to now we had housed it in an outhouse, but the daughter of the house was coming home to get married and wanted to garage her car at home. We tried to garage it at the Northey garages, run by a Mr. Freeman, but he had no more room @ 3/- per week. The word soon got round that I was getting rid of the car and a young chap offered to buy it if the price wasn't too high. The price was £90 but the electric pump needed attention before he could drive it away. He jumped at the chance and after working on it for a few hours, he paid up and drove away. We hadn't any means to get petrol even if we had been able to get the garage space for it. My boss said I could use the Morris Eight if it was wanted for any valid reason. The Austin 16 was only used for special journeys, they had a special permit as the boss was in the Home Guards and therefore he was able to visit his mother at Horsley, Gloucestershire. She was a grand old lady, not a bit like Mrs. Skrine who I worked for. I remember taking Mr. & Mrs. Skrine over there one afternoon, before we went the boss said he wanted to be back by 7 o'clock, that meant leaving at 6 o'clock. I was round at the front door at 6 o'clock sharp, but Mrs. Skrine did not appear until 6.20 p.m. The boss said to me "Get me home by 7 o'clock", "Right, Sir!" I said, so when we got out of Nailsworth I put my foot down. A little later something touched me in the back and a voice said "Don't you think you are going too fast?" I said "No, Madam, its the closeness of the hedges makes it appear so". No more was said, but as they alighted from the car, Madam flounced inside. The boss said "Thank you Harwood, and gave me £1. as the clock struck seven. After that within reason, I was more able to look after myself, but Mrs. Skrine tried to get back through Gladys and wanted her to do extra, such as scrubbing floors, etc. That brought us together for another clash.

I went down next morning before they went into breakfast and handed her my written notice, but later on she caught me and said "Forget about the extra work, I've arranged for someone to come in to do it, but perhaps Mrs. Harwood would come in if at any time they are pushed". She never gave up trying until Gladys had to go to the Doctors as she was losing weight. He put her on a diet but it didn't do any good. In the end she was sent to the Royal United Hospital, there she was given various tests, but after a month, she was sent home and there were no results from the tests. A few days later Mr. Skrine saw Gladys and said he would like her to see a Specialist and if she was agreeable he would make the appointment for him to see her at the Cottage. That was arranged and in the end it was back to hospital for an operation to remove gallstones. The operation was successful. During that time Miss Pearce was staying with her sister at Claverton Down. We contacted her and she was willing to look after us until Gladys was fit again for duty.

At that time Douglas decided to have measles, altogether it was a hectic period for all of us and we were thankful when it was all over.

Unbeknown to me, the boss had been storing petrol, he had 5 or 6 5 gallon drums full. He was now getting nervous as the raids from the Germans got closer. He told me about the drums and could I help him to dig a pit in the garden to bury them. Between us we dug deep enough to house them and covered them with over 2 ft. of soil so that we could plant on top of them. The drums were protected by old floor covering. I suppose they stayed covered until after the war was over. As we left there in 1943 I wouldn't know. It was Mrs. Skrine who brought things to a head. When my wife was on the road to recovery, she said "Could not Mrs. Harwood resume her duties as before?". I told her it rested with the doctor, but when and if my wife returned there was to be no extra work put upon her, I myself would have a word with Mr. Skrine. Now, as I have said before he was a perfect gentleman. He listened to what I had to say and then replied "Yes, I know that Mrs. Skrine is a difficult person but I hope you won't be leaving us". I replied that it depended on Mrs. Skrine. For a week or so it was quiet and then she tried to get back on me through the garden. Each year I had grown tomatoes in a cold greenhouse and this year I had a wonderful crop. Out of these I had selected three tomato plants and marked them by tying a piece of paper to those plants. I told both Mr. & Mrs. Skrine what I had done to prevent them being touched. All was well for a time, but I went to pick a few for the house one morning and there wasn't a ripe tomato there, they had all been picked including the ones I had marked for seed. I made my way down to the house and asked to see Mrs. Skrine, when she came I asked her why she had picked the ones saved for seed, she said "If a want a tomato I have the right to pick them". My reply was "Madam, in the near future you will be sorry for what you have done, I have had just about enough of this unpleasantness". I turned away and left her standing there. At night Gladys and I discussed the situation and decided to move on, but not before we found somewhere to work and live.

On Sundays it was our custom to either take a bus ride or a good walk and one Sunday found us in Victoria Park in Bath. We were standing above the bowling green, we gazed across to what we found out afterwards was Twerton Round Hill. As we looked at the scene, Gladys said "I think that is where I would like to live, that was Southdown. At other times we had tea with Glads cousin at Kingsdown, anything to get away from Heleigh House.

We attended the church at Box and the Rev. A Moltin was the Vicar. We got to know him well and Douglas sometimes went around with his son Basil. All through the war the church bells were only to be rung if invasion was imminent, but when the tables were turned and we took our forces over and landed on French soil, which proved the turning point of the war, the Church bells were allowed to ring out again. On that first Sunday morning we were walking over the meadows to Box church, the sun was shining and I think Gladys felt the same as myself, how beautiful to hear them peal out their message of good will, it made one feel better. We had both of us been through two wars and I believe that is the time when all turn to God to protect them from harm and prosper them in their daily lives, and afterwards almost forget Him.

It was soon after that Sunday we asked Douglas to bring home a Bath evening paper when he came from school. Just about then it was no trouble to buy a house, for £900 or about one could get a 3 bedroomed house with kitchen, front room and the usual offices, it was just such a one we wanted. On the Saturday afternoon I went to look at a couple, one was in an unmade road (Sladebrook Road) and the other was in the Hollow, only a stones throw away from each other, with Blackmore & Langdons nursery between the two roads. The one in the Hollow was in fair condition, but the owner would keep stressing the fine view one had, it put me off making an offer. I went on to "Lynstan", Sladebrook Road, and after seeing over it said my wife would have to be consulted, but if they were looking for a quick sale not to worry. I would go back and look over the one I had just seen, I also explained I would have to give a month's notice where I worked. They agreed to hang on until I was free, in any case they were moving into the gents mother's house further up the road on the opposite side. If we wanted to move anything it could be stored in the house until we took up residence. Before that I said my wife would like to see the house for sure before deciding and it was arranged that we would come over on the following Sunday. In the meantime I would see about giving in my notice. Sunday came round and we all went to see the place. As I expected Gladys liked the position and we arranged as soon as contracts were signed we would put the money down.

On the following day I gave in my notice to Mrs. Skrine. To say she was surprised was to put it mildly, she had obviously told the boss for later in the day he came to me and said how sorry he was we were leaving, had we anywhere to go. I told him, yes, we had bought a house at Southdown. We had given a month's notice, perhaps he could find another gardener before then, if so we would move out sooner. Nothing more was said over the next two or three weeks and each Saturday we moved a few things and took them over to our new house. Next week we did the same, and the following week we loaded the remainder of our goods, and it only cost us just over £1. to move all told. When I handed in the cottage keys to Mr. Skrine who was in his workshop, he said "Why the keys?" I said "My notice expires today and I would like to say "Goodbye" Sir". He then said "But Harwood, Mrs. Skrine told me you were staying on". That was Mrs. Skrine's mistake, I gave her a written notice but I suppose she must have forgotten to give it to you".

Gladys and I put the house straight during that week and I went over to Stratton House, Park Lane to see about a job as maintenance man, and that included the grounds. The wages were £4. per week, a break at 11 a.m. for lunch, dinner at 1 o'clock and tea around 4 o'clock. These meals were extras, but as the Matron was away nothing was settled about starting.

Now the following week a letter arrived, posted in Box, and when I opening and read it, I nearly fell flat. Glad said "What have you got now?" I passed it over to her to read and she was just as surprised as I was. The gist of it was, would I take over my old duties if my fare was paid, and I could have my lunch and tea there in the house. Well I wrote back to the Skrine's by return and told them I was awaiting confirmation of new employment, but was quite willing to carry on as before. I would also carry my licence in the event of it being required. This proved useful as it happened as I took the two of them into Bath several times. I stayed on for the next three weeks or so until I heard from Stratton

House that I could make a start as soon as possible. One could hardly believe the difference in Mrs. Skrine. She had lost her housemaid and only had the cook left, but she put herself out to be pleasant. I said to her one day "Why couldn't you have been like this like this when my wife was here, all she could say was "Im sorry, Harwood, its too late now". They left the house at Box shortly after and went to live in Lansdown Crescent, Bath, and I went there to see them at their request.

When we had settled in Sladebrook Road we had to find a new school for Brian. Gladys put all her engeries into this and finally got him into East Twerton School and there he remained until he won a place at King Edwards School, Bath.

Douglas was almost 16 years old when we bought "Lynstan" and had started Night school classes, his reports were good. Then came disaster for him. One evening, he had hardly been gone 5 minutes when a knock came at the door, Glad answered it, a stranger stood on the step and asked if her son had just come out on his bike. If so he has had an accident and has been taken to St. Martins Hospital. The police will soon be here to take you to him, he has grazed his face badly. We were soon there and his face was just like black raw meat. We were asked to stay until his face had been attened to. It was an hour or so before he was brought back, we were told her would be staying in hospital overnight and the police would want to question him as to how it happened. From what we gathered a group of boys were throwing caps back and forth across the road. After the snow we had during the Winter the roads had been smothered with clinker, this is what Douglas fell on from his cycle. One of the caps struck the spokes of his front wheel, causing him to skid. The only excuse offered was that the boys hadn't seen him coming. The following morning all the clinker had been removed by the Council. His stay in hospital was not so long as we had anticipated and he was soon back to school, he didn't let it interfere with his studies in any way.

To get back to "Lynstan", we had got everything in order. I went over again to Stratton House to see if there were any further developments and to my surprise I was told I could start on the Monday. To be a maintenance man at a Maternity Home one had to be able to tackle anything and as the second world war was still on, replacements of materials were hard to come by, it was much easier for a place like this and my former experience in painting and glazing stood me in good stead. After the blitz on Bath this place suffered a lot of damage and regards windows broken and various other damage to rainwater pipes, etc.

Getting back to home affairs. Both Douglas and Brian joined in the Scout movement, Douglas in the scouts and Brian in the cubs. It was an outlet for them apart from their own circle of friends, and it wasn't long before Gladys and I were drawn into the scout movement also, by being member so the parents association. There we met other parents and it soon became apparent that funds were needed and that sparked off the idea to run a whist drive or two for a start. At first we supplied a cup of tea and biscuits and then it grew to sandwiches and tea. We catered for about 20 tables once a fortnight at 1/- per head. This became quite a success, so we thought up the idea of social evening

every other Saturday and the takings to be given to the new Church building fund. It caught on and some Saturdays we had over 100 folk in. We made many friends during that period and our committee suggested we should meet during the coming year to discuss our future plans for the Winter months. During the intervening weeks I was busy at Stratton House painting and decorating outside and in between times working in the garden.

I arrived for work one morning and the place was more or less in a tumult. The Matron was walking about in the garden and nothing would entice her in and one of the nurses suggested I went out to see her, making the excuse I wanted to see her about the garden. As it happened this wasn't necessary, she came up to me, I could see something was troubling her. She said "I must talk to someone" and the things she told me left me speechless, I didn't know what to say. As we walked about it all came out, she was a drug addict. She told me how it all began and I just listened, eventually persuading her to go indoors and rest. When the Matron was normal she was fine and anything one did was appreciated by her.

That Christmas 1945 was a red letter day for all the staff. As there were no patients to wait on just at that time, the large ward was taken over for the occasion and a good time was had by all. After Christmas a dinner party was to be given to doctors and their families, but it was difficult to get anyone in to do the necessary cooking, etc. However, talking it over with my wife when I arrived home from work, Gladys came to the rescue as usual and I arranged for her to meet the Matron. The outcome of this was that Gladys would cook the dinner and the couple from whom we bought the house would help. Stan would act as butler, Gwen, his wife would see to the tables and help Gladys. My job was to prepare vegetables and keep my eye on things in general. Our services were to be given free, we would have a supper when most of the work was finished. The dinner was voted a great success and Matron was full of praise for those who made it possible. My next job the following afternoon was to be Father Christmas to the doctors children, which included two little girls whom the Matron had adopted at the start of this last war.

After Christmas I saw very little of matron and early in 1946 saw her in a home for drug addicts, it was a tragic end for one who was liked by all and sundry. It was then the home changed hands, the Sister assumed control and eventually took it over, it was a small company of three from then onwards, the Sister, her husband an Admiralty man and a business man. I never such such a change that came over the Sister when she was part owner. He husband took over the management to a great extent and tried to run the garden. He put my back up the first morning he was there. We kept a few hens on a lower strip of lawn and the pen was moved every two or three days. It ran on two iron wheels which I could manage unless the ground was wet. This particular morning I was struggling to move the pen when the new owner came round and I asked him to give me a hand. He stood and looked at me, then said "Don't you usually say 'Good morning' to your superiors before requesting help?". Now that was enough for me. I asked him how long he had been my superior, aren't you working for your living the same as myself, I asked him, come down out of the clouds and get your feet on the ground and we will get on together, not before, and don't try to tell me my job, please. All went well for a day or two

then he started putting up lists of jobs to be done each day. I just ignored them until he came round to me and asked me why I didn't do the jobs he had set out. I simply told him I had been engaged to look after the garden among other duties and it was up to him to discuss the work with me first and then there would be no need for lists to be pinned up. That was the last time he interfered with my work and everything ran on smoothly once more. I think he realised it was better to leave it to one who had been through the hands of experts years before and believe me experience is a hard school for those willing to learn.

After I had been at Stratton House for some time, and as my work took me round the house attending to the flower beds and lawns, etc, the patients got to know me and when the babies were born I had to be shown them through the window when possible. The matron came into the ward one morning as one of the mothers was showing me her baby. I had been working just outside and didn't she go off the deep end about it I was to keep away from the window in future, which I did. I didn't tell her I had been over to be shown the baby, otherwise the patient would have had to go through it. Anyway it was the lawn and flower bed outside the window which suffered for a while, it began to look uncared for and even the doctors commented on it, until one asked me why it was being left and when I told him why, he said it was ridiculous. Nothing more was said to me, but the Matron's husband came out to me in the garden and said "Carry on in the front as usual, and if the mothers want to show off their babies it was O.K., but not to waste too much time over it". I let it go at that, but I was sometimes called on to help the nurses when short handed to get a patient into the labour ward.

To go back a few months to the back end of the war, I had a notice to say I was called up to do work of national importance. The people at the nursing home tried to get me off as I was producing food, but to no avail. The following week found me bound for Hawthorn underground factory of the B.A.C. (Bristol Aircraft Co). There I had an interview with a labour employment fellow and after a while he said "As you are partly disabled I think you could manage to keep clean the women's toilets". Once again I exploded and refused point blank to take on that job. He said "You know what can happen if you refuse work, you could be jailed", my reply was "Then jail me, there are plenty of women employed here who could take that job". In the end, after endless arguments, it was decided I should give help in the canteen, keeping tables cleaned and floor space swept. I hated it and also being underground. It was the same each day, get up in the dark hours of morning around 5 o'clock, pack into a bus, arrive at Hawthorn and then into artificial light until about 5.30.p.m. and home again. Every morning on arrival it was clock in and down to the canteen, no lights until I or my other half switched them on. Then what did we see but a lot of bodies stretched out on the tables fast asleep instead of being in the workshops. The Thousands of pounds being paid out for night shift workers who seldom worked. The same goes for screws and hinges, these were not procurable in the shops, so what did they do but take them from the canteen tables, secrete them about their bodies and sell them to folk who needed them. It was the same in the canteen, cutlery disappeared and culprits rarely caught, although every day someone was searched by security police before one entered the lift for the surface. The day

came when I was released from this job by the efforts of the owners of Stratton House. They had been unable to fill my place during my time away, for that I was grateful. I was never allowed to forget, however, that it was through their efforts that had brought my release about. Ever after I kept my ears and eyes open for another job. That came along in time, but at the Home it was all go as they had decided to redecorate throughout. I was kept busy but I was able to earn over £1 extra each week at 1/- per hour. To-day it would be £1. per hour or more according to ones trade. My wife Gladys was the bank, she looked after the cash. My pocket money was my pension and what I could earn at Dr. Brice's, one of the doctors I got to know well at Stratton House. I stayed on until the painting was almost completed and one evening Mr. Walwork said something about another painting job. That was the kitchen and how that was to be done I couldn't guess as nurses were popping in to use the stove, the kitchen staff had to get meals for the patients and there would be the smell of paint everywhere. He proposed to get a paint spray and if I was willing to stay on a bit longer we would manage to do it in good time. Well, we prepared to start after the patients had finished their evening meal, the boss produced an electric paint spray and said "If you use this you can get over it in next to no time". I told him I had never used one before and didn't know if the paint would run. Anyway he said he would do it and started. You can imagine trying to spray along the edge of the ceiling and the wall. I could see what was happening, the spray was held too long over one patch resulting in the paint running down the wall in little streams. I was below him working from the floor up. At 10 o'clock I packed up. He said "I will carry on for a bit, you will see a big difference in the morning". I said "Good night" and made for home. In the morning when I arrived it was to a storm of protest over the state of the kitchen. I explained that I had left Mr. W. working still last evening. When I had the chance to look around, one wall was half done and there were brush marks to prove he had given us using the spray and had painted more evenly with the brush. When I began again after lunch I used brushes only and I did more in one hour with the brush than we did in four with the spray. It takes an expert to use one of those things, but all things come to an end as did the painting, etc, and it left me with just the garden. The last big job I did was on a huge Cedar tree on the lawn. I could see it was splitting in half, had it been left it could have demolished the end wing of the house and that would have included the conservatory and possibly one wall of the labour room. The head of the Parks Dept. a Mr. Dawes, came to look at it and decided it would have to be bolted by boring a hole through the two halves and a steel rod put through with a plate at one end and another loose plate at the other end pulled together as the screw tightened. All this was done by the Park people and the job left for me was to sever a large limb to prevent a drag on the tree. It took me some time to cut it and clear it away. That was my last big job there and I had three bosses to contend with.

I had heard a whisper of a job at Bailbrook House, Batheaston. I wrote for it and was given an interview with Dr. Guirdham, the house doctor, and he told me it could be several weeks before the position was vacant, but he would keep my name in front of him and when it was vacant

I would be informed. It appears Bailbrook House was run by a group of doctors from all parts of the country. They met every three months usually, but this was never certain. I had asked for £4.15s. per week and would have to wait for their next meeting to know if I was to be taken on.

In the meantime I left Stratton House and went to work for a firm in George Street, Berry, Powell & Shackell, Estate Agents, etc. This job was only to be a stop gap until I went to Bailbrook House. Up to a certain point I enjoyed it, I was van drivers mate. He was the driver and it was our job to collect items for sale by auction held every fortnight at the showrooms in George Street. On the other hand we had to deliver items bought by customers to their homes. A sale was also held at their premises in Chippenham, the same procedure as at Bath. It was very interesting to watch the faces of prospective buyers and the signs made for the auctioneer, the lift of a finger or a catalogue. I often wondered how the bids caught his eye, the auctioneers eyes were everywhere, I suppose it was use and practice.

During the 2nd World war removal firms had a lean time, as 50 miles was about the longest journey allowed by law, until the ban was lifted at the end of hostilities. I did one or two journeys, the longest was from Walcot to Wishford just outside Salisbury. The person moving had just sold his shop, etc, and had bought a farm at Wishford. It was a long day by the time we arrived back in Bath. Auctions are a great attraction to some folk. I remember one case of a man buying up pictures just for the glass. He resold the glass to people wanting it for repairs, as it was hard to come by at the end of the war. This particular day there were more pictures than usual, he made a bid for the lot, he had spotted one that he thought was unusual and he was right. He had a bargain amongst them which he kept to himself. At another time I was showing small stuff at one end of the room, displaying some of the odds and ends when the Auctioneer said "No need to set out the stall" and I answered back "I thought folk would like to see what they were buying". That I think was the last time I was put on that job.

One house to which we were sent we had to pick up a chest of drawers. This was in a bad condition and needed a deal of repair. The owners were offered a new chest in its place, which they accepted. We collected the old one with instructions not to bump it in any way. It turned out to be a Queen Anne piece, was put in the hands of an antique restorer and when he had finished with it, back it came to the showrooms. That was the last I saw of it as I left soon after to go to Bailbrook House.

Practically all furniture sold during the war was known as Utility furniture. My mate and I were moving a Utility wardrobe from the showroom to a place upstairs, it was a heavy piece and highly polished. There was no way we could get a proper grip, the corners were rounded, we had made it halfway up the stairs when the boss wanted to come down. He shouted "Get that thing out of my way, I'm coming down", I shouted back "Why not come and give us a hand, it would be quicker for all". Not another word was said either then or later, but he stood aside until we reached the top, and that was the end of it. When I was not on the van I was detailed for work in the warehouses. There was one at Grosvenor and one in James Street.

Work was really a time waster in either of them, the days spent there just dragged by, except in the case of one particular chap, if I was with him he would explain the type and period of the various pieces of furniture, but antiques were never my strong point and I was glad to move one when I received the all clear to take up my new duties.

During this last war everything outside at Bailbrook House had been neglected and a lot of the garden had got into a wild state. Dr Guirdham, the resident doctor, told me to do my best with it and not to worry. I took his advice and the grounds began to get back to normal. First, there were the hedges to trim, both sides of the drive to scythe, there I was lucky as Mr. Whitemore who supplied the milk for the house, asked if he could have the grass for his cattle. I said "Yes", as in any case I would have to cart it away, it saved me a lot of work. I think I mentioned that Bailbrook House was a home for private patients, mentally unsound. One or two were allowed into the grounds on occasions, during their normal periods, the fact is I was often hindered in my work because of them. I mentioned this to the doctor and he said "If they want to talk let them and if they sit down to talk, you do the same, in a way it is part of their treatment". In time I enjoyed their chatter, until they began to get excited and then I would make an excuse and pretend to work and usually the patient would get up and walk to the main door and go in. At the back of the house were 3 gardens, 2 small ones and in the centre a larger one. There was a door for each garden and always kept locked. If one was working there you would lock it after you and take the keys back to the house when finished. In one of the small gardens was a large Yew tree and in windy weather it interfered with the telephone wires. Someone decided it ought to come down. It was on top of a sharp sloping bank and there was only one way for it to fall, that was diagonally across the bank. We could muster 4 pairs of hands and our first job was to cut off all branches to make it lighter and then cut a big piece out of the trunk on the side it was to fall. We already had a rope on it and all ready to pull, now for the last job of all to saw through the opposite side of the cut, two on the saw and two holding the rope to keep it taut. All was going well, it was almost sawn through, the two on the saw thought we could pull it over. It didn't come off, we had pulled it to its limit and the rope slipped its knot, the tree sprang back and fell in the opposite direction and broke three telephone wires. One ran to the house, told them what had happened, they were able to get through to the Post Office and before we went home the wires had been repaired. At the bottom of the three private gardens ran a footpath seldom used as it was overgrown with laurel trees and was used more by badgers than anything else. Holes were scratched along the whole length and used as a toilet, but never covered up, so one day I had a word with the doctor to see if he would have the laurels cut. My idea was to let in more light and less cover for the badgers. As he hated cutting any trees, I told him by next year he would have the makings of a good hedge. In the end he agreed and we had an extra man in to help with the task of cutting and burning all the rubbish. We cleaned the path and it certainly put a stop to Mr. Badger using it ad lib. When we had finished the doctor had

Sweet briars planted along one end of the iron fence and when they were established the scent was lovely. I had previously asked for help to get things cleaned up and the man who helped with the laurel hedge was given the task of helping me clear up odd spots around the grounds. In one place nettles and brambles were growing rampant under a Yew tree and choking it to death. There were many similar spots but by degrees we cleared it and my help found another job and of course left me on my own.

On the edge of the lawn was what used to be a tennis court, the drive on the West side, the lawn and a walk on the North side and on the East and South sides an iron and wire fence with ramblers growing on it. Even in its wild state it looked lovely with the ramblers in full bloom and the tall waving grass intermingled, in the Spring a mass of Heliotrope, the perennial kind. When in flower the scent was overpowering but it was impossible to control its growth. This was all on one side of the court and the only thing to do was scythe the lawn and tie in the ramblers as they grew.

The drive from the entrance to the house was long and steep, on the right about half was a steep bank and on the opposite side it was almost level, but both sides had to be cut with a scythe, and as I said earlier Mr. Whitmore carted it away for his cattle. It was hopeless trying to weed by hand the gutter which took the water away from the drive, so I asked for a flame thrower, cost £12., oil 1/- per gallon, and it took approx. 1 hour to burn up the weeds. By hand it would have taken about 3 days and not such a clean job. I was using it one day when one of the visiting doctors came down the drive and questioned me about the job I could do with it. He also congratulated me on the way the work was going, that led me to getting £5. per week, which was good money at that time and was an incentive to do my best.

The first Christmas I was there I was asked to get evergreens in for decorations just for the hall and chapel. Then it was "Could you help us put them up?" and as I could not do anything outside just then I was only too willing to help. When finished it really looked good especially the marble pillars, they were from floor to ceiling approx. 14 ft. and I had twined ivy and sprigs of berried holly around them. The pillars were an Autumn brown marble and the green foliage and red berries together set them off, if met with approval, so was worth doing.

The next two or three Christmas's while I was employed there I did the decorations. I also put the greenhouses to good use, they hadn't been used all through the war and I was allowed to buy what seeds and bulbs I wanted, also crysanthemums in the flower line. We also tried cucumbers in a cold house as the boiler was a total loss, beyond repair. It was a case of make do and mend. Results were not too bad considering, the efforts were appreciated, that was good enough for me. The beech trees were our next concern as an extra large one was blown over by the side of the drive. It was fortunate that it fell inside the rails dividing the grounds and a field let to Mr. Whitmore, the farmer. It laid there for some time as I was too tied up with other jobs at that time to deal with it. The doctor came to me one day and asked me to go round with him to point out those I thought were unsafe. He hated to cut down a tree if it could be saved. I was with him all the way as I was born and brought up in the country. The trees take years to grow, but man destroys them today in minutes. We began at the entrance

to the drive and about 50 yards up. There was a group of four beeches and one in particular was split from the bottom about 4 ft. up and funi was growing out of the split, also another at the top of the drive. Before we did anything more the doctor decided he would get another opinion on them as to their safety. The subject of trees was not mentioned again, as I knew his views on the subject, until one morning as I entered the drive on my way to work, there lying across the drive was the beech tree we had condemned. I went to the house and asked them to ring the doctor, in the meantime I would collect the tools needed for the job of clearing the drive. When the doctor came out, he asked if I knew anyone who would cart away the trees. I suggested he got on to the sawmills on the Bristol Road near the Gas works, which he did, and later on that morning the boss of the mills arrived. I showed him the tree at the top of the drive, he asked if I thought the doctor would let him clear that one away, it would be haulage free, the same for the one in the drive. I promised to see the doctor and let him know, but during the afternoon I saw that the tree in the drive had gone. I cleared up the oddments, burning them. The boss at the mill and the doctor must have got in touch, for next day he arrived to see if, of the other trees remaining, any one was unsafe. His verdict, there was one at the top of the drive and one lower down were unsafe and several needed attention. This information was passed on to the doctor, the chap from the sawmills was given permission to carry on. In less than a week the work was done and his men cleared up the mess. That was another big job done.

About that time Dr. Guirdham asked me if Gladys and I would be willing to have a student to live with us for a few months. I told him it was up to my wife to decide, could she meet him next day to discuss it, he would be free at around 3 o'clock. Well, on the following day, my wife having agreed to meet the doctor came over to Bailbrook House, he and my wife met and discussed terms. Then we had to await his arrival from Belgium, he was coming over to learn the English language. His mother was head of Girl Guides and his father a top judge in Belgium, the student himself was around 20 years of age. He was well built and good looking, but he was a bit of a trial at first. He would get upset at the smallest and most trivial of matters. He knew some English and in the end it was Gladys who calmed him down. He did a fair amount of studying and he would drink cup after cup of coffee, almost strong enough to stand a spoon up in it. In one of his tantrums he really lost his temper, he thumped the table and stamped his feet, but Gladys said "Let him get it off his chest and we will attend to him after". We just sat and smiled at him and presently he calmed down and said he was sorry "But you English are so placid". It was then Gladys had her say and he was made to understand it wasn't to happen again or it was OUT. It must have sunk it for we never had a display of temper again.

One time he wanted to go to Thornbury, just outside of Bristol. We told him to ask again when he arrived in Bristol. He did this, he went up to a policeman on traffic duty, asked the way to Thornbury in disjointed English and French. The policeman tried to point out he was busy just then. Ettiene didn't understand and shouted at the

policemen and said "You're crazy". What the result might have been is anyone's guess, but a bystander came across and spoke to Ettiene in French. The outcome was an apology, the bystander took charge and put him in the right bus. He was lucky not to have landed in the police station for obstruction.

Another scrape the chap got into was at the Doctor's house. He was giving a firework display party on November 5th. As Ettiene had never been to a Guy burning before, all went well for a time then someone got careless and a lighted firework fell into a box of them, from then on it was pandemonium. The fireworks were shooting out all over the place and rockets were going off on the ground. It was a sad ending to what had promised to be a splendid evenings entertainment.

During the following Winter our week-end activities carried on, we still held a few whist drives, but the socials were the high light for quite a few elderly folk, we tried to cater for all.

One thing I almost forgot to mention was our V.J. party (Victory over Japan). Our next door neighbour started it all but was unable to continue, so we all decided to call a meeting of residents of Sladebrook Road to form a committee, take down all suggestions as to what form our party should take and when. As Gladys and I were already running our socials and Youth clubs, it was agreed by all that the chairman should be myself and Gladys should be our caterer in chief. No-one else wanted to take the responsibility so we accepted and I must in fairness give full marks to all who served for the work put in. All meetings were held at our home and a sub-committee was formed for entertainment, including competitions, children's races, etc. We hired a marquee for safety's sake and it was used for dancing later in the evening. There was also a firework display. The only thing to mar the day was Brian tripping over an iron peg holding one of the ropes and cutting his knee rather badly. It annoyed him during the races to hear his name called out and he was unable to join in. My wife took the prize for the neatest pair of ankles. Altogether it was a successful day and what was surprising, it brought everyone together and it lasted up to the time we left in October, 1951, of which more will be told later.

To carry on with our Southdown days. Just at the top of our road ran Mount Road and about 50 yards on the left was Twerton Round Hill. In the Winter if there was enough snow it made a good toboggan run and in the Summer there was always a nice breeze. One could sit and look all over Bath, and looking left one would be looking over to the Bristol Channel. The best time for youths and adults alike was Spring and Autumn, it was usual to see a dozen or more kites floating in the sky. Next door to us, a young couple just back from Hong Kong had furnished rooms and it wasn't long before he was with us flying kites. He made his own and many a youngster had cause to say "Thank you" to him as he made kites for them. Some were like sunshades quite 3 ft. across and he used special thread to let them up. Those were the days, but I think 1950 was the last time we went up to Twerton Round Hill. That night several people had pooled their firework to make a bigger display. During the evening someone began throwing squibs into the crowd and one landed at my wife's feet. She tried to step backwards, and as it was

sloping ground missed her step and down she went. When we got her on to her feet again she could not walk, so two hefty men gave her a bandy chair home. All we could do was apply cold compresses for the moment and next morning we sent for the doctor. He diagnosed the trouble as a badly strain tendon, and it was days before Gladys could use it again.

In the Spring, instead of making straight for hom, Gladys used to meet me at 5.0'clock at Ted Dolman's nursery adjoining Bailbrook House. Mrs. Dolman would provide us with tea and afterwards we would help to prick out annuals into trays for sale to the shops. If he had wreaths to make, etc, Gladys would wire the flowers and I the green base. Ted's job was to wire them into the frame of whatever was ordered. I saw him once make a floral chair by request and cushions were often made. One thing we could never understand, he was always hard up and he offered me 1/- per hour for what I did, but it was like getting blood out of a stone to get what he owed me. He owed me pounds when I left Bailbrook, but for all his faults I really liked him.

During the school holidays I had Douglas to help me clip the hedges and do various other jobs and the doctor paid him a wage, through the House of course. One day Douglas was clipping a box hedge when he put his foot into a wasps nest. He pulled off his shirt and trousers, we gave them a good shake, he then dressed, jumped on his cycle and rode home. The first thing he did on arriving home was to get into a bath of hot water. I don't remember how many stings he had but after soaking in the bath, by the evening he was fit again. I had to report the wasps nest to the Matron and then I went to the nearest chemist to get some cyanide. One could buy it in those days by signing the poison book. My next job was to get a piece of cotton wool and warm water when dissolved I put the wad on a cane and poked it into the nest entrance. The next morning I dug out the nest whole and put it on one side for the doctor to see.

I mentioned previously about putting the greenhouse to use. Ted Dolman gave me several kinds of Chrysanthemums for greenhouse work, I portioned them out, single bloom, triple and spray and grew them on as such and around Christmas I had some really nice blooms and was proud of them. I took them up to the house to stand in the hall and soon after the doctor came down to see me and he was not a bit taken up with the large single blooms or the three on one plant. His idea was that when the one died there was no other flower to take its place. I said how disappointed I was as his wife was to have had a sample and a few sprays. After a while he said "Take down what you can spare, I'm sure she will appreciate them", and when I saw the Dr's wife she said it was the first time she had ever had flowers from the garden. From then on I supplied her with flowers when I was able. The outcome of all this was that orders were given to repair the greenhouses.

After the Spring bedding was finished, it was just a matter of keeping the place tidy, it was not an arduous task brushing up odd bits from the trees. When the weather was bad there was the tool shed to keep tidy and I was allowed oil to burn in a stove for warmth when I couldn't work outside.

Our student left us in 1950 and in that same year Miss Jean Stoven the Youth club adviser for Bath approached the Southdown Youth club

regarding a Summer camp in Dorset. As our Youth club was thriving we agreed to fall in, but many of our members had already made arrangements for their Summer holidays. Several of us volunteered as helpers and so it was left until we heard from the Youth Council. In the interval I spoke to the Dr. about my holiday and suggested I take it at that time if I could have an extension of three days to help clear the camp site after the youngsters had been sent home. He said that would be alright and so it was arranged. I never dreamed these would be my last days at Bailbrook, but such is fate and in brief I will tell you of the events which followed. The day arrived for our trip to Charmouth, a small but unspoilt seaside resort and a popular place for camping. It was a pleasant trip until we reached a small straggling hamlet, about 5 miles from our destination. There we ran into a sea mist which lasted until late afternoon and we found ourselves in a large grass field owned by a farmer, Loosemore by name. There we were allotted our tents and told when we were ready our tea would be provided in a tent set aside for meals. After that we all gathered round and the rules of the camp were read out, anyone breaking them would be sent home. The most strict rule was that after dusk boys and girls would stay on their side of the camp, patrols would be provided by the helpers. Each evening the next days activities would be posted outside the meal tent. Brenda Roberts would act as nurse for minor mishaps, Douglas Harwood was games master, Ken Gray was in charge of hikes and Miss Stoven and a friend were in charge of food. Gladys and I were pulled in to help with all kinds of jobs. Our first jaunt was to find the Post Office at the top of the village. One could hardly call it a town when there were about 1½ thousand inhabitants in the off season and over 3 thousand in the holiday season. We as a camp were lucky for weather and I think the majority spent most of their time in the water. Other days were spent hiking or as a free day to do as one pleased. A real holiday and no tight strings, the only thing was that all had to be in camp by 10 p.m. One evening a chappie turned up at our camp fire, which we had two or three nights, he had an accordion with him. He was passing he said, the fire looked inviting, so he dropped in and before we realised it we were singing camp songs with music and soon the whole camp was sitting around, but by 11 o'clock we had to finish up. He had come from Lyme Regis and Miss Stoven got his address from him should we want him again, and someone with a car drove him back to Lyme Regis.

In our second week we planned a social and dance if we could hire the church hall. It was the only place available and the rector came down to our camp to discuss the matter and he agreed we could have the hall providing the church wardens approved, he would let us know the following day. This he did and we were able to put our plans into action. First we got hold of our camp fire visitor and he agreed to supply the music, he also brought along with him a photographer to take shots and supply them to members of the club for a nominal fee. I was appointed M.C., Gladys and Miss Stoven's friend looked after the refreshments and altogether we had a splendid evening. We had musical chairs and Blindfold supper, this last is two persons sit opposite each other with a bowl of corn flakes and a spoon. They are then blindfolded and try to feed each other. Its good fun, try it at a party sometime.

Our son Brian missed this camping holiday as he had gone to the Lake district with King Edward School camping.

Our time was drawing to a close so Glad and I began looking round the shops for gifts to take back with us. We went to Lyme Regis one day, also to Bridport., the only other shop was the Gift shop in Charmouth. We went in ostensibly to look around and Mr. Lewis the owner asked if we were staying in Charmouth. We told him we had been camping in Farmer Loosemores field. He asked where we had come from and we told him from Bath, then as we were going out he said "If you know of anyone wanting a good business this is for sale". My wife and I just looked at each other, we must have read each others thoughts. Gladys nodded her head, I said "Shall we have a go?", and we agreed to go into it together. The ingoing price as it stood was £3,200. As we left we asked him not to do anything until he heard from us again, he would have an answer before we left again for home. Strangely enough a Mr. Campbell joined us that day to make arrangements for the dismantling of the camp. He was something to do with Somerset Youth Clubs in his spare time, but his real occupation was in property. We told him what we thought of doing and he said not to do anything until he had seen the place and made some enquiries. We let it rest at that till the next day. We did not see Mr. Campbell until after we had eaten after a full day out with members of the club at Lyme Regis. When our club members had dispersed in groups for the evening Mr. Campbell, Miss Stoven and friend took Gladys and I aside in the meal tent and there he told us what he had gleaned about the shop. Was there one for sale anywhere he asked them, and did they think it was a good proposition? Yes, if there was one for same, after looking around for a gift and taking stock of customers he went over to the Wander Inn for a light lunch and took stock of people passing in and out of the gift shop. He remarked about the shop to Mrs. Bolton who with her husband owned the Wander Inn cafe and she told him it was a little gold mine to anyone not afraid of work. Mr. Campbell said in the right hands it was a winner, but as we, Gladys and I had no experience of running s shop, did he think we could succeed. He said there was no doubt in his mind, the trade was there and could be increased. That night we talked the whole thing over with Douglas and decided to have a go. To raise the cash we had to sell our house at Southdown first. We also had to call on Miss Hatton and Miss Pearce as we did when we bought "Lynstan". Dr. Guirdham of course had to be told. A new leader for the Cubs, the Youth Club, The Old Tyme Dancing club and Gladys had to resign from the Townswomen's Guild and the Mothers Union. Resigning from these was going to be a wrench. As the year before we had celebrated our Silver Wedding Anniversary, 12th Dec., 1950, on the Saturday nearest the date, we entertained about 90 guests to an Old Tyme dance and refreshments and the Youth Club to a similar beano the following week. I don't think those days will ever be forgotten.

Dr. Guirdham was the first to be told of our new venture and when I gave in my notice to leave Bailbrook House he wished us luck and said "If you get into difficulties let me know and will help!" Another surprise we had was from a Mr. Nation the man who cultivated the kitchen garden at Bailbrook House, he offered to let me have some cash if I needed it and no strings attached. I later took advantage of his offer of £250. and I promised to repay at 5%, he did not want this, as He reckoned I had done him many a small service since I had been at Bailbrook.

The week following we sold our house and we heard from Miss Hatton and Miss Pearce to go ahead with our plans, so on the Monday we set out for Charmouth again to settle the final date for taking over. Things went smoothly and our next problem was to find accommodation as it was a lock up shop. That was no so easy.

Gladys and I arrived back home again to find Brian at home. The camp in the Lake District had been washed out. When he arrived back in Bath, we had just started out for Charmouth and our buses must have passed one another on the way, so he had to spend the day next door. The irony of it was, as he was walking along to catch a bus, a man from Southdown stopped him and said "So your parents are leaving Bath, are they?". Brian of course did not know anything of our plans as it was all arranged after he had left to go to camp. He had to be told all that had happened and when we had moved he would still carry on at King Edwards School and we would have to find him lodgings for the time being. However, we were informed that it would be about the middle of October before we could take over the shop. We made several trips to Charmouth at the end of September. Then we had a set back to our plans, Brian had won a place at Bristol University but when we gave our future address in Dorset this cancelled his chance of going to Bristol. It was a blow to Brian at the time but to his credit he never once blamed us for it. We were then committed to the shop and instead he went to the G.E.C. in Rugby, when he was through there, he would still have to do his National Service. Douglas was doing his National service at that time.

Our date for leaving Southdown was approx. October 15th, I am not sure of the exact date. We had been found rooms at the top of Charmouth, not extortionate, and we would cater for ourselves. Our future landlady was well known here, she was around 70 years of age and still sang in the Church choir every Sunday. She also acted as post woman and delivered the papers daily. This had been her life since her early teens and she married late in life. Her husband had been previously married and had a grown up family. She also claimed relationship with Sir Winston Churchill, a cousin.

We duly arrived and unloaded almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton coal which we had bribed the driver to bring along. He could have refused as it was vetoed to carry coal with personal belongings. We swept the back of the van clean and our furniture went on to Northovers & Gilbert, Bridport, until we could find a place of our own. The rest of the day we spent in the shop finding out where the different items were kept. Before we took over there was a manageress to see to things, but we felt that if we were going to run the shop, it was better to start off in our own way. The wife of the previous owner promised to stay on and put us on the right road, for which we were grateful. Apart from ordinary things to be replaced, we had to think about Christmas toys and goods, but we need not have worried as various salesmen came in to try to sell us goods. In time we began to know from whom to buy, the genuine firms. Until Christmas was over we had no idea what to buy. One thing we never forgot was the good wishes we had from the people living in Charmouth hoping we would be happy among them. There were no direct accounts from anyone, all makes of chocolate, sweets and tobacco had to be bought through a wholesaler, therefore cutting down profits. Confectionery

was still on ration so one could only buy according to the number of coupons one received, but believe me a lot of our customers, as the books ran out, asked Gladys if she would like them, an offer never refused. It was amazing how they accumulated and by the time rationing ceased we had enough coupons to apply for a direct account with all the best firms. It was the same with tobacco firms and Dickensons for their paper products. All this did not happen over night. In the case of Dickensons, at first I was given a display stand for 'Lion Brand', and eventually through their representative's recommendation we were granted a direct account.

To get back to Christmas sales, we just about had enough cards and calendars, also decorations for Christmas trees, etc, but we held an inquest after and came to the conclusion that we needed more stock for the next year. Being new to all this we did not think of Christmas cards so early, but around January representatives were beginning to call for orders and not only cards but seaside requisites, countless things that are asked for during the season, spades, buckets, lilo's, you ask for it and we were expected to have it, such as swim suits, to-day I should think one would ask for a two piece, I don't know.

Just after Christmas a chap called from Lears and he got an order for spades, etc, if he could make an early delivery it would mean a 15% discount. He also supplied rock and novelties of rock and sweets in jars, we dealt with these people until the time we left Charmouth. This first order really shook me, so far we had held our own, but now it was a case of get your goods and pay later, that meant losing discount for the present. There was a glimmer of sunshine for us, however, the previous owners, over the last few years, had averaged £30. per week in takings, we had already bumped this up to £60., and if we could improve on that up to Easter, then we could not grumble. It was hard going and the walk at night up the hill to our rooms was almost too much at first, but we got used to it and were satisfied with the progress made.

Gladys and I got a surprise just before Christmas, several of our old club members wanted to come down one Saturday night. If we could hire the Church hall, they would bring music, etc., and we would have an Old Tyne Dance. We on our part got the folk at the Queens Arms to supply refreshments, it was also put around that if any of the locals would like to join in, it would make a better evening. Well, about two full loads of people turned up in the afternoon and in the evening about 7.0'clock we all met in the hall. We made a start, several locals turned up, altogether everyone enjoyed the evenings entertainment. The Bath people left at about 11.30 p.m., but one coach took a wrong turning on the way home and arrived back in Bath about 3.a.m. next morning. The villagers who had come along were full of it on Monday and began asking when we were going to have another dance.

Mrs. Lewis had left us some time now and we had the travellers coming in more often and we enjoyed looking over the goods they brought along. We started buying pottery as everyone was tired of utility crockery. It was a profitable venture, one could buy a tea service for around 30/- or even less at times, we sold a good many. Later we branched out in named pottery such as Honiton for example and Devonmoor. Dozens of firms started up and sold quite attractive pottery, I could mention quite a few but it would be boring. During the quiet days it

made a break to get a traveller in, it sometimes took upwards of 2 hours to go through their cases, especially if it was games he sold, as we were advised to stock up with games of all sorts against wet weather. Jigsaws were a favourite with children and adults alike, also childrens books of all types and prices.

We also had a good lending library of about 150 novels and when a book had been well read it was sold for 1/- and replaced by a new one. A new reader paid 2/6 for his first book to cover the cost, all others 4 d. each, if they were visitors they received back their deposit when they left. One day I was replacing some books when a man came in and asked me which book I could recommend for a good laugh. I had P.G. Woodhouse and A.P. Herbert amongst others, but I told him 'Chuckling Joe' was good for a laugh. He said "Funny you should say that, I wrote it". This happened so long ago I can't remember the authors name. We had several well known people in the shop in the early part of the season, but the family we knew best was Col. Bullen, his wife and family. One of the family was Sarah and two other girls named Jane and Jenny, two boys were Charlie and Michael. They were a lovely family and could ride before they learned to walk. Jane is much in the news as I write this in the Badminton Horse Trials and Michael we have often seen in the Horse of the Year show. I had to mention this as we knew them so well and by the way Mrs. Bullen was an artist of some note.

One thing we soon learned was always to smile and be ready at all times to listen to the trouble of others. On the other hand one must always be ready to take a joke, such as one day the Rector walked into the crowded shop and said to them "Look out for this fellow (meaning myself) he's waiting to lighten your pockets". Someone shouted "That will be the day".

The first season was an eye opener to us, all the fields around were filled with tents, there were not many caravans at that time, that was a phase of holidays just growing. There was one in Charmouth just beginning, and well run by a Mr. & Mrs. Emmet. He was an ex Army officer and was often in the shop, in fact we supplied them with paper, ink, etc and it paid off. We were asked to put up a notice in the camp listing our goods, etc. and where do you think they were hung, behind the toilet doors. They explained that the toilets were visited by all and when one was inside and the door shut the notice was staring one in the face:- Shop at Harwood's for Gifts, etc. It was a cheap way of advertising and we appreciated this gesture by buying a caravan from them. It was a four berth Castleton and a show piece £550., built on the site. It was let for the first time in 1953 by the owners of this particular site, "Seadown caravans". The site was divided, one part holding 25 vans was named "River Mead" and the larger field was named "Sea Down". It was only approx 500 yards from the sea which could be seen from both fields. "River Mead" was slightly more to rent owing to its privacy. Our van was on this site for several years and was a help towards paying shop expenses.

Our first year in business ended in October, 1952. The season ended the second week in September. The week before the roads and shops were crowded, but on opening the following Monday, one could have fired a gun up the street and not touched anyone. This gave Gladys and I time to adjust ourselves for the Winter and reflect on the past months trade. What if anything could we do to improve ourselves or the shop.

One thing we did was to sell Rosary's, Triptyce's, etc., as we had quite a number of Roman Catholics in and around Lyme Regis and Charmouth. We already sold bibles, prayer books, etc. for the Church of England. We stocked the R.C. gifts sometime before December just to see if they sold and we were surprised at the demand for them. It seemed we were the only people stocking them, they were cheap to buy and showed a good profit so we decided to stock up with them for the next season.

Looking back on the past months we remembered many odd things. There was the case of a family who arrived from Malta, the husband was something in the Admiralty and was often away. His wife insisted on picking us up in her car from the shop and taking us up the hill to our rooms after a day in the shop. There were things to do, restocking the shelves and sweet counters, sweeping up, etc., it was often a 14 hour day for 6 months of the year.

We refused to open on Sundays, that was our day of rest. Even that was spoilt for us once and once only. We had decided as it was a nice day, we had done our duty as on every Sunday attended our church, and after lunh we took a rug each and a book and made for Stonebarrow and the cliffs. There we made ourselved comfortable, instead of reading we dozed off and were so surprised when spots of rain began to fall. We grabbed our rugs, put them around our shoulders and dashed for the shop. Our rugs were wet, we ourselves weren't too bad, it was only a minute or two to hang up our rugs to dry, we turned to come out but folk had begun to walk in. Where they arrived from we never knew, but by the time we had got rid of them they had spent over £10., which went towards the next days takings.

As we looked back to the beginning of the season, we remembered a mother, her son and daughter coming into the shop and asking us if we knew of a place where they could stay as they were dissatisfied with their present digs. We were able to fix them up with an address and that was a friendship that has lasted until the present time 1953 - 1978.

Many things have happened to that family since we met them first, memories best forgotten.

All this time we had been looking for a house. We heard of a holiday hut on Col. Bullen's estate, but it was too primitive for us and some distance from the shop, so we decided against that. Then Baker Smith said he was moving into the shop above on the corner and Restorick the Butcher was moving into Baker Smith's place and out of the blue Restorick came over and asked if we would like to buy his premises. I told him I was looking for somewhere to rent, in the end I agree to pay him £5. per week for shop and the rest of the house. Gladys was all for it and we set about cleaning up as we could only use the shop as a showroom. We had to get permission to put up shelves, which was done by Bert Smith, Builder & undertaker, cost £5. Then it had to be painted. We managed to get one wall done before the shelves were put up. Our next job was to get our furniture back from Bridport.

To get back to the shop, 1952 saw us clear of debt and at the end of the season we were in a good position to extend our stock for 1953.

In April Douglas our son was married, April 7th to be exact, and during school holidays (he was teaching) they would stay with us and help us in the shop when we were busy, as did Brian our other son until 1956, 2nd August, when he got married. I was not able to get to Doug's

wedding as only one of us could leave the shop and his mother was the right one to go. It meant being away for just over two days. When it came to Brian's wedding both of us managed it as it took place in St. Mary's Church, Bath. The Rector of St. Andrews, Charmouth, and his wife took us to the Church and he also took part in the ceremony. When it was all over we were driven back by them to Charmouth.

Now to get back to the shop. After Doug's wedding we got back to normal duties again. The forepart of the year we had lots of local birthdays. Gladys began to remember them and I left that part of the cards to her alone, she had the knack of choosing the right cards. We also had a more expensive line in cards to suit those with a bigger pocket and that paid well. Confectionery was now paying well and as we had direct accounts we dealt with many firms including Cadburys, Terrys, Frys and Swiss firms. It was a boost to sell a large box up to £5., the shop had never been previously known to sell the more expensive brands. Gladys had charge of that side of the trade, as well as childrens toys, books and games. My side was more with tobacco, cigarettes and keeping the bookds straight. I used to chip in when I had any spare time, whether busy, slack or rushed it was always interesting. Meeting people from all walks of life was a pleasure.

One day a lady came in and asked one of our assistants which were Mr. & Mrs. Harwood, we stepped forward, and addressing us, said in a broad Scottish accent "You won't know me, I Mrs. Mc.Donald, my friends were here last year and I promised to call in to see you when I arrived. I have heard so much about you both that I lost no time in finding your shop, you haven't seen the last of me, I'm here for 2 weeks, staying at Charmouth House (the most expensive Hotel in Charmouth). Many of the visitors would come in after dinner at the hotels, and after a stroll around would enquire if there was a cafe open where they could get coffee. There wasn't one, so Gladys would offer to make them coffee if they could put up with the seating arrangements. After that it was the usual thing for a few to drop in each evening and have a chat. We never charged for coffee so no hotelier could complain. For thanks they often helped to re-arrange shelves and counters, but best of all we made friends of our customers and that was the secret of our success.

After we had settled down in our home over the road we set about stoking it with pottery from around England and different countries abroad. The Hummel figures were one of the most expensive from Austria and Germany. It was started by the nuns and somehow a man named Gobels took it over, all profits went to the nunnery so it was explained to us, but British firms were beginning to crep into the market and it proved a profitable side of our trade. Toby jugs were in great demand in 1953 so we decided to make a real show in our new shop, consequently we ordered a large centre piece, a pirate in the shape of an umbrella standing about 2 ft. high and others ranging fom 8" down to 1". It made a fine display and many a carload of people stopped to have a look. In front of this monster was a card to say all goods displayed were on sale at the shop over the road.

I must just relate two things that happened in the season. One was regarding sun hats, the majority came from Italy and could be sold

for 1/6. A lady walked in one day and asked for a large brimmed sun hat, plain white. I brought out a box of them and after trying these on, she said "Have you anything better?". I told her a deliberate lie, I said Yes, but perhaps they were too expensive at 5/- each". Could she see them, Yes, I would bring them out. I took that carton away and after a short delay I came out again with the same carton and a mirror so she could see herself in the hat. I made a play of opening up and took one out very carefully and as she tried it on I held the mirror. After a bit she said "I'll take two one for my friend". She paid me 10/- for two hats, whereas she need only have paid 3/- for them. The whole of that carton was sold as specials after that at 5/- each.

The next silly thing was a gross of small Bhudda's about 1" high. We had quite a group of them on display as lucky charms but they didn't sell at 1/- each. Then one day Brian said "I'll write a card 'Rub his head and wish', this card was put in front of the Bhuddas @ 2/6 each and believe me they soon disappeared.

Now weather at the seaside is often unpredictable, so one is always prepared. If the sun shines it is sun hats to the fore or if it rains the mack's are on show. We struck a good line of pack-a-mac for adults or children 3/6 and 2/6. At one time we had sun hats out, there was a shower so it was hats in and macks out. A bystander said "You don't miss a trick do you?".

1953 was a much better year for us despite the fact we had 5 paid helpers. They had to have a half day per week and finish at 5 p.m. Gladys and I stayed on to clean up the shop and we seldom left the shop before 9 o'clock.

Shop lifting went on in those days but not so much as to-day. We caught one or two while the camping was about. Gladys prevented one woman taking out a large sailing yacht, this person was with her mother but while she was finding the money to pay for it, her mother left. When the two had gone we found that where the mother had been standing a musical box was missing, value about £3. On the other hand children tried taking things like bars of chocolate, spangles and anything small like that, but we often caught them and made them put it back, that was bad enough for them.

While we were having lunch one day 4 boys called in and presently they called us to pay for something they had bought. Two of them walked to the door while one of the others paid for what he required. We finished our lunch before going into the shop again and just after 2 o'clock a woman from the paper shop just up the road, came in and asked if we had lost any small gifts lately, because 4 boys had been into her shop to ask for a bag to put some gifts in, as the shop down the road had not wrapped them. We then began to look around and found a showcard empty of all gifts. There was no hope of knowing where they had gone, there were quite a number of camps around just at that time.

Camping at Charmouth was very good in fine weather, but it could be pretty awful when it rained as a troop of scouts from Ware found out. They had pitched their camp the day previous and had been in the shop to buy sweets, etc. to put in their tuck shop and said they would be in next day to settle up, but the weather was not good to them. It rained in torrents and the wind blew tents down. They lost most of their stores including what they had bought from us, they were completely washed out.

The people of Charmouth were grand, the school and Church rooms were opened, blankets arrived from nowhere, hot drinks were made with the promise of breakfast in the morning. The Scout master came into the shop to settle up but we told him to forget it, but one or two boys came in during the morning, they hadn't any extra clothes. Gladys could not bear to see them like that so we fixed them up with a pack-a-mac, you should have seen their faces, it was worth it all. After they returned home we had such a nice letter from the Parents Association thanking us and the people of Charmouth for their kindness. Yes 1953 was a good year for us in every way, we had finished up our financial year quite beyond our expectations and we were looking forward to Christmas.

It was quite a family party that year, we had Douglas and Brenda, also Joy and Erian and we looked forward to 1954 with full and thankful hearts. Occasionally we would desert our church in Charmouth and pay a quick visit to our old church at Bath, St. Barnabas. On those occasions we would be up and away by 8 a.m. so as to be in time for the 11 o'clock service. We were always sure of a welcome and we had time to have a chat with old friends such as Major Bean and family. He was church warden, there was also Mr. Yeo the verger, a dear old chap, he was over 90 when he passed on. Gladys and I met many who had joined with us in our ventures when we lived there. We used to hire a car for those occasions and carried our food and drink with us. We left again at 4 p.m. to be home just after 6 p.m.

As usual in the New year we would be in the throes of ordering goods for the year as regards seaside goods and during the year plenty of salesmen came in on the off chance of getting an order. One in particular would be in about Easter, he always had glass birds and animals to sell from 2/6 upwards. I quote in old money as our currency had not been changed at this time of writing. One day or I should say one evening he arrived and brought several convex mirrors for hanging in the hall. After the war he had bought up a load of searchlight scrap, he had made mirrors from much of it and set them in circular plastic frames, with hook in the back and a chain for hanging. They were finished off with gold paint. It was impossible to make a wooden frame as that was used entirely for Utility furniture. These mirrors were bought for 25/- each and sold for £3.10s. no tax. He left 3 with us to see how they would go and it was not many weeks before we wrote for more. We ourselves have had one for over 20 years and is still as good as ever. It was the same with his glass animals, he would only call on one shop over a large area and we were the lucky ones. For £10. in cash one would get a large selection. Towards the end of 1954 workers at a glass factory were making them for pin money and doing well.

In the Winter months I got busy making shell baskets, with a sprig of sea fern, mussel shells and multi coloured shells from various other beaches. When assembled they made attractive gifts to sell to younger children to take home to Gran, Mum or friend. It was our aim to make their pocket money go a long way. Today the youngster have too much money to spend, money has not the same value as 20 odd year ago.

The start of a season was something to look forward. Many of the visitors came every year and stayed 2 weeks and each change over someone

would pop in and say "We are back again", glad to see you, stop for a few minutes and then dash off to the beach. One cannot imagine the pleasure it gave us to see these folk again. This sort of incident occurred throughout the season, we looked on them as friends as well as customers.

At the Lyme Regis Cinema we had a screen advert:- Harwoods of Charmouth, Confectionery, Gifts, Etc., and many of the folk who came in to the shop would comment on our advert, such as, "We saw your advert in Lyme Cinema and we have come over to see it". I don't think I mentioned the size of the shop, the frontage was 28 ft. with two large display windows and 30 ft. in depth with an office and storeroom at the back. In the height of the season we tried to keep one assistant on each separate counter as at times the shop could not accommodate all who wanted to come in.

The Summer of 1954 saw a big increase in the number of caravans around Charmouth. Sea Down caravan site changed hands and the new owners opened a shop on the site for sell ice cream, confectionery, bread and groceries. This did not go down very well with the village people, but it all blew over. It was very handy for the people staying in caravans and there were 75 at Sea Down and 25 at River Mead. No dogs were allowed loose on the site and if one was seen to throw a piece of paper down, somebody in charge would be after your block and they would point out that bins were provided for that purpose. There were flush toilets on each site, also a shower for which one paid 6d. to use. At one time it was known as the best kept caravan site in the country. A certain lady in the village came into the shop and asked me to sign a petition against caravans being allowed around the village. I asked her for her objections and she said they spoilt the contour of the surrounding country side and they were not wanted. My reply was "I believe you have a caravan situated in the New Forest, are you wanted there cluttering up the countryside as you accuse these folks of so doing? No, I cannot in good faith sign, these people have come here, possibly from a town to enjoy the sun and fresh surroundings and apart from that they spend money". I don't remember anyone ever mentioning this matter again.

All good things come to an end as did our 1954 year, again it was a good year. One Saturday a lady and gentleman came into the shop, we had often seen them about the village, the pair were caretaking at Thistlegate about a mile out of Charmouth. (We had often remarked on their aloofness to other folk). We were very surprised when we received a formal invitation to take tea with them at their humble abode as the husband called it. Glad and I promised to go up the following Sunday afternoon and arrived around 4 o'clock. They were on the look out for us and suggested that we look over the house first. It was vacant owing to the death of the last owner, and the agents gave this couple the job of caretaking until it was sold. To get back to our tea party, these folk had the use of the lodge for the time being and imagine our surprise when we got inside. In the kitchen there was only the small range and cupboards, all more or less empty, two packing cases standing in the centre of the room served as a table, but not a chair in sight. In the other room which served as a sitting room the only seat was one taken from a bus at some time. It had no legs and was supported by two lumps of stone. Just before we had our cup of tea, it was suggested

we should have a fire, so the next thing was to go out into the spinney and collect some firewood. Back indoors we sat down to our cup of tea, it was then we began to learn where our hosts hailed from. I should add there was a boy about 4 years old, their son, very well behaved and nicely spoken. It was over our cup of tea that they spoke about themselves. It appears that they were both at the same college and his people were well off. What happened is anyones guess. Their son was a mistake and his people would have nothing to do with him, he was allowed a certain amount of cash each quarter paid through a lawyer and he used to say "When my ship comes home it will be alright". Whether his ship ever did come in is another story, as he left Charmouth soon after Thistlegate was sold. One thing I will say he never tried to con us and his humble abode will I don't doubt cross our minds often as we recall the past.

As the season waned we looked forward to a rest in the Winter months. We had our usual family gathering for Christmas. Afterwards it was getting the shop sorted out by putting old stock forward and the new stock stored handy for the season of 1955. Two things happened this year, first I had to have my eyes tested and was fitted with bi-focals and for a time they were trying, but at last I got used to them. The second thing had been on our minds for a long time. That was to buy a plot of land somewhere on the outskirts of Bath. Our plan was to retire at 65 years, have our own plot of land and a bungalow. I should explain that Brian was courting Joy, Mr. Emery's daughter and planning to get married later on. On this particular Sunday we hired a car and met Arnold at the plot in question. At one end of it were two condemned cottages and a workshop which had been bought years before. The two cottages had to come down and anyone buying the ground for building, according to the deeds, would have to build on the same place. Beyond the buildings the ground had a steep slope and it would take plenty of hard work to make it look like a garden. It was a jungle of tree saplings, with wild Clematis growing among them besides brambles everywhere. I could see the possibilities but Gladys wasn't too keen, but in the end we decided to buy as no other plot seemed available, and it would be there when we retired from the shop, the cost £300. plus fees. It proved a blessing in disguise as 1956 brought to us a packet of trouble. Towards the end of the season as Gladys woke up one morning with a bloodshot eye and very painful, up to the doctors when surgery opened and he diagnosed it as conjunctivitis. He treated it as such for over a week, then one morning when he looked at it he suddenly said "Oh! my dear, its getting into the iris, I must send you to a specialist". That meant going to Exeter Eye Hospital.

Before this happened we had one happy event as on August 2nd of that year Brian and Joy were married. He was still in the R.A.F. doing a course on radar and finally found himself at Colerne, but there that particular subject was being dropped, so he stayed on until his National service was finished. That was the last bright spot for us that year.

To get back to eye trouble. Gladys was installed next day and when the specialist had examined her eye, said it was too late to stop it and the only thing was an operation to save the sight, a 50 - 50 chance and unfortunately it did not work. All they could do was cut a window in

that eye and let in a little light. By the end of August my wife was home again, but not to use her eye for anything but getting about. That lasted barely a week, the eye became inflamed and there was nothing else for it but to go back to hospital for more treatment. This time it was almost a month before I got her home again as they had sent her to Moreton Hampstead for a complete rest. She was there for one week and back to Exeter. I think it was some time in November when Gladys was settled back in Charmouth. Then Douglas went down with polio, an isolated case in Boreham Wood where he was a school master teaching woodwork at the Grammar School. Apart from period visits to the hospital we managed to keep going, until I was asked to accompany my wife to Exeter hospital and then I received a bombshell. I was told point blank that unless we got out of the shop, with artificial light, my wife would go blind. When this leaked out in the village that we would have to move on, the people wouldn't or couldn't believe it as the past 6 years had been so happy. It was said that one had to live there for 20 years or more before being accepted, we had with my wife's help done it in 6.

Each year we have been back to Charmouth, we bought a caravan and were able to spend our holidays there until the site was sold recently. Up till then we would meet folk we knew and during our chats over old times someone would say "Wish you were still here, we miss you". By and large 1957 was a sad year for us, but it was not before November that enquiries came in as to when we were going. We told all and sundry that as soon as we received a firm offer for the shop, we were prepared to go. A short time after two people walked into the shop and asked us if the house next door was for sale, we said "Yes, it is going for around £2,000., then the lady said if they bought that they would like something to go with it. Gladys was in the shop just to keep me company and called out "This is for sale isn't it?" to which I replied "Yes". After a little more chat they enquired where the owner of the house lived, they would call and if successful would come back and talk about the shop. To cut a long story short, they bought the goodwill, fixtures and fittings, also stock and we promised to help them settle down before we left Charmouth. We had to remove shelves and make good the walls, we left it in far better condition than when we had taken it over.

We left Charmouth just before Christmas and our goods were removed to 49, Brook Road, Bath, where a friend of ours had rented us a house for 30/- per week until our own place was built. We were there for eight months and each day Glad and I worked on our own plot. We spent Christmas at Boreham Wood with Doug and Brenda and family. Then back to our own plot clearing it ready to cultivate and it was a big job. We had some huge nonfires, but the smell at night of burnt rubbish filled the air and if one had been brought up in the country you will know what I mean, it has a scent of its own.

By March our bungalow was beginning to grow. Brian laid the first corner stone, he was then working for Arnold until a better job came along. For myself, I looked around for odd jobs until I felt like giving up. In any case I had two years to go before I received Old Age pension at 65 years. It sounds more dignified now 'Retirement Pension'. I worked for E. & H. Becket, Rose Growers at Batheaston for about twelve months, also two days a week at Mr. Hams, Bathford, when the slack period was on in the rose garden.

Later I kept Mr. Kingston's garden in order as well as various others. Mr. Kingston is the resident dentist in Wellsway. Altogether I kept up around £5. per week and when we took over our bungalow on July 11th, 1958 we began to put our roots down again.

First job was to clean up all around, the bank outside the lounge and front bedroom windows we made into a rockery. The piece of land just beyond was stonedust and had been a dumping place for years I should think. We wheeled tons of it to the bottom of the garden. We also had a greenhouse overall 20 ft. x 12 ft and between it and the rockery we laid a lawn. Beyond that we had to work in easy stages, but again my wife was my right hand in helping raise seeds and pricking them out. We made our own trays from orange boxes. I had dozens brought in, we took them to pieces, saved the nails and wire, because they were hard to come by as was wood for seed trays. One could make six good trays from a 6d. orange crate. One never sees one now and seed trays are plastic, there should be a notice on them 'Handle with care'. I could make £50. a year until a busy body informed the Tax office and I received a letter from them informing me I was running a business and was liable to tax. I replied to them thanking them for their letter and invited them to send someone along to view my shop or nursery. No one came along as far as I know and that was the end of the matter.

My wife's eyesight was better, but not good, still we are both thankful. Gladys renewed friendship at Southdown and rejoined the Townswomen's Guild also the Mothers union here at St. Lukes. My part was to join the band of sidesmen and later was elected on the Church council.

Our lives once again ran on smoothly until the late 60's and then Gladys met more trouble. The Townswomen's federation asked if she would join in and go to Holland for a week for talks and lectures all about the aims of the Guild. They arrived on a Saturday and the following day, Sunday, all were preparing to go to the English church and going down the stairs my wife fell and was knocked unconscious for about 10 minutes. When she recovered it was bed and a doctor and on examination her skull was found to be fractured. That was the end of her trip to Holland and because I was not told of this accident, at my wife's request, I received a shock when she arrived home. Against the doctor's wishes Gladys would come back with the rest. She walked up to the plane and from Heathrow she travelled by coach back home. When I opened the door to her I couldn't believe it was her. Both eyes were black and I soon had her in bed with a cup of tea. I rang the Dr. next day, his verdict, How did she manage to get home it would have killed most people, but one cannot keep a good woman down. Sooner than anyone thought possible Gladys was up and doing again.

This lasted until 1972 at the back end of the Summer. I myself was waiting to go into the eye infirmary and Glad came to one morning and she was speechless. She had had a stroke down the right side, not too severe thank God. After three days she insisted on getting out of bed and trying to walk. After a bit it was physiotherapy for Gladys. By then I was in the eye hospital, Brian and Joy had my wife up at Macauley Buildings. When I came out of the hospital after an operation I went to stay at Joy's also until we were fit again to be left.

After this last bout I was found to be diabetic and I also had blood pressure. I had to give up Church work and Gladys and I just stayed at home to look after each other. Our visits to church were far fewer.

Finally On November 8th, 1977, Gladys passed peacefully away. It has left a void in my life that can never be filled, but I am thankful my wife lived and died a Christian, trusting in the Lord.

Finis.