

*Autobiography
of
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The Early Years.

Being my mother's tenth child, I don't suppose there was much excitement when I was born on the third day of March, nineteen twenty-nine, for Mother had been pregnant every couple of years or so for what must have seemed to her an eternity. Furthermore, I don't think she ever wanted to be, nor was she very good at being a mother in the first place.

Edith Minnie Nunn, as Mother was christened, was her mother's seventh child and youngest daughter and as she once told me, she "was very wilful". I don't know if this had anything to do with her marrying against the wishes of her father or not. You see our Dad was from a much lower social level than Mum, and she never seemed to accept the situation and make the best of it. It seemed to me that Mum was never really happy. But then, as I said, when I arrived she had Phyllis, 15, Reg, 13, Bert, 11, Rog, 9, Pat, 7, Dick and Daisy, 5, and Dorrie, 2, and Dad was more out of work than in it! So she didn't have much to be happy about. My arrival must have been just one more problem in her life.



My earliest memories begin when we lived at Walderton. I recall lying in a wheel-less pram swung from a tree, in which both my sister, Dorrie, and I were put for our afternoon sleep. Dorrie was asleep but I was watching the birds, and the sun on us was warm. It is a wonderfully peaceful memory to me.

On another occasion, I was hiding from sight of the house. I've no idea why, but the baker with his square basket came in the gate behind me and spoke kindly to me. I didn't answer him and he didn't seem to expect me to, but I will always remember the comfort I felt just hearing him talk. I have no idea what it was about, but I awaited his return from the house and I was rewarded with another one-way chat as he went out of our gate. I don't remember ever seeing him again, but the warmth of his kindness is with me yet.

About the same period, I was chosen by the older kids to 'steal' some potatoes. It seems the boys had a bonfire somewhere and they wanted to bake some potatoes in it, and the potato sack was under the workbench where Dad was busy working on some job. Well, I was instructed, because I was the "smallest", to crawl in the shed, along under the bench and pinch some spuds. Well, it wasn't very often I was sought after to do anything, let alone take a major role in such an important mission, so off I went under instructions by the mile, as to the best way to do it. I got to the sack and took a spud in each hand and then I wondered how I was going to get out again. It's not easy to crawl with your hands full! Then as I sat there wondering what to do, a gentle voice said, "Want a hand there, lass?" I looked up to see Dad's smiling face. So I gave him the two spuds and got up. Needless to say there were no kids around by the time I had told Dad what I was there for.

Dad was always kind to me. I think he knew us kids very well, and it is Dad I remember who dried my hair, gave me medications, patched up my cuts and bruises, and looked after me when I had wandered off and got lost. Yes, looking back, I was probably the apple of his eye and the most predictable of his offspring.

The first neighbour I remember was a lady called Judy - she and her husband lived next door. They had no children, so we didn't see much of them, but I do recall we were sent to Judy's house with some message and the door opened to our knock by



Judy who was part way through her morning wash. This she did at the bottom of the stairs, just inside the front door. She bade us hurry inside and shut the door as she was “freezing”! This we did and poor Dick had to pass Mother’s message to Judy who was naked to the waist and not a bit embarrassed. Well, I was intrigued, I had not seen naked breasts before, so I asked her, ‘What’s them?’ and the soul said, “Thems motor horns, love.” Well this broke the kids into the giggles, and this little incident was a family tale for years and for me an early lesson to keep my mouth shut.

There is one more memory I have of this period, one I never told a soul about for many, many years. I tried to forget it, but it etched a deep track in my memory, and since I have brought it back to talk about it, it doesn’t seem so bad. In fact, I understand now how distraught Mum must have been through those trying years. I remember the other kids had gone to school, and I heard Mum and Dad having an altercation, I went to the foot of the stairs and looked up. There was Mum with a big picture frame in her hands and Dad was trying to get it off of her. When he saw me, he told me to run to the kitchen quick, and as I moved from the spot, the frame landed right where I had been, and smashed to pieces. The memory ends abruptly just there, the odd thing is I only remember the facts, not how I felt about it, maybe I did manage to forget that much, who knows?

The next place we called home was a place referred to as ‘The Cottage’ at Birdham. I don’t remember much of the house itself, but I do recall going to, and being at the Birdham School which was on a road called Birdham Straight. My first day at school was wonderful. I was allowed to play in the corner of the classroom, which had a nice neat sand pit, a large bead counting frame, and a grand assortment of toys, bricks and digging implements. It seemed that I, and I alone was to be un-hassled and undemanded of. Then, when playtime came around, I was given a big mug of cocoa and allowed to go outside and play with my sisters. It was a great introduction to school life and compared to the modern first day at school, I think the teachers were on the right track way back in ‘34.

Yes, I loved going to school. It was set, organised and my teachers made it clear what was expected of me. I always tried my best, though it rarely brought me far from the bottom of the class. But just the same, I had a seat of my own, a desk that was mine and, lowly though it was, a place in the class. I really didn’t mind being an also-ran, as everyone knew better than me at home, so it was a similar situation, and I was comfortable with it. One of my special joys in first grade was our ball and beanbag games with teacher. This period finished with a rest on our mats when we had a chance for a little nap, while teacher watched over us. To me, this meant no siblings to scare me out of my daydreaming. It was so nice to lay there in the warm sun with my eyes closed, listening to an occasional car passing, or the lovely drone of one of those old double winger aeroplanes, and to know I was safe. I did have my bad days too of course, like the day I forgot to put on my knickers and didn’t realise it until I went to sit at my desk. I was so embarrassed, I was even too scared to tell my sisters at first for fear they would tease me. But they soon noticed my distress, when I just sat in a corner of the playground. That was one bad day!

By this time, Phyl, Reg, Bert and Roger had grown up past school age, and presumably found work, so I was not subjected to as much teasing as before. Reg

had been an awful chap for teasing and tickling me and making me laugh till I cried, I really hated it. However, I didn't mind being tossed in the blanket - I was put on a blanket on the floor, while Dad made sure the bigger kids had a good hold on the blanket, then he would count down for takeoff. I don't remember them ever dropping me either! Another game Dad used to get us going with was to put a feather on a blanket and with a team at each end, a game of blow football ensued. Often ending with a heap of bodies on the floor laughing and all out of puff. Tippet was another game Dad played with us. That is, a team either side of the table and a button or coin is passed up and down under one side of the table until the captain calls 'up Jenkins', then all fists are put on the table. The other team then have to pick the hand that holds the coin. These games helped pass the long winter evenings.

About this time we had an old HMV gramophone (it must have been old for I am sure we were not in the position to have a new one.) We only had two or three records, one was the 'Teddy Bears Picnic', and one of the others had a song about 'there ain't no sense in sittin' on a fence, all by yourself in the moon light'. We played them no doubt to their ultimate destruction. But of all the indoor fun we had as a family, I liked the musical evenings the best. Mum had an old violin, which I thought she played beautifully. She used to play a lot of good music and when I hear these pieces now I still think of those days. Dad used to play the harp - well that's what he called it. It was a zither, and in later years he bought an old pedal organ, but that was much later. As the boys grew up they played the banjo, ukulele, mandolin and the mouth organ too. In later years, Daisy was given piano lessons by Miss Berry, my Mother's best friend, who was also my Godmother. Miss Berry, was the schoolmistress at Walderton, and was also Scout Mistress to some of my brothers. Dorrie and I had to be content with sounds made with comb and paper, but I didn't like doing that much. I was happy just to watch Mum on the fiddle, but she always looked so sad when she played. However, over the years I've noticed that violinists never seem to smile when they play anyway. When she played, I would sometimes hide under the table and have a good cry because it was so beautiful. But I was teased if I was caught crying. That's why I went under the table. There were lots of times when things didn't go smoothly, but since I've managed to forget many of the bad times, we will let them lie forgotten.

It was while we were living at 'the cottage' that I suffered for my own disobedience. I had been sent to bed on one of those long summer evenings in England when it is still light at ten p.m. I heard the bigger kids playing in the lane so I crept out to watch them, and sat quietly outside the gate. They were playing with a golf ball and a cricket bat, and I had been sitting there for some while before a wild shot off the bat brought the golf ball my way. It just missed my eye but cut my eyebrow. There was blood all over and much panic, I can tell you, for not even the kids knew I was there. Mum and Dad came at the run and I felt awful. My head was hurting, but I felt even worse about leaving my room. It was not usual for me to break the rules of bedtime - or any other rules for that matter, I was too timid, and hated to be shouted at or scolded. I don't remember the outcome of all this but I still have the scar on my eyebrow.

On another occasion we - the twins, Dorrie and I that is - were on our way to school. Pat was always a bit of a loner. I expect he chose to go alone. He was the clever one at school, and about this time he would have been close to leaving school, around 14 years, a time when all working class kids are expected to get out and work for a living. Anyway we had a short cut to get to school by. It was a narrow footpath between a hedge and a barbed wire fence. It so happened there were cows beyond the hedge and brother Dick said there was a fierce bull too, and that bulls chase

anything red, and yes I had a red topcoat on. Well, while the hedge was thick I felt fairly safe, but then we came to a big gap, and I would not cross it. They said if I went back home I would be in trouble with Dad, so I had better run across the gap fast. Well I had no intention of crossing the gap, Dad or the bull, so I took off my coat and threw it at them, then as I no longer wore red, I marched across the gap and put on my coat. Then to my surprise brother Dick said that was a smart move and that I wasn't so dumb after all. This pleased me, but I doubt I answered him and off we went to school. My school days were full of this kind of teasing, but I never thought it was anything but normal.

Our next home was a council house at a place called Tile Barn. The house was newer, but the road was full of holes and dirt (and mud if it rained). I don't think our stay here was a very long one, as I certainly don't recall much of the place. We went to the same school as before so that made the move easier for us. It must have been a rough neighbourhood as I remember Dad ordering us to stay indoors. On one occasion the boys were pushing for space at the front windows and getting great jollies out of watching two families, on opposite sides of the road, settling a difference of opinion with a mud fight. Yes, parents and all! I wanted to look too but Mum wouldn't let me, but I did see the houses the next day.

It was at this home that we played fire engines. Dad had gone to visit Mum, she must have been in hospital I think, and we had the afternoon to ourselves. We had a truck, a two-wheeler, with a long T handle on it that was used to collect wood for the fire, or coal if there was money for it. The boys found a ladder, and the plan was that we girls were to go play house behind the back hedge and then shout out 'FIRE', and the boys were to come and rescue us by laying the ladder over the hedge. Well, it sounded all right, so we yelled out 'FIRE' and they came on the run with Dad's brass hand bell loudly clanging and much shouting. But, of course, they had said not one word about the buckets of water that preceded them over the hedge and I didn't know there were so many prickles in that hedge till I had to climb back up that ladder, which I might add was no protection from a hawthorn hedge. I suppose it was a memorable afternoon, after all I remember it well. I used to enjoy going wooding much better, probably because being the youngest, I always had a ride in the truck going, and was usually sat on top of the load on the way back because I was too slow to keep up. It's more than likely I worked my ticket on that too.

About this time we girls were invited to play with a school friend. This was only the second time I remember being in someone else's home. Dad didn't let us mix outside of school as a rule. He had his hands full with just us, I guess. Anyway, this lass was an only girl, and her home was a nicely furnished workingman's home. I thought they must be awfully rich because she had a lot of new looking toys and a bedcover on her bed, and all the cups and saucers on the dresser had the same pattern, and on the table was a big bowl of oranges and it wasn't even Christmas yet! However, best of all she let me cuddle her teddy bear. He was a big as me and about as fat too, and that was my first glimpse of being 'rich'. So much for Tile Barn days.

Our next move was to a seaside place call Wittering and we moved into a flat over a petrol station. Well this was really something; I could look down from our curtain-less window and watch the cars coming to the four bowsers, Shell, Esso, Lube and one other the name of which escapes me now, (perhaps BP). At night Dorrie and I used to put raggedy Ted and Lambkins on the window sill and watch their shadows run back and forth across the walls as the headlights passed below. We had many a giggle at this.

Once again we still went to the same school, but it was an awful long walk. The

twins used to push a pushchair for Dorrie who had caught rheumatic or glandular fever and was still weak in the legs. I got a lift now and then if she wanted a walk, but it didn't bother me either way that I can recall. Dorrie had a birthday while we were at Wittering and someone gave her a sixpence and she paid for us both to go to school on the bus that day. That was the first bus ride that I can remember. It was a bright and sunny day and I was very excited. Quite often Dick would try his luck to hitch a ride to school for us but I only remember one car stopping to pick us up. It just so happened to be Mr. Plod, the policeman and his junior. We were in trouble now, I was sure. But he told us to get in and drove off but as we approached the police station, which was on the way to school, he drove into the station. I was certain by now that we were going to be locked up; I guess Dad had told us not to hitch a lift. I didn't know which was worse, locking us up, or telling Dad we had disobeyed him. The outcome was, however, that after a few worried moments he came out to the car again and drove us on to school, no doubt with a word of warning to the twins who were the eldest.

Sometimes we used to see Dad at lunchtime if Mum hadn't had time to cut our lunch before we left. He would bring our bread and jam, or whatever Mum could get to put on our bread, and we would wait at the school fence. Sometimes lunchtime was nearly over before he arrived.

By about this time I was about six going on seven, and a lot was to happen before we moved on from here. The biggest surprise was to find Mother nursing a tiny baby brother. Dorrie and I were delighted. We had known nothing about his pending arrival until we saw him. We were not allowed to play with him till he was much more mobile of course. Must have been bad for Mum, poor old girl. She would have been about forty-eight then and probably thought she was past having any more. It's no wonder she was distraught, but of course at the time I didn't know the cause of her violent outbreak. It happened just on our bedtime. I was standing a few feet from Mum and she was yelling at Dad. I stood still - I was terrified when anyone let off steam. She threw the cutlery box on the floor, and frightened the life out of little Johnny so he screamed too. Mum held him high with one hand. I thought he was going too -----? But Dad and one of the bigger boys got a hold of Mum and Johnny, and we girls were told to go to our room, but I didn't move, as I was so frightened. Daisy grabbed me and pulled me to our room. Meanwhile, Mum was screaming awful things and grabbed a knife. Dorrie and I hid under the bed until the noise subsided a bit and the twins were told to run and fetch the district nurse. I will always remember looking out of the window with Dorrie and watching our dear Daisy flying down the road barefoot, and her mighty flapping from the speed she was going and Dick trying to catch up with her. God, it's good to get this out of me and on paper. It hurts to remember - it hurts so much I am crying as I write, but I can lay it to rest now.

There was a seaside hotel up the road a little way, where Bert, Rog and Pat were employed for a while. They lived at the hotel I think, I don't remember seeing much of them after this time. Reg was employed for a short while on one of those sweet shops on wheels that were often seen on the beachfronts of England in the summer in the thirties. The boys made a raft while we were all at Wittering. It was made out of big drums and planks. I remember trying to get onto it, and one of the boys kept pushing my head under the water and I didn't get the chance to tell them that I couldn't touch bottom! When you have brothers you die a thousand deaths. I'm sure I did.

Like gypsies, we were always moving. It probably had something to do with not paying the rent, but whatever it was our next move was to Denmead. Once again we

lived in a row of about eight council houses, on a country road with hardly any other houses. On one side of our house lived a family called the Jarmins, and a young policeman, his wife, and little daughter lived on the other. This time we had to change schools. The Denmead school had a dozen or so pine trees in the bottom corner of the playground, and an old iron cannon, probably left over since the earliest days of cannons. It was shiny with wear from all the little bottoms that climbed and sat on it, mine included, though I didn't get on it much. Boys used to push me off. I don't remember many hassles at this school except the time Dorrie and I arrived at school at eleven a.m. Apparently I couldn't tell the time, for when the teacher asked me whether I was late for morning session or early for afternoon, I had no idea what to say. So as usual I infuriated the poor lady by saying nothing. It always worked though - she just gave up and sent me to my seat.

While we were at this school, they had a fancy dress parade and fete to raise money for a playing field for sports; I was quite excited about the parade, because the twins were going to dress up for it. There were several other outings I enjoyed, but can't place where we were living at the time - like the picnic at Broadhalfpenny Downs. This was one time I remember Mum being with us. It was a beautiful day, and it was great to run free on the downs. We saw a shepherd with his flock up there and the sheep had little tinkling bells around their necks. Another great treat was we were taken to the cinema with a lot of other kids. I suppose a body of good Samaritans footed the bill. That was very exciting, and as we came out of the theatre we were all given a paper bag with an orange, an apple, and a few sweets in it. This treat was I believe a regular Boxing Day treat.

I went to a Christmas party somewhere. It was in a big hall, and we arrived a bit late but the Jesshopes were always late! But not too late, in fact I thought it was just in time, we had missed some of the games and I hated being made to join in games. I was much happier to watch the others. Well, when we arrived the children were just being placed at the table, and what a table it was. It was full of little dishes, full of jelly and little baskets full of sweets, one each - and glasses of red, green and yellow drinks. To me this was a fairy tale party and after that we had Santa give us presents. But when my name was called out, I was scared to walk out in front of everyone. However, with a little coaxing from Santa I made it, and when I unwrapped my present, it was a big bright ball. I was one happy little lass.

We mixed with people a bit more at this place. We girls went to the church ladies sewing circle and went to Sunday school, and once there was a big tent set up in a field with a sign 'EVERYONE WELCOME - FREE'. Some church folk were trying to save some souls. Anyway we went along for whatever jollies we could find in this circus looking tent. I enjoyed being there. I had not been in so huge a tent before, and the lady playing on that pedal organ had me fascinated. On our way home, it was starting to get dark - must have been wintertime - anyway a gang of four or five kids gave us cheek. The twins were quick to give equally or better, and Dorrie put in her tuppence worth too, and only I was not enjoying it at all. The outcome was that Dick decided we would bolt for it, and lie in wait in the next field gate along the road, so we took off. Needless to say the other three were over the gate and hiding when I had just reached the gateway. I was so puffed, I could not have climbed that gate if I had tried, not at that moment, and I heard the kids almost upon me. So I turned to face my imminent fate and certain death, with my arms stretched out gripping a rail of the gate, and not only did I not speak - I didn't breath! To a man they propped in the road, looked in my direction- it was very dark now, then one yelled "GHOST", and another yelled "RUN FOR YOUR LIFE", and they were gone. I was still gripping the gate when the kids moved out of hiding Dick was laughing

and so were the girls and I was acclaimed the hero of the night for scaring them off. I didn't tell them who was the most scared, for I wasn't called brave very often.

We were allowed to take little Johnny out more now in his pushchair. Of course, we all wanted to push him, and many a row we had between us as to who's turn it was and who had the longest turn. Dick was the most daring with the pushchair. It's a miracle the little lad survived! Dick used to let go of the handle on a downhill run and run along beside him. Johnny laughed and enjoyed it well enough, even though he was often tipped out inadvertently. The worst time was when Dick was fooling on a bridge and Johnny was tipped right in the river. It wasn't a big drop and the water wasn't very deep, and our hero brother was in and had the little chap out before he could take a breath almost. He was unharmed, but we had a very wet baby to explain about when we got home. It's funny how I remember these things, but not always how we got out of our scrapes.

The family's next move was to a house on a farm near the dear little village of Hambledon. I had many happy times there. The house was a farm workers cottage, as was the house next door, but since the farmer could not afford much help there was no need to keep them for workers. Our neighbours were an old couple called Mr. and Miss Opitz, and they kept their garden very neat, when they left the house some months later (one of them had died), we were given a few things. One was a Chinese sword, made entirely of round Chinese coins with square holes in the centre and all wired together. It was a marvelous relic but we were allowed to play with it I suppose, because there were Chinese coins around the house for years after that. The farm belonged to a kindly man called Mr Stroud, and his wife was our Sunday school teacher, and the only lady I have seen that could ride a pushbike 'at attention'. She was rather strict with us, but kind just the same.

To get our belongings to our new home we had borrowed Mr. Stroud's old carthorse called Polly, and a flat cart. Old Polly had long since earned her retirement and was not inclined to be hurried at all. I remember sitting on the back of the load when we came to a rather steep incline in the road. Well Polly went slower and slower, and eventually stopped, so Dad told us all to get off and they coaxed her along a bit further, then she slowed again. Dad called for all hands to push, and dear old Polly must have thought it a wonderful idea for she stopped pulling altogether and the cart was starting to go backwards. There was a great panic to put something behind the wheels, after many threats, bribes, coaxes, giggles and lost tempers the old girl eventually came to a stop at the gateway of our new home. Dorrie and I flew up the pathway to give the place the once-over. This house was a special one to us, it only had one door at the back which led to the kitchen, on the right was a good size walk in pantry, and on the left-hand end was a large built in brick copper, which also served as our bath tub on bath nights. The only other room downstairs was the large living room. Beside the pantry door was another door that opened directly on the bottom step of a spiral staircase the kind that each step narrows to nothing on the left hand side. There was also a long window, from which by sitting halfway up the stairs you could see right across the cornfields and up the road towards a place called Lands End. I never did find out what sort of a place this particular Lands End was like, but half way up those stairs was my special place of peace. When things were not going smoothly, I often used to sit there and dream up what was at the end of that road. There was one time when I didn't find peace on my step, and that was when a little summer bee decided to have a little dream there too, and I sat on him. This was one of the times I remember Phyllis being with us, for she came on the run to see what all the noise was about. Phyllis could always make us feel better and even laugh about ourselves. She was more like a fairy godmother than a sister to me.

Across a gravel court-way from the back door there was a bake house with a big brick oven, but I don't think it was used when we were there, and beside that was a brick woodshed. Behind that was the earth closet or lav, as we called it in those days. The garden was quite a long one and one apple tree; some gooseberry bushes, black currant and red currant bushes were also thriving there.

The twins, Dorrie and I soon set about getting the lie of the land. We soon discovered a good dell to play in, with plenty of wood there too for when we were sent to replenish supplies. A running stream where watercress grew in abundance, plenty of cow fields for mushrooms, a good woods up the back, for birds nests, primroses and violets and some good oak trees on the edge of the woods that were good for climbing and a row of really good beech trees on top of the hill the other side of the farm. We spent many happy hours up in those trees pretending we were at sea looking for treasure Islands. There was another dell we found later that was being used as a dump. This proved to be quite profitable. I gained a doll's pushchair from it - it had no wheels, but I could pull it along quite happily. Later we also discovered woods closer to Hambledon, where there were chestnut trees and in the field beside it grew the biggest cowslips I have ever seen. I think we were on a private estate there, but we were never caught.

It was at Hambledon that I first saw the hounds and horses of a real foxhunt. In fact they came through the oaks at the back of our house, through a small field, down the bank into our garden, down the garden path and out of our gate. I thought it was very exciting seeing all the huntsmen in their bright coats, and the dogs up front all excited and yapping. Dad rather took exception to them chasing through our place and complained loud and long about it, but it brightened our day no end. We had a fair walk to school, about a mile or so I would think but a pleasant mile. The school was right in the village of Hambledon, beside a lovely old church. The village is a picture calendar place and not much changed over the years. The headmaster was Mr. Browning a good fair man, even though he did give me the cane for nothing! It seems some kids broke through our school hedge to an orchard beyond - now who would put an orchard beside a school playground - any way some kid said he saw me go through the hole, and I was not aware of the apples, or the hole in the hedge as it happened. However, Mr. Browning didn't hit very hard, it was the shame of being up for the cane that upset me. I used to enjoy nature study lessons; we walked the country lanes with teacher and collected leaves and grasses. Back at the classroom we pasted them with their names in our books.

I lost a lot of schooling while we were here, as we all caught ringworm from the cows on the farm. I had it worse than the others. I had blonde curly hair at the time but when we caught ringworm, I had to have all of my hair shaved off, and it was awful. I would have been about nine years old then. Mum had to take us to Portsmouth hospital outpatients many times for treatment. This for me was quite an adventure. It was a long ride on the bus into the city. There was so much of everything - people, noise, cars, bikes, and shops. The only boring bit was in the waiting room, and that hasn't changed. I especially loved it when it rained for it was dark when we left Portsmouth, and with the entire city lights and the wet roads, it sparkled like fairyland.

I don't know how many times I had to go for that X-ray treatment to Portsmouth, but I enjoyed them, bald or not. I suppose I wore a hat or a scarf, I don't remember. I know I wore little mob cap at home as worn by dairymaids and housemaids. They were rather out of date even then, but the kids soon tired of ragging me about them, Mum used to have to sit me in the sun and pull out dead hair roots with tweezers every day for ages, at least I think that's what she was doing. That was the first

individual treatment I can remember getting from Mum but it didn't last long. When all was healed and my hair grew again it was still curly but not a blonde hair in sight. It was a mass of tight brown curls and I was sent back to school again.

Our front pathway was on a bit of a slope, it was a gravel path, and from time to time the gravel washed away and down the roadside. Well on this occasion we four went out with a sack and a small go-cart, to find some gravel, and would you believe it! - There on the side of the road was a big heap of it. So we proceeded to fill our sack. Who should we see heading our way on his pushbike - none other than Mr Plod himself? We had been up that road many times and never seen a Policeman. How do they know when kids are into mischief? Well a rapid decision was made to look like we were having a rest so we all sat on the sack and tried to hide it. But Mr Plod stopped right beside us and asked us what we were doing and of course we answered "nothing", only Dick said, "nothing, Sir!" But it didn't help. So as usual when Dick is caught out and knows he can't win he explained that we wanted to fix up our driveway. This didn't work either and we were told that stealing was an offence and that our father could be put in jail for our stealing. That upset me, I knew Dad wouldn't like it if we were stealing - though I don't know how we were going to explain where we got it from, maybe it was the gypsy in Dad 'thou shalt not get caught'. Anyway I was proud of Dick, he said 'sorry sir', but we had to give our name and were sent on our way empty handed. I was concerned that poor Dad would have to go to jail, but they soon convinced me that he wouldn't because we had left the gravel where it was. It was like that when we went scrumping. If Dick thought we could get away, he would tell us to run. If not, he would wait and be polite and I am sure we sometimes were let off a bit lighter for it. He always assumed responsibility for us and never left us to take the blame, not that I can remember anyway.

We had a lot of good times at Hambledon, Dorrie and I played a lot with little Johnny. We used to play house, and he loved dressing up with us - especially hats, any one's hat or even a pudding basin. He was a fun little lad and laughed a lot with us. He had a beautiful, happy nature, and I don't ever remember him in a temper. Dad made a swing in the doorway of the shed, only a little low one. But John fell off it one day and broke his left leg and had to scuff around in a plaster for a few weeks. It didn't slow him down any. It was from Hambledon that Dorrie and I were sent away for a real holiday. Some people called 'the Brethren' arranged it. We went on a coach with a lot of other kids to a place called Christchurch, near Bournemouth. We were met by our new Aunts and uncles, Dorrie and I were to be looked after by Mr. and Mrs. Goymer, a dear kind couple who took us to their home, a nice comfortable home in the middle of a long row of houses. We were taken to our room, which had the biggest, highest, double bed I had ever seen and it had a feather quilt on it and a bedside mat on each side. We even had a chamber each or 'po' as we used to call them. After being asked if either of us wet the bed, and proudly saying 'no, we were too old for that', we were left to put our meager belongings into the draws of the dressing table.

We had a wonderful week. We were allowed to play with toys and games, and allowed to help Auntie with whatever she was doing, and then when Uncle came home from work we all had tea. We then went for a walk through the park and had a turn on all of the swings, slides and roundabouts. When we had our fill of that, we walked around the block to a little Pub where we sat outside with Aunty while Uncle went in and bought two beers and two lemonades. After a while we went on down the street and were bought a pennyworth of hot chips each, then home to bed, it was great. They seemed to enjoy our company and we all laughed a lot.

On Saturday, the day before we went home, they took us to the shops and we were told we could choose anything in the shop that cost sixpence. It took us quite a while to choose but we were not rushed, I finally chose a small china doll, and a china stove in a cardboard half box, painted to look like a kitchen, Dorrie chose a sunshade. What wonderful people they were! We went home very happy girls indeed.

Dorrie and I had another holiday, though I don't remember when. It was with Mr and Miss Milam, an old couple who lived in Swanmore. They had a very neat house in a very neat garden and Uncle Milam was the local postman. They had a very large orchard and the fruit was ready for picking. Dorrie and I were very keen to climb the trees. I think we must have been part monkey. We couldn't see a tree but what we would want to climb it - they seemed to draw us like a magnet. We were also allowed to eat any fallen fruit, but were not to pick any unless Aunt or Uncle were with us, well that was OK by me, and I set forth up to the orchard, and what a feast I had. We were to have helped pick apples after lunch that day and I had been looking forward to that. But I had such a bellyache I was dosed with a glass of Andrews liver salts, which made me feel better very quickly, but was confined to my bed for the afternoon for being greedy. I was very ashamed of myself, and I did so want to go apple picking too but I wouldn't move till Miss Milldam said I could. She was kind to me but I didn't really like her - she had a cross face, though Dorrie seemed to get on famously with her.

We were often given pennies to spend and Auntie encouraged us to bring at least half of what we bought and put them in a jam jar, so while we were there we always had a few sweets in our jar. I came to like the idea; it was fun to have a variety of sweets to choose from.

We went to the Harvest Festival service at church while we were there. I thought it was wonderful to see the stooks of corn, vegetables, preserves, fruit and lots of other goodies in the church. The church itself was decorated with what we used to call 'Daddy man's beard' and I still don't know any other name for it, it is a creeper that grows wild in the hedgerows and is particularly pretty and wispy in the autumn.

I still keep remembering happy times of the days in Hambleton. One of them was when Mum was sick and staying at the farmhouse being looked after by Mrs. Stroud, and Phyllis came to look after us. We had a lot of fun then. She could make porridge for breakfast seem like a special treat, just by giving it a fancy name and saying we should make a wish while we ate it and it might come true - make believe is the supreme gift to children who have little else. Phyllis used to read to us, she read 'Wind in the Willows' in such a way that we were right there with Mole and Ratty, and when she read the 'William' books, we laughed till we had a tummy ache - Thank-you Phyl for the joys you gave us in those times you were wonderful.

The twins were getting to the end of their school days, and soon it would be Dorrie, John and I but we still had a little longer to play in the woods fields and dells together. We sometimes went 'rabbiting'. This must have looked funny to an onlooker, but we would first get our pockets full of 'good' stones, and then while still quite a long way away from the rabbit warren, we would lay on our tum or knees, in pecking order of course, Dick, Daisy, Dorrie and me, and we would creep along to within what Dick thought was throwing distance then we had to lie still and then carefully and quietly pass all our stones up to big brother who was going to kill a bunny for dinner tomorrow. Well the greenies wouldn't have anything to worry about, for I don't think our dear leader ever even hit one, but it was fun. Definitely more fun than when they decided to take an old scooter up on beech tree hill to see

how it would go downhill - believe me it went. I didn't really want to have a go but I didn't want to be a sissy so I got on and ere it went a couple of yards, it bolted clean away. It left the track and headed for the rabbit warren. Well I think the front wheel went into a hole and I was spread-out on the ground, but no lasting damage was done.

Hambledon was the last school that the four of us attended together. There was a little cake shop in the main street where we sometimes went to buy our lunch, which was either six penny worth of broken biscuits or six penny worth of stale cakes, which was quite a big bag full in those days. I thought this was quite a treat, and sometimes we would get a penny packet of fizzers too - they were a sherbet sweet that could fizz up a glass of water. I remember we were sent to Sunday school one day with a penny each for the collection box, but we each spent a halfpenny at the sweet shop on our way there. Mrs Stroud must have seen us at the shop, for when we were at Sunday school; she gave a sort of sermon about stealing form the poor. I remember feeling guilty at the time, but looking back, she was lucky that the box got half.

We arrived at Meonstoke in the back of a removal van. I remember the van stopping and some of the local kids were staring at us and I rather hoped this was not our destination, because they didn't look very friendly. However, this was the front gate of our new home... It was a cottage with a tall wall all around the front garden. It had a large garage, which was often to be our play place, there was a cobbled courtyard at the back, and outside of the back gate the meadow sloped down to the river. It was a pretty view with a country pub and the church, closed by the river to the right the road to Droxford ran the other side of the river and parallel to it. We had a fenced off veggie garden in the meadow and it was out there that we had the only bonfire night with the family that I can remember, with penny bungers and sparklers. Johnny was very scared of the noise and I wasn't very impressed either but the bonfire was nice and warming. It must have been towards the end of summer that we moved there for I remember Mum, Dad, John in his pram and the four of us walked to the August bank holiday fair, on Portsdown Hill. I think we all had six pence or a shilling to spend, it was a beautiful day, Mum wouldn't let me take Johnny for a ride; I suppose he was only two or three at the time. It was a long walk home, but a lovely day's outing.

I had a short spell at Sunday school in Meonstoke and I loved it until one day I was picked to read a prayer on the following Sunday. I was most upset about this and made out to have a pain in the tummy when next Sunday came around, but no one believed me. To my relief however, I wasn't made to go - I didn't then and I still don't like to be up front of a group of people.

We had snow that Christmas, and what a pretty village it is when covered in snow. We had a sled of some kind and found a frozen pond to slide on too - once the twins had tested it out for strength. We went carol singing that year and returned home with four shilling between us and very cold hands and feet.

It's rather odd, but I cannot remember one thing about Meonstoke School, I know it was at the end of our street and that is all. The twins had to go to the senior school, which was at Droxford, and Dorrie had a fever of some sort. Mum said it was due to our bedroom wall being so damp and maybe that is why we didn't stay at that house so long. It could be that Mum kept me at home to help her with Johnny, which would explain my not remembering much of school.

There was talk of war about this time and we who were not encouraged to read papers, and were sent out to play when the news was on. We knew very little of the

outside world. To me the war was something in our history books and Mum said if war did come, Dad would get work and we would live better. So at the time we moved from Meonstoke to Fareham, I hoped the government would go to war. Looking back now, it must have been a worry for Mum knowing she had three children in their twenties and three in their teens, and it was when we moved to 21 Blackbrook Road, Fareham in 1939 that war was declared.....

The War Years 1939-45

Our move to Fareham was the last family move; Mum and Dad were to live there for the next 20 years or so. Our house was about a mile from the centre of Farnham, the town had a railway Station, a bus station, two picture houses and a busy market place - on Mondays! It also boasted several Pubs, Churches, playground parks and both public and private schools. West Street was the main street and when we arrived there West Street was made of Tarred wooden blocks (dug up later and sold as fire wood after tanks loosened them). Our house was the centre of three attached houses on the corner of Blackbrook Farm Road and Fir Road. Blackbrook Farm was just opposite our front gate, it was no longer a farm, but the house was occupied for a short time until 'Vospers' built a war production factory there. At the age of ten I had little or no knowledge of the news of the day and my interests were to find out all the 'good' places this new town had to offer. The first week we were there, Dorrie and I took little John to town. He was only three but he walked all the way there and most of the way back. We didn't have his pushchair, I don't know why - lost in the move perhaps - anyway, Dorrie and I were very proud of him, and he was such a happy little chap.

For the first time ever I had to go to a new school with no brothers or sisters, and so did Dorrie, I to the primary school and Dorrie to the high school. I remember Dad took me on the first day and though I was very shy, I soon settled in to the routine of the school.

I enjoyed my school days at the Fareham junior school and during that first year I went on a coach trip to one of the London Zoos - I really loved that. I didn't do too badly in my grades that year either; well I was more in the middle than at the bottom anyway! Each class had a garden that year and I found a real love of gardening and growing things. A couple of years later, with advice from Dad, I had a jolly good veggie garden going at home. I was quite proud of my effort and so was Dad, I think. He often told me how good a gardener his Dad was.



The last year at Junior went all too fast and I had to move to High school and for one last year Dorrie and I were together again. High school was girls only who were good and I liked the Domestic class we had once a week. Not that we did much cooking as all foods were rationed and hard to get but the teachers taught us the basics and it was a nice change from books. I also liked country dancing and singing, but I fear my teachers didn't seem to find my efforts at all satisfactory. I was ignored more than reprimanded, that suited me fine and I continued to enjoy the sessions. Dorrie was better than I at school; she was in the B grades while I only made the C's. I had nice teachers - leastways, they

didn't upset me very often - but poor Dorrie had a rough time especially with Miss Pullen. She was a history teacher and Dorrie's class teacher.

The war didn't affect us very much. In those days, we spent a few hours in the shelters during air raids, though very few bombs were dropped around Fareham. We also had to carry gas masks to school with us. The greatest danger in an air raid was shrapnel from the Anti-Aircraft guns, many a lad had a collection of the stuff, and I think Johnny did, as he got older. It was around this time that plastic raincoats were sold for the first time and now 50 years later, they are still a very handy item.

Dorrie left school and found a job and soon after Dick joined the Navy, Pat was in the Navy and Reg, Bert and Roger were in the army. We saw very little of any of them. They'd just pop in for a short leave and away again. Pat took me to Portsmouth on one leave, to see 'Pinocchio'. It was a wonderful day for me. I was so proud to be out with my favourite brother. Uncle Jim, Mum's youngest brother, used to visit us a bit too. He was a Stoker in the Merchant Navy. Daisy tried to join the Navy too but she failed the medical and she eventually joined the NAAFI (Services Catering).

Well, our big family was spread all over the world during the war years but the five of us at home had some good times never the less. We spent many a good Sunday at Lee-on-Solent beach. Dorrie, Mum, Dad and I had bikes and Johnny used to ride in the carrier in front of Dads bike, for a one legged man Dad could peddle with the best of us. Sometimes the ice cream man would walk along the beach and Dad would buy us all a penny ice block and Mum had a bag of sandwiches and sometimes scones or rock cakes. Dad often took a tiny metho heater to make Mum a cup of tea. Then, at sundown, we would peddle our way home before dark.

On Earning A Living

Long before I left school the idea of doing something to get something was not new to me, but the first time I recall getting cash in the hand for it was at Meonstoke when my older brother, two sisters and I went carol singing and together we earned the grand total of four shillings exactly. Mother said we should each choose a gift for ourselves since Dad had no work and we were receiving a box of food a week. I don't know what it was called but was some sort of dole assistance. So it looked like this shilling was our Christmas gift. I was thrilled, I'd never chosen a Christmas toy before and I looked everything in the local store that cost one shilling and there was this little doll and my Christmas was made.

The next time I was to receive cash in hand was not so easily gained. I was about 12 at the time and during the war and I went one Saturday to pick potatoes. I worked hard for four hours that morning and presented Mum with my hard earned four shillings. I was glad the ride back from the farm was downhill most of the way. I decided then and there that I was in no hurry to leave school and start work.

My 14th birthday came along and just as one must go to school, one must accept leaving this haven and go out to earn money for the food one eats. Dorrie was working in a tea and coffee Kiosk at Fareham bus station and her boss Mr. Williams took me on as an extra in busy times. I learned to make sandwiches and



tea for the customers and soon was taken on full time. In the meantime Dorrie left the job and stated as apprentice upholster in town. As I recall I was quite happy at the job, but it must be a bit of the gypsy in me, it was time to move on and I found a daily domestic job - or Mother did!

I was starting to learn how other people lived, I was good at doing as I was told, and being the tenth child in a family it was the natural thing to do. So I learned to do things the way the lady of the house wanted and I found the family very kindly towards me, I don't remember how long I worked there, or why I left, but it was time to move on again.

The next move was quite exciting as I was going to move away from home, 25 miles in fact, to a beautiful seaside resort called Bognor Regis. There was lovely lady called Mrs. Bartholomew who wanted a 'live in girl', my brother Reg, who lived in Bognor with his wife and family, took me around to Kenilworth Lodge (now called San Sousi) in Victoria Drive and the job was mine. I learned a lot more than cleaning a house from Mrs. B. She was a real lady, very kind and very patient with me. I could go visit my brother or Dorrie, (who had also changed jobs and was working domestic another part of Bognor) anytime, or go for walks along the beach. It was a good time of my life and I was learning to like stability. I went to church with Reg's family, joined GFS or Girls Friendly Society [Church Club for girls] and was also confirmed in the Church of England.

It was while I was in Bognor that the war ended and I was starting to get restless again. I had this idea I wanted to join the Navy but I pushed the idea away once or twice, but eventually I had to tell Mrs. B. the time had come to move on again and I headed for home. In the recruiting office I was told I couldn't join the Navy till I was 17 and a 1\2 and I was not yet 17. I could however join the Land Army at 17. So I filled out the papers for that! I don't know why to this day! I took a job in a soldering factory until I became 17 and my enrolment in the land army was confirmed. It was a small factory run by a widow lady who was trying to keep her late husband's business going. I remember I had the feeling she was losing the battle. It was, however, my first job in a factory situation and I enjoyed the 'being part of a team' kind of job. In all, there were about a dozen girls and women; I left the job when my Land Army papers came through.

My first posting was to a farm owned by Lady French at Upper Bullington, about halfway between Winchester and Andover in Hampshire. The farm was managed by the 'bailiff', Mr. Durford, and the foreman was Mr. Blakeman whose daughter I still write to - she is now Mary Beran. By far the brightest personality on the farm was my direct boss the 'dairyman' known to all as 'Pop Allwork', a lovely man. He was



72 when I was there at 17. I was the dairymaid, but I was always called 'land girl', except for Pop who called me 'Jenny-me-luv'.

It was at Bullington that I learned to milk a cow, make butter, help a cow at calving, bucket feed calves, hoe our turnips, pick frozen Brussels sprouts, stook the corn and ride a bike with two 3 gallon cans of milk on the handlebars, that I had to deliver to Lady French's house and Lower Bullington. As well as pump all our dairy water and cut the wood for the copper to wash up the dairy gear, but I never did learn to overcome my fear of that shorthorn bull!! Life was kind to me. It was more a way of life than a job and my off work hours were full too. Mary and I went for bike

rides, went swimming, even made a raft (which sank when we got on it!!!). We also belonged to the Sutton Scotney Youth Club and we went on bus trips with them to London shows, Zoos, river cruises. We even put on a pantomime, had lessons in ballroom and old time dancing. One of the lads from the Youth Club, John Everett was his name, came out to Australia and I wrote to him a few times. His wife has recently written to say he had passed away - he had a bad heart for years. I had a bad bout of earache and my landlady, Mrs. Andrews, said I should see a Doc, and just as well I did. He rushed me off to hospital pronto and I had a mastoid operation and then they took out my tonsils. I was then sent to Ashton Wolds Convalescence Home for Land girls. It was one of Britain's stately homes, a beautiful place, and after I'd been away for several weeks I decided I would not return to that farm and applied for a change through the Land Army office. Now looking back I wonder why, as I loved it at Bullington. I guess it was time to move on again.

When I was declared fit for work I reported to Mr. Houghton, my next boss, who was a farmer with a dairy of large Friesians and several large greenhouses full of tomato plants. The dairyman's name was Mr. Herridge; I boarded with him and his good lady, in the small farmhouse. This dairy was more modern, there were machines for milking and water was on tap. There was a steam pipe to heat the wash-up water and a steam box to sterilise the buckets etc. There was of course a fearsome monster called 'the boiler' which had to be fed, and the noise of the safety valve was quite awesome and being told to keep an eye on the gauge in case 'it sticks', was quite scary. No I, by far preferred the gentleness of chopping wood for a copper as at Bullington, to this steam-spitting monster.

Pop Herridge was a quiet gentle man, he had a little white Sealyham terrier called "Toots" and Toots was always with him. This farm was adjoining a convent - well, it was one of the fine homes of Hampshire, but the Nuns had taken over the home for a girl's boarding school and the farm part was sold, or leased to Mr. Houghton. It was situated just outside Wickham Square and my dear Dorrie, now married to her Dutchman Jo, lived at the other end of the square, and I spent a fair amount of my spare time there.

One day Pop H, had gone to Portsmouth on business and I was milking on my own when an Insurance man said he could not find Mrs. H in the house, so I had to turn off all the machines and go find her. The poor soul had taken a stroke or heart attack, I found her on her bed and ran down the road to a lady I knew had the phone. I don't know to this day where that insurance man went! Anyway three days later the poor lady died and Pop H moved to his sisters place and my brother Roger became the next dairyman. He had been working on a farm in Devon since he was de-mobbed after the war and was familiar with dairy work.

I think it was just after Christmas of 1949, that I decided to leave and get a change of job. Searching the job column I went for a 'Nanny's' job in Putney, London. I didn't get the one I went for, but was put on to a Mrs. Gross who employed me to Nanny her little lad, Irwin - I suppose he would be about 39 now (as at 1982), how time flies!

Anyway London was a very different ball game to say the least. The Gross's house was no bigger than Mum's place at Fareham with 3 bedrooms and bathroom upstairs, and lounge, dining and kitchen downstairs. However, most of our time was out walking. I found all the parks and gardens around for miles, and there were walks along the riverbank too. One day I walked to Kew Gardens. I've no idea how far it is from Putney to Kew, but I remember being a little apprehensive as to whether I'd be back by my allotted time. I met another Nanny in my walks, her name was Rosie,

she was small, Indian and somewhere between 20 & 40 (it's very hard to guess the age of an Indian). We used to spend our days off together, we would have coffee and cakes at a different cafe shop each week, and then go to the movies after, I remember one day it was raining so we dashed into what we thought was a Picture Theatre and when the show started it was a live show of nudes, Rosie didn't show her embarrassment, but I know it was harder for her as she had a convent upbringing in India. Anyway we crept out while the lights were low and had another coffee and cake, while we regained our equilibrium.

I wish I had written to Rosie when I left London she was a real loyal friend, but that's how I was I guess. On one of our days off Rosie went to see a sick friend and said I could go with her. We went to a rather rough and poor area and into a long dark passage with several alcoves on the right side, the first alcove had several Indian men just sitting on a bench seat all dressed Indian style, turbans and robes, the next alcove was much the same and the next was all ladies older and the next there was a lady on a mattress being attended by some younger women, and there were some mothers with little ones in the end one. It was all very strange to me. I just followed Rosie down to the sick ladies alcove and waited. Rosie gave something to one of the ladies and there was a lot of quiet murmuring going on in the alcoves. We were not in there more than a few moments and then we were out in the street again. I was hoping Rosie would explain, but she didn't and I thought it would be rude to ask her so I never did find out what that place was so very dark and airless. There was a sad and timeless feeling in there, almost unreal. Perhaps one would have to be Indian to understand.

I was at Putney for the Oxford/Cambridge boat race, which is always run on Easter Sunday. It was 1950, and I was 21 that year, after lunch Mr. and Mrs. G took their lad out to 'parade' Mrs. G's Easter bonnet, and I was free to go to watch the race only a small walk away. (I believe Bob Hawke was at Oxford at this time!!) Well I don't remember who won the race that year but it was a lovely day and a very festive time to be on the riverbank.

When I left the Gross household it was very sudden, in fact, I walked out! We were



both to blame I suppose. I received an undeserved bowling out, it was about a bit of shopping I did for her. I bought the Kippers at the wrong shop, since I've always been a coward in a verbal altercation I just went upstairs packed my port, gave her the door key and said good-bye. I had no idea where I was going and I was very upset, but I had made friends with a lady whom I had helped in the street one day. (I had carried her retarded child home for her.) I called in on her and she let me cry it out over a cup of tea and gave me a bed for the night to 'think it over'. By the morning I had got logic back on top, found a job in the morning paper and my friend had a friend where I could board and by the end of the day I was employed as a counter hand at the Notting Hill Gate

Police Station canteen and boarding with a young mother at the end of Nelson Road. For the life of me, I can't recall her name though I stayed there several weeks. While working at Notting Hill Gate Police canteen, I had a surprise visit from Dad. He had come all the way from Fareham [Hants.] to see how I was doing. He went first to see the Officer in Charge of the Station who then gave me the rest of the day off. So Dad and I had a walk in Hyde Park, hired a boat on the Serpentine. I was a keen rower then and Dad loved it. We then discovered the Albert Hall, Dad was thrilled. We didn't go in of course but Dad was happy to have seen the place he had heard so much about on the BBC Radio. All in all we had a good day and Dad went home happy, no doubt relieved I wasn't in any trouble, and he would have known, I'm sure he knew me better than anyone.

I found the work at the canteen easy to get the hang of but I couldn't find any good vibes with the other ladies. It didn't upset me, but I felt they thought me a "plant" for some reason. I found the police staff - our only customers- very friendly and mostly happy and I enjoyed the popularity I had with them. Before long I was thinking of joining the force myself, though I doubted my education was good enough, but the lads got me to fill in an application form and I went for an interview. The outcome of which was that I was not the right 'type' for the job, looking back now they were quite right. I would have been a disaster on the job, but at the time I was disappointed and this made me restless again. This time I wasn't going to walk out, I'd find another job first. I found an advertisement in a local shop window and the way I read it- a young lady was required at a good establishment presumably as a maid- oh my goodness I was a country bumpkin! Anyway I went to the address- in my tweed skirt, flat heels, and no makeup. The door was opened by a regular "Jeeves" sort of chap. I told him I had come for the job as advertised and just for a second he was off his balance. Then he "feared madam had the wrong address". He must have understood my mistake. I was, however, insistent that it was the same address, but he assured me no staff were required and I left. When I got to the canteen I was telling a couple of Bobbies what I'd done and they roared with laughter. It seems that establishment was the classiest brothel in the street. Anyway I settled down again for a bit until one day, I was on a day off and a policeman called at my lodgings and said the sergeant at the local station wanted to speak to me so we walked to the station and I was sacked! I was stunned, I'd never been sacked before, I asked what had I done and he said you know very well what you've done and that he didn't intend to discuss it. He gave me my wages due and said I was never to apply for any employment with the police force again. I had never stolen from any boss and never cheated time, never back answered; I was too timid for that. I could only think of getting home to Dad. He always said as long as we were honest with him he would stand up for us and I needed someone on my side and I needed it bad.

So once again it was back to lodgings, pay my dues, pack my port and get the next train home to Fareham. But I didn't know that poor Dad was up to his ears with sister Daisy's troubles. Her estranged husband was all but trying to break in our house, he was a bit full - a big strong sailor lad he was - and poor old Dad was a little bloke with a wooden leg doing his best to protect his daughter. And I decide to go home!! It was 10 -11 p.m. when I got home, the sailor boy had gone and when I knocked on the door Dad thought he had come back. I had to keep calling to him through the letter flap, my sister eventually let me in and I found myself supporting the family, they were in an awful emotional mess.

Well I didn't tell them what had happened and like most things that hurt me in life I set about forgetting it ever happened! I'm very good at it. I think I learned it at a very young age, but I wouldn't recommend the habit because I think you bury a bit

of yourself too! Having gone through eight jobs, it was getting a habit. One more didn't take long to find and after the hassles of city life I was glad to get back on a farm again. But before I took my next job, I received a letter from brother Pat [Arthur Valentine] with an invite to his wedding. I took a train to London and because I was out of work and a little light on for cash I decided to get a lift to Yorkshire. But how to get out of London onto the Great Northern Road? I hadn't a clue, so I took a train to Welling Garden City, which was as far north as the London City trains went according to the station map.

On arriving there, it was about midnight by now, but it didn't bother me. I looked for the stationmaster to ask directions to the highway and a youngish chap was on the platform and I asked him and he said, "wait a minute I'll find out". But I didn't like his looks and decided to find out for myself and took off fast out of the station and up the road and around a corner, having stood still I found I wasn't being followed. Also I heard a constant hum of a highway so I walked toward it. Actually I walked down three short dead-end streets but the forth one took me right through to the highway north. I started to walk and had not gone far when a car stopped to give me a lift, the driver was a rather shocked vicar who was none too happy to find a young woman hitching to Yorkshire. But he took me as far as he could and reluctantly let me out with his blessing and a promise he would pray for me.

The next lift was with a schoolteacher and his wife a great couple they were and took me a long way. The next lift was a travelling salesman who was not going a great deal further up the highway but did offer me a room at his place or the night. He added as his wife was away at the time he didn't think I would like to but it was up to me. Well, we pulled into his driveway and I was out of the car and at the gate calling my thanks for the lift, and as I went the last I heard was his chuckle and a "take care". The last lift was a truck with a few gas cylinders on the back. The driver was an ageing workingman with a young off-sider and we just fitted in the front and the old truck took off slowly for Yorkshire. At about 2am we pulled into a truckies food roadhouse it was a grubby place but we had a pie and a cup of tea, the cups were huge, held about a pint I should think. All round the room were low benches on which were several truckies catching up on sleep, but we went out on the road again much refreshed. After that I must have slept on and off as the next I remember it was morning. The sun was up and we stopped while the young boy went to buy a paper for the old boy who then said we were near to where he was to drop me off. It was a lovely summers morning and Yorkshire looked beautiful, the driver said the coach station [where my brother expected to meet me] was a couple of miles up the road he indicated. We bid our farewells and I started off up that country road. I came to realise I was very tired and it was not until midday I was to be met at the coach station, so I went into a field at the side of the road and took nap behind the hedge in the morning sun. When I woke I set off on the last two miles and just before I turned into the coach yard I realised I was walking behind my brother and his wife to be, Pat was surprised to see me and thought "my coach must have been early", which I allowed him to believe. I didn't think he would have approved! I went to the wedding but I don't remember much about it.



There was a mental hospital at a place called Knole near Fareham and I was employed on the hospital farm as a poultry maid. I knew nothing of chooks till I went there. I didn't even like chooks. I soon found enough to fill my time on and off the job. I had over a thousand layers and table birds to care for, feed and collect eggs. I learned to

pluck and draw the table birds - one, two or more every weekday. The day olds were to be reared in their little kerosene heated little homes. I was supplied with 3 gobbler turkeys and 7 hens and as the hens laid their eggs I set them under clucky chooks. I reared about 40 to table size for the hospital for Christmas - they were big fellows too.



I also learned to drive while at this farm. There was a left hand drive Jeep that we used to tow a trailer, for taking milk and eggs to the hospital only a couple of hundred yards up the road. Before mastering the Jeep, I hit a gatepost and broke the front bumper bar, much to the joy of the farm hands! I also managed to get to learn to plough on the old Fordson, a tricky beast to start but once the lads started it for me I was right. Before I left they had bought a new hydraulic Ferguson, a beaut little job! I could plough much straighter with that one. I did a lot of fieldwork at harvest times on this job and a bit of dairy from time to time and even kept the dairy and farm books up to date. Yes, it was a good job and I had a lot of satisfaction knowing I did it well and as it turned out it was to be my last job in dear old England. Though I had no ideas of leaving till early spring in 1952 and by June that year I had set sail for Australia.

My brother Dick had written to me from Australia, where he had gone at the governments expense after he was de-mobbed form the Royal Navy, asking me to join him, and the idea seemed interesting and new. So I applied for the relevant papers and found that for the payment of 10 pounds and a doctor's certificate I could be allotted a berth on the MV Cheshire on the 4th of June 1952, and so it was. My brother -in-law Jo crated up my new bike, my pride and joy, 3 speed, hub dynamo, Hercules, all gold and chrome! And with my few belongings in two cases I waited at Wickham rail station with young brother Johnny, Mum and Dad, Dorrie and Jo and their two little ones to see me off. As the train took off from the station on impulse I threw my handkerchief on the platform and my last glimpse at the scene was my dear Dorrie running to retrieve it and I've no doubt it was wet with her tears ere I reached the next station. Dorrie and I were very close, she, just two years older than I and had been my constant companion until we left school. I found that empty carriage very lonely and I wondered just what I had let myself in for this time. Fortunately, on arrival in London, I met up with a family also travelling to Australia via the M.V. Cheshire so I tagged along with them, as we had to stay the night in London.

On Board the M.V. Cheshire

This is my account of my trip from the U.K. to Australia and a short few months after my arrival as taken from my diary.

Wednesday, June 4th.

After spending the night at a Euston Hotel I caught the 9.35am boat train, and at the end of that journey I had made friends with about half a dozen folk and was already feeling at home. On our



arrival at the docks in Liverpool, we were directed to the customs office, where we were not kept waiting very long as very few items of luggage were inspected. We made our way to the ship leaving our luggage for the porters who delivered same to cabins, baggage room and hold accordingly. By then it was about 5.30pm and we pulled away from the dock. It was a rather sad farewell for many, both on ship and shore, and tears were flowing freely. But I felt very calm as I had my cry the night before. I could have changed my mind, but six weeks holiday on a ship was too much to resist.

After getting really away from port with the lovely hills of Wales on the left and a faint distant view of Ireland on the right, we were instructed by means of the ship's microphone to muster at certain points on deck according to our cabin positions, with our life belts on, a drill for an emergency at sea. 'A' deck, top is for ship's officers only. 'B' deck is mainly single and double cabins, and a prohibited area for children [we have 150 aboard]. 'C' deck is the main deck where the children have their little sand pit, and the lounge is also on this deck. The next deck is 'D', that is the deck I'm on, and also the dining room, the shop and the hairdresser etc. Below 'D' are more cabins, darts, table tennis and the cinema hall. During my tour of curiosity round the ship for the first time, I got talking to Ron Hunt. He is a Devon chap, an ex-marine, quite nice to talk to, and I did just that till about 10.30pm then we went to our cabins. I was the last of our eight to go to bed. I suppose most folk were tied out travelling. Four in our cabin came from Scotland yesterday. And so to bed.

Thursday, June 5th,

This morning I had a job to get my sea legs but after an hour or so I had a good breakfast of cereal, bacon and egg, marmalade and coffee. Then took a turn round the decks, and wrote a letter to Dick after which I had a couple of hours on my bunk. Lunch was very nice, so far I've not felt sea sick and have enjoyed my meals. The weather was foggy this morning and only cleared up a little during the afternoon, but after dinner the sun did pop through for a while. As I was dreaming over the rail, the padre I met on the train to Liverpool came over to me and had a chat. He's Irish and he's just been home for a holiday. After a short while, the young man that sits opposite me at meals, came by with a young boy and Jack. We had a lot of laughs together and about 9.30pm we were on our way to the bar lounge, but it was awfully smoky in there so Jack and I went out on deck again. Jack is another Irishman and very nice company. He has a comical sense of humour, we were talking till after 11pm so I was last in again.

Saturday, June 7th, Midday.

I missed writing for yesterday but the main interest was a meeting called by the captain, to form a sports committee from amongst the passengers. We all went down to the cinema hall, where he gave us an outline of entertainments, ranging from bridge to skittles. Last night was also the first showing of films on this trip. I did not go, but it was quite good or so I believe. After lights out last night, there were several Irish folk gathered on the foredeck singing Irish songs in the moonlight. Jack and I went round to listen. Last to bed in our cabin again! And it was yesterday that I had my most energetic morning, consisting of three doubles and one singles at table tennis, then two doubles and a singles of deck tennis. It was great fun. This morning Mrs. van Lune, an Australian welfare officer, officially welcomed us to Australia, she also advised us on shopping at ports of call, also introducing the three padres: R.C., C. of E. and O.P.D.

Last night we saw the lights of the Spanish coast, and several fishing boats were to be seen this morning. It was not a bit rough through the Bay of Biscay, and at one

o'clock today we passed Berelings [I think!] Islands. Also this morning I saw what looked to me to be a swordfish - I may be wrong though. And further along were the mountains of Portugal. We could even see houses on the side quite near to the cliff edge.

I had another good game of table tennis this afternoon, and then had quite an interesting chat with a Canadian traveller. After lunch, I had another turn at table tennis, this time with Jack 2 - there are quite a lot of Jacks here. It was very hot down below, but there was a lovely cool breeze on deck. I had a bath before dinner. The hot water is salt, our lascar steward fills the bath and informs us when the bath was ready, and in we go. After dinner, I wrote a letter to Mother and spent an hour or so on the foredeck with Tom and Johnnie - they are from Southampton and Wales respectively. We certainly are a cosmopolitan lot of passengers. There was a full moon and a lovely calm sea, and the dance had just begun up on 'B' deck, so we went to join in after interval.

It is Sunday today, and there is a service being held in 'B' deck smoke room, and it's nice to hear the folk singing hymns. I will probably go to evensong and our own Sunday half-hour. It's a beautiful morning and the sea is as still as a millpond with just the ripple off the bow cutting the sea. On our left now, are more mountains of Spain and I've just had a peep through a pair of binoculars at a wee village at the foot of the largest mountain. It really is a terrific sight. The mountain immediately level with us looks just wild vegetation and the one we have just passed looks like a sandy desert waste, reaching to the rocky top. Now we have just drawn level with a small town. I just can't find words to express the fascination of this beautiful sight.

On our right is the north of Africa, and what terrific mountains they are too! I've just seen a shoal- or school - of porpoise; gosh, they look smashing in the sunlight. An ESSO tanker has just passed us on the starboard side. Now back to the port side, along the Spanish coast, there looks to be cultivated land reaching from the sea in ridges up the slight gradient to almost the mountaintop. As we pass further along the mountains get higher, and wild vegetation stretches for miles back and up to the rocky peaks. A mere farm girl could never accurately describe the wild beauty of the coastline that I am looking at as we approach the Mediterranean. I must therefore leave a lot to the imagination.

Now the mountains are lower and the wildly vegetated land reaches down to the sea, which incidentally is beautifully calm. Still watching the port side coast, I can just see the Rock of Gibraltar coming into sight, and on the north Africa coast, we are just level with the biggest mountain of rock I ever saw and as we pass there is a terrific sort of bay leading out to a headland. Then land will be out of sight for a while on the starboard side. Just before the mainland joins the rock, we can see the bullfighting town and bay of Algiers. I've just been told that Barbary apes run wild on top of the most part of the Gib. Rock, to which we are changing course and getting nearer. I must get my camera to get a snap.

We are now approaching Europa Point. It's a marvelous sight and on the Mediterranean side there is a terrific expanse of what looks like a cemented flat slope which I am told, catches all the water to supply Gibraltar. The rain runs down this steep slope on the sheer side of the rock, down to storage tanks we can just see. It surely is a terrific sight. Now we have passed it and the coastline is much further away with a view of low hills in the foreground and blue forms of hills beyond the hills. As we progress the hills get higher toward the coast and then more hazy and distant and it looks as though we will soon be out of sight of land on either side. After all that excitement, folk are leaving the rails to retire to their deck chairs, and I

also shall leave this for a while.

Tuesday, June 10th, am.

Yesterday, we saw Algiers and were passing the wild coastline of Algeria all day. But this morning it is very difficult to see any coastline at all. I had another energetic session yesterday with several games of table tennis and deck tennis. I also played a game of darts with a fellow who said he was the champion darts player of Scotland. He was extremely good, but I feel inclined to doubt the chap a bit on account of his boastfulness. Of course I may be wrong - I don't know. I got up early this morning to do PT but somehow the arrangements must have gone wrong because our instructor didn't arrive. It's a wonderful morning and all seems well with everyone.

Wednesday, June 11th, am.

Our position is just passed Malta in the beautiful blue Mediterranean Sea and there's not a scrap of land in sight. It's a wonderful sensation sitting in this lounge listening to a piano being played well and so far from the troubles of the world. Anyone would be lucky to be as contented as me at this moment - sometimes it seems I'm too lucky. I went to PT this morning and enjoyed it, and also had more practise at table tennis. The pianist is now playing Rustle of Spring and it really is lovely, everything seems so serene and, well, just too nice. That's all I can think of just now.

Thursday, June 12th,

It's strange that in so short a time I could feel so totally different for today I've lost all the contentment of yesterday, and for no apparent reason. I don't want to talk to anyone or join in the games, and taking it all round I am a total misery this morning. I suppose it will wear off. I think I'll change my library book and wallow in that today and hope things will right themselves later. I'm not homesick - just a bit of boredom, I expect. There was a whist drive last night and a singsong as well, and lots of folk obviously enjoying themselves. It's a grand morning with still no sign of land in sight and the sea seems bluer than ever. I've just heard over the mike that I'm in this morning's team for the skittles tournament; I suppose I'd better go.

Friday, 13th, Forenoon.

It's 11 A.M. now, and having had my table tennis practise, I am sitting in the lounge and once more it is a lovely morning. We have just had another talk by Mrs. van Lune giving us advice on being a new settler. I went to PT this morning; it sure does get one in good form for the day. There is still no sign of land, but we are expected to reach Port Said tomorrow. I do miss the radio. We have the news from British Overseas Broadcast, but not much music. But tonight we will have a dance with gramophone records. The sun goes down very quickly. On Wednesday night I timed it, from the time it tipped the horizon till it disappeared it took just two and a half minutes. I found out that Scotch fellow really is a darts champion. I feel a bit ashamed of myself in a way, and for thinking it was a lot of talk, still it's just one more mistake to add to the list!

Saturday, June 14th, 9am

I got up at 4am this morning to see the sunrise, and also to be able to see the first glimpse of our first port of call, Port Said. It's now 10am. Everyone got up earlier than usual and our first sight was the buildings round the harbour on our right and as we approached we went between the breakwaters. The one on our right was a continuation of a jetty, around which were to be seen several small boats, also on our right was a statue of Disraeli. Then MV Cheshire continued up the harbour and then anchored for stores. As I write this there are dozens of little boats with baskets, bags,

shoes, hats etc. selling - or trying to - and boy do they try! This is really a terrific sight, the sun is high now, but there is a cool breeze, and our ship is waiting for a few more to make a convoy to go down the Canal. Just before we reached the jetty a wee motorboat brought a pilot aboard to navigate us down the canal.

This is really grand sight, and so interesting that it is hard to know what to describe first. What is really most fascinating, I think, is the small craft buzzing around like flies. There are only a few Egyptians allowed on board to sell their wares and those not allowed on are not fussy how they try to board ship. I saw a couple climb up ropes on the left side of the ship, but the Egyptian police, who came on board first, soon got them off again, but they sure are a rough lot. Another odd thing I've noticed is that the first store in the street just opposite the Cheshire, which is fairly wide and long, is Woolworth's! Its name is painted black and white not like our English stores. I can see adverts for Craven A, Goldflake, Raleigh cycles, and Brooke Bond tea. One of the most impressive buildings just here is the Police Station - it is situated on a corner and is a light cream colour. It has a sort of a lookout tower; it must be a wonderful sight from up there. A little further to my right is a large clean looking building in white brick with green shutters, but no indication as to what it is, may be flats or factory of some sort.

The noise is like Charlotte Street, tenfold - plus Marble Arch on Sunday with Piccadilly thrown in for good measure. I'll try to describe the traffic starting from below me where the wogs are trying to sell their goods. There are 25 on this side at the moment! There are one or two nicer looking boats, bringing officials to and fro and a little further from us almost by the wharf wall are 7 fishing boats, each with three or four men washing fishing nets. While further to my right there is a very long low boathouse with dozens of motorboats, most of which have white canvas canopies. I see also a couple of RASC Golden Mist motorboats cursing around us. It's good to see the British boys around. Nearly all the motor tugs have the most peculiar horn to let the rowboats know who's who! For the first time I have seen palm trees in their natural ground. These I see are in front of the green shuttered building. They are alternated by what could be a sort of laurel tree. Now back up to the left past the police station there is a large wooden jetty, which is for a passenger-car ferry across the canal. They seem to go quite frequently. The ferryboat looks much the same as the car ferry at Gosport back home. There are quite a few really modern cars, and bicycles seem to be in common use. The dress of these people is much the same only more hats are worn, and they vary from straws and trilbies to turbans and topees. The tug, which brought our fresh water supply, has just left our starboard side, and the wogs are still bashing on!

Midday.

We have just pulled away from Port Said, and on our right are several rows of army trucks and an army stores wharf. Prior to that, we saw what I believe is called Navy House where all the mercantile business of the canal is carried out. Then we got really into the canal; on either side there is waste ground and fresh water streams alternately. Each side of the canal is cemented blocks, and on the right is a roadway and railway. There's quite a bit of army traffic about. Several birds are flying about the ship as we progress at a very slow rate. They look similar to swallows when in flight, but are an off white colour. There are, also on our right, a few straw built living abodes. They look very primitive. Hundreds of jellyfish, bright blue in colour, were to be seen in and around the port. They are called Portuguese man of war I think. One more thing I remember as we approached the Port was the smell, just like a silo gone wrong.

Sunday, June 15th, 6.30am

As I sit here in the morning sun on the foredeck, the Egyptian flag, which we have flown all through the canal is being taken down, as we have just left the canal. Mostly all the way down the canal, it was sand dunes and desert shrubs interspersed with odd native abodes, official looking radio stations and several army camps. As we passed the latter, we exchanged the heartiest catcalls with our British comrades. Last evening after dinner, we went out on deck and it was a grand sight. To start with it was a cool starlight night and out of our convoy, of seventeen of which we were second, we could see about three behind us, all with bright searchlights to guide by. It was in the light of the ship behind, that we could just see the road which runs parallel with the canal, and on that road we saw an occasional camel and a native, and several flashy cars dashed passed us as we made a steady 7 knots all the way.

At 5.30 this morning we approached the end of the canal and saw Suez. The town looks grand from here with its terrific white buildings, but nature has put that grandeur to inferiority with the most magnificent range of mountains, the town of Suez is dwarfed at its base. Then as we progressed, the attractive port of Tavic, which is alongside the canal, came into sight. It is like a peninsular running parallel with the canal at the end of which we passed a large memorial stone. We could not read the inscription. Then out into the harbour where there were many ships anchored and also several dhows and small craft. On our left, land soon went out of sight and the brilliant sun has risen with terrifying strength into a beautiful clear sky. On our left, those majestic mountains stand defiant, and then around the bay become lower and lower, and as far as eye can see. Then once more there is very little land to see.

Sunday, June 15th, 3.30pm

The sky is and has been, all day, as clear as crystal and with the brilliant sun. The sea has lost its muddy appearance of Port Said and has returned to a deep cool blue. On either side of us, as we enter the Red Sea, are ranges beyond ranges of mountains, sometimes almost flat desert plains then large barren cliffs, and as if to keep intruders from the country beyond, the mountains rise higher still. It is a grand sight. Though it is a fascinating view from here, I wonder why there is such a vast expanse of barren land. Maybe it is for the protection of sea birds, or to keep intruders from the wild animals. But even so it looks too bleak for any living thing to exist on. But there it is, and who am I to question the marvels of the world.

Tuesday, June 17th,

Yesterday I did not write my daily episode but there was very little coastline to see and it was our first day of the stifling heat of the Red Sea. There was very little activity, I sat around doing embroidery for a while, and spent a large portion of the afternoon in a lazy snooze. Folks from E deck - one below mine and much hotter - slept on deck last night and the night before. I expect we will soon adapt ourselves to this heat. I'm afraid I funk'd PT this morning. Gosh, it's too warm for unnecessary exertion. I spent an hour talking to Brad this morning. She's the ship's hairdresser, and I think she's jolly interesting. I took part in the ladies' deck tennis tournament and lost a gallant game of 4-6. Still, maybe I've hidden talents for something, so press on. There is a good breeze today so it's not too unpleasant. I got a little more experience in hairdressing after lunch by shampooing and setting Mrs. Dadman's hair.

Thursday, June 19th,

This morning we arrived at Aden at 5 A.M. and as it was so terribly hot last night I

was on deck at 4.30 A.M. and therefore saw the approach which is extremely rocky. There's a group of rocks surrounding the area except for a small part of the coast, which is Aden. We're only here for a couple of hours, so we will not be able to go over the hills to the city centre when we dock.

Midday

Having left Aden, we are now in the Gulf with no visible coastline and we are enjoying a really wonderful breeze, cool and a blessed relief. Aden more than satisfied my curiosity and if I never go ashore there again it will be too soon. It was terribly hot for a start and the poverty of the place is very depressing. At first I was thrilled to see the camels harnessed to carts - until I smelt the brutes! At first, too, the little children were fascinating until I noticed their diseased skins and dirty way of living. There were plenty of shops but they all sold the same or similar goods, the view of the place from the ship, was definitely the most pleasing sight and I did take a photo of that.

Friday, June 20th, 9.30am

This weather is really getting unbearable. I'd hoped it might improve after we left the Red Sea but it is no better. I am surprised that the folk are as lively as they are, especially the old folk and the children. I must confess that I'd be much happier working in wind, rain and snow, than to idly sit around in this oppressive heat. That's enough complaining for now, except to say that I slept - or tried to - on deck last night, but the breeze was practically nil and terribly humid.

Saturday, June 21st 2pm

What a difference in comparison with yesterday! We are in the Indian Ocean now and since yesterday we have been having really rough wind beating up a terrific swell and waves, the first of any size. All the portholes are fastened and the foredeck is a forbidden area on account of it being washed regularly by natural causes. At mealtimes the attendance is below normal. Lots of people are not so good and I must confess that on this our 17th. Day at sea my boastfulness has left me; I am not a good sailor! As I write this we are rolling from side to side. It is possible we are running into a monsoon, and some say it will be like this until we get to Colombo, and that is six days to go yet. O, to be in England or Australia but not at sea! I've no further ambition to be a stewardess and my return journey will have to be by air I think. Although I do like to see a bit of rough sea, but only for half an hour not six. I'm a bit choker!

Sunday, June 22nd

Life seems brighter today. The wind and waves have lessened by about half. There are a lot of flying fish in these waters; they look about the size of sardines with a wingspan like that of a sparrow - some a wee bit larger. Last night about a dozen of us had a singsong on deck. It helps to pass the evening away, and yesterday everyone seemed a bit cheesed off or sick but our 'tums' are more settled today. We are miles from land and we've not passed a ship for a couple of days. Our progress from noon yesterday till noon today was only 320 miles and its 1,000 to Colombo!

Monday, June 23rd 2pm

It's a nice day today with plenty of breeze and the sea not too rough, and just slightly overcast at the moment. Last night while on a tour round the ship [about the millionth time I think] we heard music from the crew's quarters, so we went to see what was going on. The 'band' consisted of a bass drum, made from an oil drum, a stick and a piece of twine. It sounded good too! A mouth organ, a home - made



drum set and a few lusty voices, and it wasn't long before we all joined in. We expect to get to Colombo by Thursday, that's three more days to go yet but it won't be long. Today we are just halfway. Three weeks to go.

Tuesday, June 24th

Uneventful!

Wednesday, June 25th

Yesterday was the lascar's Christmas, but apart from time off for church, they seemed to work as usual. I spent the morning and latter part of afternoon writing letters - otherwise nothing important happened except we had a fall of rain this morning, real heavy it was. It has been overcast most of the day and not too hot, thank goodness.

Tomorrow we dock in Colombo so it will be something to write about.

Thursday, June 26th 2pm

As I write this I am sitting on the steps between 'B' and Main decks, and looking over the bows and across Ceylon Harbour where I can see the waves breaking on the harbour wall. There are many ships in this, the largest artificial harbour in the Southern region.

Friday, June 27th am

I was disturbed from completing my daily edition so now I'll relate the happenings of yesterday. I went ashore with Tony and as our ship anchored out in the harbour, we had to take the ferry bus to the jetty where we waited to pay our fare of one rupee. While we waited in the queue we could see several bullock -drawn carts. They are wooden wheeled trucks, with a sort of woven reed tops. Then we changed our money and went on tour of the town via a rickshaw. It was great fun. We visited a Mohammedan's Temple - we had to remove our shoes! Inside was a blaze of colour of china finished gods etc. which covered the walls. I saw for the first time a Banyan tree, which drops its roots from its branches. There were lots of Indian crows flying around. In many shops one could hear Indian type of music. Ceylon is by far a better place than our previous ports of call, due to its cleanliness and it is quite a modern place but it has its poverty as is only to be expected. We left the harbour calmness and ventured into the rough sea once more at just passed 3pm, with our "trophies" and fruit etc. Bananas are a shilling per dozen or less if you can bargain very well. Pineapples are a shilling to one and sixpence. This morning the sea is a bit calmer and I've been in the lounge to hear another talk by Mrs. Van' on New South Wales and have received one or two daily papers of the place.

Saturday, June 28th am

Today we 'crossed the line' and operation Neptune commenced at 10am this morning. It started with a parade of King Neptune and his followers around the decks and a short speech to the captain. Then the followers dosed the unfortunates with a black looking liquid from a medicine bottle and a pill of some sort, and then they sat in a chair to be 'lathered' with flour and water [hair, ears, mouth etc] then tipped into a canvas tank of water. It was a very amusing hour and a half. Now folk are endeavouring to get the dough out of their hair.

Tuesday, July 1st

I've missed writing for two days now so I'll endeavour to catch up with things. Last Saturday night we had another dance and it was quite fun and a real work of art to keep vertical on a rolling ship! But the weather is really very good, there's a strong wind, which keeps it cool and a bright clear sky to cheer us up. Sunday passed uneventfully and yesterday we were allowed to go up to A deck and look over the bridge. We went in the wheelhouse and I saw the radar screen, which shows any vessel within a radius of 5 miles or maybe that was more. Then we saw the chart house where there are several complicated instruments for telling the ships position, which needless to say I did not understand! It was fun to look down on the rest of the ship from the top. For the first time since before we reached the hot climate I tried my hand at table tennis again with Doreen, Peter and Douglas. I was not so good at it, in the afternoon I did a little more embroidery [still only on the first chair back!] and also wrote to Pat, Dorrie and Mum. Last night there was a whist drive but I didn't go.

Thursday, July 3rd am.

The weather these last few days has been, and still is very windy but quite bright and I notice the men are wearing jackets. Woollies are being worn almost generally. Yesterday was full of different matches being played off including children's skittles, gents' table tennis and deck quoits etc. Tomorrow will be the kids' fancy dress followed by a fancy dress dance for us big kids! So far I've not decided whether or not to make a fool of myself.

Friday, July 4th

Last night at 8.30 we had our ship's concert, and it was a real good effort on the part of passengers and crew that took part in the proceedings. It started with a session of bagpipe playing by a Scot. That was followed by songs sung by the padre, and then a few sketches etc. and a few solos, and was termed by most a most successful evening. Tonight we have a farewell dinner for the folk that leave us at Fremantle. We will probably get there Saturday night or Sunday morning. It may be later because one of the engines has broken down and we reduced speed to about 5 or 6 knots, but all is well this morning. We have just heard over the microphone the summary of the day's events starting with sports for the kiddies, a show by them for us, then their fancy dress parade and a tea party followed by a carnival dinner for us and a fancy dress ball. I must leave this now for a game of deck tennis.

Saturday, July 5th am

We had a really hectic time yesterday what with getting things ready for the fancy dress, I changed my mind and went as a nigger and Florrie came as my wife. We got Ray, the ship's writer, to make us up - and what a job it was getting it all off again. I borrowed a complete gents evening suit and we made Florrie up real good. She is a ripping sport and we did enjoy the little escapade. This morning the folk that are getting off at Fremantle are getting their belongings packed. We expect to arrive tomorrow; there is a sort of friendly feeling among the crowd and much returning of borrowed props of last night.

Sunday, July 6th, 2pm, Fremantle

I got up at 6am because we were due to reach port at about seven or eight o'clock and I didn't want to miss anything! It was a really beautiful sunrise this morning the sky turned red to gold and then the sun peeped over the trees of the coast, our first view of Australia. We then had to muster for the Doctor to pass us as fit and then show our papers etc. after that my first thought was for mail and sure enough I was not disappointed. Dear old Dorrie she has written to every port bless her. I also had

mail from Dick, and Nan's daughter, still none from Mum though. By this time we had docked in harbour and all is very quiet - it's Sunday. I was not going ashore at first, but after everyone else had gone I decided to go for a walk on terra firma for a bit. I went through a few streets and came out on a part of the shore where there lots of sailing and fishing boats and just alongside the water was a sort of park with swings etc., for the kiddies. There were some very attractive spruce trees just there too! As I walked on the grass [first since I left home!] I was feeling at home again. I got talking to a Dutch boy who was cleaning his motorbike. He came over two years ago and has been to Newcastle, Sydney and Melbourne all the way on his bike. He was a very pleasant chap. We had to be on board again at 1.00pm and now having left port almost an hour, we are once again settling down to routine. But from now until we reach Melbourne, we are expecting a bit of rough sea but that's as maybe. We may be lucky enough to get through fairly well, so as we head for the blue again in this lovely sunshine, [but chilly wind] we 'dig in' for five more days at sea, then Melbourne.

Monday, July 7th, 5pm

The weather is still moderately calm and we have another bright sunny day. I had a very interesting talk with the padre this morning, and am looking into the Catholic creed out of curiosity and so far it seems logical enough. Otherwise the day has been fairly uneventful. I am about to get my mail written for our next port just in case it's too rough to write it latter.

Tuesday, July 8th, 1pm

Well here we are in yet another bright day and still no sign of rough weather. The trip is continuing pleasant and uneventful.

Wednesday, July 9th, 10am

The sea is just a little rough this morning and the spray is coming up on deck now and again. It's quite overcast and the cold wind is keeping most people in the lounges. Having just taken a walk round the deck with Uncle George, I'm settling down to a bit of writing and seriously planning details for my arrival at Sydney which will be next Tuesday - one week from today! Since our Fremantle passengers left us, there have been no more organised games but there is great demand for the table tennis room lately. I've read another book in the last couple of days and have come to the conclusion that the less I do, the less I want to. I'm getting really lazy but quite content to stay that way till we arrive at our final destination. I am quite disappointed that we have not, so far, seen any sharks. We are out of sight of the Australian coast but there a great amount of albatross flying around our ship. They are extremely beautiful creatures and it is a marvel how they glide into the wind for such long distances and keep up with, and overtake us with no visible effort, their wing span must be at least five foot, or more fully grown.

Thursday, July 10th, 9am

As I write I am in B deck lounge and it's a nice quiet place compared with the lower decks at the moment I've just been for a blow around the decks. It's a wonderfully gusty night and I didn't see a soul all the way around the ship! Anyway as I passed lower deck lounge, I heard the happy squeals and laughter of the folk who went down to the social, it's held as a farewell to the Melbourne bound passengers who leave us tomorrow. I shall go down later on I expect, still that remains to be seen. I started collecting addresses today, I didn't realise how many friends I'd made in these last six [almost] weeks. I heard today that we would be in Sydney one day early I must remember to send Dick a telegram about it. It's very near now, I can't

believe this second half of the journey is almost over and in a few days I'll be there. I'm quite excited inside. I hope to go ashore in Melbourne tomorrow for a while, that will be our last short visit ashore. I'd better go down and find our friends who will leave us tomorrow since it's their last night aboard. I'll have quite a bit to write about tomorrow I expect.

Saturday, July 12th.

Yesterday we docked at 10am, or rather we were due to, but it was 2pm when we arrived wharf side. We were welcomed by the folk who came to meet the passengers who were due to leave the ship. I went ashore at about 3.30pm with Douglas, Les and another lad; I've forgotten his name. We had a look around town and it's a very much bigger place than I imagined it to be. Then we sampled the food, which was good and moderately expensive to what we've been used to, but I must make special mention of the coffee, it was excellent. We then visited a cinema and returned to the docks via train [which was very 'ribby' compared with S.R.!] at about midnight. We left harbour at approx. 10am this morning. It was a grand send-off with lots of paper streamers from boat to shore and the Irish boys [ex-passengers that stayed in Melbourne] came down to cheer us away. It's terribly quiet on board without them now. We expect to arrive in Sydney early on Monday morning so we must get all our packing done tomorrow. Well, this is almost the end of the trip now, I'm very pleased with the way we have been treated and have enjoyed most of it. It's odd that we did not meet any rough weather across the Bight though. I'm keen to get a job as soon as possible when I arrive. I've missed the country life for ages, so it seems!

Sunday, July 13th, 3pm

This is our last full day at sea and as I'm writing in our cabin, we've all finished our packing and are more or less ready to get off. It's a nice bright afternoon but the wind is rather cold. On our left, we can still see the coast of Victoria and it is very hilly and deserted looking. We have to be up early tomorrow and breakfast is to be at 7am. And we will be ashore quite early I think.

Tuesday, July 15th

Yesterday was a great day. We docked in Sydney at 7am and Dick came on board at 8.30am and we finally left the port about 10am and set off by car to Newcastle with a friend of Dick's who owned the car. It was a terrific sight along the Sydney to Newcastle road, real wild beauty of the hills and valleys covered in trees and rocks. We passed a couple of lakes and we could see the sea when on the high roads. First, we went to Dick's friend's house to meet his wife - a very pleasant girl. Then home for the first time to meet Nan and what a dear she is too. All the family and friends have made me welcome and now my next concern is a job.

A New Country

Wednesday, July 16th

I spent today settling in with Nan. I like her and she is so very good to me, and I like Bill too, he is a good sort of chap. This evening Dick took me to an old time dance. The dances are very different more on the lines of modern style. We saw Bill there too. He likes dancing more than Dick, I think. We didn't come home together as Dick and I had the Vellosette. It's a super bike.

Thursday, July 17th

I went round town with Nan and I like Newcastle. As far as towns go it's a nice

place. We called in at Nan's church hall after our shopping and met some of her friends, and what a jolly crowd they are too. Dick took me to the pictures tonight and we saw a good show. We went on the Vello' again.

Friday, July 18th

Did a bit more visiting of Nan's folk and neighbours today and as Dick had a bit of a cold we stayed in, I went for a walk alone to get the lie of the neighbourhood.

Saturday, July 19th

The days go by so fast with Nan she is a jolly good cook and is good fun too. Bill took me to another dance; Dick came after and stayed a while but went early. I think his cold is not so good.

Sunday, July 20th

This afternoon I went to a Dolls show with Nan at the local school and then Dick joined us at Mollie's home and we spent a lovely evening with them all.

Monday, July 21st

Dick and I went out to a farm in the bush to visit some friends he made while he worked at the Masonite Camp. It's a dairy farm and though it's machine milking the place is rather tumble down. But the folks are a wonderful, good family and we had a lovely tea. It came on to rain as we left and by the time we were on the main the Vello' refused to give us a good headlight so we chugged along in the rain with little or no lights at all. I was freezing cold and wet when we got in, but dear old Nan had a good fire going and Bill fixed us a cup of tea so I soon felt better. Dick didn't take much notice of it at all.

Tuesday, July 22nd

The day passed very pleasantly with Nan. We both went to the labour exchange to see how the work situation was. Then we had dinner out and in the evening I went to a Housie Party with Nan to the home of one of her church friends. It was in aid of church funds. It was great fun and I, being a 'Pommy', was made quite a fuss of which was rather flattering. They were mostly women there, of course, but I really liked some of them a lot.

Wednesday, July 23rd

Today is the birthday of Mr. Pop McAnerny. He is a neighbour of Nan's and he is 92. So Nan and I went over to wish him a happy birthday and his son took us for a ride in his car around Newcastle. We saw some truly lovely houses; they really are a picture to see. This evening Dick took me to the town hall to see the opera *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*; it was a lovely performance for a first show of Newcastle amateurs.

Thursday, July 24th

Once again Dick took me out, this time to some friends a few miles away. The chap is Dick's ex-workmate. He and his wife have a lovely home. We had a super tea and then I stayed and talked to them awhile. Dick went to see another friend about getting the bikes lights fixed, arriving back for me at about 9.30pm. I'd like to go back to see those people again when I'm around that way again.

Friday, July 25th

Dance at Town Hall, Newcastle with Dick, Pat and Bill. Applied for and got a job with Mrs. Jewel.

Saturday, July 26th

First day at work.

Sunday, July 27th

Worked this morning and spent afternoon touring Newcastle with David and Margaret Noakes in their car with Dick.

Monday, July 28th

We set off for our first trip in the pouring rain. It was not a very successful beginning, but it was at least a start of an adventure for me and just another job for the rest of them. The two boys we are taking with us have travelled with a circus so this sort of life is not new to them. We travelled almost all day stopping only for meals, which we prepared before starting and heated up in the caravan. We were all rather tired when we curled up in our rather confined spaces for the night.

Tuesday, July 29th

We stayed camped all day today in Tamworth drying out after yesterday's damp. We also went around town to do a bit of shopping. I bought myself a dress. It's a very nice sort of town with wide streets and clean large stores.

Wednesday, July 30th

This proved to be a very tiring day. We started off early after breakfast on our 250 mile trip to Mungindi. It was a very rough road all the way and the wildest country I've ever seen, just miles of what we would call common back home. We passed quite a few herds and flocks being driven by drovers, real cowboy types of fellows. The only sign of civilization was the telephone wires and rail tracks. It's been a terrific experience but I'm rather seat sore at the end of the journey and so thankfully to bed.

Thursday, July 31st

We pulled in to our camping ground this morning and prepared for our week or possibly two weeks stay. The men spent the day putting up the carnival things. Just settling in a bit now tonight is first night. It was not terrific but it was as they expected. It's all terribly strange but I guess I'll get used to it.

Friday, August 1st

Ditto on yesterday, with the addition of a bit of shopping which is quite a pleasant task. This is a quaint town the roads, though wide, are all just gravel but the shops are quite large and fairly modern and are stocked very similarly to any other towns I've seen. The birds sing well and beautifully around here all day and although there are lots of pretty birds, including parrots its good to see little sparrows around. They're all I have, as far as countryside goes, to remind me of the old country.

Saturday, August 2nd

Most shops closed today and we had a very quiet day.

Sunday, August 3rd

I feel more at home now than I did at first. I can fit in a bit better. The folks are quite nice once you get to know them. Mrs. J. and the boys went fishing this afternoon and brought home one bream and six of some other kind - I forget the name for the moment. Today is quite a big day for Mungindi. It seems they have won the cup for football for the first time since 1925 and as I write this all the cars and trucks are returning blowing their horns furiously to show their jubilation over

the great event. When the train pulled in bringing some of them back the old 'Chuffer' was blasting her whistle quite happily and even the local cockerels chimed in with several long loud crows which set us all in fits. It did sound funny. Well, now it's gone eleven o'clock so I must to bed.

Monday, August 4th

Today passed quite quietly with the normal chores and the weekly wash of the camp etc. But Tuesday was more interesting in as much as the men went pig shooting so I went with the kiddies and we went to the bush and played while the others went in for the kill -if there had been one! Anyway, while we were waiting on the lonely bush road for the hunters to return we saw a great big wild boar and a kangaroo. I'm glad to say they were a comfortable distance away! And also as we were waiting a huge flock of sheep passed us being driven by a half dozen or more dogs and two cowboys. It looked so nice I took a couple of shots with my camera. I hope they turn out well. On our return to camp I saw an emu for the first time. They are clumsy looking creatures. Tuesday also turned out to be Keith's Birthday so Mrs. J. and I pretended not to know and secretly prepared a tea party for him, and after the day's duties were completed and poor Keith thought he had been forgotten [he had no mail from home] he got his surprise and even an iced cake and decorations he was so pleased and surprised it was good to see.

Wednesday, August 6th

It's been a very ordinary day today; it's been cold and overcast all day and business not so good. I'll be glad to get on the move again, still only a few more days. I think we pull out after this weekend. It seems a long stay we've had here but it is only 10 days. Here's hoping I get some mail tomorrow. It comes to Mungindi only three times a week, Tues., Thurs. and Sunday.

Friday, August 8th

Thursday came and went and no post for me. But today has been better. Yesterday afternoon we all [except Mrs. J.] went the 27 miles to Thalmouth and back, [possibly our next stop]. It's a much more primitive place than this one. The road there was real rough, but we saw 3 more Emus and 3 Kangaroos on the way there but apart from that just a few cattle and sheep. It is very barren looking plains land. As I was going to write, today has been more fun for me because after dinner I went fishing with the family [except Mrs. J. and Jimmy] and caught two yellow bellies, one big about one and a half pounds, and one smaller one. It was lovely and peaceful down by the river, which is the boundary between Queensland and NSW. Mr. J. caught 10, Keith caught 7 and Bobby caught two like me. Johnny was a good lad too. The worst about this fishing, is the job of cleaning the brutes when we get home. Mrs. J. and I did it today; still eating them tomorrow will be good.

Tuesday, August 12th

The weekend was not exceptional. On Sunday, we went to the sports ground and watched Mungindi football team lose the cup they won last week. The game looked like Rugby to me; anyway it was a rugby ball and goals. Yesterday, Monday, we had a busy day packing and washing for the move, which is today. As I write this we are at Garah. We retraced our tracks about 50 miles in preference to going on to Thalmouth and we may be here for a week or two. It's a smaller place than Mungindi I think.

Tuesday, August 19th

St. George, Queensland. We left Garah yesterday morning after a shortened stay on

account of possible flooding of the road ahead. We passed the critical spot, a ford where the water was rising quickly in reasonable safety, by crossing the bridge, which had been condemned, some years hence I should think. Anyway we arrived in St. George yesterday before lunch and have camped just outside of town and at the moment our next destination is unknown - it depends on the weather.

Friday, August 22nd

Bollen. We arrived at this rather small town of Bollen yesterday and are camped on a bit of wasteland between the river and the road. Tonight is our first night of opening here and tomorrow is our last then we expect to go back to St. George to show. This time not just pass through. The road between here and St. George was really tricky when we came up yesterday, on account of the rain we had had three nights back, and the 'roads' are only sand and once off the hard sand one could very easily get bogged. The men folk went duck shooting this afternoon and brought back two wee black ducks. Mr. J. had to swim in the river to retrieve them, so he told us, as he was the only one of the three that could swim! It's been really lovely weather for two days now and if only I had some mail everything would be wonderful. Goodness knows what's happened to everyone lately. Not one letter since Fremantle and not one from Dick since I left Newcastle either, still bash on! As it is Friday again I'd better do my 'weekly three' letters to Pat, Dorrie and Mum and my 'odd one' - that goes to my friends alternately.

Friday, August 29th

St. George. I've had mail at last! I got it when we got back here from Bollen last Tuesday. I had one from Mum, Dorrie, Tony and Doreen also my tax rebate. Doreen, my ex-cabin mate, and her mother have still not found work yet and are getting desperate poor things. I can't help much but I'll try to find an opening. I was a bit upset when Mum wrote about Lassie being put to sleep but otherwise the letters were the most welcome letters in the world then. Not much has happened since we arrived here - just the round of cleaning, washing, eating and sleeping each day but I'm getting into a bit of a routine now. Mrs. Jewel may go away for a holiday soon which means I'll take over for a bit. I hope I cope all right.

Friday, September 5th

St. George. Well, this is almost the end of our stay in St. George. I've had more mail from Dorrie and a most welcome one from Johnny boy. I've just answered it. I'm glad he's getting on well, gosh I'm proud of him! Tomorrow I shall go see the sheepdog trials, if there is no rain. This evening is very cloudy and seems to be blowing up for a corking storm. If it does, we may not be able to go on to the next town. I do hope that will not be the case though. I had a visit from another 'Pommy' yesterday. Somehow she heard I was just out from England and so came round to see me! I was so pleased. She and her husband and kiddies came out last December and they love it - 'except the insects!' she said.

Friday, September 12th

Dirranbandi. Several days have gone by since I last wrote. I must try to remember to keep up the writing or I may leave out interesting items, though goodness only knows why I do it - I don't. Anyway, I went to the sheepdog trials with the kiddies and two of the local children [sweet little girls too, I've got their addresses and promised I'd write]. The dogs each had three sheep to drive through two gates and into a pen it was quite interesting. After that the local lads gave a good demonstration of bullock buck riding. Gee, those animals sure do kick about plenty. There were several rides, shows etc. and a canteen for refreshments but I was glad to

get back to bed that night. It seemed a very long day. Well after that, we had one more move and here we are parked in the sports ground and today and tomorrow is 'Rodeo' which includes all kinds of horse riding and racing in competition style, followed by a good show of horse buck jumping.

Well that's what today was; tomorrow may be different. There are several other small carnivals camped alongside us here and one family are extremely good to us in as much as they gave us half a lamb yesterday and another today. I think they own a station around here. As I write this, I'm minding the kids and the camp as all the others have gone to the pictures except Clary. He is a temporary hand taken on by Mrs. J., - he may be permanent. I like him better than Bob and Keith - they've been more than annoying for a week or more now. I don't know why I really do try to get on well with them but it just doesn't turn out that way. In fact they really got me boiling inside tonight and I was glad to be left alone to cool off! I went pig shooting with Bob, Keith, Mr. J. and Clary a couple of days ago. The only 'bags' were one wild duck which Mr. J. shot and one kangaroo to Keith's credit, which Clary skinned for the boys. They've dried and oiled the skin I believe. They did the same with a water rat Bob shot some while ago. Well it's getting cold - jolly cold again now so I think I'll go to bed. They can get their own tea tonight. Last Tuesday I waited up till 11.30 for their return from the pictures and made them tea but they can get their own tonight. I should write my weekly letters too but I'm not in the mood to write, not even to answer the mail I had today, one from Dick at last, one from Pat and one from Mum, and so to bed.

Monday, September 15th, am

Dirranbandi. As I am waiting for the return of the whole family who went into town while I packed up the caravan for our next move, I might as well fill in a bit of Gen. Oh bother! They're back, will write later.

Pm Just arrived at Dundee Station and Mrs. J. and the kiddies are in the house, while the men folk are talking over by the shearing sheds. So I've tucked myself in the caravan till the men decide to put up the lean-to [as we expect to stay here for a day or two, then Mrs. J. leaves us to go south and we move on to another town]. Anyway once the lean-to is up its unpacked! Unpack!! Unpack, and get another meal on.

Wednesday, September 24th

Surat. Mrs. Jewel has left us now. She went the day after we arrived at the station. I went fishing while we were there and also I saw the first day of shearing. Then we moved back to St. George to get a few stores and I did a bit of shopping and then we moved in to this town yesterday - not a bad town, fairly small. Met some jolly nice people here and almost got flooded too - it rained and rained.

Chinchilla

This is the close of this diary and quite a surprise item for the last page as I am seriously considering leaving this job for very personal reasons but the children need me till their mother returns if I can stick it out, but maybe my next diary will show a better move.

Chinchilla - that is where my diary finished as did my employment, and as the truck and caravan took off I wondered where I would go now, and as I sat on my port, on the empty block of land between the pub and the milk bar, where the carnival had been set up, it was midmorning and I had till sundown to get a bed for the night. It

seemed to me the hotel was my best bet and maybe I could get a job there too, but I was no cook and didn't fancy bar work very much, but it was a beautiful morning and I sat there a little longer in the sun when I saw Clary coming along, he had been taken on as an extra to the carnival at St. George.

Clary was a gentle, quiet bush boy and was surprised to learn I hadn't continued on with the carnival. The outcome was that he said I could stay on at his place till I worked something out, and bless him he helped me carry my gear, and off we set, out of town on foot, mind you Chinchilla wasn't very big in 1952. I remember it was very sandy everywhere. We walked past the Goldsbrough- Mort sale yards and down the cattle track a short way and there was 'Clary's Place'. It was a small wooden hut, strongly built with a kitchen / living room, a bed room and a sleep out. The windows were of corrugated iron of the push out type there was a combustion stove of great antiquity a tin trunk in the bedroom with a few old blankets in it, an old wooden frame single bed and mattress. In the kitchen was a dresser with basic utensils, a table and three chairs, a wash basin hanging on the wall and a rain tank outside the back door.

Clancy said he would on the sleep out on what might have been called a chase lounge about 100 yrs. ago, and it looked as though it had been roughly were it was for the last 50 of them. I found a cloth and broom and took the top layer of dust off everything, as Clancy had been away for 4 yrs. working on a station. While I did that Clancy checked on the water tank and the toot down the back, then we went back to the shop for a few supplies.

Over the next few days we both found work. I was offered cook at the Pub but opted for house cleaning for the saw miller's wife. She was a great person and we got along fine. I found a great difference working for Australian households and I liked it. I decided to stay in Chinchilla till the end of the year. Brother Dick was coming up just after Xmas and I was going back with him on his motorbike to Newcastle. Chinchilla had a cinema, a large corrugated iron structure more functional than fashionable, but it boasted the most comfortable seats I've ever found in any cinema. They were long deck chairs seating 6 or 8 people and every seat had a clear view of the screen and if the movie wasn't good, it was a great place for a nap!

That weekend Clary took off to another station that needed a hand, and said I could stay at his place as long as I liked. The house was never locked - I doubt anyone knew where the key was. It just wasn't important in those days. I was on my own for a couple of weeks and had found a second house cleaning job to keep me occupied, then the wife of the nearest neighbour came over and invited me to move in with their little family until brother Dick came up for me. So I closed up Clary's doors and windows and moved in with the Evans family. I must admit I really enjoyed their shower I'd been 3 months washing myself with a basin of water. It was a lovely big house. There were four girls and two boys between the ages of 17 and 7. The eldest girl of 17 seemed to run the household, with the help of her sisters. The boys were the youngest ones. I soon made myself useful on their sewing machine. Mother didn't like sewing and had never taught the girls, so we soon caught up on a few jobs and I made the eldest a beautiful ball dress with a quilted top after that. I could have gone on forever, if they had their way. While I was staying at the Evan's, the father came home. He was away getting 'skins' most of the time, maybe 'roos, - yes that must have been it. Anyway, I never saw any skins around the homestead. The father decided we would go 'night fishing'. This was new to me and I wondered what it entailed. The young ones seemed quite excited about it, Mother wasn't so keen, but went anyway. We had an early evening meal then all piled into the Ute with the dogs and off we went to the river. Once there Dad and the boys did a search

for yabbies in a muddy inlet while the rest of us brought out the blankets, one each to sleep on. It was quite warm weather. Well, we all got lines bated up and thrown into the river and we sat and talked and waited and talked and talked and yawned and waited, and no one got a bite first or last. One by one we gave up and climbed up on our blankets till the sun came up, then we went home.

Well, Xmas was almost upon us and, for me, my first Australian Xmas, and I knew it would be very different if only because of the weather. It was hot, and I wondered how we would get any jollies out of the day because of it. Once again it was a trip in the Ute. In many boxes we took with us all the Xmas fare, watermelons, beer for Dad, wine for Mum and soft drinks for the kids then we set off for the water hole. I must admit I wasn't sure what to expect when we found this waterhole, but I was delighted to discover the 'hole' was just a deeper part of the river. It took us quite a while to get there and the track was very rough, but it was shady and the water was clean and cool and the younger ones were wet within minutes of our arrival. After we had unpacked I joined them. I'd not been in the water long when I felt a small kind of bite on my arm and on investigating found a horrible little creature hanging on to me. I tried to brush it off in somewhat of a panic when the youngest lad gleefully informed me it was 'only a leach' with following advice to just tweak it off and then 'The river is full of 'em - they don't hurt.' Well, they sure seemed set on a feast of Pommy blood that day but all in all it wasn't a bad Xmas Day really.

Back to Newcastle

Dick came up a couple of days later on his 'Vellosette' motorbike, and after being invited to stay over a couple of days to rest. We made our plans to return to Newcastle. We took most of my luggage to the Rail Station and set off from Chinchilla, to Brisbane first, then down the coast road. After we had travelled a couple of hours Dick thought we had taken a wrong turn so we stopped at a homestead to enquire, and were invited in to rest - and more watermelon! And yes we had gone off our route but to get back on the road there was a fair stretch of corrugated road to travel. It was really rough, after we were past that he let me drive for a while. I'd never driven a motorbike before, but it was just like a pushbike without the effort, and as we drove along with Dick on the back seat playing his mouth organ I was really enjoying the trip. I didn't drive much since I had no licence. We stopped here and there had a quick look at Brisbane and headed on. It was nigh on sundown and just started to rain and we were getting a bit saddle sore and weary so we kept our eyes open for shelter for a place to kip down. We spotted a brick building with an awning so we stopped and investigated only to discover it was a dairy, the door was unlocked so we went in and slept on the cement floor on Dick's coat. We were so tired we slept till about 4 A.M. and we were up and away again.

So far so good, the rain had stopped and as we went down the highway it looked like being another lovely day, I don't wake up as bright as Dick used to and I was still a bit drowsy and had my eyes closed so I didn't see what happened I just remember when I opened my eyes I was looking at a very worried looking lady. I was lying on the road with a cushion under my head. I felt confused but comfortable. The lady explained that a car skidded on the wet road and hit into the side of us and I had landed on the bonnet of her car. She said Dick's leg and bike were damaged and the Ambulance had just arrived. We were both taken to the Byron Bay hospital where I sat in a high backed cane chair in the middle of a ward and either fainted or went to sleep. I'll never know which. The Doctor had to deal with Dick's leg first, then I

went in to see him and it was about midday by then. The Doc said I was O.K. and I went through to see Dick. He had to stay in hospital for at least two weeks and his bike was probably a write off, so I was on my own. I had to get to Newcastle, to see his boss and his Landlady to let them know. We didn't have much money with us so I left Dick with what I had and decided to hitch a lift to Newcastle. We had lunch together at the hospital and then I set off with a few things in my bag. I felt O.K. - just a bit of a bruise on my leg but not enough to stop me enjoying a good walk out of Byron Bay. It was a grand day and I had offers of lifts mostly short distances and the afternoon passed quite pleasantly.

It was quite dark when I was dropped off in a little town and I didn't feel happy about going on, so I looked for and found the local Police Station. I explained who I was what had happened and where I was going and asked if he could help me. Much to my surprise he said he didn't think he could, and when I asked him why, he said his wife was away for a week, and he was on his own, and it wouldn't look good and it was only a little town. The poor chap, I did feel for him, but I needed a sleep so I asked him could he put me in the lockup for the night. He said "Oh Miss, I couldn't do that!" But I assured him it wouldn't worry me one bit, and since he was eager to find a solution he agreed and promised me a new mattress from out the back. He assured me, "No drunks have slept on that one." So I was installed in a cell. He even brought me a cup of tea and some bread and butter and showed me where the toilet was. I slept like a babe till morning when I was awakened by a knock on the door and I was brought more tea and bread and butter. Then he unlocked another door in the cellblock which led to the street indicating that was the door I should leave by. So I thanked him and did just that.

So it was back to the highway again. I walked and had lifts all that day. No one, it seemed, was going right down the coast road but late afternoon I had a lift in a flat back truck. The driver was a rough looking chap of 50 + and he had a young off-sider. Anyway, when the driver said he would take me right to Newcastle, I was pleased. But he also said they would need to sleep for a few hours, so we travelled till about 11pm then the lad got under the tarp at the back and the driver said he would sleep about four hours, gave one big yawn and was asleep so I curled up in the corner of the seat and did the same. We arrived in Newcastle the next day and I set about getting my gear from the station, after seeing Dick's landlady and then looked for a job. I found one the next day - just what I needed - 'live in domestic' - so no more travel, just quiet orderly living in comfortable surroundings. It was just up my street as they say, and I settled in very nicely. The people I worked for were the Ash's of Merewether, - lovely people. They had a fine home on the hill by Merewether beach, where I used to swim every afternoon that summer. I realised I really was more at home in this sort of place than in the bush, yet in the old country I was definitely a country person.

Well, Dick recovered and returned and we had a bit of social life again. I used to go to his church with him. That's when I spent a lot of time with Enid, my first real Aussie friend, and what a good mate she was too. She helped me integrate with the Australian way of life. Being a Pom, I had a lot of wrinkles needed smoothing out before I could fit in with comfort to the Australian scene. We had a lot of good times together. There was the tennis club, swimming, on the many Newcastle Beaches, picnics, shows, pictures, and then Newcastle was beginning to try out Operas and Ballet. Dick was a violinist in the Newcastle Orchestra at the time and, of course, there were the Dance Halls - Enid's great joy. Even now forty years later, she still goes to her regular dances with her friends in Newcastle.

Now I had regained my peace of mind in orderly living, I found the domestic job

rather boring and I knew it was time to move on again. On looking through the papers saw 'Nursing' with training and I decided to give it a go. It was a Psychiatric Hospital out at Stockton and the Nurse's Quarters were wonderful. They were 12 hour. days and four day week, so my social life was rearranged a bit. But I devoted the next six weeks to trying to prepare myself for a nursing career. But I'm afraid it was all to no avail. It wasn't the fault of the hospital or the staff or the conditions. It was that I couldn't come to terms with mental disabilities. I suppose some cope better than others, but this was not for me.

Well, it was back to the newspapers again, and what should catch my eye but 'Prison Wardress'. I wondered what it might be like and the only way to find out was to give it a try. So out with pen and paper and I wrote off for it. Almost by return mail I received my acceptance into the position and an appointment for an interview in Sydney prior to arriving at Long Bay within two weeks. So I gave a week's notice and on the due day I caught the 'Flyer' as the Newcastle / Sydney train was called in those days and arrived in the big smoke with an hour to get to the office. It wasn't hard to find. I was duly interviewed, accepted again and told to report to Long Bay Goal at 3 P.M. the following day so I had a day to fill in, not a happy thought but I had been told that the People's Palace was a good and cheap place to stay in the city. So I found it and I also found out why it was cheap, but never mind at least I was safe for the night. In Sydney that's a big load off one's mind. I had a sleep in next day and after getting a bit of lunch, I took off with my port to the station and caught the train to La Peruse. It stopped right by the prison, I was checked out at the gate and had quite a walk up to the huge prison doors. I'm sure they only make them so huge to terrify those who enter either by force or by some misguided notion. I swear that door asked me to state my name and after a long pause and a rattle of keys I was in, and the door relocked. I was then ushered into the gate room.

Duty in the gate room was one of my duties in the next few weeks along with escorting prisoners to their various posts of duty, kitchen, sewing room etc., and church parade, and some did chores in the Hospital. All meals were eaten in individual cells. They would, at meal time, leave their work place, parade in their own block, receive their meal and take it to their cell, and after an hour in which we had our meal in two half hour shifts, would be let back to their work place. All that is, except the 'lifers' who were allowed to spend their lunch hour in the common room and play cards or whatever. One Wardress supervised these, with an emergency bell by her chair. We mostly worked in pairs and what I learned was what I could get out of my other half each day and I found them curiously reluctant to tell me anything. The most difficult thing for me was, to 'only speak to a prisoner when giving an order'. It seemed so rude not to say, 'Good Morning' in reply to a cheery 'Mornin' Miss' and I must admit I broke that rule rather often. I was doing my laundry one day when a dark lady came in and offered to do it. When I told her I was used to doing for myself, she told me I wouldn't last long, I was too nice to be a screw and those I work alongside will soon have me out. Well, I've put that plainly but this coloured lady had access to extremely colourful speech.

I found the prostitutes to be the only happy souls in the place. They found something to laugh about in everything and they were fair, if not extremely kind to the other prisoners. There were a few prisoners I was extremely wary of, though I knew nothing of them. It was just instinct and my instinct has saved me a lot of strife in my time, so I give it full reign when it strikes. But that doesn't mean I am a good judge of character. It just means I'm aware of possible danger to me - all purely primitive, but as the cowboy said 'it works for me'! As for my judgement of character, one of the old ladies who used to work in the hospital really appealed to

me, a sweet Motherly soul, who loved to help everyone. Well after I had left the job, and some few years later I saw her photo in the paper and the headlines read 'Thallium murderess dies in Long Bay' seems my sweet old lady had killed off 5 or more of her family. After that I've never thought of myself as a judge of character.

There was a nice 'First Timers' section in the Goal, a high wall separated it. It was a low-set building, and each prisoner had a nice room, with bars and locks of course, and the building is set in a nice lawn and garden setting. During the day they were allowed to walk in the garden and front veranda, which has a view over the wall of distant hills. I was on duty over there one day and one of the prisoners asked me where I was from, when I said I was from Newcastle she begged me never to notice her if ever we met there. I assured her, we were under oath as to that sort of thing, but I did feel for her and was glad that I had no knowledge of what her misdemeanour had been. The gardens were full of freesias, beautiful perfume, not a bad place to be - but only for first timers.

I did night duty on my own one night. That meant I stayed in the gate room most of the time doing a round of the gaol every hour or two to check there were no sheets around the cell bars, indicating possible hangings - a gruesome thought. To do this round we had to unlock and relock four or more iron bar gates with padlock and chain and try as one might it is nothing short of downright noisy, and I can't think of anything more creepy than that plus the rattle of loose louvers in the tops of the cell blocks, that was one long night. I had also been told not to let anyone in the main gate except the Comptroller General, and when I asked how I would know it was he, I was told 'Oh you'll know'. I made a mental note if he came, he would be very cold by the time 1st. shift came on duty!

I'd been on the job for four weeks when Matron called me to her office and we spoke of the job, and she was of the opinion that the job didn't suit me, in other words she asked me to give my notice. I think she was right so to do. I didn't really enjoy it and my curiosity was quite satisfied and before the day was up I was looking forward to going back to Newcastle. I wrote to Dick who was now the owner of a snazzy looking soft-top red car and was dying to do a long run, and the following week he was at the big gates to pick me up - his wandering sister once more. So for a second time, I did the trip from Sydney to Newcastle road by car. I moved into the Y.W.C.A. then found a job. This time in Mayfield, just a short bus ride out of Newcastle centre. I worked as a sheet metal worker. It was a nice change from my last two jobs. I worked a large machine that stamped out shapes from small sheets of metal. It was a sit down job and rather noisy, but I was soon getting a good tally up. It was a pay by piecework job, and I soon settled into the rounds of tennis, swimming and so forth with Dick, Enid and their church friends again.

It wasn't long before Enid and I found a flat in Mayfield. Living with Enid was quite an education for me, I was still a Pom in those days and I had a lot to learn about Australians - what one does and does not do. I couldn't have had a better teacher, and still, after all these years, she is still my best and dearest friend. We spent the next Xmas at Enid's parent's farm in Woolomin near Tamworth, really good country folk they are. Enid's two brothers took us to a dance. We travelled miles to get there, but we had a good time.





Married Life

The following year I met and married Ray. Our meeting was due to a fellow R.A.A.F. chap I had been casually going out with. He was to be taking me to a birthday party for one of the girls where I was working. He decided not to go, made up some excuse and took off leaving Ray to escort me. After that we started to see each other

regularly. We decided to get married in August having found a vacant house for rent next door to the flats Enid and I were renting, and we all moved in - that is brother Dick, cousin Peter and Ray. We were to be married in the chapel at Williamtown where Ray was with the air force. He had been trying for a few years before to be posted overseas, and with a few days to go for the wedding a posting to Japan came through. He was called to the medical centre and was told to report on Monday for vaccinations. When he told the Sister-in-Charge he was getting married on Saturday and was to be on leave for a week, she said to report in then on Monday week. We spent much of that week much on our own.

I can't remember what we did except for one day we took the bus into Newcastle taking with us a packed lunch, and with the tide being out we walked around the base of Shepherd's Hill walking on the beach and climbing over the rocks. We were accompanied by a German Shepherd dog with whom we shared our lunch and he stayed with us till we got back to the bus seemed to say goodbye and went on his way and we on ours.

This was not the only problem that this posting was causing as my future in-laws were coming down from Brisbane to share Xmas with us in our newly rented house. But fate stepped in, Ray had such a bad reaction to the vaccinations he was in hospital for a week in which time one of the other chaps in his section asked him while he was still in hospital if he would exchange postings all was arranged. So he went to Japan and Ray stayed at Williamtown, and I did not have to meet Mum and Bert for the first time on my own. But I still remember meeting them on Broadmeadow Station. There was Poppy, a big tall man with a big smiling face and kindly manner, and Barry their adopted 6 year old bright blue eyed boy with yellow curly hair. I could cope with that, and then Mum in law still fussing over bags ports and boxes smiling a welcome while still ordering all and sundry as to who should carry what to the car, and telling everyone what they should have done first! And I knew Mum was the commander of the fleet.



I didn't have a lot going for me as far as Mum was concerned. I was a Pom to start with, and they had never amounted to much in her book. Secondly, I was rather gentle of nature and Mum liked people, like herself, who called a 'spade a spade', but never the less we both made an effort to please each other as best we knew how, and we had a good Xmas. Poppy was an ex-wharfie and had a never ending supply of jokes and stories. Mind you, my Mother would not have approved of many of them and there were plenty that a certain religion would have taken as offensive, and rightly so, but that was

Poppy. But all the same he was a kind and gentle man in his own way.

Well Mother wanted her gardens dug over and talked Ray into getting a posting from Williamtown to Amberley Air Base, and since he wanted to see his home town, Brisbane, again he didn't need much prompting. Within a few months we were heading north to live at Carina with the family. It was a long way for Ray to go to work but he didn't seem to mind. Mother had her gardens dug, Poppy couldn't do much as he had 'TB'. He had given up drinking and smoking when we first met him, though he had well and truly had his share in his early days.



We stayed with them about a year I think and when I became pregnant, we rented a house in One Mile, Ipswich and then we had to start from scratch. But at least we were on our own and starting a family. John was born in '56 and Jamie in '57, we were getting a home together and had some nice neighbours.

Jamie was about two years old when we brought out my parents from England - they were both about 70 yrs. old then, and the cold was getting harder for them to bear. We assumed they were on a pension and we had the room, and when we are young we can do anything! Anyway they were not on an age pension as Dad had not kept up his stamps when he was unemployed [which was often] so they were on 'Poor Relief' which no longer covered them once they left the country.

Well this really put us back. Ray had just left the Air Force in June '57 and was working in the Railway Workshops, and we had his de-mob money to buy a piece of land in Vineyard St., but that ran out looking after the parents. By now brother Dick had come to Queensland and married an Ipswich girl, and they had a son. So Dick took them for a while, and I don't know how it was arranged but next I heard my parents had been given a full Australian pension and a pensioner's cottage at Brasilia. I think it was the St. Vincent people. I know they gave them necessary furniture and visited them often. It gave Mum and Dad a good happy 10 yrs.

Our next little problem was we had to move. The owner of our home wanted his house, and so we applied to the Housing Commission. We were allocated a lovely new house in Law St. Redbank. Being a new home, no garden was established and since we had no car as yet, our home and garden was our pride and joy and we were proud of our achievements. I was pregnant again in 1959 and in August of that year Ray left the railway to go to New Guinea - it was to be a two year stay. I was not happy with the thought of going there and having dark people look after my children but he returned after two weeks. After his return he was out of work for a short time and then started work at the Brisbane Mental Hospital as a Nurse in Training in October.

In early 1960 we at last had a little girl - I couldn't have been happier. But it wasn't to be, little Jennifer died at just six weeks. 'Cot death' they called it. I don't want to write about it. These things have to be and we must cope. The following year at about the same time, I gave birth to Patti and I knew again the joy of having a little girl. The next five years were wonderful to me,





being a Mother was the best job I ever had.

During those five years my sister Daisy [now Frances] and her family migrated out here and also lived in Redbank, Frances had always been a working Mum and talked me into getting a job with her at the Woollen Mills, this enabled us to buy our first car second hand but a car of our own. Ray by now was a nurse at the hospital and did morning shift so I could do afternoon shift at the Mill, that way the children always had one of us at home. We did get our car, but I'm not sure it was the best solution; even

though I did enjoy the work sometimes it was too much.

Mother Nature intervened and I was blessed with another girl. Donna arrived about the time we moved to Inala in 1966. The Redbank house had only two bedrooms and I was sad to leave our lovely garden but with another baby to love, I wasn't sad for long. Ray had bought a second-hand English pram and after many coats of black enamel it was my pride and joy. After the boys had left for school Patti and I went to the shops with our new baby in the pram. Patti had one more year before starting school, which was just a short walk up the road. Our house was 98 Lorikeet Street and we were to live there for three years. The main shopping centre was only a walk away, and we had a smaller selection of shops just around the corner, one of which was a wool shop. I knitted a lot at that time.

The boys joined the local Scout Group, and the boys often went to the Inala Swimming Pool. We had good neighbours too and it was a good period for us.

Ray's Mum was having difficulties living on her own since Poppy died so she came to live with us. It was not a good move at all really but we tried to make it work. Even when I went back to work at the Mill, we had difficulties. Eventually Mum went to live with her sister and we rearranged our lives back to normal again and life was good. We decided to buy a piece of land at Riverview the following year, and we were busy with plans for the house we were to build on it. But all these things take time, but towards the end of our Inala days my Mum was in hospital for a bit and came to stay with us for convalescence. Frances had Dad because he couldn't cope without Mum. But then Mum had a stroke while staying with us, and it was a bad one. She was in hospital a long time then Eventide. Mean while Fran left Dad with us, he was very senile by then, and to be honest I didn't cope very well. We had to have him placed in the Geriatric Ward in the Mental Hospital. These were very bad times. Dad died first and Mum three months later.



A Home of Our Own

When we moved into our new home about November 1969, Donna was 3, Patti 8, and the boys 12 and 13. We also took in a young Scottish lad named George Cravens who was in Australia on a working holiday. A fine lad he turned out to be. He was with us for two years and we never regretted a day of it. He returned home soon after his the 21st birthday barbeque that we held for him.

Early in 1970 Ray was given a scare with the arrival of a Police car on our drive. He thought the boys who travelled to High School at Oxley by train were in trouble. But it turned out one of the local Police Officers was the Group Leader of the local Scout group and had found he had an ex-scout in the area. Ray and the boys all joined the local Scouts. That turned out to be the first of many visits by the Police to our home.



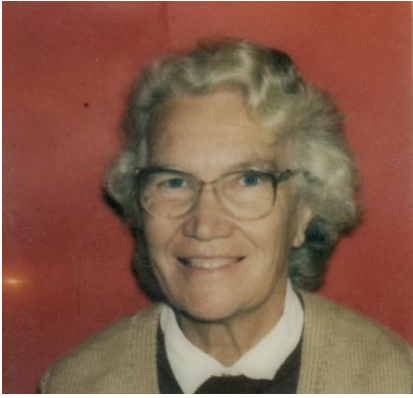
The next four years were very full as we all became involved in the scouts. The boys progressed through scouts, senior scouts to rovers. Ray started as cub leader, then scout leader, then senior scout leader, finishing off as chairman of the group committee. I did a spell as committee secretary. Patti joined the Guides and I was also in the guides as commissioner at one stage. Ray and I used to run a 'Record Hop' for the scouts and guides too. Added to that the effort of setting up a large garden - it was 3/4 of an acre of unfenced field! It had to be tamed, mowed and planted, and eventually fenced. Added to this, we had the usual complement of dogs, cats, and birds in cages, guinea pigs and one time a lost baby Wallaby.

By 1973 John had left school and Jamie was doing Senior, Patti was in her last year of Primary School and Donna was in her early grades at Bundamba. In September of 1973 Ray left the hospital and went to work for White Motors. As the school year closed, we had an early wet season set in ending with a cyclone, which caused devastating floods in Brisbane and Ipswich. For us, in Ipswich it started during the long weekend preceding Australia Day. On the Saturday night, we had about six or more of Ray's senior scouts at our place and I seemed to just stand at the stove making pikelets which disappeared as quick as I made them. They were the last things cooked in the house for the next few weeks. By midnight Ray and the boys plus one extra, who could not get home as he had been cut off by water, were settled in at the Scout Den, and myself and the girls slept the night at the home of the scout group leader. By next morning we were all together and stayed in the scout den for the next two weeks.

As I write this now I am 73 years old and I'm depending on my memory for the sequence of events and time between. But something like the big Brisbane Flood, as it has been called, no one seems to remember it also hit Ipswich. But when your home is filled with muddy water, up to and over the roof you find that hard to forget.

During the time the flood waters were still rising, John went out with a group of volunteers who manned trucks made available by the Dinmore Potteries to save the belongings of people threatened by the rising waters, he managed to cadge a lift in a boat to save a few things from our home which by this time had two to three feet of water through it, underneath the laundry, the rumpus room etc were all flooded. John knowing the layout of the house jumped over the railings onto the veranda, while the boat owner climbed over the railings and went straight down the





stairwell before John could warn him.

Ray managed to have a call put over Radio 4IP, they had a car in our area which gave us a link through its CB radio, [by now we were in affect an island] for anyone in the area who needed a dry bed to come to the Scout Den. In no time people were arriving at the Den with beds, mattresses pillows and blankets that we would be needing. The wonder of it all was when people were able to return to their homes, the people who left the bedding came and collected it and apparently

nobody lost anything.

During the first day we moved into the Den we had a visitor who wished to know if we required anything. I said we needed salt and toilet paper. By this time there were ourselves and the four children; one of John's scout friends who could not get home the night before; and two other families in the Den. This number grew over the next few days as the water continued to rise. But he asked if there were any personal needs. When I said I only had the pants I was wearing, he said come with me, and he took me to his residence where his wife gave me 6 pairs of her own - brand new. The visitor had introduced himself as Harry West and it was not till a few days later we found out he was the Rev. Harry West the Baptist Vicar in Dinmore. After the flood we became very good friends with Harry and his wife Edith dining with us on a number of occasions and Harry later married John & Mandy; and then Dona & Manning. Later that day, about 7. 30 or may be 8.00 P.M., a vehicle sounded its horn outside the Den and when Ray went out. A man was standing between the headlights offering two loaves of hot bread. This was repeated each night till the floodwaters subsided. We never knew who our benefactor was.

The Shell Road House at Riverview [since closed and demolished] being without power could not keep the stock of frozen food for too long and were forced to cook it up as it thawed out. We in the Den and many others in the area enjoyed some very good meals. We found during the flood that it mostly brought out the best in most people - although for some you could only feel pity for their terrible behaviour. We had our funny moments like the manager of the local super market brought 4~5 tubs of ice-cream around as they were starting to thaw, just a little before two young boys arrived with a parcel of Vegemite sandwiches for the poor flood people. I thanked them, then asked if they would like some ice-cream and gave them a tub and two spoons. I do hope they were not sick from too much ice cream.

When the floodwaters subsided then came the trauma of how much damage has been done, how much work before we can move back in. On the first day it was possible to get in. Ray said if it were not for all our friends there to help he would have walked out, but he gathered together all the girls dolls and the boys games he could salvage and brought them to the den where the girls and I washed them and hung them out to dry. Among these things was a brown snake that had taken refuge in Johns knapsack and was very much alive. Along with our friends who followed Ray into the house came others some we did not know who came and took away all our clothes that were in the house - bed linen and blankets and all being returned clean and ironed. The days that followed for the rest of the week were filled with cleaning cupboards, cooking utensils, crockery and finding places to stow things when we could move back in.

We stayed a week in the Scout Den after the floodwaters had gone down before

moving back in to our home again. Much was done in that time to help us. Harry West with the assistance of Dinmore Potteries with the use of their trucks collected household effects in the area that people no longer wanted and gave them out to people to help them settle back in their homes. Ray went back to work at White Trucks who gave us \$100 from a staff collection, and continued to work there till the October of '74. His return to work at the hospital was caused by the failure of Cambridge Credit Finance Corp. who financed all the trucks built by Whites. With twenty trucks nearly finished and no one to buy them there was talk of a heavy layoffs and this coming on the heels of the flood was too much. We knew we could not afford to be out of work, so he went back to the hospital starting on October 21st. He stayed at the hospital till he retired. John stayed on at Whites till he married in September the next year.

Here ends the journal of Jean Olive Gill. Her story goes on yet and one day she might bring us the next installment. How 'bout it. Mum?

