

GLADDY'S STORY

The personal memoirs of Gladys Collins (1911 – 1995): a life-long resident and Friend of Box Hill.

Transcribed from her original manuscript with added notes for the benefit of non-family readers

1.

I was born at 'Bullen Wood', High Ashurst, Mickleham near Dorking now called 'Bellassis', Box Hill, Tadworth. High Ashurst was a large estate owned by the Earl of Harrowby stretching from Upper Farm on the Deepdene Estate to the Hand in Hand on one side (of the road), Headley Common down to Headley Lane, Warren Farm and part of Mickleham Downs joining on to Lord Beaverbrook's estate, Cherkeley Court.

The estate was almost self-supporting, having its own church in the gardens. The vicar lived at Brockham Hill Farm. The school was next to 'Bullen Wood' and is now the garage of Bellassis. The school mistress, Miss Bailey, lodged in one of the cottages there. The children of staff at Brockham Warren attended the school. The Brodie's and their employees also came to church.

Warren Farm was a dairy farm. We collected our milk from there daily, skim milk which was very good, a penny a quart. Our route to Warren Farm was over the cricket field by the head gardener's cottage, down through 'The Pinch', across the drive over styles No.1 and No.2 provided for us to cut off a corner. At cowslip time this walk was a naturalist's dream which brought us out above the Bottom Lodge and on to Headley Lane. Birchingrove Farm was for sheep mostly. Mr Philpott was the shepherd and lived there next door to Mr Leeves the poultry man and beekeeper. I remember he was very deaf, lived in a world of his own; he had such a lovely face and seemed at peace with the world. Mr Philpott not only sheared his sheep but cut men's hair, no basin! I often went with my brother on a Saturday morning and waited and watched him have his two pennyworth. It was Bessie Philpot, the late Bessie Trussler who told the story for our WI Scrapbook of Miss Bailey, the teacher asking Alice Musk, 'who is the Good Shepherd?' Her answer was 'Mr Philpott.' Double Lodges, now called East and West, housed the painter and decorator and the roadman. Ashurst Drive was beautiful, not a weed, holly trees in opposite pairs and beautifully shaped until you reached the Common Gate and joined Green Lane, now called Headley Heath Approach. The Drive continued with its stonework gully past the big house down to the bottom lodge on Headley Lane.

Now back to 'Bullen Wood' to complete the community there. My father¹ was head gamekeeper, next door to us, Mr Wrenn, the estate carpenter, the other two cottages, an under gardener and the engineer, Mr Dobson. His wife was not popular with the tradesmen; she weighed her bread and meat for fear of being overcharged. 'Old Dobby' as we called him behind his back, chewed tobacco, we all said the gully was for him to spit in. On his way back to work, one would see these long jets of brown liquid being ejected regularly. This fascinated my brother², he put in lots of practice, with water, not tobacco juice, and became quite expert. 'Old Dobby' passed Mr Houghton's, the head gardener's cottage (still standing) on his way to the engine room which housed his pride and joy, a big steam engine. 'Dobby' really believed in 'spit and polish' for it was a joy to behold; he never seemed to be without an oilcan in his hand. Water was pumped from a deep well, I think it dealt with the lighting as well. It backed on to the stable yard, where the coachman lived as well as the groom and the stable men. The young gardeners lived next door in the Bothey, next to the laundry and the home of the laundry maid. Still on the outdoor staff, Cockshoot Cottage and Bottom Lodge, under gardener and cowman and, of course, the head cowman at Warren Farm; two cottages up the lane, I think a labourer and Mr Raisey the carter. The cart horses, Prince, Duke and Punch, a handsome sight bedecked with ribbons and shining horse brasses. Next to the farm, a saw-mill, I remember the German prisoners of war working there; they wore dark peak caps, brightly coloured patches on their suits for identification. I was frightened of them, for to me, they had killed my Daddy!

Now to High Ashurst House – I don't know when the Earl³ and Countess died⁴. I have a picture of the Dowager, at the opening of Headley Cricket Pavillion. I don't know who the thatcher was, it was beautifully done with heather.

It was the Earl's three daughters we knew, Lady Margaret and Lady Constance Ryder and Lady Audrey Anson, a widow. As girls we were expected to curtsy each time we met the Ladies but they were all very sweet.

Lady Audrey held Sunday school in the school room. All the young estate children attended; from there we marched through the gardens to the church for morning service. The older children went to bible class in the afternoon; I escaped that being too young. After tea, it was evening service through which I often slept. I can remember waking up in the arms of Mr Bowles, the coachman, being carried out of church.

Lady Constance played the organ; the big boys earned pocket money for doing the pumping. My brother George was a choirboy. I remember Church Army and Salvation Army Captains taking the services after Mr Cooper the clergyman left.

Scouts and Cub meetings were held in the school room by Lady Constance. Regular Red Cross parties were held there too, wives and mothers on the estate did noble work for this cause. The Ladies were Red Cross nurses and worked at a Tadworth Hospital, being taken there by horse and trap. When my father was reported missing they helped Mother enquiring through the Red Cross etc, in fact they were a great comfort to her. My young sister⁵ was born while my father was serving overseas. Lunch for Mother⁶ was provided from the House, also for the nurse, George collected it. We also collected super dripping. I believe 2^d a pound, 'cook's perks' no doubt.

The House seemed alive with servants for there were about fifty bedrooms and eight reception rooms, butler, footman, houseboy, cook, kitchen maids, scullery maid, between maids, housemaids, nursery maid, schoolroom maid and, of course, the Ladies' maids, the cream of the indoor staff. Miss Petter and Miss Pateman held these positions. Mr Knowles, the estate Bailiff, was king of the outdoors. He regularly visited the estate in his horse and trap, the children were lucky to get a penny for opening the Common Gate for him. He wore a brown hard hat, breeches and his gaiters shone like glass. He carried quite a corporation, he was known amongst the boys as 'Guts and Gaiters'.

We always had a super Christmas party, all on the estate had presents, carefully selected for each adult and child.

High Ashurst held the shooting rights of Headley Common, purchased in 1885 by Henry Dudley Ryder from Thomas Lucas Esq.; the Manor or Lordship of Headley, comprising about 488 acres of common land, with exclusive sporting rights.

The under-keeper lived at 'Keeper's Planting', a cottage on the common. The shooting was let when my father came to High Ashurst in 1909. Mr Crookenden of Headley and Mrs Coles of Pebblecombe were the tenants and my father's employers. His wage was 23/-^d per week plus free cottage and firewood (a rise of 4/-^d on his previous post near Winchester). Later the shooting syndicate was joined by Mr Le Beck, Mr Trinder from Tadworth and Mr Maltwood, I think from Kingswood. The pheasant rearing pens were at the back of 'Bullen Wood'. Not being near shops, we knew nothing of chocolate Easter eggs, we always had a pheasant's egg for Easter Sunday. My father had a cabin on wheels to use while guarding the young pheasants from predators at the critical age; we joined him for a picnic for a special treat. The cabin was like a shepherd's hut, our early experience of caravanning.

One year a fox broke into the pheasant rearing pen and killed about 60 hens sitting on eggs. It was no wonder gamekeepers hated foxes; this was killing for killings sake and a ghastly sight.

On shooting days everyone was roped in as 'beaters', my sister⁷ and I were just 'stops', it was always an exciting day. Mother⁸ catered for the gentlemen and their ladies lunch in our front room, while the 'beaters' and 'stops' had sandwiches, beer and ginger beer provided by the Hand in Hand. A great thrill for us!

The estate school was closed before I started school so I had to walk to Headley across the common, my father saw that all the rides were trimmed back to enable us to keep reasonably

dry. I remember it snowed the day I started in January, no wellingtons then, we wore old stockings over our buttoned boots to keep our legs dry. The family convoyed me across, the eldest leading then my sister, my brother, treading down the snow for the baby sister, they were so proud to take me to school. I don't expect it lasted. There were plenty of hazel nuts and walnuts for us to harvest on the common, no grey squirrels then. Nightingales and nightjars were common. During the war we collected elderflower for ointment, we spread it in empty kennels at 'Bullen Wood' to dry and save it sweating; it's a smell I always remember.

We walked past the Little Brimmer Pond and the Brimmer in which the boys used to bathe on hot summer days on the way home from school, I remember the policeman chasing them for swimming in the nude. The Common Pond was opposite 'Bullen Wood', plenty of newts and tadpoles there. A big pond was in the school yard but, of course, there was plenty of playground outside. I remember seeing my only crested newt in here; I didn't know what it was till years later. I remember too my brother being chased by Mother for some misdeed, he ran into the pond to escape capture, she was cross and took the clothes prop to reach him; he went in further above the waist. Mother was scared now and had to promise not to hit him before he would come out, he was the only one who dared to defy my mother.

Another little pond was at the top of Green Lane, two more in Birchingrove Farm fields and one off the farm road at the end of 'Bullen Wood Bottom', this is the valley below 'Bellassis' that people think is nameless. In those days it could have been Primrose Valley, for there were masses, it came out at 'Damson Tree Corner' just before joining Headley Lane. There was an old oak tree in the middle of 'Bullen Wood Bottom', the Hermit Oak. I don't know why it was so called.

Before my father joined the Army he was called to guard a naval balloon in the field below High Ashurst House, I remember being lifted into the basket with my teddy bear. I recently came across the medal and membership card for the 'Surrey Corps of Guides to HMS', issued 18.8.14, signed by B V S Brodie, District Guide, S E Watney, DW Guide and F D Watney, Chief Guide which explained why he was called for duty. The occupants, meanwhile, were being entertained to lunch by the Ladies. It was evidently the will of the Earl that High Ashurst was to be sold. The Ladies were heartbroken for they loved it so; when they left it was never to return for they couldn't face seeing the changes: wise Ladies.

My father was now in the Army, Mother keeping the flag flying, seeing to the dogs, ferrets, birds etc and still catering for the gents on shooting days. Father was reported missing then later killed, our cottage required for another keeper. My baby sister, we found, died the same day as my father was killed.

Imagine poor Mother now with four children. The Ladies offered us the school, we camped for six weeks amongst the desks etc, great fun for us children but cooking on an open fire with big ornamental spikes must have been a headache.

To try and forget her troubles and to earn a little cash, Mother went weeding in the gardens as most of the men had been called up. Mother's income was now 28/9^d per week, 13/9^d War Widow's Pension and 15/-^d allowance for four children.

High Ashurst was about to be sold and, to help us out of the school situation, the Ladies offered Mother a housekeeping job while preparations were being made. Our address now became High Ashurst House. The school room now became our living room plus two bedrooms. The Ladies were still with us doing their final turning out, they made constant visits to the school room bringing things they thought we would enjoy, lots of jig-saw puzzles, we sorted out the complete ones, the floor was covered and we were kept busy. After the Ladies left we children spent some exciting weeks exploring this big mansion, especially the cellars by candlelight.

Brother George had become a houseboy to the Ryder's and moved to Berkhamstead with the household where they stayed while the Ladies did their house hunting. They settled for Somerset just outside Dunster. The High Ashurst organ went with Lady Constance, years later we were to hear a service broadcast from Timberscombe Church and again heard the High Ashurst organ.

George was ordered to travel to Dunster to help with the cows (his pet aversion), he refused and the sack followed. What courage in those days for a young lad to stick up for himself.

With a leg-up from one of the shooting tenants who was in shipping he joined the Merchant Service, he was in Australia for his 16th birthday, we were all very proud of him.

The Ladies bore him no grudge and always welcomed him when he stayed with the coachman, later chauffeur. I still hear from Charles Bowles, one of his sons, his brother Donald was at one time curator of Edinburgh Zoo.

Back at High Ashurst, White and Sons of Dorking were preparing the lots for sale while Mother was housekeeping. Mr George Moore was in charge, it turned out he played cricket against my father and we became friends for life. Father was a keen cricketer, playing for the High Ashurst team he won a bat with shield in 1909 and again in 1911 for the best batting average, both presented by Lady Constance. He also played for Headley United and in 1913 was presented with a silver cup by Mrs Mappin (of Mappin & Webb) from Headley, again for his batting.

High Ashurst had its own football team in which my father played. He was a keen golfer, was a member of Walton Heath Artisans Club as well as playing on a small course behind the Hand in Hand. Cycling to the Chequers at Walton and the Institute at Headley he was able to enter the billiards and snooker world. All this in the 'bad old days'!

We children transferred from Headley to Mickleham School, down to Warren Farm, if fine scrambling up White Hill, over the Downs, dropping down to the William IV pub just above the school. If wet we had to keep to Headley Lane to Juniper Hall, London Road to the church then across the recreation field.

In 1918 the house and estate were sold to Mr P Bayman of George E Gray of Forest Gate, his main interest was timber, this was cut over a period of four years and, unfortunately, not replanted at that time. The house and immediate grounds were bought by Lord Rowallan who gave it to YWCA for a hostel for London club girls. Mother stayed on for them as cook/housekeeper so we moved into the laundry cottage, joined to the building in the stable yard. The work was very hard but, as usual, Mother got stuck in and was a success, she was very popular with the young ladies, I still have an invitation from them for one of their drama shows. Some very talented acts they performed too.

I remember seeing the sweets prepared for an evening meal, trays of mock poached eggs, half peaches on corn flour rings, most impressive! After a year Mother had the offer to run Upper Farm Tea Gardens and housekeep for Mr George Elliott, the tenant. We had known the Elliott's for a long time, he worked quite often for my father and before Mrs Elliott's death Mother had helped out on several Bank Holidays. After much thought Mother accepted the challenge and in September 1919 we moved to Upper Farm and started a completely different life.

¹ William Collins (1876-1917)

² George Collins (1904-1971)

³ Died 1904

⁴ 1913

⁵ Winifred (1916-1917)

⁶ Laura Collins, nee Dalton (1877-1966)

⁷ Edith Burbidge (Edie), nee Collins (1906-1998)

⁸ Percy Collins (1908-1930)

2.

In the middle of September 1919 we left High Ashurst to come to Upper Farm, Box Hill. My sister stayed away from school that Wednesday to help Mother move. My brother and I set off to Mickleham School as usual but had to come back to a different home, we knew we had to find the Zig-Zag and climb up the hill. Once we got to the Fort and saw the swings and push roundabout we knew where we were for we had been on them on a day out on bank holiday. It was a strange feeling and I'm sure we must have made a pathetic sight, such youngsters, but poor Mother couldn't be in two places at once. We soon settled down for we had plenty of exploring ahead. There were hens, Tom the pony and Clara the black & white cow. Clara had to do her stuff for there was no milkman; we had any surplus milk from Brockham Warren. Our rent was paid to the Deepdene Estate, collected by Mr Groombridge, I have a receipt for midsummer 1920, 6 months rent £28/15/0 + £1/7/6 water rate, total £30/2/6 (£5/0/5 per month).

We bathed in front of the fire, a kitchener, an oven on the left with a boiler on the right, this we filled with the water can from the only tap which was in the old dairy, outside at the end of the cottage. This too housed an old copper, still doing service as a flower container in my garden. How I wish we had kept our splendid old fender we brought from High Ashurst, it was semi-circular with lovely brass spikes, a real beauty!

Outside was a horrible old privy, a great pit, couldn't say it was bottomless! For this was for everyone, customers, male and female as well as us!! A good supply of newspaper squares was always kept neatly strung up. Thank goodness newsprint was a better quality in those days! Poor old Mr Elliott, we all got on quite well really but it must have been an upheaval for him too. When we nearly drove him to distraction he would shout loudly 'dandle the kids'.

As with many of his age, he could read but little. One night a week was story night when Mother read to us. Mr Elliott never went to the 'Hand' that night, wouldn't miss the serial, rather pathetic!

I think the old boy had his sights on the marriage stakes but Mother had other ideas.

Years later when we were old enough to be cheeky to her, Mother was very amused when we threatened if she brought a man home we would kick his backside out!

We thought Mr Elliott was feeding a ferret in an unused pigsty, what joy when we discovered a tiny puppy and christened him Victor. My brother painted VIC in red paint on the sty door, we kids just took over and, in no time at all, he was one of the family in the little cottage.

Several times he followed us to school; he enjoyed it so, even dear Mr Piper, the schoolmaster then, brought him a bone for lunch. He was quite content to stay in the lobby with our coats. One morning he caught us up at Juniper Hall, after that he had to be kept in till we were safely at school. We tried every route to school according to the weather that never kept us at home. The 'Slopes', we aimed to be on the 'Whites' when Burford House clock struck four. It was a minute or two faster than Dorking church clock.

Sometimes we used Military Road or Zig-Zag, Slip-Way and through the woods to Upper Farm; the Tower and Pinehurst Drive, often seeing the white Rolls Royce belonging to Miss Corbet Hew; Happy Valley and even Ashurst Valley and over White Hill. When it snowed my brother pulled me on a sledge to the top of the 'Slopes' then got on too for a wonderful trip down. Here we had the West Humble and Pixham Lane children waiting to join in, always late for school those days. We left our sledge at the lodge at Bencombe until we came home and then what fun. If it was moonlight it was nothing for us to get home at 8 o'clock, no one thought of tea and Mother knew where we were. Always had the 'Slopes' to ourselves. We had no playmates, my brother and I often went on Saturday mornings to Betchworth Station to play cricket in the pits with our old neighbours from High Ashurst, the Wren's, always using the Fort Road and Red Road for our journey.

Lower Box Hill Farm was the dairy farm for the Deepdene Estate; Upper Farm at one time for sheep. The Burberry family ran the farm before the Elliotts and they used a cultivated field in Ashurst Valley (Wilton Bank) in which they grew mangolds. The gate posts were there for many years, quite a pull up to the farm!

'Old Donkey Brown' and sometimes three sons, Fred, Perce and Bill came up from Dorking on weekdays. The donkeys were left for the night in a field by the river at Lower Box Hill Farm, always leaving their saddles at Upper Farm. I often waited, even a couple of hours, to get that last half mile ride home from school, there was Joey, Tiny, Ada, Jenny, Dolly and Snowball. What joy when they brought up a young baby donkey to learn the ropes. Father Brown came up in a horse and cart bringing the daily requirements. We children often led the mounts for poor old Bill who was very bad on his pins, had slits cut in his boots! 2^d across the green, sixpence all round. All manure had to be stacked and litter cleared daily before the site was left, the manure heap removed at the end of the season.

Open-top buses ran along the London Road and sometimes we saw one of the last of the stagecoaches. Hardly any traffic used the Zig-Zag, we were excited to get a lift in a steam coal wagon one day. They were our coalmen from Tadworth and knew where we had to go. It was Monday, I had a clean coat on, cream linen, to last me a week, Mother hoped. You should have seen it after the coalmen had lifted me down! We did enjoy our ride though!

One morning going to school the Tower way we watched five red squirrels in the walnut tree there, a great thrill, nearly late for school that morning. Coming home the same way, I remember my brother, always a dare-devil and a terrific climber, walking around the top of the Tower! I was terrified.

Mr Holden lived at and ran the Fort Tea Gardens, helped by his son-in-law who lived in Keeper's Cottage. Next door in Woodman's Cottage were the Binfield's, I think he was gardener for Mr Wood at Flint Cottage, George Meredith's house at the bottom of the Zig-Zag. Swiss Cottage was let to the Latham's. With Upper Farm this was Box Hill complete, all on the Deepdene Estate. Further along the road were High Ashurst, Brockham Warren and Betchworth Fort. All on Box Hill had a Dorking postal address; the postman left his bike at Boxhurst and walked up to the Fort, Swiss Cottage, Woodman's and Keeper's Cottages and Upper Farm. Two deliveries a day, some of the time he earned his cup of tea!

Brockham Warren and Betchworth Fort had a Betchworth postman, the others from Tadworth. From Upper Farm to Pebblecombe on one side were four lodges at Brockham Warren, two keeper's cottages (just demolished) past the Hand and the gardener's cottage at Pebblecombe (Mr Payne). On the other side; the Double Lodges, Brockham Hill Farm, the Hand in Hand and two cottages down the lane. If we had a paper, old Cornelius White, 'Con' to us, brought it up for us, he lived in Dorking Workhouse and he was always pleased to earn a copper or two and was very willing. We remembered him at High Ashurst, his stooping figure and shaggy beard, he was blackberrying. 'Con' got badly scratched picking sloes for a customer, he had two horrible septic hands, when Mother saw them she took him under her wing, he was like a child in her hands and had to report every morning for his salt bath treatment, with miraculous results, how the old boy enjoyed his cup of tea and a bite to eat, a grateful old soul. I shall always remember him for buying his box of 'Lucifers'!

With only a little traffic everywhere was so peaceful, we could hear most of the local church clocks and church bells ringing. According to the wind direction we could foretell the weather by them. The trains too, London Brighton & South Coast Railway coming out of Mickleham Tunnel or the South Eastern & Chatham Railway (slow easy & comfortable riding) chugging its way to Betchworth.

We inherited a few campers; some had been coming for years. Some had to wait for the hay to be cut, an unusual sight! Round the edge of the field, five or six Indian wigwams, some used into the winter. A framework of bent hazel rods covered with blankets, overlapping and safety-pinned together, the framework was higher and chimney-shaped in one spot, uncovered to actually act as a chimney, an open fire on the ground below. It became quite cosy. I tasted my first ever tinned apricots in one of these structures belonging to Mr & Mrs Camebus, later Lottie Camebus became a friend of Mahatma Ghandi and worked with him in this country and in India. I have a picture of the wigwams sent by one of the owners years later, knowing I hoped to make a scrapbook some time.

Box Hill had been given to the National Trust on condition that it was run by a local committee, this was formed in 1915 one being Sir B V S Brodie from Brockham Warren. The first changes came when the Fort was leased to H G Kingham, grocer and provision merchant from Dorking, and a manager was installed. Next the first Hill Keeper arrived in Keeper's Cottage, E Killick, a forester; we now had good neighbours who joined in the local life. I

remember him showing me dormice, they had been disturbed in hibernation, he tended them until the spring and they were then released. His daughter, Peggy and I still exchange nostalgic letters at Christmas time.

At this time the Brodie's took on where High Ashurst had left off, first with Cubs and Scouts roping in most of the High Ashurst troop that were left, the Wren's from Betchworth, Ben Leach from Boider, Don Simms from Pebblecombe, Charlie Wheeler from the Hand and, of course, my brother. In 1921 the Misses Brodie started Sunday school held in the school room at Brockham Warren, the first three pupils, Bert Newland, Jack Farnes and myself.

The Brodie's kindly allowed us to use their telephone in an emergency. Theirs was the first telephone on Box Hill, installed by National Telephone Co at the end of 1908, about 15 subscribers then, they were Betchworth 5. We were a fairly healthy bunch and didn't often have to worry about a doctor but it was useful in an emergency to be able to telephone dear old Dr Thorne from Brockham Green who came up in his grand car using Brodie's Drive. He was a walking chemist and always could supply pills, powders and medicine for any complaint; he seemed to carry a bottomless bag!

Church services were arranged for the locals in the front hall at Brockham Warren taken by clergymen from Headley, Mickleham, Betchworth or Brockham. My sister and I were confirmed by the Bishop of Southwark at Brockham. Preparation classes were held by Rev Longley at Betchworth Vicarage. I was allowed out of school for this purpose, I then walked home from Mickleham, joined my sister and we walked together to Betchworth then home for tea, thought nothing of it!

We always walked to Dorking on Saturday evenings, bought fish and chips to eat on the hillside on our way home; I couldn't wait and had a good picking on the way. Needless to say we were taught to bring our litter home! Always plenty of glow worms, they were very common. Bill Trussler, cowman at Brockham Warren, amused us with his story. Coming up Brockham Hill after celebrating at the 'Barley Mow' with some of his pals, he picked up a glow worm, he thought, only to find it was a cigarette, an unexpected meeting with a courting couple, he wasn't made at all welcome.

To enable us to take part in a social life, Mother would take us to concerts, whist drives, socials and dances, walking to Headley, Betchworth or Brockham, we would hide our candle lantern and walking sticks in bushes at the bottom of the hill for our homeward journey.

For a short time Ida Binfield came to Mickleham School. Dr Westermark lodged with them, a Finnish professor and author of 'The History of Human Marriage', 'The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas' and 'Ritual and belief in Morocco'. Much of his writing was done at his table under the trees. He shared the joys and sorrows of the family when the son Jack died tragically in a motor cycle accident and the eldest sister of consumption. The son used to ferry the professor around, for he made frequent visits to the British Museum, I can still see the professor almost overflowing from the sidecar. Eleven years he spent here (including the general strike in 1926), he really loved Box Hill in all its seasons. Later, a fine black marble monument from Finland appeared at the Binfield grave at Mickleham.

1921 was a year of great changes, everything seemed to happen. Deepdene Estate was splitting up and Upper Farm was for sale. The Elliott family were not interested and Mother was given first chance. Betchworth Fort was sold on the same day to Mr Boot, Rosemary Worth's grandfather.

After much heart searching, with help from friends and relations, Mother took this big step and in July 1921 Upper Farm became hers. Mr Crookenden of Headley, a solicitor, who had been one of my father's employers, advised and acted for her. I still have that receipt showing only half fee, being for his partner.

This meant old Mr Elliott leaving Upper Farm, getting rid of 'Tom' pony and 'Clara' cow, no good taking the dog, he'd find those kids wherever I took him (we kept dear old Vicky for 16½ years). The old chappie went to live with one of his sons. His son and daughters and grandchildren worked for us on Sundays for many years.

We kept pigs, plenty of free range hens and mallards for our pond. Mother, of course, had many sleepless nights; my sister left school and was at home to help. The first priority was for

respectable toilets for both sexes. We now had a cesspool, no free emptying or dust collection. We were in Dorking Rural District. I still find myself burning the disposable rubbish.

At this time, High Ashurst, owing to its isolated position, proved to be unsuitable for the YWCA's purposes, they sold it to Mrs Law who opened it as a finishing school for young ladies, renamed as Wentworth Hall. Opened in 1923, pupils were received from many countries, the church being in daily use.

Things were really moving in the district. November 1921 P Bayman sold 'Bullen Wood' to the RT Hon Rosamund Viscountess Ridley, our cottages converted to the kitchens, a big studio as she was an artist and the house built as it is today, renamed 'Bellassis'. The school became the garage, the stables built on the pond site. Birchingrove was taken by Major the Hon. Oscar Guest, brother of Lady Ridley who built the house and developed the grounds and gardens.

Houses popped up along the Green Lane (Headley Heath Approach), the main road (Box Hill Road) and Ashurst Drive, several being weekend and holiday homes. With more people moving in along the road it attracted a regular paper man and a milkman, both from Tadworth. The milk cart carried a brightly polished milk churn. I remember Mother being a guest at Charlie Kellaway's (the milkman) wedding.

Occasionally on a busy Sunday we would sell out of bread. It was Mother's principle not to refuse a customer, even if it meant later, either walking to Pixham Lane or Brockham Green for a couple of loaves of bread at 4½^d each. There was breakfast to think of and our sandwiches to take to school in the morning. I always fell for these journeys, to keep someone company, at least the dog was pleased.

One or two more children came to Mickleham School, for one of term we were taken by taxi, a Tin Lizzie from Central Garage, Dorking, we had to walk home. Even the single journey proved too expensive for the authorities, we had no notice and waited in vain, that was the only time I ran all the way to school, almost collapsing on arrival, no other passengers turned up. I was rewarded for I got a pat on the back from the headmaster as he said 'that showed guts Gladys'. The others were boys!!

I remember one lunch time going to Norbury Park Farm, with my Dutch friend Coba, to see the havoc a fire had caused the previous night. What a shock to see those poor beasts, now just roasted bodies, horses, cows and a prize bull, one could recognise them by their shape.

Mickleham School took part in the Leith Hill Festival when they held 'childrens' day'. Miss Cullen, our conductor, a marvellous musician but a hard task master, I'm afraid she didn't bring out the best in me! Often we rehearsed after school, this meant walking home on my own in the dark. Dedication! But all worth it when I look back at Competition Day at Dorking Drill Hall, no Dorking Halls then, a marquee and duck boards, for it was raining hard. Our judge and, later, conductor was (the then) Dr Malcolm Sargeant, he took off his jacket to put us through our paces and revealed a bright blue shirt, very dashing in those days. Dr R Vaughan Williams was very much in attendance, a fatherly figure, the Festival very much his brainchild, his idea to bring good music to the villages, what a blessing he lived to see the fruits of his labours.

My brother George left the Merchant Service and helped at Upper Farm. He soon purchased a Scott motorcycle; he was now able to take Mother on the pillion to Headley to draw her war widow's pension, it was either there or in Dorking. He replaced the Scott with a Norton and sidecar, really mechanised now, a little later, what joy, a bull-nose Morris Cowley.

Cars were becoming more popular, more requests for petrol, so we arranged, just for weekends, for a Dorking garage, May's and Morgan, to have a supply of petrol in cans with a mechanic to serve and do emergency repairs. To comply with rules and regulations, petrol had to be stored a distance away from buildings and we had a brick pit built for this. There was not enough business for the garage so my brother carried on with the petrol, later having tanks and pumps.

In 1923 the Salomons Memorial (Look Out, View Point) was erected and unveiled. I wonder how many millions have used and appreciated it since. It is Leopold Salomons' house, Norbury Park that one sees looking out from the Whites and the 'Slopes'.

On the subject of memorials, my father's name is on the Mickleham War Memorial, one in Headley Institute (Village Hall), also one in Headley Church ¹ as well as being on the world famous Arras Memorial in France. We always have bordered on different parishes, I expect that would account for that.

Twice a week during those early summers we had a party of Banstead Asylum patients, ladies on Tuesdays and men on Thursdays, they came by horse brake and stabled horses at Upper Farm. They stored their thick crockery with us, we just did the washing up, the attendants served them and they brought all the food with them. I'm sure those cups would have been in demand for chamber pot collections these days for they were gigantic!

Evidently the attendants made their choice of who to bring. One old dear, furious at not being chosen, shouted out, as the brake was leaving, 'Hope your b.....y horse drops dead' and before they left the grounds, it did just that! We were told on the next visit when they explained their absence.

Before the old boys arrived we had to make sure the eggs were collected, for one week they came over and asked us to boil eggs for them, they were still warm from the nest! Another time our free range hens were being chased and one caught by a passing visitor's dog on our property. My brother naturally hit the dog to try to save the hen, without warning the dog's owner appeared and struck out at George and before George could flatten him, two well meaning witnesses from the campsite held him back but I was still free. As a Collins I wasn't going to let him get away with that so I landed him a 'fourpenny' one that was followed by another from one of George's motherly admirers on the campsite. The fellow went off with his tail between his legs even if his dog didn't. I bet he thought he had landed in a hornet's nest.

Caravanning was becoming more popular, at first we had converted trams and buses, even a double-decker, Noah's Ark, where the folks went upstairs to bed, a lovely home, one or two gypsy caravans, a showman's van, pantehnicons, two or three chalets and lots of tents. The Tea Gardens were growing, more improvements being made, any money made being ploughed back into the business, the family drew no wages. After the great Wembley Exhibition was finished, a big sale of equipment was held. George went up on several days buying lots of crockery etc, garden chairs and marble-top tables. This enabled us to cope with the increasing business. A few of these purchases are still in use today, 60 years later! We now had one on the payroll, a cousin from Suffolk who had come to live with us, plus casual labour on Sundays or if we had a big party.

This was a great year for us, we were building our house. I was often the plumber's mate for we knew the Denyer brothers from the dances. We moved in just before Christmas, this was heaven, a bathroom and an indoor loo, after six years in the cottage.

What a Christmas to choose for our house warming. We had Ena ² and her mother and father staying for the holiday; it was on Christmas night when we had the terrific snowfall, huge drifts, couldn't get the car out of the barn, no traffic at all. With no car to take Ena and her parents to Tadworth we walked down to Box Hill Station with them, helping with their cases. What a journey! Especially back up the Hill, we were stiff for days.

After a week Mr Stent, our baker from Brockham brought us some bread on a sledge up Brockham Hill, he was our rescuer. We saw no snow ploughs in those days up here. Being Christmas we were well stocked with food, so no starvation threats. Mother was used to living in isolation and was always prepared for emergencies anyway.

Incidentally we always used Tadworth Station, it was cheaper than Dorking and we could leave the car at the dairy, a cheap day return to London Bridge was 1/9^d, 1/11^d from Dorking.

The Misses Brodie, with some of the staff, used to set off to Brockham WI, they went down the Drive via Lower Box Hill Farm in the mule and trap. Box Hill was growing, so they went to work to get a WI formed on the Hill, this was formed in 1928. Mother, Edie and I were founder members, we two because Mother paid our subs, 2/- each. They also started GFS and a Brockham Warren Mens' Club was going for a short time, they were all held in the Brodie Room in the dip by Chestnut Lodge, next to the pond, purchased especially for the benefit of local residents.

Our family was shattered in 1930, my brother Percy was riding in a motorcycle trial, he crashed on Mother's birthday and died four days later, just 22. His funeral made a London

evening paper for among the many wreaths was a full sized floral motorcycle; that would have amused him.

I too had left school at 14 and was working at home. We made our own ice-cream; George collected ice blocks from Redhill, later digging a storage pit in the clay. Sometimes this was used as a darkroom for developing films. It was jolly hard work turning the handle to rotate the container in the ice; we tried vacuum machines, easier with no turning but got hard around the sides. Next we went modern and had a Petter engine to do the hard work. We had no storage for keeping, if we had a bad day and didn't sell out we really had a feast, on occasions, if cold sat by the fire or even took a dishful to bed.

We had no fridges then, if any milk was left over, in hot weather it had to be scalded for the next day, that gave us clotted cream for lunch but it was just another chore at the end of the day. Saturday mornings it was knife cleaning, again turning the handle and making sure the knife powder was in the machine.

About this time we had the telephone installed and became Betchworth 100. When John Logie Baird was living at Swiss Cottage he often called in as a customer, always for a glass of milk. He never looked very strong and looked as if he needed that nourishment.

Now to end this section with a little moan. More houses were appearing, unfortunately more hedges disappearing and being replaced by brick walls. Why do people come to live in the country then start to turn it into a town?

¹ Now also at St Andrew's, Box Hill.

² Ena Hawkes, cousin of H C J Burbidge (Jess).

3.

It was in the early 30's we first met the 'Star & Garter Boys' from Richmond, mostly casualties from the 1914-1918 war. A few of them had motor chairs; they called themselves 'The Flying Squad'. They had met Ted Killick, the first hill keeper, on the Donkey Green, being an ex-army sergeant he had great sympathy for them and let them go on to sacred grass that was banned to other vehicles. He enquired how they got on for tea and found they weren't too pleased with their first visit to the Fort Tea Gardens. 'You go and see Mrs Collins next time' he said and this they did. They were welcomed with open arms, we had no steps so they could drive in, later George made a ramp on to our back lawn to enable them to drive round under the apple tree and be away from the public eye. In nice weather they became regular customers, they were very independent so we had to charge them for tea, mind you we noticed they never checked their change, in any case they were spoiled rotten, home-made this and that. Edie and I were invited to a concert at the Star & Garter and have been visiting ever since. The Flying Squad have long passed on but I shall remember the thrill of hearing those two-stroke engines sailing by with a friendly wave, saying 'see you later'.

My cousin had returned to Suffolk to get married, for two summers we employed a teenage mate of mine. I bought a bell-tent, put in a couple of beds and a table and we camped out all summer, great fun but I wasn't too keen when I saw a mouse staring at me, we had left our apple 'chogs' in the candlestick on the table and he was enjoying them.

I can't remember when the flint road was macadamised to withstand the ever increasing traffic. Caravan sites, a shop or two appeared like mushrooms, even a post office called Box Hill Road Post Office. This was a long black wooden building, I suspect at one time it had been a poultry house, now converted into living accommodation; it was removed later when the shops were built.

Gradually over the years, the estates of High Ashurst and Brockham Warren have dovetailed and become a part of Box Hill. As far as the Hand in Hand, all came under Dorking Urban District Council, higher rates without the amenities but we soon had a rubbish collection and a cesspool emptying service, one free each quarter.

We were policed by men from Headley, Walton, Buckland, Betchworth, Brockham and Dorking.

The Upper Farm Box Hill swimming pool came into being in 1933, this meant getting rid of pigs, hens and, of course, our mallard ducks. Mr H C Burbidge¹, now my brother-in-law, planned and built it for us. The cow shed became the café; the cart shed toilets, the pig sties turned into garages, the roofs of which formed the sunbathing terrace. We retained, as far as possible, the lovely old flint wall which ran the length of the pool.

The water pressure was so bad, taking six weeks to fill; we had to call in the fire department to help us fill it in time for the advertised opening. This wasn't welcomed by Sir B V S Brodie as it cut off supplies to Brockham Warren. The water tower on Betchworth Clump had been completed, the new reservoir and pumping station prepared so our water problem was short-lived. Water was first laid on to Box Hill in 1897 and until 1936 being pumped from Caterham and then taken over by the local pumping station.

Viscountess Ridley often let 'Bellassis'. The Marquis of Queensbury was host to Richard Tauber and Diana Napier who spent a part of their honeymoon there. The staff and their friends enjoyed listening to his singing, unbeknown to him of course.

Remembering the japonica bush under the bedroom window at 'Bullen Wood', now 'Bellassis', I collected an apple from it and planted the pips, it took a year or two but it provided us at Upper Farm with a sentimental hedge. Growing from seed, the colours varied, it was a great success, certainly worth waiting for.

Fraser Heath was built for Mr Peake; Lord Castleross lived there, later Sir Malcolm Campbell before moving to Headley Grove, where Bluebird was kept and strictly guarded. We were thrilled one day when the family called for tea at Upper Farm, leaving their cycles outside. Edie served them and got a sixpenny tip but no longer has it. Donald Campbell was friendly with some of our campers and was a regular visitor to the swimming pool.

The pool had really got going, Box Hill Swimming Club was formed, Sunday morning water polo matches a great attraction. Once we had a midnight match, this attracted over four hundred spectators (at 2^d a time). Being floodlit, of course, there were drawbacks for the referee but who cared, he was thrown in after the match anyway, complete with kilt. Both players and spectators had a thoroughly happy time, we only did this once, couldn't give the locals cause for complaint! I followed the team around, being one of their lusty supporters; I ruined my tonsils so doing but what a game. We were honoured to have the Surrey County Diving Championships held at Upper Farm, a great thrill.

After going to the expense of installing a Petter engine for running the filtration plant, later that year the electricity authority decided to bring electricity along to us, how annoying folks can be!

1935; Jubilee Year for their Majesties King George V & Queen Mary. What a super day for the actual Jubilee Day, crowds of people and we were very busy. Dorking Scouts removed the turf above the Memorial for the series of bonfires that had been arranged and what a sight from the Hill. Crowds came for this spectacle, queues of cars for miles. I had to wait until nearly midnight to get the car out of the yard, my dear aunt had come from East Grinstead to help us, and I then had to take her home.

Eddie and Jess were to be married later in the year; he was busy building Red Gable for their home.

Jess had lost Lylie, his first wife, when Bernard ² was born, he was now 3 ½. On his way to the wedding, in November, he was telling people in the train 'I'm going to my Daddy's wedding'. I expect they wondered! The reception was at Upper Farm. The dance band had to be stopped on the arrival of the second post. A serious looking postman walked through the crowd to deliver to the bride, a rolling pin, no wrapping, just a label. Eddie turned straight to the culprit, her uncle, and threatened him. Half the water polo team were guests at the wedding and worked at Dorking Post Office so it was easy to arrange the right postal delivery. Unusual for a couple to take a rolling pin on Honeymoon! Among the presents was one from the 'Flying Squad', a dressing table stool made by one of the patients, this is still in daily use and is still much treasured.

Two weeks later, Bernard came to his new home, he soon settled down to his new life with us all and became one of the family. What a Christmas! Father Christmas did overtime! It meant us all changing our ways and minding our P's & Q's. I realised this while watching an exciting water polo match, he repeated what I had shouted and it didn't sound nice coming from him!

With more people around, a pavement became necessary from the Hand in Hand to Upper farm. This did away with the regular gullies draining the road into the ditch. Flooding troubles followed, like a river in heavy rain, especially Ashurst Drive. It also cut off supplies to our pond and the river now sails past and becomes a worry for the National Trust.

We all came under Tadworth postal address; we still get letters addressed to Dorking.

As Eddie moved out of Upper Farm House another cousin came to live with us and help out in the summer, out came the bell-tent again and Phill ³ and I camped out. One early morning, just after three, we went up to Betchworth Clump to watch an eclipse of the sun, leaving the car at the 'Hand'. It was very still, warm and humid, one could feel the heat coming up from the quarries, suddenly the sun appeared, what a sight, plus the dawn chorus, an experience of a lifetime. Arriving home we slipped into the pool, as we often did, late or early, joys of the tent, we didn't disturb anybody indoors. We both had the urge to swim in the nude so one night we did just this. We knew the police often made a point at Upper Farm, we didn't want to give them a treat so one stood cavy while the other enjoyed her swim. We daren't dive in for fear of attracting attention. Phill took a job for the winter, as nanny, living in, coming home for her weekend off, she was hurrying to get home before dark and with snow and ice it was very slippery. She scrambled up from the Burford, stood her case down for a well-earned breather, to her horror she saw it slipping away. There was nothing she could do but go down to collect her belongings, luckily still intact. What an explosion when she eventually arrived at Upper Farm, not to be wondered at but a pity nobody else shared that unusual sight.

Coronation year 1937 seemed another busy year. Wentworth Hall closed its school and sold the property to Surrey County Council who intended making it into a home for physically defective children.

George and Mary⁴ were to be married in September so Jess and George were busy building Upper Farm Bungalow. I celebrated the coronation by buying myself a light trailer caravan, Ena took her life in her hands and accompanied me to Somerset, and it was great fun, most unusual in those days for a female to be towing a van. 'Roma' was a great success, George and Mary borrowed it for their honeymoon. All the family were able to enjoy it the following year.

George and Mary also had a wedding present from the Star & Garter Flying Squad, a leather blotter, an exact replica of the one the Home had presented to the Duke and Duchess of Kent on the occasion of their wedding. Charlie Whittaker made the blotters. Poor Charlie died shortly after having his second leg amputated.

About this time the Police House was built and Box Hill had its first resident policeman, PC Adsett, now retired, I am still in touch with Jack and Alice.

Our business was mostly of a summer nature, we were always busy when other people were enjoying themselves. Luckily we were brought up to amuse ourselves and were encouraged to bring our friends home, we really had our own private sports club; Bagatelle, table-skittles, shove ha'penny, darts and cricket nets on the back lawn, diagonally we could just fit in a full length cricket pitch. I had a full size table-tennis table, half the water-polo team often came to tea on Sundays during the winter; we played as a team, had several matches locally, had great fun. Winter evenings we always had one and sometimes two 'solo' schools on the go, in summer of course we could swim out of hours when the pool was closed to the public.

Sounds idyllic but remember in those days the customer always had to come first! When the weather was good we were too busy with clients to enjoy these pleasures and too tired anyway. I bought myself a good air-rifle and got in lots of practise and, although I say it myself, I wasn't bad at it. My partner in crime at that time was Bill Hall, his father too had been a gamekeeper so he knew the tricks of the trade. Bill borrowed an air-rifle and we took ourselves on to adjoining land and did a bit of poaching. In our first lunch hour we managed five rabbits, we were thrilled, my brother George was horrified, I think he was afraid we might get caught. He needn't have worried; the novelty soon wore off after we had proved our point. We put wire netting all round the garden to keep the rabbits out, much cheaper to do our bit of poaching! At least everybody enjoyed eating them, especially Mother's rabbit pies, hadn't even heard of myxomatosis in those days. I remember when the Bungalow was being built, Lionel the bricklayer, daring me to have a shot at his tea mug. I refused to do so while he was holding it so he placed it on a post. What a dare, his face was a picture when he saw the hole in the middle of his enamel mug and his tea pouring out.

Another time when the pool was emptied for its annual painting, Bill came running for my rifle, very excited, saying 'Collie there's a ----- great rat in the bottom of the pool'. I was adamant saying 'my rifle, my first shot'. With Bill at my elbow, waiting for his turn, I took aim, it keeled over and blood started trickling away. I can't tell you what poor Bill said to me, enough to say I was never forgiven. Of course, we couldn't use a shotgun, for fear of damaging the surface.

Box Hill was shaken in 1938 by the death of Sir B V S Brodie, Brockham Warren and the estate now passed to Sir B C Brodie, 4th Baronet. Jess was asked to prepare plans for a house for his two sisters, 'Biddy' and Marjorie, he planned and built their new home of which they were very proud, they called it Oak Wood House. Typical of Marjorie, she carted loads of precious porcelain and priceless treasures across the field and though the wood in the wheelbarrow. I think it was only one that got cracked!

Bravely they tackled their new life, cooking gardening and farming. They had trees felled next to us to make way for a meadow for Marjorie's beloved animals; this was welcomed by us except for Andy, her smelly billy-goat. We had to close our windows when the wind was in his direction; even so, he was always darling to her but definitely not to us!

Hardly had they settled in to Oak Wood House when war was declared, this really started another era; it meant changed lives for most people. First aid classes, ARP lectures, Home

Guard, fire watching rotas, most eligible folks were roped in, 'Bidly' and Marjorie purchased land and moved their Brodie Room from the dip by Chestnut Lodge to its present site, had a chancel added and it became St Andrew's. The Chancel was enclosed by large ornamental doors, the hall used for everything, even the doctor's surgery. Everyone was issued with ration books, gas masks and petrol coupons. Every week one would hear of somebody's husband, son or daughter who had joined the ranks, our community was getting less. Not for long however, the London air raids soon had an effect, people, a lot of them bombed out, flocked out, every shack, caravan and chalet seemed to be in use. At times people were sleeping in cars on the 'Hill', some quickly returned, feeling so unsafe without their accustomed air raid shelters. Box Hill had its quota of evacuees, I remember with others meeting a train load at Box Hill Station, sorting out and delivering them to their new homes. We were lucky; they fitted in well and were taken in by local schools. Oak Wood House was seldom without an evacuee of some kind, friends or otherwise, 'Bidly' was Head ARP Warden, Marjorie a warden too, they did noble work.

Brockham Warren was let to Mr Duke, still as a family residence, my uncle, Cecil Goater, worked as a gardener for him and lived in Brockham Warren Lodge. This was the main entrance; the white gate has now been replaced by a prison-like wall, one of my pet aversions. Cousin Phill was married from there in October 1940. I remember the air raid warning going during the service in Brockham Church, it was completely ignored, no local activity.

Later that month Canadians moved in to the district, the first one I met, I invited him in, they were preparing camps, Nissen-huts etc, Charlie Grarnet, turned out to be the first of many. Mother was 'Mum' to them all. For a few weeks British lads were down at the Fort (C Company), we had two of them for Christmas Day, a very happy one too. Shortly afterwards they moved down to Juniper Hall so we were still in touch with them. Back came the Canadians, our petrol pumps were commandeered and removed, as so many outlying petrol stations were. Our barn was taken over by the Army and became the LAD workshop; they also wanted the swimming pool to be used as an inspection pit for the vehicles. We appealed against this, after much consideration they decided a swimming pool would benefit the troops in their leisure hours. George was now in the Royal Air Force, after a spell as air raid warden. Catering was a headache, all records had to be kept, and we had to get 280 cups out of each pound of tea. Being mostly recreational, our quota wasn't large, we opened only in the afternoons to make our rations stretch. We ourselves were stretched to our limit, for while we had no male staff, Edie and Mary both with young babies, records and forms to be sent in, life was indeed hectic. Incidentally, when Jess was rushing Edie to the nursing home to have her baby, they were stopped by the Home Guard, checking identity cards, they asked to be allowed to pass quickly or another card would be needed! As it turned out Colin⁵ was in no hurry so they needn't have worried.

Rationing was really hard in 1941, 1/6^d worth of meat per head, 2oz of cheese, milk and clothes rationed. Many things disappeared, quite a lot under the counter. Our petrol ration only allowed us one trip a week to Dorking for our shopping so we were lucky if there was something special available for us to join the queue. Queues formed automatically, sometimes mistakenly!

Later we were allowed a trip to Leatherhead to the watercress beds; we were noted for our watercress teas. We bought the cress by the 'hand'. A fascinating sight; to see the men cutting the cress so skilfully, as much as the hand would hold.

It was April 1941 when the Canadian Army moved into our barn, trucks and Bren-gun carriers were in and out all day, our lives had to be readjusted, for the business had still to be kept going. C Company was at the Fort, the LAD lads marched up and down for meals, and the cook-house was at the refreshment bar. Later a bomb dropped right outside missing it by a few yards. Swiss Cottage housed the officers.

It was May, the 11th I think, when the House of Commons and Westminster Abbey were blitzed, the sky was so bright one had the impression that London was completely gutted, the next day the sky was full of small fragments of charred paper. I was now an Air Raid Warden, I remember a bunch of Canadians singing 'The Flat-footed Flugie' to me; they thought I was a police woman!

Every Sunday during the winter, we always had from four to six lads up for tea, it was great to see how happy they were to be in a home, just sharing a fireside, an easy chair and a newspaper, in short, the comforts they had left back home. The dart board was very popular and much used; the weekly visits soon became daily. We fed them on salads mostly for they knew our rations wouldn't stretch too far. At the LAD workshop, somebody was always on duty every evening and our home just suited the lads we had almost adopted, for everyone knew where to find them. Sometimes they would be called out for a breakdown and one could hear the great 'Wrecker' long before it got to Upper Farm, speeding back along the road to get back to the fireside.

Although Mary and I were, of necessity, working around the yard, we never had to suffer bad language. Later, I found out from one of the truck drivers, they were warned to watch their language because of the ladies.

Blackout was a worry, vehicle lights, even torches had to be masked. Imagine seeing no Dorking lights from the Memorial!

I was very worried when our chimney caught light, I could visualise the headlines in the local paper, 'Box Hill Air Raid Warden fined for blackout offence'; except for a broken chimney pot all was well. Box Hill had quite a few bombs, mostly falling in open ground without much damage, when incendiaries were dropped, it was just like fairyland. It was a shaker the first time explosive incendiaries were used but our army visitors came to my rescue, as they did when Brockham Warren hay barn caught light, we had quite a chain gang working with buckets and stirrup pumps. 'Doodlebugs' were the most frightening, we being so high they just skimmed over the tops of the trees, in some cases going on for miles before exploding, as one did on Produce Show Day, it landed at Woking. The suspense of waiting for the explosion was always terrible. Three landed on the Hill, one in Birchingrove fields, one between Boxhurst and the Donkey Green, the other opposite us in the woods, blowing windows and doors and lifting the roof off the tea room but we were very lucky.

I still remember the smell of bruised leaves after the blasts, it lasted for several days. From my bedroom window, in clear weather, I could see the barrage balloons in Weybridge. One Saturday afternoon, Edie and I, with Colin in the pram, were walking between Upper Farm and the Donkey Green, we heard a low plane then saw tracer bullets spreading out, the target seemed to be a train, we crouched behind a big tree, more than a little scared! The air raid warning then went but it was just a single sneak raider. From that same spot, another day, I saw a most unusual sight, a runaway train, the carriages were sailing on towards Deepdene Station, a few seconds later the engine came rushing along trying to catch up, it really was funny. I read a snippet about the incident in the local paper thus proving that I hadn't just imagined it. I don't think that stretch of railway has ever been as busy as at the time of the evacuation of Dunkirk, one put up a prayer of thanks as each train rattled along. Two local lads threw out messages at Betchworth Station, letting parents know that they were among the lucky ones.

Our ARP night duties took us to the Memorial, the Army of course had their own guards, a very pleasant arrangement I thought. Searchlights and guns were in the fields at Lower Box Hill Farm, a colleague and I were passing our duty time on a seat above the Memorial when the searchlight picked us out, we kidded ourselves they were being friendly and waved to them, we were soon disillusioned when the guns opened up at aircraft, then the siren sounded!

Occasionally the Memorial was used as a pulpit, when different Companies marched there for a church parade, it was most impressive. Marches were pretty regular, the friendliness of the Canadians was most noticeable, they called to us when they were passing; our customers were most impressed. One day I was invited to join them, I looked enquiringly at the officer, he gave me a smile and a nod so I marched down the road a little way. You see the officers were so grateful to us for having the lads at home, could you imagine that happening with a British regiment?

The LAD hated to see us females doing rough jobs and helped us all they could, especially when the sergeant-major wasn't around. I remember in heavy snow, when we couldn't use the car, we walked to the Burford and caught a bus to Dorking, returning with our shopping, climbing the Burford Slopes and through the army camp. It coincided with the LAD marching back from lunch, we had orders to place our baskets by the seat opposite the Memorial, they

were marched up the road and dumped at Upper Farm before the men turned into the workshop, only wish I had a picture of that.

During 1942 I went down with acute tonsillitis and ended up with having to have my tonsils removed. Dorking Hospital in war-time was certainly not the right time to choose, air raid warnings, poor food; I really missed Mother's cooking. We were in an old part of the hospital; we set mouse traps at night, the only way to protect our precious sweet rations. Great rejoicing when the traps went off and we were successful. The ward was mostly taken up by ATS girls, so we had our share of fun.

I came round from the operation to find a Canadian soldier leaning over me offering me a piece of toast. Paul was just a regular customer; he knew the family couldn't leave the business, no petrol anyway. He said 'I'll go and see her, Mum, and let you know how she is', and this he did. Most of my visitors were Canadians, one with his girl friend. Mac came with a lovely big bunch of roses from the LAD, who happened to be away. No doubt they had robbed the rose beds at the big house where they were stationed but to me it was a lovely thought and much appreciated.

Getting home was a problem, a taxi was a rarity, and the family had to resort to booking an elderly lady who was noted for her bad driving. I was terrified, I was still far from well and the journey seemed endless. At least it had been a good way of slimming; I lost eighteen pounds in eighteen days.

When I had recovered, I took a course of riding lessons, I wanted to surprise George when he came home on leave and be able to go with him for a ride; it was great fun. I made a date to go riding with one of the Canadians, he was moved and had to cancel, it wasn't till then I found out he was Bing Crosby's groom! I did, however, go riding with one of the lads, not as experienced as Lyle though, I might add. I laughed so much, for when he dismounted he remarked 'If friction causes heat, Honey, you could boil a kettle on my behind'.

Christmas this year was the turn of the Canadians. I was asked to invite some for Christmas Day, to other people's homes, quite a responsibility. I was worried, finding two suitable for Oak Wood House. I warned my 'scouts' that they might be doing a lot of carol singing around the piano; they assured me I needn't worry. It was a great success, however one insisted on splitting wood, the other did the afternoon milking, they were so grateful to their hostesses.

Going across Headley Common I caught sight of Field Marshall Jan Smuts, another time, General Eisenhower, he was perched on a tank outside Upper Farm. Headley Court was Canadian Headquarters; camps were dotted around the district. One at 'Boidier', Sir Oscar Warburg's place, it was breath-taking to see Nissen-huts among precious trees and shrubs, for Sir Oscar had a marvellous collection, having shared expenses in plant-hunting expeditions and naturally, sharing in the discoveries. One of the houses was burnt down while the Army was in occupation.

How the Canadians loved children, it was a job to keep a baby in a pram when they were around, we knew they too had kiddies back home, it must have been hard for them but, at least, they enjoyed the Collins and Burbidge youngsters. Colin was so fair he was always called 'Blondie' or 'Cotton Top'.

In bad weather, with all the army traffic, there was always plenty of mud around, if the trucks were speeding, the babies often got splashed with mud. The drivers were severely reprimanded by our regulars if 'Cotton Top' or his cousins ⁶ were splattered. We had the same Canadians, off and on, for about two years; they almost became part of the family. It was a sad day when they moved off nearer the coast, we all knew it was in preparation for D-Day. Some of them came on weekend leave until the great move.

In the meantime, more British troops moved in, more friendships, David ⁷ was on leave from the RAF, he got talking to a soldier on guard duty at the Fort and, on enquiring found he had nowhere to go. 'You must meet my friends at Upper Farm' said David, 'they always have a house full of soldiers'. So John ⁸ was introduced and soon got his feet under the table. Later he became Jill's ⁹ godfather. Even now, John can fill me in on when I planted certain trees and shrubs during the War!

With so many boys away, I spent quite a bit of time letter writing, this I did on my duty nights, if there were no raids. I formed one or two Canadian pen-friendships, relatives of the lads;

they were so pleased to have news of their loved ones for so many letters were lost. My first nylons arrived from this source.

We all knew that D-Day had to come, preparation was continual, lots of activity, Spitfires and Hurricanes doing their stuff, we saw a parachutist from a 'Jerry' plane which had been brought down, sailing over Bradley Farm; we didn't have to worry as there were plenty of army to take care of him. I remember lots of planes towing gliders and felt the time was near. Although we all dreaded the great day, it was almost a relief when it arrived. The camps became almost empty, it was very strange; it was certainly easier in the swimming pool without so many heavy army boots in the baskets to lift up into the racks, a back-breaking job on a hot busy day.

When it came to my age group, for war work, I was interviewed by another of my pet aversions, an officious (little) woman, I towered above her. It was her idea that I should go part time in a works canteen and we could employ a part-timer to do my job! A doctor's letter soon put a spoke in her wheel for I was laid low with acute sciatica.

George was in Holland with the RAF, he went hoping to trace Cobra, my old school friend, of whom there had been no news since the German occupation.

We all struggled on, keeping the business ticking over and as normal as possible. There were always plenty of reminders of war, one very sad occasion, a swimming party of mentally affected servicemen; no doubt as a result of Dunkirk. When the wind was in the right quarter we could hear gunfire and heavy raids across the Channel. One of my worst moments was having to pass on a telephone message to people staying in a caravan telling them of their family's home having a direct hit and all five occupants were killed. Mary too had her fair share of messages.

Letter writing now took any spare time. Christmas was a sad time for us all. Christmas cards were mostly Box Hill views and much appreciated, so many of the boys had remembered us. I had a surprise call one day, an officer on short leave, he had brought over a revolver and a load of ammunition, and we went to an isolated spot for some target practice. It was great fun but I wasn't as good as I was with my air rifle. Years later I was talking to a man who had valued damaged trees for the National Trust after the Army occupation and I felt just a little guilty.

The Zig Zag too was in a terrible state after the trucks and Bren-gun carriers had done their stuff, it was never very good but so little used. I can imagine the National Trust rubbing their hands when it was made respectable and tarred! At the same time it was sad to see the old chalk road go for it really did look super.

A few of the Canadians were able to come and bid us farewell before setting sail for home, others went direct.

George was never thrilled at being in the RAF. Upper Farm was his life and what his wife, mother and sisters were left to do, naturally, was a worry to him. He was officially 'demobbed' December 12th 1945, released with leave but liable to recall on 17th October 1945.

Mary passed on this information which, I think is a fitting end to this chapter:

G W Collins No. 1462986

Service recorded: 4 years, 4 months, 7 days.

¹ H C Burbidge (1906-1989) [Jess].

² Bernard Burbidge

³ Phyllis Glanfield nee Goater

⁴ Mary Collins nee Payne

⁵ Colin Burbidge

⁶ Maureen & Alan Collins

⁷ David Daly

⁸ John Kenny

⁹ Jill Williams nee Burbidge

4.

Post war days, the beginning of another era, still rationing and shortages, everyone needing time to adjust and finding it difficult to settle down. The business, with no maintenance carried out during the war, the result of army occupation, plus war damage due to 'doodle-bug' blast, you can imagine life was still hectic.

Len Nye (died 1990) ¹, a special in the police force before joining the Army, returned from the Middle East, and just couldn't knuckle down to his old life and, before long, emigrated to Australia. He returned a few years later, for a short visit, but was sad to see how the woods had been neglected. At the end of the 1946 swimming season, history was made at the Upper Farm Swimming Pool, 'Koringa', the famous circus artiste, wanted publicity pictures of her swimming with her crocodiles. I bet it was a little cool but we couldn't admit the crocodiles earlier when the pool was open to the public. About this time our WI started an overseas link, it was through one of our Canadian lads, his mother-in-law was a member of Collins Bay, Ontario; this lasted for years, in fact, till they literally died out.

We got up early and watched from the 'Hill', the Olympic torch bearer, leaving Dorking and running along the Reigate Road, continuing his journey to the 1948 Games. Quite an event!

Sugar rationing was still on; this was our first year to make our home-made collection for the Star & Garter Home. About this time, after an unsuccessful attempt to form a country club at Brockham Warren, it was sold and split up into five separate units. Gerald Moore the famous piano accompanist bought No.1, his grand piano was near the big window looking out to the wonderful view. Famous singers often spent weekends with him and his wife, Kathleen Ferrier among them. Gerald Moore was very fond of cricket; unable to play himself for fear of injuring his precious hands, he and his wife, Enid, went to Pixham Lane as spectators when George was playing for Dorking Wednesday team.

We were saddened in 1949 to read the advert inviting tenders for the demolition of High Ashurst (Wentworth Hall), the following year we bought bricks and timber from the demolition firm, thus enabling us to build our new servery. The block floor we bought from the demolished church, this enabled us to overcome the general shortages. We also bought the High Ashurst bell, mostly for sentimental reasons but did find a use for it, warning caravanners of the milkman's arrival. This year Mary and I were invited by Miss Cole, originally from Pebblecombe, to join Headley W.I. choir and take part in the Leith Hill Group Carol Concert. It was held in the Martineau Hall, conductor Ralph Vaughan Williams. What an honour and a joy especially as 'Greensleeves' was on the programme.

I can't remember which year Brigadier Schreiber took over 'Bellassis', he had been aide to the Duke of Gloucester in Australia and Controller of the Duke's household, Mrs Schreiber, lady in waiting to the Duchess of Gloucester, Prince William was page at their wedding in Australia.

It was June 1950 when George was collecting a caravan from Wales, Mary and I accompanied him, we stayed the night in the shadow of Harlech Castle. All was great until our return journey on 13th June. After a very hot dry spell, we ran into a terrific thunderstorm and, going down a hill, hit an oily patch. The van went over first and dragged us with it; we climbed out, with help, for we had completely stopped all the traffic, including a bus. It was just sending the rain down and we were taken into the bus for shelter. George, being a conscientious fellow, was worried about the traffic and returned to the car and, with help, managed to move the car a little, enough to let a single line of traffic through. This enabled the bus to move on so, still in torrential rain, we were turfed out! Imagine us orphans of the storm! Then rescued by ambulance, hadn't thought it was for us! I was bruised and shocked and was glad to accept 'sal volatale' but not Mary, brandy or nothing for her, we all refused hospital treatment and were taken to Kidderminster Police Station. After consuming great mugs of tea and providing the needed information, we were discharged; three very wet and bedraggled souls. I knew one of my Star & Garter boys had married and settled in Kidderminster, We had just got out on to the street when I heard the familiar sound of a motor chair, who should it be but Lionel. I gave one of my unlady-like shouts and he came over and said 'What are you doing here?' I said 'We've just come out of the Police Station.' In spite of having the builders in, he insisted we went home, cleaned up and had a meal before

taking a taxi to Birmingham and catching the midnight train to London. Jess met us, I've never been more pleased to see him, we certainly looked a scruffy trio. We had bought a load of asparagus, it was heartbreaking to leave it behind, at least Lionel would have enjoyed it and I was thrilled to meet his wife and two tiny children. A happy ending after being struck down with polio while serving abroad.

I remember Coronation Day, June 2nd 1953, Gerald Moore calling for petrol, on his way to Westminster Abbey, he had been asked to sing in the choir for this great occasion.

Natural history had always been a favourite subject of mine; I like to think I had inherited this love from my gamekeeper father. At a countryside course at Denman College I was encouraged by our tutor, Dr Bruce Campbell, who advised me on choice of binoculars. I joined the British Naturalists' Association and really got hooked. With a super leader, I went with a small party in 1955 to southern Sweden, to see the migration of birds of prey. Imagine a nice sunny day, a lovely sandy beach, with the wind direction perfect and over came hundreds of hawks, common and rough-legged buzzards making their way to southern Europe and Africa. We also saw goshawks, harriers and kites; this indeed was one of nature's miracles. Being a member of the Field Studies Council I have had the privilege of staying in Flatford Mill and Willy Lott's Cottage, the home of John Constable, again a marvellous area for birds. The beauty of bird watching is that one can do this in any county or country.

In 1958 we laid down a hard tennis court, this was popular for a time, and charges were, singles 3/-^d an hour and 4/-^d for doubles. To add to the Collins sports club, I purchased a quarter-size slate-bedded billiard table, this was great fun. George knew when the light was on, that I had a partner, he would appear as if by magic, saying 'I'll challenge the winner'; he wasn't always welcome.

This was the year I made my first trip to Canada, complete with binoculars of course. I watched terns diving into Niagara Falls. The country is so vast I needed three different bird books to see me across. Apart from the birds and the country, it was great to meet the lads and their families; I was met everywhere, taken everywhere. I was treated royally wherever I went. I stayed with relatives in Winnipeg, otherwise all old war-time friends, a great and never to be forgotten trip. Later that year we were all saddened by the death of Dr Ralph Vaughan Williams, he had been part of local life for so many years and known affectionately as 'VW'.

Bird watching again the next year with a small party of friends; a week on the island of Skokholm, a bird watching sanctuary off the Pembrokeshire coast. This was heaven; we watched seals, kept daily records of each bird species, watched puffins and went out at night ringing Manic Shearwaters, as they came in from the sea to their nests underground. The weather was super but we were marooned for three extra days, boats couldn't reach us because of swells and tides. Each day we had to pack our bags, ready to dash if the boat could make it; a flag was hoisted to warn us of its approach, so we were able to continue with our bird study. There were loads of rabbits to be shot in case our meat supply got low. No means of communication, George rang the AA to get news; they were getting worried at home at my non-appearance!

Definitely worth recording: November 1960 I spotted a most unusual feathered visitor resting under our shelter, evidently on migration. A water-rail, what excitement! I had seen one at Leatherhead watercress beds, such very shy birds. The following April a plaque was erected to 'RVW' in the porch of St Martin's Church, also one in the entrance of Dorking Halls. I was lucky to be one of our choir chosen, with others from other Leith Hill Festival choirs to take part in the dedication service at St Martin's.

Another trip to Canada, this time finishing up in California. More super bird watching, in fact, my enthusiasm was passed on to the folk in Toronto, Winnipeg and California, they all bought binoculars. I came home via the polar route, saw the Northern Lights, as well as breaking the flight time record; it didn't last many days but all very exciting.

It was two years later we welcomed our first Canadian visitor; Anne wasn't born when Wallie, her father, was over here during the war.

A great year for Box Hill, 1965, the sewage scheme was started. After tears of complaining to the Council about their method of disposal, this was wonderful, we no longer would have to keep windows closed for so many days. The following year was a sad one for us all, Mother

died, in her ninetieth year; typical of her, she knitted and patch-worked right to the last. Ena joined me at the end of the year, after a short trial period, she moved into Upper Farm. Later we had our first war-time Canadian over with his wife, a happy time was enjoyed by all, it was great taking them round to their old haunts, the 'Hand' a must of course. Bart was sad to find an open space at Wentworth Hall, where he was stationed. One thing that thrilled him and others that have since followed him - the lights of Dorking and district, only previously seen under blackout conditions.

Great excitement for me in 1969, three people walked up the garden path, who should they be but my old school friend Coba, her brother and son. How tongues wagged. They had had a very rough time during the German occupation; her husband was in the resistance movement. Our friendship started all over again. This was the year the new St Andrew's Church was dedicated also the terrible autumn floods that washed away the lovely Box Hill Bridge, off the Reigate Road.

George had become a very sick man and was very unhappy at not being able to carry out his usual active life. His ambition had always been to go to a test match in Australia, this he did while he and Mary were staying with 'Memes' their daughter, in Sidney. A happy man returned, having seen England win the 'Ashes', he died shortly afterwards.

Over the years lots of films have been made on Box Hill. Before the companies had their own mobile canteens, it was fun to serve them. Claud Hulbert, a friendly gent (who enjoyed his Belgian buns), in 'Many Tanks Mr Atkins', I could pick out his stand-in when I saw the film. Margaret Lockwood, in 'The Milk White Unicorn', it was muddy so Ena lent her some ankle socks and Ena's wellingtons, no personal thanks there! The last one at Upper farm was 'O Father', Derek Nimmo in a small scene at the petrol station. He parked his Rolls Royce in the field well out of sight. A keen gardener, I enjoyed showing him around, he went off clutching a precious plant. Of course the actual filming quickly drew a crowd, I was very amused at one spectator who told me, earlier he had seen a very unusual sight, a parson driving a smart 'Rolls'. He too was amused when he recognised the parson!

It was a great struggle for us all to keep the business going, staff problems a headache, we were all reaching the retiring age, it was clear we couldn't cope. Selling was the only solution, this was a heartbreaking decision after over fifty years but it had to be faced. It was hard to see so many alterations, especially the pool being filled in. a helicopter landed on it two days later! I organised my last Poppy Day collection for Box Hill in 1976 and retired after over 50 years. The family and friends had always been great supporters and collectors. I earned one of the Dorking Advertiser's sickly headlines, 'Poppies Veteran Fading Out'.

Two years later, I had a surprise visit from Leslie Head and his wife, Velda, from Canada, it was through Leslie we started our WI link with Collins Bay. He wanted to show his wife where he used to come to tea; he was thrilled I remembered him and that he originally came from Devon. In that autumn, Bernard took Edie, Jess and me to Arras. I had always wanted to see the famous War Memorial bearing my father's name. We made an early start and went over by hovercraft and made our way to Arras where we were booked in for the night, Bernard and family had lived in France for a couple of years so language and travel were no problem. The memorial itself is huge, we found my father's name and then turned the pages in the big book, which is under a glass case, to find the individual entry, and we photographed both. I just can't explain how I felt seeing the words 'Husband of Laura Collins of Upper Farm, Box Hill, Dorking, Surrey'. Having no known grave, it really meant something. Although sad, it was a marvellous experience, one that I wouldn't have missed.

Bernard's children were growing up and needed some home entertainment so my billiard table moved house and served its purpose for a while at Fetcham, passed over to Colin at Reigate, where it still is, a popular pastime for him and his family. My interest in birds has never waned, I still keep a list of species seen, and this I have done for over thirty years.

In 1985 the Upper Farm Restaurant² changed hands and was called 'Boxers'. While the builders were there I discovered the High Ashurst bell had been stolen, I was very upset and sad. I was waiting to have it erected in the back porch! No doubt it was melted down; whoever took it, I certainly didn't wish him well!

While trimming the hawthorn hedge by the roadside last year, a car stopped and enquired of me, 'Have you lived here a long time?' I grinned and the driver said, 'You must be Gladys', he

then went on to say, 'We camped here years ago'. He and his wife were speechless when I recognised them as Bill and Mary Parsons. It really made their day, it was their golden wedding day and they had met in our field. After tea on the lawn with us at Upper Farm on to the White Horse, Dorking for a weekend visiting local beauty spots and favourite haunts.

I now realise, I need no longer keep records of events, my nieces and nephews, for whom I have written these memoirs, are now more than capable of doing this for themselves. I will just finish with the great October Hurricane. What a shock when daylight broke, we looked out on to a completely different scene, devastation, so many trees uprooted or maimed, very sad, like losing old friends. Everyone was affected, some worse than others of course, they say it takes a disaster to bring out the old war-time spirit, it appeared as if by magic. Friends and neighbours were terrific; Colin has worked so hard and has given me the encouragement I needed to face the great task of clearing up the debris and doing some replanting. The wind now whistles in without the shelter of the trees. On the credit side, we now have views, when the clearing has been done, I'm sure they will be super. They say history repeats itself; evidently the same thing happened in the 1700's and look what beauty we inherited! Let us leave something worthwhile for future generations.

¹ Keeper, National Trust, Box Hill.

² Formerly upper Farm Tea Gardens