

The Last Cowboy in Sussex

A farm boy's memories
of Sompting in the 1940s

by

Bill Lindfield

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My Cathedral

By Bill Lindfield

Some Cathedrals are built of brick
Some old are built of stone
But the one I cherish is not built at all
And is my very own

Tis created high my Cathedral
Where one can view the hillside and the vale
Where one can share in God's creations
In the sunshine or in gale

One can feel the wonder of his glory
Hear the trees sing hymns with the chorus of the birds
And as the corn fields rustle
Hear the wisdom of his words

One can see the magic of life's cycle
As insects hatch and buzz and fly
And pictures painted with soft white clouds
Floating high up in the sky

Hear the beautiful song of the nightingale
Its notes caressed by summer air
As the smells of the most precious scents
Drift from everywhere

No hassocks here to rest the knees
But downland turf so fine
No organ or no bell to toll
No bread or taste of wine

Tis up here midst all this beauty
One needs no sermon or no prayer
For the presence of our Master
Can be found everywhere

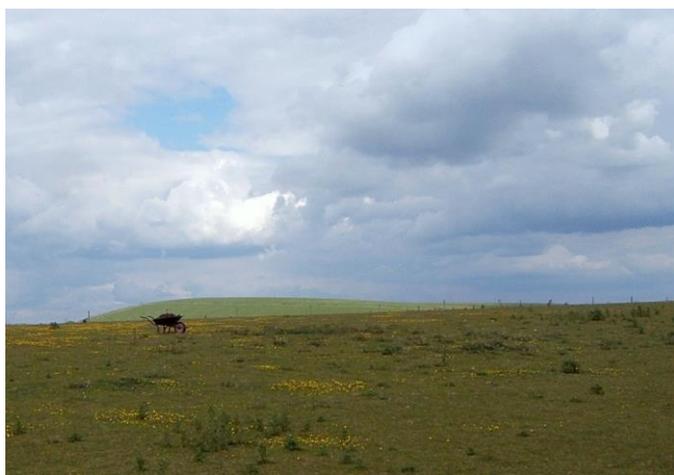
From the great majestic beech trees
Clothed in the finest leaves of green
To the tiniest of daisies
In each petal his gentleness is seen

To hear the sweet notes of the blackbird
To lowly croaks of frogs beside the pond
Where eyes follow great floating clouds
To lands so far beyond

To see the cows a grazing
And watch sheep safely in their fold
Old barns that were the flints of fields
And sunsets made of gold

Oh how I love this open air
And the wide expanse of sky
That makes the mind so much at peace
And gives pleasure to the eye

In my Cathedral there's no altar
But valleys hills and banks
And shadey nooks neath billowing trees
Where one can kneel and silently give thanks



Foreword

This is the story that I have often wanted to tell. It is the tale of a lad growing up in an area that was doomed to become a dormitory for all the commercial areas around it.

I would like to think that I grew up at its beginning, but in retrospect the change is going on all the time and I witnessed only the period of the most rapid acceleration.

Sompting, which is the village to which I refer, is in fact a collection of small hamlets, comprising of Lower Cokeham, Upper Cokeham and Sompting itself. There are two areas, one being Cokeham, which has its own public house, The Ball Tree, and the other Sompting, which also has a public house called The Marquis of Granby. These pubs were, I was brought up to believe, about a mile apart or as near as mattered in that old fashioned world that existed then. It was an area of closely knit people, and a lot of one's business was known by others, but not out of a sense of nosiness, as opponents to the old village life would like one to think, but because each life in many ways was inter woven with the others.

In those far off days Sompting was in the rural district of Worthing, but in later years has been linked together with Lancing and in most cases today referred to as the collected area of Lancing and Sompting. A lot of my memories have that link also.

I left this area on two occasions, each to join the army. On my return from my first visit I was lucky enough to meet the girl who was to become my wife, and together we were fortunate enough to have three children. These children were born during my second visit to the army, where my good wife and I lived in many different married quarters and consequently the children were born in different places and so had no static roots on which they could look back. We came back when we could and they always looked on Sompting as their home.

It was to create a Sompting that was and had been full of change. To record the host of memories that the old village held for me, and describe the manner in which things were done in the past, that I have committed these words to paper, in the hope that they will be of interest to them and their children in future years.



Bill Lindfield.

Chapter I
WESTERN ROAD

Western Road, which now stretches from the sea front up to The Ball Tree Inn, was but half that length when I started working in 1941. The road itself was made of flint only, with no tar macadam or concrete surface applied at that time. It concluded about 50 to 60 yards south of the railway line. The foundation for the road had been dug as far as the railway, but it was to be several years before it was to grow into the road we know today.

Extensive building projects had come to our area, and this land along with many other acres in our village had been sold for this purpose. The road had been laid to keep pace with the bungalows that had grown almost as quickly as the mushrooms they had replaced. These bungalows, with the exception of one pair, had been built on the eastern side of the road.

War had arrived just a couple of years before, and was going to change the world. There was no escape for Western Road. Like many human beings in later years it found itself between the new world and the old. The war had put a stop to the building, and so much of what was previously grazing land now held with pride the new bungalows, while the remainder stood by dejectedly unfenced, uncared for, but as we will see not unwanted.

The bungalows on the eastern side nearest the sea had high ground to their rear, but halfway along the road the land dropped away leaving the remainder perched on the higher of the ground, with their back gardens sloping down to their fence, which stopped it tumbling away down a furze and blackberry inhabited slope to a reed filled brook. Beyond the brook the tufted sharp bladed grasses flowed on across the lowland, until once more a reed filled brook stood to halt their progress.

These brooks were just two of the many that lived in this area carrying out their threefold task. Firstly, they were necessary to drain the boggy land, and so make into some lowly form of pasture, and secondly, to boundary the area into parcels of grazing allowing some control over its usage, and thirdly, to create supplies of water where the animals could slake their thirst. The brook that ran behind the bungalows ran north and south, and had the road not drifted off in a north westerly direction, would have been parallel. At its northerly end just before it got lost in a small scrub like area, there was a ford where the water shallowly flowed over the shingle base of the brook, giving it the appearance of being clean, but as far as I was concerned it was in appearance only. This ford allowed the cattle to wander from the higher pasture into the parcel of sharp bladed reed like grasses. The further brook stopped them proceeding over more brookland and the higher ground beyond which made up the neighbouring thirty five acre farm.

Southern Railway owned this farm, which had obviously been bought as part of, or to extend the large Railway Works which stood on the high ground to the east, and was segregated from the farm by a twelve foot high wooden fence that enclosed it. It was said that there was eleven miles of rail within these works, and at that time it gave employment to a large number of the inhabitants of Lancing. The twelve foot high fence which enclosed it also enclosed the sidings at the northern end of the rough pasture. In these sidings were carriage upon carriage awaiting to be pulled forward, as their turn came either for repair, inspection or for modification. While they waited they stood there aloof, and from their high position looked down at a strip of good pasture, over a bank and the scrub, into which the brook disappeared. Over the rough pasture to the bungalows, and over the brook to the right and on up to the rising ground where lived the briar and the furze, and noticing here and there the trees of Hawthorn, Elder and Elm.

Slightly to the east of where the sidings finished and running north and south, and in so doing separating the slope of furze and briar from the good level grazing at the top of bungalows, stood sold old Elm trees. They stood like markers, calling attention to the crossing gates of the railway line. Their purpose was to allow access of cattle and farm implements from one side of the line to the other. These gates were always securely locked by means of stout chains and heavy padlocks, for not only was there a danger from the trains, but this part of the railways was electrified using the ground rail system. The keys to unlock these padlocks were issued to registered key holders only, who had a need to have access across.

There were in this area three such pairs of gates. The first pair for whom the large Elms stood as markers opened out to the bottom of Cokeham Lane. Although people were not really allowed to use them, they were regularly used by the people of Sompting as the easiest and most scenic route on their beach outings to the sea. I had with my mother on several occasions, and with my young friends later, climbed the gates and scurried across the rails when we also had been on such excursions. They were in constant use to allow cattle to be driven over the unfenced grasslands I have described. One hundred yards or thereabouts to the west of them stood another pair, the site today being occupied by the Western Road bridge. Now the crossing of the rails is completed high above them, whereas then there would be a decline to the rail and a sharpest climb out again having crossed the lines. There was no road at the northern side of these gates but merely the large arable field called Chalky Ham. Nearer to Ham Bridge some five hundred yards from this pair stood the third. These, instead of a drop to the rail, had quite a rise, and having crossed would drop away sharply again. Access to this pair by vehicle was by travelling down Loose Lane, whereas by foot or by cattle down Blacksmith fields and the brookland below. Whichever approach was made the last stretch to the gates was made over a culvert, below which ran a stream that to us kids created the best tadpole territories in the area.

The pair of bungalows that stood on the western side of the road had at the bottom of their garden a brook that ran along to meet this third pair of gates, but like a runner who just could not make the distance, it collapsed into the bank of the railway and disappeared beneath it, some fifty yards short. A fence just to the west of the bungalows and running north and south created this triangular parcel of some eight and a half acres into the only piece of fenced pasture on that side of the railway line.

The fenced pasture, the open piece of grassland between the top of the road and the railway, the furze and briar-inhabited sloping bank to the brook, the reed like grasses enclosed by the brooks, which incidentally had access to Western Road by means of a gap now filled by Commerce Way, the shrub land and narrow piece of pasture by the railway sidings, was known to me collectively as "Over the line". The thirty five acre farm owned by the railway was "Stakers Place", for he was the one who rented it during the time I recall it. On the west side of the road, where westerly the brookland stretched to the Worthing rubbish tip, with its great stocky tall chimney puffing out the remnants of rubbish that could be burnt, while the other rubbish created a tip face that would, one day to come, devour the whole area, the brookland came to an obvious stop. Southerly, however, it tumbled on until stopped by the coast road. The whole of these several brookland fields, for several there were, each secured in its own territory by the many brooks that flowed through it, I called "Waddies Brooks", Waddie being slang for Mr Wadman who farmed "Yew Tree Farm" in Sompting and either owned or rented them.

Chapter II
WADDIES BROOKS

In the autumn and early winter months, until they became too wet or the weather too cold, Waddies Brooks would be used as grazing for the Bullocks. There appeared to be hundreds of them traipsing from one parcel of brookland to another through the reeds and grasses, their red brown coats showing up darkly like those of the buffalo on the Prairies in the time of "Buffalo Bill". These were unlike those in as much that they munched quietly on undisturbed until the time came to move to market or to other drier quarters.

Whatever the case the "Cattle Drive" had to be undertaken. The first obstacle was to negotiate the railway. One year I was told some broke and ran up the line and caused considerable chaos to the timetable of the trains for a while, and two or three it was said found an early slaughter. Anyway once over the railway it was relatively easy to drive up through Blacksmiths Fields to the farm. Unlike the quiet of the Bullocks the air was often filled with the squeals of the pigs in the area of those gates, for a pig farm lay just up along the line, and their din must have been a constant nuisance to those who lived close by.

The late winter and spring these brooks were left free, and now with the reed filled brooks that separated each field could carry out their main task. There were something like seven or eight of these brookland meadows, each connected by culverts to allow access one to the other. The brooks carried away the water which drained from this land, and conveyed it to the "River Dyke", which although being too big to be a brook was indeed too small to be a river, its real name being the Teville stream. A small length of this Dye exists today at the northern end of the boating lake. It was at this time quite a substantial flow of water and needed small bridges of railway lines laid crossways with sleepers to allow passage across. The water was conveyed by it to the sea, using the same exit that is used today at the south end of the boating lake. There were on the smaller brooks several crossing places made by us kids on our forays to the tip for anything that might be of use to us at that time. The materials for these crossings were of log, planks, bedsteads or anything rigid that may have been to hand. Sometimes the forays would be to throw missiles at the rats that were like not others I have seen since, for they appeared extra big with an abundance of fur, apart from their faces which were clear. Many of the brooks could be jumped, but most had their banks broken down by the Bullocks in their quest for water during their stay. The poor old moorhen had other predators, as well as us boys, who would rob a few nests of eggs, which some would eat, but I don't think I did. However, if I did, the taste has left me a long, long time ago. With the coming of the spring the fields filled rapidly with a multitude of grasses, herbs and wild flowers. The fields that just, it seemed, yesterday had been supplying the needs of the red brown bullocks, had now dressed themselves in beauty with their bountiful bounty of floral, and as if with joy, swayed and danced to the tune of the wind.

Another change was about to take place in "Waddies Brooks".

These fields each year became alive, bustling with activity as the men from "Yew Tree Farm", along with their horses and machinery, arrived. Those long swaying waves of light and dark green grasses were about to be turned into stacks of sweet smelling brookland hay.

The brooklands during May and June time were alive with insects, some flying by and fascinating one with their fragility and beauty, others buzzing around, their speed of flight seeming to make themselves invisible, many trying to make themselves a nuisance. There were others who would, and did, bite anyone and everything, anywhere they possibly could.

The horses pulling the mowers would be the first to arrive to begin the transformation of the quiet brooklands into one of the year's busiest and enjoyable tasks. These large docile beasts would be attached in pairs to the mowers, one each side of a long pole. Attired in their harness they would also be wearing light Hessian sacking over their backs, and their leather bridles would be adorned with small twigs of Elder or some such plant. These extras, along with their flowing manes, the ability to twitch patches of skin at will, and their coarse flicking tail, were the defences that were set against the insects' marauding attacks. The heavy metal mowers, with their long knives protruding to the right, their triangular blades running along the bed of the beam, and in the recess of fingers, that ran at regular intervals along its length, creating a scissor like action

between the two. The beam and fingers would be stationary while the knife would chatter to and fro at a very fast speed deriving its power from the gearing, which in turn gained its energy from the turning wheels. Extending from the rear of the machine would be the metal seat supported by a sprung arm, and it would be fashioned to receive the buttocks of the operator, central and to the fore was a risen shaped piece intended to stop the operator sliding off, but it managed in a most efficient manner to portray to its occupier by means of pain its presence, and so was always padded with sacking. Within easy reach of the operator were levers and foot pedals to allow control of the height of the beam and the input and output of power. The two carters who sat upon these seats were Bill Scrace and Bill Wady. They were complete opposites in physical stature, with Bill Scrace being a large man with a heavy moustache, and the whole stature being topped by a wide brimmed trilby, while Bill Wady was but half his size, clean shaven and topped by a flat cap. Opposites they may have been physically, but they were very well matched vocally as they shouted abuse at their charges, not that they ever meant much of it, and even if they did, the old horses seemed to take little notice. They plodded gently on like some old man who had been nagged all his life, and the tirade of abuse was something one had to live with. Other carters on the neighbouring farms would smile when they heard these vocal bouts, for they knew they could get as good and better results with gentle words of encouragement and a few stern commands when needed.

The chattering mowers would commence their journey around the perimeter of the field. The horses with their heads shaking, tails flicking, would steadily plod their journey and behind them the grasses would shudder violently as the knife contacted their stems and dramatically fall in a small cloud of pollen, as the swathe board attached to the end of the knife beam would, by its angled fixture, direct it clear of the standing grasses and so allow each cut to become its own independent swathe. The journeys continued, with the horses being stopped at each corner, the beam raised and the horses turned through ninety degrees and so carry on in the new direction. As time progressed and the chattering of the mower continued accompanied by the vocal choir of the two Bills, the standing area of grass grew smaller and smaller, and the colour of the horses' coats grew darker as the sweat caused by their exertions stood upon them. As the mowing continued, so the sharpness of the blades would diminish and require to be changed for newly sharpened ones. If one was to listen carefully during a stoppage of the noisy mowers, one would hear the not so melodious singing or humming coming from whatever shady spot was at hand. Proceed to that spot and one would find old Ben Halls, equipped with his file honing away at those triangular blades, or with his hammer and rivets replacing those beyond efficient use. Eventually the grasses of that field would dance no more, and in their place would be Battalions of swathes perfectly still and precise like soldiers awaiting inspection.

Once the first meadow had been cut the mowers would move onto the next and other horses and equipment would arrive, all of course hoping for a stay of good weather when the sun and the warm winds would dry and conserve the goodness of the grasses, and so turn it into good quality hay, or at least as good as this brookland hay could be. To assist the speeding up of this process the turner and the tedder would be brought into operation. The turner would follow the swathes around the field and rotating tines would lift and turn two swathes each journey, thus allowing the sun and wind to play upon those grasses which had been covered by its many companions. Sometimes this operation would be needed to be carried out just the once, but more is the case two or even three times the field would be covered. It was very important for the grasses to be just right before they could be presumed to be made into hay. Should they be exposed too long to sun and wind then the goodness of the hay would deteriorate, as is often the case when rain has entered the time of the process. Equally, should the grasses contain too much moisture and they are stacked, it is then likely the stack will fire, or at the very least turn musty. So it was that one would see not just Mr Wadman enter the scene, lift selected handfuls of the grasses to his nose and smell, to allow the experience of many years to tell him of its state, but almost each and every worker copy and make his own assessment. The scent of these grasses that were changing filled the air with a sea of aromas that have never failed to make me pine for those times wherever I may be. It always has and I hope always will make me think of those long off days as a farm boy.

Once Mr Wadman had given the word, then the time had come for the hay to be gathered and stacked. At this time different processes of the operation were going on in different fields and

would continue to do so until the whole task was complete. The tedder may well be brought into use at this time and used to fuse two swathes into one. The rake was probably my favourite piece of equipment at haymaking, and I suppose it was nearly always the first introduction of the boy to any independent field work. The rake comprised of two large wheels between which hung a series of half hoops with their opening to the front. The horse was fitted into a pair of shafts in the front and travelled over the hay directed by a pair of reins held in one hand of the operator. As the horse proceeded forward the half hoops filled with hay, and when filled the operator bent, grasped and lifted a lever which tripped the hoops, causing them to rise up high and then return again to their original position, leaving in the wake of the journey a roll of hay. Although as I said I enjoyed this task, I must admit that I have never had overlong spells at it, but I am aware that continually activating that lever over long periods is an exercise of extreme fatigue. My experience with one of these machines coincided with the innovation of a foot pedal to replace the hand lever, and the difference involved must be similar to driving a Rolls Royce after a Mini. As the mowers made their way from field to field, chattering away, so the rakes and tedders would follow, awaiting the turners to do their work, which would be governed by the weather. Each field would gradually change and become rows of sweet smelling hay.

The site of each stack would decide the type of collection used. An elevator would be required. The elevator was no more than an open topped box, within which slats about four feet in length, each containing three metal tines with bent ends, were contained. Each slat would be fitted into square links on a chain that would proceed over metal flat ended cogs found at each end of the box. The top cog would be an idler, while the bottom one would be driven from a gearing that derived its power from a pony or a spare horse which would be harnessed to a pole and then commence a walk to nowhere by going round in circles for hours on end. The elevator box would be something in the region of twenty feet long and at the bottom had a box through which the tines would pass. On its sides were two high poles, at the top of which was situated a pulley into which a wire ran, one end of which was secured to the elevator along its length, and the other to a static winch and handle, the winding of which would raise and lower the elevator according to the height required. When work was to start the horse received its command "Giddap" and off he would go on that never ending journey, and with a clanking and a squeaking the tines would pick up and convey up the box any hay that had been pitched into its bottom.

Should the hay to be stacked in the close vicinity of the stack site, a pair of horses using a Sweep would be put into use. The Sweep would be a wooden structure comprising of a dozen or fourteen, eight or nine foot long metal tipped wooden tines fitted to a rear frame with a wheel each end and a further wheel situated centrally over which the metal shaped seat was fitted. A horse would be attached to each side of the Sweep and a further pole about three feet from the ground would prevent them treading on the tines.

I always associated Mr Tinkler with this implement. He was a short little man who didn't really walk but used to throw his weight over on to one leg, and then throw it back again as the other foot went forward. His cap was always pulled well down over his eyes and it seemed forever in contact with his ears. A kerchief was around his neck, and with his jacket open, like all his contemporaries, his waist coat was there to be seen adorned as all the others with the old watch chain. His trousers too were similar in style to the others, held aloft by his sturdy braces, but as if complete trust could not be put into them, a thick leather belt wrapped around his waist some inches lower than the top of his trousers. His trousers were also strapped below his knee, only exaggerating the bandiness of his short legs, for he stood no higher than five foot six. His teeth had worn with the passage of time and the stem of his old pipe, to allow it to fit perfectly between them. This little man always seemed completely at ease and content with his lot and his normally quiet rural surroundings, and it was difficult to picture him in that hell of the First World War. He had been there and was extremely proud to have been one of the original "Old Contemptibles". It was difficult to see Mr Tinkler as a mature, well trained seasoned soldier in his early twenties, but that is what he had been. I was always respectful to him for he was happy with what he was, and very proud of what he had been.

The Sweeps would be pulled across the field, collecting the rolls of hay in the manner of today's bulldozer. The horses were backed up on arrival at the stack, leaving a pile of hay for the two men there to pitch into the elevator where it would be carried to the top centre of the stack and dropped. There would be three men on the stack who would pass the hay by pitchfork to one

another. The third would be the builder who would be responsible for the shape of the stack, while the second would be the filler, whose task it was to fill the middle and also tie in the builder's lay, the first of the three keeping it clear beneath the elevator. The Sweep was a good system if the operators knew what they were doing, for if they pushed the hay into a pile from all angles before depositing it at the rick, the persons pitching into the elevator would pull their guts out trying to get it apart. I have heard conversations take place because of this that were not for the ears of the squeamish. All day and into the evening the labours would continue, the elevator squeaking, groaning and swaying as the box was raised higher and higher to meet the demands of the growing stack. The poor old horse would, as time progressed, require a lot more motivating, either by calling its name or some far more severe command. Sweaty faces would become dirty with the dust of the dry fields and the tramp of the horses feet, until at last the top of the stack was complete and the field was cleared. Everyone was ready for home and the old horse could at last reach the end of its circular journey.

When the hay was in a field other than that in which the stack was to be built, then the wagon would be used to load the hay on to before being conveyed to the stack. The wagon would have ladders both front and rear. These ladders were a wooden structure the width of the wagon and the two main stays would fit it to the front and rear floor by means of hooks and eyes and lean forward and rear. By stacking hay overhanging the sides and up against these ladders the area of stacked hay would be increased twofold. Attached to the back of the wagon would be a hay loader. The loader was a series of eight or nine wooden bars fitted with tines at intervals throughout their length, and fitted alternatively to cranked revolving beam, the whole contained in an angled box that reached above the ladder of the wagon. The power of this vehicle was again self propelled and so the forward motion of the wagon along the rows of hay would allow the tines to pick it up and by means of the cranked revolving bars walk it up and drop it over the ladders and so on to the wagon. There would normally be two horses to pull this assembly along, one in the shafts and the other as trace, which would be a harness of chains. The chains with hooks on would be fitted to eyes on the underside of the wagon's shafts, and so pulled by the horses in line. Should the distance involved require it, a rope would be thrown over the load and secured, but in "Waddies Brooks" this was not necessary.

The chattering of the mowers, the chorus of the carters, the clicking of the turners and tedders, the rhythmical clank as the rake came in contact with the ground, the commands to the horses on the sweeps and the clanking and squeaking of the elevator with its jaws continually spilling hay onto the stack made conversation between the haymakers rather difficult, if not impossible, and of course to those on different tasks it was, and they all looked forward to a break.

Meal times were quite a pleasure when seated together around the stack area, laughing and joking, as the bread and cheese was swigged down with bottles of cold tea, each bottle of course deficient of milk. Each supplied their own refreshment, food and drink, for the days when the women would bring the foodstuffs to the hayfield and the farmer supply the drink were long past and buried. Yet times were there to be seen, as clearly as they would be in a history book. The older men's dress, where hardly ever did the waistcoat get removed, the kerchief always around the neck, and their feet encased in those hobnailed boots, and in their hands their knives as they carved away at their hunks of bread and cheese. The younger men would quite often be stripped to the waist, perhaps no hats at all, and light shoes upon their feet as they ate their sandwiches. These young men were no different of young men of any age, ready always with a bit of tomfoolery, and a bit of teasing of one of the older men who they knew would try to clump them around the ear as they scampered laughingly away with the older man's "Silly young bugger" echoing in their ears. From some source on the second or third day they acquired a boat and then it was trips full of laughter up and down the River Dyke for the younger ones, as the older ones sat there exchanging stories of days gone by, when no doubt they were just as silly as those they criticised at this time. Then, all too soon it seemed, it was back to their solitary tasks and the quiet was once more disturbed by the symphony of haymaking.

As they proceeded, field by field, ever closer to the sea, so I was unable to follow and only at a distance could I see the range of activities carry on. I was now just a distant spectator instead of an each participant.

Then all too soon it seemed the last field was cleared. Haymaking on "Waddies Brooks" had passed on again. The fields that a couple of weeks before had been filled with different grasses and flowers too numerous to number had for another year swayed and danced to the tunes of the wind for the last time. The scorched stubble that remained seemed to mourn their passing as each field appeared so mournful and empty. Now the brooks contained only the haystacks of dark green, scattered about like little houses on a prairie. Left still though standing proud and aloft in the dykes stood the reeds. They reached up to the sky, standing like guardsmen, protecting it seemed those now dejected looking fields, with the confidence that nature would soon breathe life into them again.

Today one looks at the large pitch and putt course, the boating lake, the miniature railway and the children's corner. It is good to see so many people enjoy "Waddies Brooks", but when I look at the remains of the River Dyke to the north, I am grateful to have enjoyed them as they were, and privileged to have shared the experience of their haymaking.

Chapter III
OVER THE LINE

However, I had no place to be among the haymakers on "Waddies Brooks" because my employment at that time was for Mr Lee, who farmed St Johns Farm. I was fourteen when I started full time but had been working during my school holidays for a couple of years before. The year was 1941. My task for the first half of the day was that of herdsboy. Arriving at work at seven o'clock I would report to the cowshed where I would find Mr Lee milking with "Fairy", the cowman.

Why "Fairy" should have such a nickname I never found out. I realise now that at a later time that name would very soon be given a meaning, but it didn't then and neither did it have cause to. He was about twenty eight at that time and had twin boys who were still babies. He was by no means a country boy and in fact was a proper Londoner who had before coming down to this area been a Steward on Southern Railway. Unfortunately he suffered from asthma, sometimes quite severely, hence a young man at his age being free of military service. He had, he had told me, killed two birds with one stone when for the sake of his health he had accepted an agricultural course, and through that course enjoyed the life and felt a lot better, and so remained within it. We became good friends.

We had but twenty cows at that time, which was only a small herd. Milking would start about half past five with Fairy starting on Snowdrop at the bottom and then he and Mr Lee would take alternative cows until Kicker would be reached at the other end. By half past seven the retaining chains would be slipped from the cows' necks and we would be out of the yard and on to Cokeham Lane, and together we would amble on our way to "Over the Line". As we plodded along down the lane the cows would leave their calling cards steaming in our wake over tarmac and grass, and one fine spring morning when the grass was fresh and I was not paying attention, over me. I would walk beside old Sandy, she was an old Jersey some six years older than me, and should have been retired years ago, but as retirement to an old cow is the Knackers Yard she was allowed to carry on. She was still being milked and I had no idea how many calves she had had. As we slowly journeyed on, leaving the civilised road of tarmac and proceeding to the darker reaches of the lane, Mr Lee had taken a short cut in order to unlock and meet us at the first of the set of three railway gates. On we plodded to what was and was going to become an even more familiar trip to me. Past the entrance to Lancing Recreation ground, Alan Bashford's cottage and eventually his long Market Garden, opposite the barn and Market Garden of Mr Bushby, which came into view as we cleared the thatched cottage. The remainder of the journey was now darkened by the large Elms which bordered the lane, and light only entered where the gap appeared to allow entry to our arable land of Chalky Ham. The next large gap was that allowing entry to Towns Market Garden, which housed the large water tower that served Lancing Railway works, and even later gave its name to Tower Road. From here on the lane lowered until it was some eight or more feet lower than the fields that encased it, and the trees gave way to high hedges. At this point the drainage of moisture from the fields, allied with the continual tread of the cows' feet, turned the surface of the lane into a quagmire that was too difficult for me to negotiate. I would leave my charges and climb through the hedge to the firm land above, from where I would motivate the girls below with guttural wishes of good luck, as leg after leg was recovered from that sucking mire, only to be lost again as the others were retrieved. It was, though, only about twenty yards before we arrived and waited at the gates. On arrival the far one would be opened and hooked back, as Mr Lee awaited my signal that we were all gathered. When the line was clear he would force the gate open and shout "Righto Son", and I would rustle them over as quick as I could without panicking them. He would then shut and lock the gate, sometimes having to wait until the train had passed before he could lock the second because the gap between trains was often quite short. Having locked both gates he would again call "See you at one Son". He never did call me anything but "Son" all the time I worked for him. The train had disappeared into the distance, Mr Lee had clumped away in his wellies, it was all quiet and I stood there in the quiet of "Over the Line" and gazed at my companions for the next five hours, the cows.

Five hours is a long time for a boy of fourteen, and even longer when it was raining, as it quite often was. At the far end of this grazing area was eight and a half acres which was securely fenced and so there were times when I could secure the herd, although I was not supposed to do this. This secure area was to be kept for the period when I was required for other jobs, and then the herd could be driven into it and I could return for those other duties.

To protect myself from the rain and to give me shelter from the wind where I could eat my lunch, I built a little shanty in bushes. There were days in that period I spent "Over the Line" when I thought the task was sheer Hell, and others when it was pure joy.

I made friends with the old gentleman who lived in one of the two bungalows on the western side of the road. He was a keen gardener and as well as his garden he had created about eight or nine rods of the brookland into an allotment, removing the turfs and building them in a protective low wall around it. It was at his instigation that I commenced to make a few shillings for myself. Armed with his wheelbarrow and shovel I collected the pats that the cows left as their trademarks, and at the going rate of a shilling a barrow load I soon had a good little money spinner. When the season came there were to be found all over the brookland a great many horse mushrooms. These were much larger than the normal type and it was not unusual to find some the size of dinner plates. These too supplemented my wages and at other times, although they never were all that plentiful, the water Iris.

My wages when I went down as a schoolboy was sixteen shillings a week, but the second week that I was at the job full time I received one pound. These perks then were readily, nay, eagerly accepted. Although only fourteen I was then a smoker, for the publicity of the danger to health had not at that time become a deterrent. I would retreat to my little shanty in the bushes and lay back in the sun, or huddle within its shelter, depending on the weather, and enjoy my woodbine or Players Weight. Life was not all commercial though, for I was just a boy and like all boys of that age I had a vivid imagination, and was not backward in putting those imaginings into practise.

The ford in the brook that separated the rough brooklands from the rest, with its shingle base, was just the spot for a "Posse" to go galloping through and I would be a member of that "Posse" riding my horse flat out, and thrilled as the spray flew high from my horse's hooves. Over and over again I would travel through that ford until I would either realise I was wet through, or was it that the "Baddies" had finally made good their escape and had now reached the forbidden badlands of the railway works. Whatever the realisation I would feel immediately wet through and very soon miserable until I lit a fire and dried myself. Building footbridges over the brooks was another pastime that wiled away the time, and always that fascinating quest among the brooks and bushes to discover something new. One other obviously silly thing that I did was to lay old half pennies on the lines to let the trains run over them time and again to see how big they could be flattened. My young mind would at times be so engrossed in some of these pastimes, and then in a flash I would become aware of my responsibilities and look around and see none of my charges. Panic would flood through me and I would charge off in a state of near hysteria, with mental pictures of gardens that were once full of flowers now only full of those companions of mine, but only on a couple of occasions did they let me down and nibble but a couple of lowly blooms. There were indeed occasions when there were long periods when there was nothing to do but walk around in my own company, and how as I to know that those times were probably preparing me for my Army service to come, when guards and patrols came easier to me than most. I remember there were other times when I had in my possession pencil and paper, and as the cows sat down to chew their cud I would make lists of the order that they did so and enter their names on my paper. It is with a smile on my face now that I realise some thirty years later I did very similar things, but then called it work study.

Chapter IV

OLD ALF

Perhaps the greatest thing that happened to me, and helped my appreciation of, and attitudes to others, was my meeting and consequential friendship with an old man named Alf Knight.

One of the relics of the builders' days was a large shed situated by the side of Western Road, at about the same spot that is now occupied by the Bus Shelter but laying back a bit from the road. I had been told that this shed was occupied by a couple of old Tramps and so I gave it a wide berth because, up to this time, any association that I had had with Tramps had been far from enjoyable. Came the day when about to pass the shed that curiosity overcame my fear. Noticing that no movement appeared around the shed and all appeared quiet from within the interior, I cautiously approached its door. Then standing at its door and looking into the dark interior, I was struck most, not by the sight of anything I saw, for my sense of smell blotted out all the others. From within that darkness there came an aroma completely different from anything that I had smelt before, and impossible to describe. The interior was separated by a couple of sheets of corrugated galvanised iron which gave completely independent areas to each of the occupants. I was to discover that these two could not find it possible to share life together in all aspects, but were sensible enough to realise that the shelter was the best that either of them was likely to find. They had decided they would share the big shed, but that always the galvanised iron was to be as rigid a barrier then as the Berlin Wall would be to others in years to come. Both accepted the situation and lived in peace, each to their own territory, within the confines of the shed. I noted the interior was all quite neat and tidy, that is as far as it could be with the motley collection of belongings that a Tramp found it necessary for survival. How long they had lived here I do not know, but they lived a life of peace and quiet, and with as much cleanliness as their environment allowed. It was only their bodies that they made every effort to keep clean, but what garments they had that could be washed were, and were hung out to dry.

I suppose it was justified on reflection, although I far from thought it at the time, that the people in the bungalows should complain to the Council about their neighbours. I recall it being stated at the time that the drying washing was the last straw, and so the coming of the Police and the final eviction was just a natural progress of events. I had been fortunate to have been invited into the shed before this event took place and was accepted by both these gentlemen. I now found myself in the strange position of being allies and holding sympathies with both those in the bungalows and those in the shed.

The two gentlemen were of similar age that I would put at around their late sixties. They were, or at least had been, two big strapping men, although the one whose name I was to find out was Alf Knight had allowed the years to bend his body. Alf always fascinated me because on one hand three of his fingers were permanently clenched, while on the other he had two fingers that were forever in the same fashion. In later years I was often to wonder how Alf begat these obvious handicaps, but then in the innocence of just fourteen years of life, everything was accepted just as it was dealt. Both old gentlemen were heavily bearded. I suppose that apart from the difficulty of shaving in the environment they survived in, the bearded faces gave them warmth when it was needed.

The eviction came as a great blow to them for as Alf told me, it was nice to have a permanent base where on return from whatever jaunt one took, your chattels, such as they were, were there to welcome you. The other gentleman was in no doubt what to do after the eviction and within a couple of hours, complete with his immediate necessities, was off to the area of Horsham, leaving but a memory of him in my mind, for I have never seen him since. Alf was another matter, and he was really very upset and had no idea what to do. It was at my suggestion, I recall, that we collected up Alf's bits and pieces and conveyed them to my "Shanty" in the bushes.

Within this little "Shanty" of mine two things developed that were to last for the next few years. Firstly, we decided that with a little effort and thought this little "Shanty" had the potential, and we the ability, to extend it into a home. At its back were two Hawthorn trees that we trimmed and the base around them levelled. Here then was the basic structure of Alf's home, the living

trees of God's Earth. Secondly, a partnership that was to be very dear to me in my future life. Today on this spot stands a Balsa Wood factory, but it could not have been created with more enthusiasm than its predecessor, Alf's little home. The following days were full of journeys across Waddies Brooks to the Destructor. I had been to the Destructor many times before, but then it was to bombard as they scampered away among the discarded bits and pieces of Worthing. Now we allowed them to watch us as we pulled and pushed among the motley collection of materials that could be used in the construction of the hut. The return journeys found us carrying bed springs, lino, carpet, old chair cushions, in fact, anything that would help in the construction of Alf's home. Each journey would call for a new appraisal of the building plans, as new and unthought of materials were found. At last it was completed. It didn't look much I know, but it was well secluded under the spreading branches that remained on the old Hawthorn, and the top was waterproof. There was plenty of room for Alf to lay full stretch in comfort and still room to have a fire at his feet.

The second thing that grew from that conversation within that "Shanty" was that strange friendship between the old tramp, travelling along the autumn paths of his life with the leaves of memories dancing around his feet, and the young herdsboy skipping along the lanes of his spring, sided by the greenest of grasses and the buds of the future opening before his eyes. They were miles apart in time, but during the following years they walked hand in hand along that glorious road of companionship.

Although I say the hut was finished, it was always subject to modification. The important thing was that Old Alf was home.

Life was different now for Alf and he was a lot happier than he had been in the shed. It was also a lot happier for me too, for once I had the cows "Over the Line" and the gates were closed, and when the last echo of Mr Lee's voice had trailed away with his "see you at one Son", I would make my way to Alf's home. "Morning Pop" I'd call and he'd reply that he was just getting up, as his bearded head rose above his so called bedclothes. I would wander off to settle down my herd as he carried out his morning ablutions, which always concluded with his meticulous combing of his flowing beard. He was a clean man was Alf, and one day even acquired a good suit which was to hang at the back and was only to be worn on very special occasions. I never knew a time when he would leave his home without first shining the uppers of his wooden soled clogs, of which he had two pair, again one for the special outings.

On my return from my settling walk we would share a cup of tea as I roasted my cheese sandwiches, and there in that smoky abode we sat and talked or merely watched the crackling wood on the fire creating its many patterns, and feel comfortable in each other's presence. The weakness of Alf's home was the fire and some days I would, when the wind was in the wrong direction, go home with a blackened face, clean only where the smoke-induced tears had run down my cheeks.

We had a couple of outings to the cinema together, and although Alf had his best suit on, all around us shared the aroma that could only be found in the interior of Alf's smoke filled home. I was able to supply Alf with a lot of his vegetables which would be added to his meats as they all boiled away in the one pot. He seemed to have the ability, which was obviously gained over the number of years that he had lived like he did, to add each part of his dinner to the pot in order to have the whole meal cooked at the same time. There were a few times in the late morning when I could entice into the corner Tiny, our smallest cow, and through her I was able to offer quantities of milk. We had going at one time a chopped wood business, when he purchased a chopper and gathered wood from the Destructor, which he chopped and made into fire lighting bundles, and I took them to our local shop as well as selling a few to the bungalow occupiers.

Later, after I had progressed from the rigours of herdsboy and became a young soldier, putting into practise some of the lessons I had learnt "Over the Line", the builders came and once more Alf was evicted. He moved for a period into the barn at "Stakers Place" where the population of rats was innumerable. After that move ended I lost track of him. I am grateful to Alf, for he taught me that people are not always what they seem.

Chapter V
ST JOHNS FARM

I was quite luck in this young working life of mine to be employed by Mr Lee, who farmed an area of some ninety acres only, which was known as St Johns Farm. Mr Lee came from a family of farmers who had farmed land in the area for many years past. He was, however, the last of his line, for like his sister with whom he lived, he had never married. They lived in the big house that stands opposite the Joyful Whippet. It was not the prime property then that it is today, the present owners transformed it into its present likeness. Previously it was a drab house hidden in an even drabber garden that seemed to keep it in perpetual shade. Why they should have left it in the manner they did I don't know. It wasn't because of the lack of funds, because on his demise and later that of his sister a considerable fortune was left to some animal sanctuary. Mr Lee was not a robust man by any standards, and in fact was of slight build, and had very small neat hands that were always soft by the continual labours of milking. He was, I remember, very prone to getting whitlows. These would appear under his nails and were the result of milk entering a small wound and going sour and must have been more than a little painful. I have been to him on several occasions when he was milking and for one reason or another the pain came upon him. He would jump up and, placing his hand between his knees, jump about uttering comments of pain. I would have to excuse myself and go outside to have a giggle at his poor misfortune. On return he would give me a knowing look, but he never ever lost his temper with me although I gave him many opportunities to do so. I was a very keen footballer in those days and Mr Lee took a great interest in my progress. He told me that he once played goal for Sompting, which quite amazed me with those small hands of his. Holidays were something he never practised and was at work every day, unless a small illness became him. His bicycle would convey him so slowly from his home to the farm and back again, three or four times a day, but he seemed quite content with it, and I don't think he ever owned a car.

The farm was reached by a short journey along Lotts Lane, where the brick gateposts would stand off set like two sentries standing guard. On the left from here on would be a long high flint wall that for the first thirty yards would have been the remains of some lean-to building that had collapsed long before my arrival and as I recall no reference to it ever being made, assumed the passage of time to be several years. Opposite here was the only cottage on the farm, a relatively modern one at that time. It was to stand empty for a long time, having been occupied by the old cowman, a Mr Andrews, who was relieved by Fairy, who having accommodation already declined to move into it. Surrounding the cottage was about an acre of ground used for Market Garden crops. This ground ran hand in hand with the farm road until it reached a wide strip of grass on the right. This strip of grass was dissected by a cinder track that ran back for about thirty yards to a low rambling bungalow, which had to its northern side an orchard of about half an acre and at the rear a large garden that contained a full sized tennis court. The eastern boundary of the garden was also the extent of the farm land in that direction.

On the left hand side of the farm road where the bungalow road commenced was a cart shed that had once had a roof that kept out the rain, but most of that had disappeared by now, and the remains merely allowed the flow of God's good water to be concentrated in just a few selected spots. When coming down here in my schooldays during the time of Mr Andrews this shed had housed an old lorry. This vehicle that stood there through most of the year was started through some miracle I would think two or three times a year to help bring in the hay. Once started and mobile I think it was only by God's will that it ever stopped, but never the less it brought home some hay. It seems to me that with the going of Mr Andrews the old lorry deemed to go also. The open shed now became the top cart shed. Next in line was the small barn with the loft above. This barn had two double doors, but that was long ago and now all that remained of their presence was the two gaping holes between the posts. The long high flint wall still maintained its duty by being the rear wall to this small barn too, and then becoming one part of a short passage that opened out into the long cowshed with ties for twenty two boarders, but in our case only twenty were used, the old Bull occupying the last two. The dairy was between the small barn and the cowshed, the small passage being its rear wall. Next to the cowshed was a loose box that was the home for any sick cow that we may have, or sometimes for a cow and calf. The yard, half of which was covered, was where the duty of the high wall came to an end, although it was still the

rear wall of the covered half, while the uncovered area was made up of three high scaffold poles with gaps between them. This was also the area for cow and calves at times, but its main task appeared to be the venue for the old Bull to do his stuff. He was, of course, a really key figure on the farm, for cows that don't have calves don't give milk, and milk being the cash flow product of the farm the whole system would collapse. The sting nettles that grew next to the yard appeared to be the dumping ground for any thing that had past its useful life, and no doubt the summer stable which stood next to it had contributed its fair share in its time. I only knew the horses to use this stable a couple of times, and it was always where we kept our tools; the hoes, the pitch forks, the prongs, the scythes, the dung rakes, the dung forks, the swap hooks, the saws, the bill hooks and a multitude of sacks of varying sizes and various uses. The last in line along the farm road, apart from another small area of sting nettles, was the bottom cart shed in which was housed our newest possession, our wagon.

On the other side of the farm road from the small barn was the straw stack and the mangold pie. The mangold pie was often covered in smoke from the little tin shed next to it where the water was heated to boiling for the washing of the dairy equipment and the milk bottles. Never too far away from the cowshed was the ever growing, ever diminishing dung lump, that grew each time the cowshed was cleaned out, which was twice a day, and diminished as we hauled it away to the field whenever it grew to be a nuisance. The two acres behind the lump, which again was used for Market Garden crops, was hidden from the bungalow to its north by a long row of coniferous trees about ten feet in height. Next to this, encased by a fence each side was the cows' footway to the meadows, this footway was entrenched latterly with the constant strides of the cows on their twice daily trek to and from the meadows. Opposite the Hovel was the stack yard and here would stand the haystack, the straw stack and the rick, of either oats or wheat, if it had not already been thrashed. The grass stood lush green and tall next to this area because it was here that the cesspit found its home, readily accepting all the liquids from the cowshed which often were more than it could hold, and so overflow trenches were dug to carry away the surpluses, and it was these that encouraged that lush growth. Sandwiched between this green and the meadow was another acre or more of Market Garden.

The farm road, having passed the bottom cart shed, came up against four long greenhouses that had at their side two smaller ones who were now coming to the end of their useful life. As these smaller ones were level with the others at the bottom end it left enough room at the top end for a couple of pig styes. Surrounding these greenhouses and their sunken boiler house on each of the three sides were the bulk of the Market Garden area. Running parallel, about thirty yards distant from the greenhouses, was a track that allowed access to the thick hedge at the bottom. A further thirty yards to the east the boundary was that of the nursery of Mr Sharp, with his packing shed at the top followed by his greenhouses, and the remainder of his land was hidden from us by a very high row of Poplar trees, standing aloof and proud and rustling their leaves at the slightest kiss of the wind. The western boundary was the barbed wire fence of the meadows, with a strip of grass that stopped abruptly in the westerly direction by the large and sprawling briars, whose task it was to protect the curling tongues of the cows from the grasses of the main meadow whilst allowing them to bypass to the brookland meadows below, having turned right at the thick hedge and proceeded along the remains of an old lane, until the open brooklands stood before their gaze, abruptly halting at the railway. There was an area of about fifteen yards that ran down alongside the Market Garden, and the fence, that each year never failed to amaze me. Throughout the winter at very regular intervals this piece of rough land was used for the passage of the horse and carts, and their constant passage would create deep open ruts and a very uneven surface caused by the wheels and hooves, and yet each spring without fail up would shoot sticks of rhubarb and the flowers of the daffodil, some from even the bowels of the ruts. Nature is wonderful.

The thick hedge that bordered the southerly extent of the Market Garden was not really a hedge at all. It was, in fact, the northerly side of a sunken lane. This lane was now impassable, and by the growth of the young trees that grew from its banks and floors, had not been in use for at least the last twenty years. It was now used for the dumping of waste vegetable, which at times were pulled out for a secondary role. The question that teased me and still does is "Why was it dug out?" It ran from Cokeham Lane in a westerly direction to where the cows used to get to the brooklands, where as a lane it ceased to exist. At its beginning it was deep enough to conceal a

horse and cart from any eyes other than those looking along the lane. Its depth got increasingly less as it proceeded along its length, which was probably about two hundred yards, in such a manner that its surface was probably level for its whole length. It ran to almost precisely parallel with the railway some one hundred and fifty to two hundred yards to its south. Anyway, I have conjectured that it was a lane through which surplus soil was carried during the building of the railway and that perhaps years before it proceeded east at least as far as Lancing. Understanding that the meaning of the word Sompting is "those that live by the swamp", I have conjectured even further that this old lane may well have been the main access route by the sea. I never have known and now I don't suppose I ever will.

Anyway, this old lane that had two breaks in it allowed access to the arable farming area known and "Chalky Ham". This was a field of about twenty acres and on the easterly side had a strip of four acres of meadow. Southerly then the railway, northerly the sunken lane, easterly Cokeham Lane where the cows struggled through the mud, and westerly the brookland.

This then was the extent of St Johns Farm. This, along with those with whom I would work, would be the fountain of knowledge from which I would drink. This was the area that Mr Lee farmed. On paper he had a partner, a Mr Wrapson, whom I only saw on a couple of occasions. Mr Lee had probably got into partnership with Mr Wrapson because next door he had a nursery of about four acres. The westerly wall of this nursery was the same one that was the back of most of the buildings of the farm.

Chapter VI
THE NURSERY

The nursery was just a bit wider than Lotts Lane is long and in fact Lotts Lane was its northern boundary. The southern extent was a hedge that was just above two of the greenhouses mentioned in the farm layout. A gap only large enough for the passage of a wheelbarrow was the only means of vehicle connection between the two. As the farm was on the one side, the other was the nursery of Mr Russell, whose house still stands in Cokeham Lane.

Facing the bend in Cokeham Lane stood the double doors of our potato shed, above which was the loft. The other end of this building, which could be reached by entering the personnel gate at the side of the shed, was the stable. A packing shed separated the gate from the larger one on the other side of it which was large enough to allow the traffic of vehicles. From the passage created by the packing shed and the wall of the potato shed ran a path that passed the stable door and travelled southerly, passing firstly the artificial shed which contained a many and varied selection from phosphates, dried blood, hoof and horn, bone meal, fish meal and others whose home may well have been there before I was born. The thing that attracted me in that shed though was a cycle wheel that hung suspended from the roof, and had hung there no doubt long before the war had started, on which there was a tyre whose tread was a series of swastikas around its whole circumference. On the right past here was a piece of ground large enough to contain two, two hundred foot greenhouses, while on the left was the potting shed. Some of the pots in this shed were used, but most had been there long after their makers had passed on. Beyond the potting shed was land that quite often became the home of a crop of lettuce. The other side of the path to this were the shorter greenhouses that were squat and had raised beds in them. They had been built so many years before for the special raising of cucumbers, but were not used in that capacity during my time. Back to the packing shed and turning right there was a black cinder road which ran alongside a greenhouse that was fixed to the north wall, and on the left the stokehole that created the heat that would be conveyed through the hot water pipes to the greenhouses, and within them allow an environment that would allow crops to grow in abundance outside their natural growing period of the year. Turning sharp left past the stokehole with its large pile of coal one would find a road that ran the length of the two hundred foot houses, and the shorter squatter ones, as well as the path between the two. This road was again made up of this cinder surface and roads of this nature were to be found in all the nurseries in the area because this was a secondary product of the boilers, and if one dug beneath the cinder one would come across the clinker as well. These by products were really waste and so apart from making use of them it was also a gainful manner in which to dispose of them. At the bottom end of the shorter greenhouses were the second set of stokeholes within the nursery and, of course, its stack of coal.

Beyond this area was an acre and a half that was used for crops that could be grown out of doors, and four or five old apple trees that had probably been around long before any of us that worked around them.

The long cinder road that ran southerly had a great long old greenhouse built against it that once inside there seemed no end to it and its back was once again that long high flint wall. I suppose you could say that that old long flint wall was the backbone of both the farm and the nursery.

Chapter VII
THE WORK AND THE WORKERS

The potato shed whose double doors opened out on to Cokeham Lane, where it met Lotts Lane, was I suppose the domain of my father. It was a concerted effort on all our parts to plough out and pick and sack all the potatoes. Once they had been conveyed to the potato shed and tipped into their different piles it was always father's task to segregate them into their various types.

The shed was normally, when occupied by the ware potatoes, separated by large wooden partitions into three separate divisions. The largest breed of potato that we grew was the Majestic and that one always occupied the largest division. The other two divisions were at different seasons occupied by Arran Banner, Arran Pilot, Epicure and King Edward, to name but a few of the tenants. These occupants were in quite high piles which were achieved by walking up carefully placed planks with the sacks on your back. Then carefully spilling them from the sack's mouth and watch as they steadily cascaded from the back wall down, settling into a natural angle of descent. Several blankets of straw would liberally be placed upon them to keep them from the dreaded fingers of the frost. There they would lay until the blankets would be pushed aside and dad would commence his grading and despatch.

A Brighton market firm would come three times a week to collect our Market Garden produce and they would dictate the quantity of ware potatoes that they required. I would often as not be with my father as we scrabbled the potatoes from the bottom of the pile, sometimes sitting back on our heels as a small avalanche of them would come cascading around our knees. The grading was done progressively as we selected the ware. Those really large ones were separated because they would be desired by the Fish and Chip shop, while those the size of a hen's egg would be classified as seed, and the smaller ones, the chats, being readily bought for pig food or taken around to the farm and added to the cows' diet.

Dad had a trades bicycle at that time, with a large basket container on the front, and I would cycle home for my snack, having seen the departure of Mr Lee some ten minutes before, and in the carrier of the bike would be our perks, potatoes either of ware or seed.

The other end of this shed was the stable and here was the home of two of my greatest friends, the horses. Neither of them were pure breeds and so like all heavy draught horses that have strains of other breeds they become cart horses. So it was with Daisy, our light brown mare, who had obviously been bred from a shire but in the breeding had lost a lot of the feathering; that is the hair around the bottom of her leg. This was obviously out of desire rather than by accident because in the true shire these feathers would get heavy with mud, and they had other deficiencies that I would inherit later. Daisy was a gentle creature and she was able to look after a young boy like me as together I was to learn the basics of my trade. Standing beside her in the second of the two bays that made up this stable was Rodney. He was a young gelding and would of course never be able to continue his line as his father had done. He was a grey, a fine looking animal and had descended from the breed of Percheron. Although at an early age I could use Rodney pulling the various implements that are required to toil the soil, as soon as a pair of shafts were placed each side of him he would be an entirely different creature and would just not walk, he had to trot just about everywhere whether loaded or not. Dad was once given the task to take a wagon up to a place called Lambleys Barn, which I estimate to be about a thousand yards from the road, and each and every one of those yards uphill. With Rodney in the shafts of the wagon dad kept him in check until the base of Lambleys Lane and then decided that he could make his own pace up the hill, and although he was panting away by the time they got to the top, the devil wouldn't stop trotting. Together those two old friends will always keep a place in my heart.

My Grandfather Stone, who was my mother's father, was the carter and these two old friends were in his charge, as indeed I was much of a lot of the time.

Grandfather Stone was as good a carter that you could find and I would like to think the best, but I have a friend down the road who would richly dispute that. He would dress in the manner that carters had dressed for the many years before. He wore in the winter his mole skin suit, which he had seemed to wear for years and years. Surely, I would think, that can't be made out of real mole skins, and I never did come to any conclusions on that matter. I don't know what

became of it when Grandfather passed on, but I surely would have liked to keep it. The trousers were of the flap over type in the same manner as the sailors wore in their uniform, and below the knee was always that strap, whose purpose was to keep the trousers from flapping around the feet when walking the furrow, and so stopped the transfer of mud from the boot to the opposite trouser leg. The waistcoat could no way be called a waistcoat in my time, it was to me more like a heavy jacket with cloth sleeves and each of the substantial pockets was flapped. The jacket was heavy and came just below the seat of his trousers. It had a type of pocket that ran around the interior of the garment that I have heard described many times as a poacher's pocket. Once again, like the waistcoat it had large exterior pockets with the flaps that would stop the rain from spoiling whether the contents may have been. His shirt was always the type without the collar attached, not that it would have been noticed because of the kerchief that was forever in position around his neck. His cap, which was always worn flat upon his head, covered a head of hair that would never have gone bald, and it was cut extremely short with the exception of a tuft that he loved to wear in the front. It was the fashion I had seen of youngsters in pictures of long ago. So it was at work, and who was to know about his hair for his cap seldom left his head.

He lived in a bungalow that was situated in the Upper Brighton Road that belonged to Mr Wrapson, the silent partner of the farm. This was probably the first time he had lived in such a property, having spent all his life, even that as a boy, in one farm cottage or another. He was allowed to live in this bungalow until he no longer required a place on this earth. He was a man of no more than five foot six inches but he will always be a big man in my memories because he had to be a strong man to manage Rodney.

Grandad always seemed just as much at home seated on a truss of hay just inside the stable as he did in his favourite chair at home. The hay on which he sat was the bulk of the horses' feed, while the energy was gained from the oats within the large bin next to it. This, when served to the horse, was mixed with chaff in a large circular sieve with a raffia type base that could allow the dust to be removed before presenting to the horse. On receipt of it in their manger the horses would give it a gentle blow from their nostrils which would dispense with any dust that remained present, and follow this with a separating of the mixture with their upper lip, before gathering it in their mouth and present it to their grinding teeth. They would receive two such feeds while he gave them a good "curry", which was a comb-like implement that removed from their coats any muck picked up by their night lay, as well as bring to the surface any dust from under it. The dust would be removed by a stiff brushing to the accompaniment of Grandad's hissing. This would serve the double purpose of keeping the dust from his mouth and allowing the horse to know of his whereabouts and so not startle them. This ritual would be carried out each working morning six days a week. A forty eight hour week was still in progress then, which meant that the working week did not cease until twelve o'clock on Saturday. Two hours was given each day to this task, that is from half five in the morning till half seven. When the horses were dressed in the harness that hung on the wall by the oat bin all three would leave for their day's work, with half an hour for lunch at ten and then an hour dinner at one, and return to the stable at night. This was a little different than the routine he had worked most of his life, which he referred back to when a lot of ploughing had to be done, and then it was into the field at seven and back in the stables at three with a couple of short breaks during the day. During that time and doing that task it was reckoned to have ploughed about an acre a day, with variations between the different types of soil and depth of ploughing that was necessary. It was estimated eleven miles had been walked in the process. The work on our farm was so varied that the former type of day was far more convenient to be adopted as it fell in far better with the type of day that us other workers adopted.

In this nursery area there was a foreman. His name was Fred. He was a Church Warden. He was a man who to me seemed full of authority, no one appeared to joke with Fred, no one trod on his toes, and nobody disobeyed him. I was to be a Sergeant Major in later life, but I never learnt to carry the cloak of authority like Fred did. Mr Lee was his employer, but I am sure that even he took his instructions from Fred. As soon as I had started work he called for me and told me that he wanted three and six pence of my wages each week. This, he told me, would go into the Steyning Building Society and as Fred had spoken I duly handed over my Three and Six each week. No one, not even Fred, could convince me that it would be for my eventual good, but Fred had spoken and who was I to say "no" to Fred. Some four years later I drew the lot out and blew it just before I went into the Army, and rued the day all my life. The nursery producing tomatoes,

Chrysanthemums and peaches was quite an efficient place, but then what other way could there be with Fred in charge.

There was another employee on the nursery at that time, Steve. Poor old Steve, he was a bit of a cripple and, like the rest of us, was no match for Fred. He was all too often getting a lashing from the tongue of Fred, who of course never swore, but had the capacity to put venom into each and every word he said if he so desired. Steve seemed to live in mortal terror of getting in his bad books, and of course because of that mental state, he always was. At other times there seemed to be one or two casual people employed, but any other work that could not be covered, we from the farm were called to assist. Old George, who made up the force of full time workers on the farm, was often called upon to give the stokehole of the nurseries a good going over. I think it was often done to allow Old George a nostalgic task similar to those he carried out years ago. Old George was at least seventy at this time and was a life long bachelor. He had married but it was not to a woman, but to a steam engine. For forty years Old George had travelled the lanes and byways with the steam ploughing tackle, and his home had been the caravan that travelled with them. He was always dressed very much I assumed as he had in his days on the engine, with his blue overall suit with its trousers and jacket, similar to those worn on the railway. With Old George, though, there would always be the kerchief and his flat cap, and in his mouth his pipe. If ever a job allowed him to work in a bent fashion, with his elbows resting on his knees, he would do so, because this was the position necessary to be adopted to feed the fire on his old steam engine.

He would then gladly descent those steps of the nursery stokehole and make a great fuss of clinking (removing the fused coals) and clearing the ashes, and laying up the coal in easy reach for the next firing before climbing out to leave it ever tidy and clean. As he passed we would both look back at the stokehole and I would see a trusty galvanised iron roof from out of which ushered a brick chimney, but I knew that in his mind's eye all Old George could see was his shiny black engine with her brasses gleaming, spurting her little streams of oil here and there, steam hissing, while the smoke from her chimney folded back over her, like a young maiden throwing back her hair. Old George would go away happy and Fred would be pleased that the old man had lived a memory.

Through the hedge at the bottom that stood with three or four old Elm trees keeping it together was the four other large greenhouses that were in use. In charge of these was Fred's half-brother, Perce. Perce lived, I am sure, in his own little world and was sure that no one was going to upset it. I enjoyed the company of Perce for like his half-brother he had a special quality about him. They were both, there is no doubt, craftsmen, and took a great pride in their work. In that Fred could enforce discipline to those around him because he worked with people under his authority, Perce worked on his own and had a code of discipline that he imposed on himself. He was never ever a minute late in the morning and neither ever a minute late in knocking off. There was a time to stop and a time to start, and there never ever seemed to be a reason why they should be altered. He smoked, but only at times according to his watch. He would check it first to ensure that the time for a cigarette was due. He kept a diary which in it was recorded the weather each day, and when weather was discussed could always quote the weather for any day several years before. He also recorded the daily war activities, such as planes flying over, dog fights and bombs dropped. I thought little of it then, but what an interest it would be to read today. They were indeed, Fred and Perce, a pair of brothers I found fascinating to have known.

My favourite job of the year in the nursery was that of bringing in the Chrysanthemums to their winter quarters, which took place about October. We would all have been engaged in the planting of them in May time, when my task would be to fetch the boxes of plants to the planters, and quite enjoyed the task of knocking them out. This would entail holding a box of some twenty four plants and gently knock the corner of the box on the floor to free the roots from the side of the box and then flip the contents up in the air slightly taking the box away quickly and allowing the contents to land upon the ground in the same condition and formation that they had been within the box. It always reminded me of the table cloth trick where the table cloth was snatched away leaving the placings undisturbed. They would stand and grow during the summer months when Fred and Steve, along with what casual staff had been employed, would stake, tie and disbud them.

Now was the time to bring them in. At first those nearest the greenhouses would be gently placed into a wheelbarrow and conveyed inside and replanted in a trench, and there would be drenched with water at the roots to help them to re-root in their new home. As the plants had a greater distance to be conveyed the horse and cart would be used. This process would take us three or four days and I enjoyed it so much that I still do it each year in my own garden, but sadly not by horse and cart.

I would be employed also cutting suckers out in the peach houses, which was a task I did not relish. I seldom got the chance to work in the peach houses when the fruit was on the tree, but one day I did. I remember it because I learnt a lesson I was to use myself many times when I had the duty of the management of others. I was in this peach house, and of course amongst those hundred of peaches, and I did of course eat a couple. Later Fred came in and looked about knowingly and said "You had one of these peaches young Bill?". "No", I replied, thinking how could he see that, but of course it wasn't the tree that told him I had, it was the reaction of my face when confronted with the question that told him of my guilt.

We, the farm workers, did not like to be co-opted into the greenhouse during the summer months, but there were occasions when we were. One such task was when we would mulch the tomatoes. This operation required the horse dung from the stable to be placed around the base of the plants. This action would keep the root area damp and watering through it would act as a boost in the food supply when the plant was at its greediest. Because it may well have damaged the plant, as well as bruising any of the fruits that it may have come into contact with, the barrow was scorned at for this task. Old George and I would replace it. Old George would kneel by the lump of manure and with his hands would fill the buckets with it, and I would carry them to either Steve or Perce, depending on the area we were working and they would lay the manure around the plants. I would also be required at times to assist with the stringing of the plants, where a string is required to be attached to the stake by each plant and the other end tied to the wires above near the glass to enable the growing plant or vine at this stage to be trained up it, and so produce a greater number of fruits.

It was neither of these jobs, and in fact I cannot recall what job it was, that found me in that long greenhouse that leant against the wall. I was about in the middle of its length when I looked up and away to see a sight that I had seen before but little liked the second time around. It was a German plane, and falling from its body was a couple of bombs. Later Roger Bannister was to break the four minute mile, but in the next few seconds he would not have had a chance in hell of catching me. "Bloody Hell" I thought, what a place to be caught in, encased in glass and bombs on their way to the ground. The cinders of the path I ran on must have been flying from my heels as I made for the door at the bottom end. Long before I reached that door I realised it was an uneven competition and threw myself down amongst those cinders and placed my hands over my head. It could only have been a split second later when there was a terrific roar of an explosion, and it seemed glass was falling and shattering everywhere. The noise abated as quickly as it came with the exception of the twinkling of glass falling and breaking, as loosened sheets gave up the struggle to retain their grip in the old frames. I got up and quickly made for the door and even then when the incident was passed, I was so relieved to be out of what had become in those few seconds my prison of glass. The bombs had landed over the wall some eighty or a hundred yards away. They had spewed dirt from out of the ground and spit it out all over the cowshed and the other buildings, but no one was hurt, thank goodness.

I had little time to think as I reached outside that greenhouse because the sound of splashing water came to my ears and I immediately associated it with a disaster. Within the nurseries of that time were large concrete tanks, quite deep, that were to have the rain water from the roofs directed into them and they were nearly always half full. With the knowledge of their presence and the splashing of the water I immediately assumed that somebody had been working by them and the shock had cause them to lose their balance and slip or topple in. I ran to the source of the noise and was found to have made nearly the right assumption, but it was not a someone, but a something. There, some four to five feet down from the rim, was the nursery cat. I felt a great sense of relief, but the old cat was looking up at me as he circled away doing the paddle, and was mewling as if to say, "Well, don't just stand there. Do something." As if receiving that sarcastic comment I ran on to where I saw a draw hoe lying and then on to a bucket, and hanging the bucket on to the swan neck of the hoe I ran back and lowered this makeshift

implement into the tank. The bucket immediately filled with water. The old cat needed no command from me to stop that circular journey and swim to the area above the sunken bucket, when I promptly hauled the lot to the surface. The old cat, with one of his lives gone, never even stopped to say "Thank you". Fred saw the cat leap out of the bucket and run away and insisted I take a shilling from him. Perhaps I was the only one in the war to make a shilling out of a German bomb.

The bottom greenhouse often became the venue for our lunch when, seated upon the pipes covered in sacking and enjoying the conversation of Perce, one could lean around and grasp a ripe tomato. The taste was really good, so much so that all these years later I grow the same variety and grow and feed them in the same manner and try and pride myself that they taste the same.

Chapter VIII
DAD AND THE MARKET GARDEN

Dad was nearing forty when we worked together down "Old Lees" as we would often refer to it when it was discussed. He was a member of the Home Guard and never, ever allowed a night's duty, whether or not he had had much rest, to interfere with his day's work. In fact, I have known him finish duty at five in the morning and go straight to work in the field before coming home for his breakfast. Incidentally, he celebrates his eighty second birthday this Thursday.

The area of some perhaps six to seven acres surrounding the lower greenhouses I like to think of as Dad's domain. The Market Garden vegetables were sown by him, planted by him and, quite often, gathered by him. I was of course with him a lot of the time, but my share of the work was, I am sure, quite minimal. There was also help from Old George, but what I lacked in concentration, Old George lacked in speed, and so the bulk of the work was left to Dad.

Grandfather would always prepare the soil and get it to a fine tilth with the aid of the horses and the implements. We would grow in this area the vegetables for the Brighton Market, and as for the potatoes, they would be collected three times a week and so our harvesting would become a bit of a habit, although there were times when some of the crops were at their best and they would have to be picked and dispatched then. We grew best broad beans, runner beans, peas, cauliflower, broccoli, brussel sprouts and potatoes. These would be the second early of the potato crop as the first earlies would come from the nursery, where more natural cover was available to them. The plant bed would be established with my father either using a draw hoe and sow from his hand or a small hand drill. In either case, I would harrow them in with a small hand harrow that was nothing else but three or four short pieces of wood with tines through enabling them to protrude into the earth, disturbing it sufficiently to cover the drills into which the seed had been sown. The sow beans, peas and other larger seeds a horse drawn implement would be used. It would have a pair of evenly sized wheels at the front fixed to a single stem, that by means of tightening or slackening a nut could be raised or lowered. Under a pair of handles that converged on each other would be a stout iron beam that would slope down and forward in an arc, and on its tip would be a square shaped share that would bite into the earth at a depth controlled by the wheel's adjustment. Each side of the beam would be large twisted mould boards that would allow the earth to travel along them, and as the twist in the set them wider apart at the rear than the front, they would cast earth away to each side as the implement proceeded forward. When used to make the ways for potatoes to be planted, which required to be closer in the rows and deeper than peas and beans, it would leave a series of ridges and thus was called, by us, the Ridger.

We would, once the shallow ridge had been opened, have the back breaking job of placing the pea or bean seed within the drill and then, shuffling along the row one foot each side, we would push the earth back over the seed with the side of our foot.

When planting was to be carried out, which happened at various times because we planted a collection of different cabbage that would produce either heads or greens the whole year round, the tilth would have to be marked out so that it was clear as to where the plants were to be placed. I would normally cop this job, and was armed with a long handle with a T bar on one end that I could grasp, while on the other end was a long beam that was holed to receive what looked like miniature spades at intervals of one foot six, two foot or two foot six. Firstly it was necessary to pull the tool forward along the edge of the field heading to a predetermined marker, leaving in your wake four or five straight marks in line. From then on it was a matter of walking backwards, keeping the first little spade in the outside mark of the last journey. Not too many journeys were required across the field in that manner before the back of your legs felt they had gone a distance tenfold that of reality. This task, if possible, was chosen on a day that followed a light overnight rain. Pulling the plants from the plant bed was less likely to damage them when the soil was moist and bunch after bunch was pulled and placed into a barrow and wheeled off to the marked field, and my father. Dad liked to work piece work at this task, as he did at most tasks if he was able. He was a master at this job and could plant almost at walking pace. I would have backed him against anyone at this particular job. It was not just the pace he could plant but he could keep it going forever it seemed. His reward in those days I clearly remember being three shillings and threepence per thousand. This planting was carried out in the autumn with the Spring Cabbage,

again in the spring with the Summer Cabbage and cauliflower, and then with the Brussell sprouts, Cow Cabbage, Kale and so on to the late cabbage, and that to mature in the New Year.

We grew some good stuff down there and there were hardly any, if at all, manures that were not organic put into the ground; obviously with the cows there was farmyard manure; Shoddy, which was the sweepings of the northern wool mills; Confetti, as we called it, which was savings from the button makes. Also, sewage from London. Not many years before there was probably seaweed too, but that had stopped by my time.

In between the cabbage planting there were the potatoes to be set. Those which had been set in trays in the frost proof greenhouse, where there was an abundance of light, had produced on the tubers strong young growths that would get away quickly into the growing stage and were planted with some care. Prior to them being placed in their growing position either Old George or I would tread each row with a bucket under one arm, from which we would grab a handful of the potash manure and spread it along the drill. Covering of this crop would be different too, because here the horse would be led along the top of the ridge pulling a frame, with handles that were grasped by my Grandfather, and the tines attached to the frame scuffed the soil over the tubers in the drill.

The inter row cultivation seemed to be never ending, at first with the horse hoe, with the same type frame as aforementioned in the potato covering. Here, instead of tines there would be blades, the front one in the shape of a broad arrow and the rear ones cutting alongside the row, and then the blade extending into the row creating the ability to cut all the roots of any weeds that grew between them. Whereas the horse hoe eliminated the weeds between the row, so the hand hoe carried out the same task between the plants. The hoeing was a task that could, and did, at times become quite boring and in some years was really hard work as the rubbish grew faster than one could check it.

It was one such day that we were going to the field, my father and I, when turning the corner by the four greenhouses he disturbed a rat which rushed away across the unplanted piece of ground, between the houses and the track to Chalky ham. Dad picked up a clod of earth and threw at it, scoring a direct hit. The rat rolled over. Proceeding to it he turned it over with his toe, or at least that was his intention, but as soon as he touched it, the rat jumped up at him. There followed a frantic period, when Dad would try to beat it down with his hand and tread on it each time it landed. I stood transfixed where I was, unable to do anything but watch from my position. I had heard, although I had never seen it myself, that a rat would attack a human if it was cornered. Here was a rat in an open area attacking my father. It was probably only seconds, although it seemed a great deal longer, that as the rat landed after one of its jumps that Dad was able to stamp on it, and this time there was no pretence. The rat was dead. It was a frightening short time and we were both rather shocked and completely amazed at that rat's daring and courage in an open field.

Having planted these crops they would in some cases require no attention other than hoeing before they reached maturity.

With the Broad Beans, their succulent top shoot seemed to be an attraction that could not be overlooked by the black fly. Once the plant was invaded by the millions of these little fellows all future hope of a good crop could be forgotten. It was found that the best deterrent was to take away the attraction, and so it was that I would be sent to remove these young shoots. No tools would be required other than God's creation of a thumb and forefinger, brandishing a substantial nail. After long periods of this task I would soon find myself the possessor of a very sore finger and thumb.

With the Runner Bean it would be a similar task; although the problem was of a different nature, the solution was the same. The Runner bean is a climber and as there were no aids in our field to assist its climbing habit we were obliged to create in it the desire to bush. To enable it to climb it would produce long tendrils that would shoot up and sway in the wind like some snake from a charmer's basket. The music here was the wind and there was no pleasure in its swaying dance but merely a futile search for some climbing support. By eliminating the tip of that tendril it could search no more and, so being spurned in its quest for height, it would change tactics and create more shoots, thus creating the bush we required and a substantial amount of arms on which to carry its crop.

The Spring Cabbage crop is one where the seed is sown in August and the resulting plants placed in their permanent position in the September or October. After taking root they then stay relatively dormant until the spring. It is at this time that a good hoeing followed by the right weather will bring them to life. One year that I recall we were unable to get to hoe them early on because of the wet and when it finally became possible to do so other work took over as the main priority. During the wet period the chickweed grew rapidly and by the time the long length of the following dry period was over the cabbage had long been under a blanket of this spreading weed. Other people's crops had suffered during the dry period, but ours had had a dampness around the roots and the leaves and the hearts were tender thanks to the blanket of chickweed. It was then that ours received the premium prices. Whilst working in this area we were invited into the adjacent packing shed of Sharps to sit and enjoy our morning break with our friends there.

Dad and I both carried the forename of "Bill", as indeed did Messrs Waddle, Riddles and Richardson. It was to my young mind quite amusing to listen to the next few seconds of conversation, as each one bid the other "Good Morning". It seemed as though the short statement of "Good Morning Bill" would never end. It was here, also, that they commented on the planting of the field. They said "Your Father came into this brown field in the late afternoon, just as we were about to go home, and when we arrived back in the morning it was green". Such in those days was my father's work rate.

With the beans, both the Broad and the Runner, it was quite a pleasant job picking these because they were easy to find and pick. They were also reasonably bulky and one could very soon fill a bushel box, and then another, and the job therefore seemed fulfilling. With the pea it was an entirely different matter. The vines of this plant had the ability to get all twisted and the desire, it seemed, to keep its fruit or at least some of it from prying eyes. The vines therefore had to be lifted and searched for the quarry we sought, and even when they were found and plucked, it took so many to fill the box that the desired quota appeared an unattainable target. It was a job I disliked. The peas did not all become available at the same time and the second pick was even more tiresome than the first. Although I disliked gathering the pea, I didn't really hate it. I kept that emotion for the dreaded Brussel Sprout.

The Brussel Sprout always seemed to take up so much of my time. It was planted in about the same way as all the other Brassicas, which is the family to which it belonged. Yet it was destined to be quite a majestic figure standing by its short, stubby, heavy hearted cousins, with its large, tall stem carrying the broad spreading leaves, where at the axis with the stem the sprouts would form. I don't know what it was about this tall fellow, but whereas all the family would make homes for the caterpillar during the summer months, the Brussel Sprout would be the most generous. Once the hungry little mouths of those inhabitants had taken a liking to the flesh of the leaves, and left to devour at will, that majestic figure would become just a skeleton, and collectively they would stand like a wood that had been subjected to a heavy artillery barrage. To prevent this I was sent to destroy those creatures. The tools, once again, were those which dispensed with the Broad Bean tips, the thumb and forefinger. I would travel from plant to plant separating the leaves with one hand whilst the little creatures would be grasped and squashed with the other. Soon the hand would become thick with the little bodies and the stench remain with one long after the washing was done. Once the plant was freed from the parasite it would grow aided by the horse and hand hoe. The time of its maturity would coincide with nature's coldest weather, and now the hate would creep in as we were sent to collect the bounties of our previous work. It would be necessary to travel over the crop about three times, collecting first the sprouts at the bottom of the stem and the second time the next higher and so on. The centre of the plant would be cut out just before Christmas and sold as tops. A very pleasant dish these. With the tops gone all the energy collected by the plant would now be directed to forming the remaining sprouts. The weather when we picked this crop ranged from quite pleasant to extremely cold. We would enter the field with about every bit of clothing for the outdoors we could muster, and even then we would supplement with sacks. There would be sacks around the legs, sacks around the waist and another would be slung around the shoulders. Fingers on the cold days, that because of the task could not be enclosed in gloves, would feel they were dropping off, and when the hand slipped down the stem, as it often did when a sprout would at last release itself after increasing effort by the picker, the rough remains of the stem would appear to tear the arm apart. It would not have been too bad if after we had transported the picked sprouts to the farm we could have bid each

other goodbye. No, that was not to be. For another couple of hours we would stand in the barn with no doors removing the dead and dying leaves from off the sprouts, and then stand the top layer on their stem in rows so as to present them for inspection by the buyer, in much the same way that the Battalion would be presented to the visiting dignitary on the parade ground. No parade ground was ever closer to having two deserters than that sprout ground on a cold or wet day. Dad once said to me in the presence of Mr Lee, "those who want these bloody things should come and pick them". The next time we went out we had one more picker, Mr Lee. When all the sprouts had been cleared from the stem they would be left standing. They had in the Market Garden world presented all that they were going to, but as the weather gradually warmed they would start to produce shoots that would eventually become the yellow flower of the plant. At this time the cows on the farm would find the meadows short on bite. It was then a daily ritual to cut and carry off these stems and issue to them. I was always rather surprised at this time that complaints were not received about the taste of the milk, because to me it always seemed to be tainted with the strong flavour given from this feed. Even after that operation the old Brussel Sprout had not finished with me. I would now have to dig up the roots and make little piles of them all over the field and finally collect and dispose of them. Yet I think they had the last laugh over me because when all this was done the cycle was ready to begin all over again.

One of the cabbage crop that was grown was that called Cow Cabbage. It was grown primarily to supplement the cows' diet, as the title suggests. However, it seemed each year that at about the time this crop matured the market was short of all cabbage crops and eagerly called for this one to be supplied. The wooden crates that were used to convey a dozen of the normal cabbage could manage but three of these monsters. I have never seen them grown anywhere else, but it is obvious that they were.

Always too in this area was a small patch of Marrow Stem Kale, again this was for the cows' diet. Whereas on a large farm this crop was grown where it was sown, and quite often the cattle fenced on it to feed as it stood, it would produce a greater amount on the same land if it was thinned or planted. In our case it was the latter course that we adopted. They grew to maturity, producing stems larger around than a man's arms and wide cup-like leaves that appeared to hold a bucket full of water. I had to tackle these monsters armed with a wood chopper and although I always came out the victor and the monster lay at my feet, I forever seemed wet through. It was always morning when this task became mine and the leaves either contained the liquid of a heavy dew or the remnants of the night's rain. In the end I found the best method was to strip to the waist and go at it like a mad man until the day's quota was cut, and as quickly as possible redress.

One crop I quite enjoyed harvesting was the cauliflower. This was due mainly I think because it always matured in the better weather. There were the two types, summer and winter, although at this time the winter type was still known as broccoli. The winter type would, as the name suggests, stand all winter and then develop when all the frost had departed, while the summer variety would be planted in the spring and would mature in the late summer.

This crop would not all develop together and so we had to go over the patch several times, over two or three weeks, to clear it. My father would check and cut them when ready and pass them to me, and as soon as I had gathered as many as I could carry I would take them to the headland and place in a pile. Once we had been all over the patch, then again my father would pass them to me, but not before he had trimmed off the leaves and graded them. I would then pack them in their crates. It was a pleasant task and it was a pleasure to work with my father. He was a good worker and a great influence on my working life.

There was always something to be cut, picked or dug in the Market Garden and one of the joys of working in such a small place as was Mr Lee's was the constant slipping from one job to another. Even the bad jobs had the benefit that they would soon be over.

Chapter VIX
CHALKY HAM

Dipping down from the Market Garden area I would pass across the base of the old sunken lane, now containing various piles of cabbage stalks, potato haulm, bean haulm and assorted other discarded vegetation, all well hidden by the tall hedges and old Elm trees that grew on its banks and then rise again into the realms of Chalky Ham.

Away to the left were the Elm trees and hedge which hid the low floor of Cokeham Lane, where the cows made their way to "Over the Line". To the south was the railway line carrying the traffic from Brighton to Portsmouth, and destinations far beyond. My old friend would come along each day. She would be the steamer from Plymouth, stretching out and bounding away to Brighton. There was no way that she was going to stop at Lancing whose station was but a mile down the line. She tore away like a Greyhound enjoying her freedom, with the steam and smoke laying closely over her back as though they were her ears, and her tail, the coaches, stretching straight out behind her. She was my friend not because of any association that we may have had, but merely from the fact that for the first time that morning I knew the correct time. It was a quarter past twelve and merely another three quarters of an hour and I would be going to lunch. Far off to the right I could see the fence that separated the Chalky Ham meadow from the arable, and beyond that once again the big Elms and then a couple of Wither trees followed by the tumbling thick bank of hedge that ran down to the railway, and so doing stopped any further viewing in that direction. This then was the farming area of St Johns Farm.

In this field I was to learn the growing of wheat, oats, Swedes, mangolds, main crop potatoes, fodder maize and fodder trefolium. Here was the domain of my Grandfather. Whereas my father was the key figure in the vegetable growing, so my Grandfather was the key figure in the growing of the farm crops. Nevertheless, my father still spent many hours down there at various piece work tasks.

It was here in Chalky Ham that I was to see and learn a way of life that was fast disappearing, and in fact in many places by my eighteenth birthday had completely gone.

The horses had given way to the tractor, the binder had been replaced by the combine harvester, the threshing machine had become completely redundant, silage had more or less replaced the mangolds. It was a small area was Chalky Ham, as farm areas go, but I was pleased to be there, at least most of the time.

The horses were our motive power and like the tractor that followed they needed fuel. Where the tractor, by means of a clever internal combustion engine, could turn oil into power, so the horse by a far more remarkable process could turn oats into power. Oil could not be grown and oats could, and so the farm of days gone by could be self-reliant on their fuel. So it was that we grew oats, and as the straw of oats was the better quality feed of the corn straws, it followed that the dry cows also had feed. Wheat was grown and was made into a rick, and was to the farmer money in the bank. When a withdrawal was required the threshing tackle was sent for and consequently the finance was released. Milk was the bread and butter of most farmers then and so quite a large slice of land was used to raise cow food for the period when grass was not available or needed supplementing. Mangolds, fodder maize and kale were grown. Other crops such as potatoes and swedes were grown to sell for cash, but if needed could also be used as feed.

The first step to any growth was to plough the land and so the plough became a very important implement. It had several adjustments that could be made to it to allow the depth and width it ploughed to be changed for any crop or circumstance. It was usual to plough a width of ten inches, but the depth would be shallow for the corn crops and deep for the roots.

The horse plough consisted of a pair of handles with strengtheners between them which were horizontal where the ploughman was required to hold and put leverage on, and then sloped down converging on each other as they did so to form one thick metal beam at its lowest point. It would rise again until it would be about eighteen inches from the ground and then revert to horizontal for the last two or three feet of its length. At its lowest point a thick metal breast would slope down and forward, on the end of which would be fitted the changeable share. The share was shaped as an arrow head with one wing cut away. Its task was to cut the earth along the bottom of

the furrow. Pointed down to its point was a blade fashioned at its top in the share of a bar, this was secured by a bolted bracket to the horizontal beam above, and so in that secured position cut the side of the furrow. The mould board, three foot long and about ten inches wide, fitted onto the breast and as it proceeded back twisted and also reached away from the plough. As the horses pulled the plough forward, the earth cut at the bottom by the share and the side by the coulter would be lifted by the mould board, and as it proceeded along its length would be twisted over to finish almost upside down in the previous furrow. To maintain depth and width a cross bar was fitted about a foot in front of the coulter bar, on to which two wheels with bars running up from the hub were clamped. The cross bar allowed them to be adjusted laterally as well as vertically. There was a small wheel which ran along on the land that had yet to be ploughed and was aptly named the land wheel, while a big wheel ran along the previously made furrow and was of course the furrow wheel. The correct setting of these wheels allowed the ploughman to adjust for width and depth by adjusting the larger wheel and to keep the plough upright or otherwise by the small one. In front of the coulter would sometimes be fitted another bar, at the bottom of which was what looked like a very miniature plough. This would just skim the top removing any rubbish first and would ensure that all rubbish was buried; it was of course called a skimmer. Some years ago on the Brighton Evening Argus was a writer on country matters who was known by the pen name of Skim Coulter.

This plough was known to me as the run-a-round type. The mould board was in a secured position and therefore could only turn the earth one way. After the land was set out the ploughman had to go up the field making a furrow, but could not return within that same one and had to make another on the way back. As more and more furrows were made it was necessary to run-a-round the end of the ploughed land to enter the furrow in that direction. It would of course have been uneconomical to keep on with this procedure because of the eventual waste of time running around at the ends. When a field was set out for ploughing, the "Lands" were set out each thirty to forty yards apart. Each of these "Lands" would be ploughed until there were some fifteen yards wide, leaving between the two an unploughed area of about thirty yards. At this stage, instead of running around the "Lands", the plough would be taken down one "Land" and back up the other, gathering the two together. Grandfather called these the gathers. It was then so important to lay out these lands absolutely right, or come the last furrows the plough may travel half the field without turning a furrow at all. The ploughman took great pride in their work but the straight furrow was more than just that, as can be seen. Grandad's advice was "keep the ends up boy, and the middle will look after itself", meaning that if you entered the furrow and left it correctly all would come right. When running along the end the plough would be kept leaning over on the big wheel only and to let it enter the ground it would be necessary to lay it over on the small wheel. The turning area at the ends of the field were known as the headlands and were marked out first with a shall furrow at a distance of about six or eight yards around the perimeter, and would be ploughed at the end when the field was completed. When first setting out the field the first two furrows would be ploughed the opposite way to that which the ploughing was to be done, at half depth. The plough would then be set at full depth and plough them back. This would be done to ensure that all the ground was moved.

I first got a taste of ploughing when I was still at school and would go with Grandfather on Saturday morning, or at holidays. Initially I was allowed to hold the handles as the plough followed the horses up the field. There was little to do if the plough was set correctly, as it was with my Grandfather, but to get the feel of it in the earth, watching as it proceeded along, the brown earth being lifted, turned and dropped to the hissing of the mould board as it did its task. Now and again one had to be ready for the jump of the plough as the share contacted a flint or some such object beneath the surface. The next phase was to progress to the headland work, where in learning to lay the plough over I would get knocked for six by the handles as the plough fell on its side. The horses would be stopped and I would rise from the ground close to tears. It was then I was subject to abuse rather than sympathy for not holding the handles properly, and it was soon that that experience, allied with the abuse and physical pain that the handles bestowed on me, I passed that stage. The pleasure of those first "solos", brief though they were, created a pleasure that lives with me now, and my ambition was set for the future. I was to plough many acres in the years to come but not, alas, in the company of Rodney and Daisy.

It was in Chalky Ham that I earned my first shillings on the farm as I spent my first eight hour days leading either Rodney or Daisy pulling the horse hoe through the mangolds and Swedes. It was a task that took a lot of concentration, both on my part and Grandfather's. I would be required to lead the horse through the rows of those tiny seedlings in such a manner as to enable those large hooves to miss threading on them, and equally behind in the handles of the hoe, Grandfather would be busy ensuring the hoe missed them as it cut away the weeds between. From seven in the morning until five at night, with an hour for our lunch, seemed a long, long time. Monday until Saturday dinnertime was a long week too.

It was on other days at this time that I started my acquaintance with "over the line".

We grew in Chalky Ham some fodder maize. It was sown very much in the same way as the peas and beans, and was a white large seed the shape of a horse's tooth and that is the name it carried; Horse Tooth Maize. It grew to a height of about six foot or near enough. It was sometimes used by the kids for a good game of Hide and Seek. Grandfather chased some big kids who cheeked him into the depth of this patch one day. They would keep appearing and disappearing, until Grandfather got out of breath, but I am sure that he gained as much enjoyment out of the chase as they did. I had many pleasant journeys during the next few years, cutting and loading this crop on to the cart with old Daisy in the shafts, and arriving in the cow meadow allow her to wander at will as I mounted the cart to spread the long slender leaves each side of its meandering journey to await the mercy of those curling tongues. The same fate would await the Kale at a later time. On Saturdays our high sided cart would also be loaded and left in the cow meadow to be distributed on the Sunday.

It was in this field that I was to get great pleasure in collecting the sacks of potatoes in the cart and conveying them to our potato shed. Great strides had been made in potato harvesting, but they were all in other places than here. The modern method was by a spinner which, having lifted the plant and tubers, would enable its spinning tines to project them on to the surface at the side of the row. We were not to be so modern. Our ridger, with its mould boards removed, would now be fitted with a breast of five fingers and raising from the rear of the bed would be four more. The theory being that as this plough proceeded through the ridged row of potatoes the soil would fall between the fingers leaving the potatoes laying on the surface. Unfortunately, this was true for only half of them, the remaining half lay beneath the soil and this had to be scratched away to reveal them. Nevertheless it was always rewarding to see a good crop.

The mangolds that grew very well in this field I again enjoyed harvesting, although it quite often meant the muds of late October and early November. My father did the back breaking job of this crop as part of his piece work. That was the singling where the plant had come as per the seed sown and now required to be singled leaving one plant every ten inches to a foot. They were horse hoed a couple of times as they grew, and then were left alone until the time came to harvest them. To harvest them six rows were pulled, the tops removed and the bottoms placed together so that a cart could then travel between the rows. On some farms in the loading process a prong was allowed to stick in them as they were picked from the ground and thrown into the cart. Mr Lee frowned upon this method, sticking to the assumption that the puncture the prong made would later be the cause of it not keeping. It was therefore our task to pick up by hand and throw them into the cart. I enjoyed the transporting of these to the farm yard, but because of the antics that Rodney would get up to I was only allowed to use Daisy. In the later years I would be allowed both of them when Rodney was used as the trace horse. This was when the season was very wet and it took the combined efforts of these two animals to pull those loads from what had become the deep rutted fields. The journey from Chalky Ham, should it be near Cokeham Lane, would be by that route, combined with Lotts Lane. Any other part of the field, either one of the two tracks through the Market Garden area was used. On arrival at the farm the loads would be tipped and Old George or my father would stack them up into the shape of the pie they were to make. The pie would merely be a large lump with the sides as steep as the shape of the mangolds would allow, and to a height of about seven or eight feet. When the whole crop had been gathered the pie would be covered with all the waste grass cuttings, cavings, and in fact any vegetable type material that would help insulate the harvested crop from the anticipated frosts of winter. The horses lugging those loaded carts from the muddy fields always remain with me as a picture of sheer muscle power, as they leant into their collars from which all the harness is attached. Their muscles would stand out as their heads bobbed with each and every stride they took. Aided only

be a short verbal request they would give you, their master, one hundred per cent effort. They seemed to know that as they rested you, their master, was required to do your part in loading the cart, and that task over it was now their turn. I'm sure that they knew that as they were bound to their implements by harness, so you were bound by the need to survive, gained from the wages that were earned, and that in each other's company the working years of each would be that of toil. They were good companions and no doubt there were many man and horse that spent a good twenty years together, sharing their life with each other for a greater period of the time than they did with any of their own species.

The meadow of Chalky Ham was the home of the dry cows until haymaking allowed their own home to be available to them. When the cows moved out it was the month of June. The horses could not be set free within the confines of the meadow and so remain until called for in the morning. Having been fed in the stable after their day's toil, and had a brief brushing, the halters would be fitted and they would be off. Down through the farm, past the cow shed, along the track of the Market Garden, through the wire gate of the cow meadow and so to the wire gate they knew so well. Once through the gate the halters were slipped from their heads, they felt freedom for the first time for about eight months, and they would certainly show it. They would gambol off, throwing their heads around in a circular movement as if to confirm that it was true, there really was no collar there, and at the same time throwing their backside in the air, twisting their bodies and lashing the air with those strong rear legs. Gone were their good manners as the trumpet calls of passed wind would accompany the stretching of their bodies. Soon the gambolling was over, a spot had been located, and down they would go. As their legs reached to the sky they would screw their backs into the soft soil beneath them. The rituals over, they were on their feet to trot off into the distance and see what Chalky ham looked like without the hindrance of a plough or cart attached to them.

To Grandfather it was a pleasant walk in the morning, a call and he was beside them, it would be half past five, the halters would be slipped on, a new day had started. Grandad was sick one day. It was half past six when I started the ritual. It was half past ten when at last we made our way to the stable, Rodney, Daisy and me. That morning our friendship had been sorely tested. I had done all the right things, I had called them, but they had merely looked up and gave me a withering stare as much as to say "Stupid Boy", and gone on with their munching. They wouldn't come to be, so OK, I'll go to them, and on reaching them they would gallop away to the other end of the field, and I'm almost sure I heard them laughing at me. We changed ends several times and on a couple of occasions I got hold of first Rodney and then Daisy by the forelock, that's the tuft of hair hanging over their forehead between their ears. Each time they threw their heads in the air, nearly pulling my arm out of socket. At last we agreed to get some work done.

I have often wondered that perhaps they were trying to get their own back on me because it was the same field that they grazed that I was working with them one day. It was a ritual of farming to chain harrow the meadows in the early spring. The chain harrow could be loosely described as a large net of iron links and when pulled over the meadows would level out any cow pats, horse droppings, molehills or hoof marks, as well as tear out any rubbish and aerate the top surface and, in so doing, stimulate the grasses to life. The trouble was we didn't possess one. In the past it had, so my Grandfather said, been the practice to carry out the same task with two or three hawthorn trees that had been felled and lashed together. It was again down St Johns Farm that this old custom would be revived and practised by me, with the help of Rodney and Daisy. We had on this day completed the lengthways journeys and were now at the farthest point from the gate when a storm broke. I threw the nose bags up on the top of the branches and climbed up after them, making myself secure. Then, with a flick of the reins and a sharp command, we were soon at a gallop. Ben Hur had nothing on us that day, the wind in my face was only disturbed by the divots flying up from the horses' hooves, seeming as though a hundred golfers were digging a ball out in front of me.

The swaying and suspension of those collective branches below me created a ride I shall never, ever forget, I have never had a better and I know now I never will. There is no auto factory that can turn out a suspension like I had that day, or any vehicle that was as exciting to ride. If Grandfather had seen me I would have got a good clip around the ear, but there I was not going to tell him, and I am sure that neither would Rodney or Daisy.

It was in Chalky Ham that I was working one day not more than a couple of weeks after I had left school. The swedes had survived the winter rather well and I was to pull the remainder, trimming the roots as I did so. I suppose I was some eighty yards from the bottom end of Cokeham Lane and about two thirds of the way down the field. The job was not going well at all. Some of the swedes, although looking sound, had not survived as well as they could have done and on grasping them they would just collapse in the hand, making a mashy handful of nothing. It was still some time to go before it would be time to leave the field and head on home to my lunch. Hearing the sound of an aeroplane I looked over the direction of the beach at Lancing and was horrified to see clearly the dark crosses under the wings of the plane that was at a height of about a thousand feet. It was a German. It was flying toward me, and for the first time in my life I saw bombs leave an aeroplane, my eyes following the first part of their descent. In the next instant I was on the ground and competing with those swedes to see who could get the closest to the surface, them or me. I'm sure I won. Lying there I could not resist looking up as I saw great conicals of what looked like black earth spew upwards as the loud explosions followed. As soon as the echoes of the explosions died away the sound of machine gun fire was heard. "Oh my God" I thought, he has seen me, and nobody at that moment could have convinced me that he was firing elsewhere. Obviously he was, but I was a mere fourteen and my young mind was rapidly approaching panic as I closed my eyes and gritted my teeth to await the blow of the bullet. Then the firing ceased, I gave the quiet a short moment and then looked up and was so relieved to see the plane disappearing over the sea on its way back to France. I arose and looked around me. There was not a soul to be seen, it was as it had been just about a couple of minutes ago. Then I caught sight of it. It was in the hedge. It was looking at me. It wasn't there before, I'm sure it wasn't. It was a German steel helmet; I recognised the shape from all the photos I had seen. I shouldn't have closed my eyes, because that's what the firing was all about, to keep my head down while the parachute was coming down. Maybe I should run and tell someone. No. I must not do anything other than what I normally do, or he will become suspicious. Carry on as though you were not aware he was there. The seed had been sown in my young mind and I was now completely under its domination. It was there and I had to kid him along until I could naturally leave the field. Time dragged, and sly glances showed me I was still under surveillance, but the swedes were coming up easier now and it didn't matter if they did disintegrate in my hand. At last my Old Friend from Plymouth came bounding along, good, I only had three quarters of an hour to go. That three quarters of an hour I thought at last must have past and I made my way slowly up to the old sunken lane, and up the other side. It was then that doubt set in and I kept under cover and slipped into the depths of the old lane creeping up its far bank until I could see the spot. He was still there and hadn't budged an inch. It couldn't be and I ran up to the farm. They all spoke to me of the bombs, but nobody mentioned the paratroop and so I never said a word about him either. I didn't have to go to Chalky Ham that afternoon, and I was grateful. The next day I went down there. Yes, he was still there. I went over to him, scabbled under the thick hedge and pulled that old bucket out, jumping all over it to ensure it never put me through that terror again.

Along the old sunken lane growing by its banks were a couple of the old Elms whose branches stretched out into the field and interfered with the loads of corn that were carried past them. It was at the time that father and I were looking for means to supplement our Christmas cash flow. Father asked if we could lop the offenders and have the wood for our enterprise of logging. The request was granted and so it was on this dark cold November evening, armed with a bow saw and a piece of rope, we were in the light of our companion, the hurricane lamp, in Chalky Ham. I had clambered up the trees to the largest bough and secured the rope, while my father directed the fall of it I severed it from its mother and it fell onto the unploughed headland. Father and I with our scarves around our necks and the collar of our coats pulled up around our ears, were each of us pulling the saw through its cut, as the opposite handle reached the bough. We were imprisoned in the circle of light that trembled out of the old lamp, when from nowhere the circumference of light was broken by a third figure. There stood this strange man on this freezing night attired only in a shirt with no collar, the buttons of which were undone allowing it to spread open showing his bare chest, below this he wore a pair of shorts and on his feet short socks and a pair of shoes. In answer to our questions we found out that he worked in an office in Brighton during the day and nothing gave him greater pleasure in the evening that to get home, remove all his office clothes and attire himself as we had seen and take a brisk walk down to Chalky Ham. Later, as we loaded our cut lengths onto the hand market barrow and struggled up

those rutted tracks to the farm, we could have offered him as much exercise as he needed. I wonder how he is now because father is coming eighty two. I don't know which of the exercises were the best.

Harvesting was a task that I enjoyed and it was another of those on St Johns Farm that transported one through time, back to the early nineteen hundreds.

The corn was grown to the very edge of the field and as the Binder was drawn by three horses, and the knife extended out to the left, therefore during the cutting of the first round the horses would be walking in the standing corn. It was to relieve this situation that we would cut a "road" around the field. My Grandfather, born in an age when the scythe was a prominent implement, could wield one with complete efficiency. By fixing a bow shaped piece of wood on to the lowest region of the long shaped handle, each swing would place the cut straws standing against those whose life had not yet been concluded. Selecting a small bond of these straws I would lay them straight upon the earth, and collecting sufficient as to enable that bond to encase them, I would circulate and tie them. This procedure would continue around the circumference of the field until a clear "road" for the horses was made.

The binder had in the past been subject to bad labour relations, as does any progress that endangers the livelihood of any band of working people. I must be honest and say that having experienced the tasks of the days before the binder, which were not too distant from manner that Grandfather and I cleared the road, the binder was a welcome advance. Later I was to work upon some of the earliest combine harvesters which in just a few years ousted the poor old binder, but that's another story.

The binder derived its power from a large banded wheel that ran centrally below the main mechanism, with about a five foot knife extending from its left hand side. The knife was the same as that which cut the grasses, but in this case behind it was the canvas, and so instead of the cut straws falling to the good earth they fell on the canvas. The canvas was rotating on rollers which conveyed the straws to the mouth of two other such canvases, which sandwiched the straw between them as it rose them into contact with the packers. I call them packers for want of a correct name. Anyway, they would be curled tines that were set on a crank and as they revolved they would pack the straws into bundles. When these bundles were of a sufficient size, which had been predetermined by the setting of the mechanism, a string would be automatically placed around the bundle, a knot tied and this action would set off a strip that would allow two tines to rotate, ejecting the bundle and so give birth to the sheaf. The knotter on this and other machines that used the same mechanism was so complex that very few people ever understood its workings, and I have heard it said that its inventor went mad.

The carter would be perched in that familiar iron seat that was fitted to nearly all the farm machines that needed an operator in close attendance. His task on this machine would be many fold. Above the knife were the sails; these were wooden slats about five or six in number that rotated over the knife and gently bent the straws to the cutting edge. As the height of the straws varied somewhat he had the adjustment of these to manage, and of course the same applied to the knife. The knife had to be raised at the corners and the horses turned, the knife lowered again, but I suppose the main observation was to ensure that all the sheaves were tied.

Having done six turns of the field we could now get on with the task of stooking, although we always called it shocking. This was where six or eight of these sheaves would be stacked against each other in the shape of a tent to allow the air, sun and wind to circulate through and around them to dry the straw. The task of shocking could be a very tiring one and could at times be quite painful. A long period at this job would soon give one the desire to be in shirtsleeves. To create a shock one would pick up a sheaf under each arm and, aided by the knees, would place their butts apart and ears together. The continuing process of the straw on the arms would create in a very short time an agonising soreness. At the end of the binding and the shocking the fields would be filled with rows of these shocks, all in line and running north to south. The effect would be like looking at an army unit in the field for their summer camp. There they would stand for ten days or more until they were dry enough to collect and carry to the rick yard and built into a rick, which is where they would remain until the corn is required and the threshing machine called to relieve the straw of the valuable crop.

Sheaf cart was a time I enjoyed very much as I would be on the wagons as my Father and Grandfather would pitch the sheaves onto it, where I would be required to lay them in such a manner as to ensure that each set of ears was securely held by the butt of the following sheaf. The rick was a very skilled object to create. It had to be firstly shaped with an inverted slope to the eaves, then a slope away from the eave to the apex, each sheaf to be laid so as to enable its predecessor to be fastened in place, with each and every straw leaning to the ground. In this manner all moisture would be transferred straw to straw until it reached the eave, where it would drop to mother earth clear of the base.

In our old fashioned way at St Johns Farm there was no such thing as an elevator to convey the sheaves to the top of the rick. Instead, we left a hole just above the eave where my Father would stand and the sheaf passed to him by prong from the wagon and by transferring it to his prong would pass it above to the receiver on the rick. We would have but two ricks to make, one of wheat and one of oats, although some years it would be all wheat and the oats bought in.

Although our harvest was just a small one it was equally as important to us as those on our much larger neighbouring farms and, while it lasted, just as important and hard.

So it was that the ploughing, cultivating, planting, sowing, hoeing, cutting and harvesting would see the seasons pass in Chalky Ham, I at that time would hope forever, but it was not to be. Time, with its ever present companion decay, has seen the horses and the old ones pass away, the shocks have been replaced with nice little bungalows and my eyes see the neat little gardens, but I will always see in my mind the corn, potatoes, swedes and mangolds of long ago. To me there is no Bowness Avenue and no Ullswater Road, it will always be Chalky Ham.

Chapter X
AROUND THE COWSHED

Enter St Johns Farm between the two brick piers, past the cottage that earlier had been the home of the Andrews and later, for a time, the place we cleaned the sprouts, and at other times was a home for our oats which we tipped and piled in the living room. At another time was the billets of the soldiers that kept us company for a short time. On down to the cart shed and the place where my ignorance caused me a few tears.

What the reason for it was I don't recall, but I was quite happy one day to go down to the Town's nursery and borrow their old horse Dolly. Dolly and I were going to use the farm cart.

To use a horse in a farm cart one would need to put the pad and breeching on. First, though, it was necessary to put on the collar. The collar was a leather fronted padded seat for the shoulders of the horse into which it could comfortably exert all its strength, because it was by pushing into the collar that all the draught was created. It was necessary to turn the collar upside down to slip it over the horse's head and then correct it at the small of the neck. Once in position the hames would be fitted to the collar. These were of brass or wood. These would be two individual pieces attached together at the top with a leather thong and at the bottom by a chain. On one a chain and a strainer on the other which, when placed through a link, would tighten the hames to the collar as tight as to stop the chance of them moving and then secured by slipping an individual link over the strainer. The hames would have two short chains of six to seven links on them and a hook on the end, one of these chains to each hame. These short chains were the tugs and when the horse was between the shafts of the cart would be attached to hooks on them, and so by leaning into the collar the effort would be transferred through the hames and tugs to the hook of the cart, thus propelling it. On the horse's back would go the pad. This leather topped article was padded on the underside like that of the collar to enable it to sit comfortably on the horse's back. The pad would be fitted to the thong at the top of the hames by means of a buckle on one and strap of the other. A strap would reach over the back of the horse, ceasing when it reached the top of the hind quarters. Two thin leather straps hung from it each side to hold around the horse's hind quarters a thick half circular band of leather on the ends of which were short chains that could be fitted to hooks on the cart's shafts. The horse, now leaning back against this thick band of leather, known as the breeching, would transfer the power through the short chains, the quoilers, to the cart thus moving it back. On top of the pad was a channel created by two pieces of wood through which the ridge chain passed. This chain was secured to the cart on both sides, a similar chain ran under the belly of the horse. Obviously the ridge chain took the weight of the cart, while the belly girth stopped the car from tipping.

I had harnessed the horse correctly, but whatever the load was I had not placed it correctly within it. Too much weight was in the rear part of the load and when I got Dolly to back the cart into the old cart shed the rear weight caused the shafts to rise up and this in turn caused the belly girth to play its part. In normal events all would have been well, but with the rear of the cart so heavily laden the girth pinched her belly. She, of course, had no way of telling me apart from her actions, and she wasn't backward in letting me know by that means, as she viciously snapped around at me with her mouth, biting my finger far more severely than that belly girth bit her. I, too, was not backward in letting her know how much she had hurt me and was soon dispatched around to Fred, who repaired the nasty mess she had made of my finger. That was the first time I had had Dolly and it was the last. I don't think it was because of that incident that we never worked together again, but she taught me that day that a horse's bite is worse than its bark.

Within that old cart shed was stored about thirty sacks of what we called "confetti", which were the sweepings of the button factory and were, as such, pieces of bone. They had made this abode their home for far too long. We, that is Grandfather and I, were to move them and use them for the purpose that they were purchased, that of a fertilizer. Apart from the fact that it fitted on top of the walls, the roof had nothing else in common with other roofs and the contents of the sacks were sodden. This was of no real consequence to the sacks at the top of the pile, apart from making the fabric of the material very weak, but those at the bottom was a completely different matter. I placed my hand under the bottom sack, where instead of grasping sacking material as before, my hand filled with a squelchy mess. I withdrew my hand at once and the sight of its

contents, which visually and aroma wise, caused me to immediately vomit and continue to do so until my hand was cleaned. My Grandfather, far from being sorry for me, laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks at my poor unfortunate antics. However, he concluded the task on his own and excused me the possible repetition of that unpleasant incident. Nowadays, when I go to a wedding I never throw confetti because no handful of that stuff could ever be that innocent again.

Next door in our little barn with a loft we spent many hours. I say we because sometimes I would be cleaning those cold sprouts in the company of my Father, sometimes cutting chaff in the company of my Grandfather and sometimes chopping mangolds with Old George. There were other times when nobody knew of my whereabouts as I would creep away up the stairs to the loft and wile away the odd half an hour. Up on that floor of the loft would be a pile of the horses' oats, a pile of the slabs of cow cake awaiting to be introduced to the cracker and probably some pokes of sugar beet pulp. Downstairs housed the means of power to drive the machines that were housed within it. The power was a stationary petrol-driven Lister engine, and the machines being the chaff cutter, the oat crusher, the cake cracker and the mangold chopper. However during my time, because of the small volume required, only the chaff cutter would be driven from it. The chaff cutter was nothing else but a wheel with two spokes and on each would be sharp knife blades. At right angles to the box was a wooden trough and at the end nearer the blade would be revolving bars. When the wheel was rotating the trough would be filled with hay and the revolving bars would press the hay tightly together and propel it forward at such a speed as to present to each blade about an eighth of an inch, which would be cut off. These cut off pieces now assumed the name of "Chaff" and were mixed with the horses' oats to create their feed. Grandfather and I would manufacture a great lump of this and carry it around to the stable in large sacks called "Pokes".

The little engine would be started to cut this chaff. It had a detachable handle and as the engine fired was supposed to slip from its spindle, but there were a couple of occasions when it did not do so and then we would run for cover as the engine picked up speed. It was with a loud clatter that the handle would fly clear and then all was safe to return and once the initial smoke had cleared that little old engine seemed that it would chug on forever.

The cake would nearly always be in slaps in those days, either because it was easier to convey in that manner or that was the most convenient way for it to be produced. In such a manner it could not be fed to the cows and so was put through the cracker. The cracker had a large wheel which would be rotated by hand. The handle at right angles to the wheel was large enough to grip with both hands, as were all the hand turning machines within the barn. The turning handle would rotate two metal bars with protruding points that came in contact with the slabs as they were fed into it, causing the cake to break into pieces.

The oat crusher we used very seldom and when it was used it had a large hopper into which the oats were placed. From the hopper they went between two closely revolving wheels, thus crushing them and be caught in a sack that was hung on to hooks at the exit point.

The mangold cutter was a morning ritual for me and Old George to rotate. It had a large wheel where half circular pieces had been cut and pushed away from its surface. There were numerous of these protrusions from the face and they revolved around the side of a large conical shaped basket. The basket was fed with the mangold and as the wheel was turned and those protrusions cut into the mangold cutting through it and dropping underneath the machine a cut piece in the shape of a chip.

At seven each morning I would bid Old George Good Morning and our ritual would begin. A layer of cavings would be placed on the concrete floor and with one of us rotating the wheel and the other feeding the mangolds into the basket a pile of chips would gather under the machine. Soon sufficient chips had gathered under the machine to be shovelled onto the waiting bed of cavings. We would continue with these layers until the right quantity had been prepared for the cows' feed. The large sandwich we had created was not subjected to a good mix, similar to that given to concrete. Buckets would be filled and breakfast would be served at St Johns Farm.

Next to the little barn was the dairy and opposite its door was a little tin shed that ran back to the row of conifers. This little tin shed housed not only the hot water boiler but during the time he was at the farm in the daytime it was also the resting place of Old George. He would arrive in the morning having ridden his old bicycle from one of the cottages that stand over the other side of

the old Toll Bridge, and whether or not he paid his penny toll I don't know. There may have been a couple of days when he didn't manage to make that journey but I can't recall them. He would arrive about six thirty and light that fire beneath the water filled boiler and sit back on his seat where I would find him puffing on his old pipe. His seat was a short plank situated between two logs. It was important to have the water boiler as soon as was possible.

The dairy then opposite the little tin shed was the place the milk was taken as soon as the collecting buckets were full. Within the dairy was the cooler. The cooler was a hollow corrugated type radiator in reverse, because inside would be the constant flow of cold water. Above the cooler would be the receiving tank which would be just about as high as a man could reach. It would be covered in muslin and the milk would be tipped through this to catch any impurities and then drain through the cloth into the tank. Running from the tank into a spreading gutter it would be spread the width of the cooler. Flowing over the cooler would quickly reduce the heat in the milk and thus prevent it from going sour as quickly as it would do without this process. There would be a further collecting gutter at the bottom which would slope slightly to the middle, directing the milk through the exit where it would again pass through a muslin filter that was placed over the top of the churn that stood beneath.

The milk would not be there for long before along would come Mrs Hazelgrove pushing her three wheeled milk trolley loaded with empty milk bottles. She would work for Mr Souter who owned the Lancing Dairy in South Street. On arrival she would, using the water Old George had boiled for her, wash all those empty bottles and Old George would refill the copper to boil again for the cooler utensils. Mrs Hazelgrove, carefully ladelling the milk from the churn, would fill all the bottles with milk and reload her trolley, setting off on her journey to Lancing. Any milk that was left over, and there would be a fair amount, would be collected by her employer after the afternoon milking. As she made her way back to Lancing she would be delivering the milk and once again replenish her trolley with the empties, and so it was that her customers would have milk on their table in less than three hours from it leaving the cow. However, progress arrived and the system had to be changed and they now manage to get it some two days or more later. Now the Lancing Dairy is no more, and I don't suppose Mrs Hazelgrove is any longer with us, but because of her milk trolley she will always be with me.

The bungalow that stood back from the tin shed some thirty yards had a similar range of tenants to the cottage, that is until the day that Tony moved in with his family. I got to know Tony, who was about my own age and still at school.

He supplied me with a memory that I will never forget the day he came to me and volunteered the information that he had made a bomb. It was constructed, he told me, from the makings of his father's cartridges. I didn't question this because he was learning things at the Grammar School to which he went that I had never had the chance to study. When asked for what reason he had created the bomb I was surprised to learn that he intended to blow up the milk van of Mr Souter when it arrived on the farm that afternoon. I was very unsure what action to take after he had left me and it finally evolved that I took none at all. That afternoon I slipped away from the task that I had been directed to, about half an hour before the van was due to arrive. I slipped into our little barn and made my way into the loft, because I knew that if I climbed on the sacks up there I could get a good view of the position that the van would normally stand on its arrival. I was a bundle of nerves as I was aware I should have told someone of this intended incident and yet was curious if he would do such a thing. Standing on the sacks and easing up the skylight of the sloping roof I had a great view of the whole area and what was most important a means of getting out of view quickly. I sat down on the sacks and started wishing that I had stayed in the field. Maybe there was still time to top it. Then I thought I can hear the van. I climbed up to my observation post. It was. It ran down and stopped at its normal place, Mr Souter got out and went in to see the boss as he always did. Looking up to the bungalow there was Tony making his way cautiously from conifer to conifer ever closer to the tin shed. He arrived at the shed and appeared to be preparing his missile. I was so full of apprehension wishing that I never knew anything of this moment before, but I did, I would be half responsible for the consequences. What would happen I wondered as my attention once more returned to Tony. He shot from behind the tin shed, crawled under the van, paused and lit a match and then back out and scampered away and slipped behind the tin shed. Then, like a snake slithering among the grass, he moved between those conifers and away. It was then I realised he was gone and should I be caught I was bound to

get the blame. Then there was no more time, there was no explosion either, just a noisy "pooohf" and clouds of smoke, some of it drifting immediately into the cowshed through the half door, bringing Mr Lee, Souter and the cowman flying out. I dropped down on the sacks, hand over my mouth to stifle the laughter. I don't know to this day whether I was laughing at the comical anti climax, the looks on their faces as they came flying out, or merely out of relief that it passed off so innocently. It was some time before I could creep away to my task and make up the work I had missed. I saw Tony later and they had rightly put the blame on him and by all accounts he got a right old pasting.

The cowshed, like all of the premises of that time, was of whitewashed walls. It gave an appearance of cleanliness, which soon became destroyed when a cow carrying out its constitutional would decide to have a cough at the same time. One soon learnt that when that occurrence happened to a cow it was a wrong time to be behind it.

I got the task one day to rewash the walls with the whitewash. I armed myself with a big brush and was dejectedly looking at the never ending walls, or to it seemed, with an air that could be associated with Tom Sawyer, when in walked Grandad. He could obviously see that I was not thrilled with the prospect that lay before me and said "Let's use the stirrup pump". These were pumps that were hanging everywhere during the wartime era, awaiting to act as an immediate action for any fire that may be present. They consisted of a foot pedal that would be stood on with the foot outside the bucket to keep the pump steady, while the pump case would be inside reaching down to within an inch or two of the bottom. Within this case was a plunger that was operated by the two hands on the handle and the two kept together by a furrel [ferrule]. We got a sack of the finest material we could find and strained the whitewash through it to avoid blocking the pump. When all was ready I got hold of the nozzle, set for spray at the end of the hose, and directed it at the wall. Waiting to see the liquid spurt in force from the end having heard by Grandfather depress the plunger, I was amazed and disappointed to find nothing of the sort occurring. I looked toward Grandfather at about the same time a curse escaped his lips. The curse sounded like burble because he was covered from the top of his cap to his boots with whitewash. It was obvious that the furrell was not secure and instead of the forced liquid shooting forth the hose it went up and over him. I eventually finished the job with a brush, and you wouldn't be surprised that I got no offers of help.

There was but room for twenty cows in that cowshed of ours and what a motley collection they were. Kicker was the first one. She lived up to her name and so hanging on the wall behind her was a rope on a nail. This rope was used each time she was milked to tie her legs together and so stop her kicking. She arrived on the farm in the time of Mr Andrews who reckoned he had never tied a cow before and wasn't going to now, yet somehow after landing in the muck gutter three times in quick succession, he was the one who first hung that rope on the nail. Kicker was a Shorthorn and was coloured light brown and white, in a kind of flecked mixture. There were another two that took after her, but in the colour of their coats only, and they were Rhoany and Tiny, they shared the same bay as each bay had two ties. Rhoany had a nice pair of horns but looked quite young. Tiny was as her name implies, the smallest of the lot, but was the only one that had had a pair of twins. Half a dozen were Friesians that were black and white in colour and were known to be bulk milkers. There were a couple of Jerseys, one being Old Sandy and the other Rose. Rose, I thought, always had the best head, that is until Primrose joined us, she was an Ayrshire. She was good looking and she knew it, and carried herself full of importance about the place. Nigger was the only black one we had and I had cause to remember her. The last bay was kept for the old Bull so there were always two cows that never shared the cowshed, but these changed as each one became dry and another who had had a calf came in.

We had a change of cowperson there too. Firstly Mr Andrews, then Fairy and coming along to help him was Rosie, and finally the last of the line was to be Raymond, who was to be assisted by another girl.

It was during the reign of Fairy that Mr Lee took me to him saying "I want the boy to milk. Give him the hardest of the lot and then when he has managed her he will be able to milk any of them." So it came to pass that I made the acquaintance of Nigger. She was as I have said a black cow and had a pair of horns that for some reason had not developed properly and it may have been her dismay at being crowned in this matter that she was classified as the hardest cow to

milk. Some cows will allow their milk to be taken from them easily while others, Nigger among them, seem to resent it and hold it back, thus being classified a hard milker.

I had never ever wanted to be a cowman anyway. My ambition, or lack of it, combined with the efforts of Nigger not to let me have it only helped to make up my mind that going through that process twice a day was certainly not for me. However, I had no qualms about helping out whenever I was called upon to do so and so the learning process had to be endured. Anyone that has not gone through those agonising hours of learning to milk on a hard cow would find it difficult to believe the pain felt by the muscles of the foreman as one squeezed and pulled for what seemed an eternity, and that big old bucket failed, it seemed, to get any fuller. However, I managed to get the milk down and I was now available to be called upon when needed.

I was for one reason or another called upon one day to give Fairy a hand as Mr Lee was not available. The dress for milking was a white coat, a small white hat upon the head. The equipment was that of a three legged stool and a galvanised bucket with a brass measuring band down the inside to allow the milker to see how much the cow had given. I was, like most young people, quite looking forward to this dressing up, but it was not to be, there were but two sets and although I was sitting in for Mr Lee there was to be no way that I was to wear his dress and use his equipment. A bushel box was to be my seat and an unmarked bucket was the receptacle in which to catch the milk. It was a hot summer afternoon that I sat upon the box that day, with my cap turned back to front on the head that rested in the flank of that old cow. I was stripped to the waist.

They do say that there are some cowmen who when milking can play a tune in that old milking bucket by training the driving streams of milk at various parts up and down the bucket. I was never to hear any of them, but must admit that I enjoyed the musical noise given off as those forceful jets of milk pierced the froth of their predecessors, changing their notes as the milk in the bucket rose higher.

Fairy was milking cows faster than I and so as I had finished one I would proceed to the next that required my ministrations. It was in this fashion that we journeyed up the cowshed until I found myself sitting in front of Fairy, at the flank of Rhoany while he relieved Tiny of her quote. Whether or not it was a sense of devilment or that my back held a fascination to Fairy I know not, but what I do know is that looking around Tiny he took aim, and with squirts of hot sticky milk scored direct hits on my back, to his great amusement and my discomfort and shock. I joined in his laughter, well, after all he was bigger than me. His turn came to move on to the cow in front of me, I think it was Snowdrop. Anyway I thought here is for my revenge. Looking under the belly of Rhoany I gave two lovely co-ordinated squeezes and pulls which sent some massive jets flying in that general direction. Without Fairy's knowledge that they had been fired they missed him completely, striking Snowdrop with such force she must have thought that she had been bitten. Snowdrop replied in the only way that she knew how, but a big kick. The only way she, like all her companions, could kick was in an outward circular motion, which is what she did, taking with her kick the bucket, the stool, the milk and Fairy and, what is more, creating in Rhoany the same action. "What the bloody hells the matter with them?" Fairy cried, as he looked at me as we sat together in the droppings, with milk cascading over the steps and down the drain. I have never to this day given him the reason.

The coming of Rosie was a godsend to Mr Lee because from now on he was not committed to the twice daily routine of milking, that chore became the province of this newcomer.

I was as pleased as Mr Lee. Rosaland Ann Benedict Kean was a young Irish girl who was a member of the Land Army and arrived dressed in her green jumper, her khaki breeches, her long socks with brown shoes and on her head that hat that was close to that of a boy scout. What to me was very important was that she was just over eighteen. I suppose I had a crush on her but even then I was aware that at a mere fifteen I could and would have no other association with her other than the company of someone younger. I spent all the time I could with her, trying as best I could to have my lunch breaks in her company. We talked a great deal and she learnt me an Irish folk song that I have never heard from any other source and derive great pleasure in singing it whenever I can.

Fairy, whether for health or other reason, moved on, as indeed later did Rosie, and Raymond took over the role as cowman, and another girl replaced Rosie. Well, she couldn't

replace Rosie and that's the reason I suppose that I don't recall her name, but I do recall an incident that keeps her alive in my memory.

The old Bull that stood in the last pen spent a lonely old life and was not called upon to exert himself probably as often as he wished. He was called when the cows, in that way that I have only seen broadcast in this animal, that is to nominate the cow that requires to visit him by playing what us kids call pick-a-back. The cow that stands still beneath her sister is the one that desires the visit. Should she not be granted the visit at that time she would not be interested for another month.

A cow, of course, is kept on the farm to produce milk. She will only produce milk in the natural events of life to feed her calf. The old Bull then is of great importance to see that all his herd has calves. On the birth of the calf the cow will give milk, but for the first three days the milk is not fit for consumption, at least in the normal day to day manner. At this time it was sometimes taken home by my Grandfather and something that eventually looked like cold custard was made. I loved it. After ten or fourteen days the calf was taken away for good and the cow continued to milk for nine or ten months.

The yard of poles at the bottom of the cowshed and loose box was the place reserved for the meeting of the old Bull and one of his ladies. When he was taken out of the cowshed the spring clip at the end of a chain of no more than four links was attached to a four foot stout pole that was clipped on to the ring which was permanently in his nose. He was very quiet and went about his matrimonial duties with complete efficiency and no doubt a certain amount of pleasure. His task done, he would be led back toward the cowshed. Now, whether it was because he wished a longer stay with the ladies, or whether he disliked being tied up I don't know, but on that journey back he would jump about a bit. It was decided that whenever he went out not only would a pole be used but that a rope would be fitted around his horns and the end threadled through the ring and the loose coils held in Raymond's hand that held the pole.

Because as I have said the amount the Bull was called upon in the way of duty was small it was necessary to give him some exercise. At times Raymond was seen to take him up to the shops at Cokeham Road for a walk and this was seen to be foolhardy and a stop was put to it. In future it was decided he was to go along Lotts Lane, down Cokeham Lane, up into Chalky Ham, down into the sunken lane and up out to the track in the Market Garden and so back up to the Farm.

Raymond and the Bull set off this morning on the set route, and following behind in her khaki overalls worn over her green jumper was the land girl, armed with a stick. We reckoned when we discussed it later that the trio having arrived at the entrance to Chalky Ham were rising out of Cokeham Lane when the girl gave the old Bull a flick on his flank with her stick. This striking caused the old Bull to rush forward in surprise and in so doing his big shoulder came in contact with the back of Raymond, knocking him flying down the bank. Raymond, with the wind knocked out of him, said afterwards that he rolled through the sting nettles down the bank, winded, and in the process dropped the pole and rope. The old Bull veered off into the old sunken lane and feeling no check to his forward movement climbed the bank and made his way along the bottom of Sharps nurseries, past the poplars and on into out Market Garden. The land girl had taken fright and taken off in another direction from the Bull, across the Market Garden up to the Farm for help.

Father and I were working away near the bottom of the farm buildings when her cries made us look up. She was running hard toward us, her breasts jingling madly under her green jumper, her face couldn't have been redder if it had been painted. "Quick", she said fighting madly for breath, "The Bull's got the cowman down the lane". Following dad's example we dashed in the old summer stable and grabbed a couple of prongs and away we went. Later I was to be charging around on exercise as a soldier with fixed bayonets, but with no greater sense of urgency than that day as we rounded the corner by the greenhouses. No rat was disturbed today and even had there been one we had no time to see to it. Out into the clear of the Market Garden we ran, but as we looked across the field it was not the Bull that first caught our eye, but the tall Poplar tree that stood amongst its brothers who were still. This one was swaying wildly like some fanatical tribesman at a war dance.

We arrived at the area relieved to see Raymond. He explained that he had only momentarily been winded and very soon gathered himself together following the journey of the old bull. The bull had passed the bottom end of the Poplars when he decided to stop, probably to get his bearings when he saw the clearness of the Market Garden. While he paused, Raymond grabbed the end of the rope that trailed behind the Bull and quickly secured it to the bottom of one of the Poplars. The bull attempted to move on and was definitely not pleased with the check that he found from the secured rope. The dancing Poplar tree was now evidence of his displeasure, as he angrily threw the soft soil that only a few days ago had been the bed of our second early potatoes over his back, as first one and then the other hoof pawed at it.

I was sent to get another rope and by my return Mr Lee and Grandfather had arrived. It was hoped to get him less mobile than he was at the moment, as his angry antics created scuff marks around an arc from that tree. Fashioning a lasso from the rope that I had collected I made many attempts while standing in the safety area behind the arc to get the rope over his horns. This I was able to do eventually, and in so doing probably gained myself the distinction of being the "Last Cowboy in Sussex". With this other rope we were able to secure it to another of the Poplars at some distance from the first and so restricted considerably the Bull's freedom.

Half the job was now done. The task that remained was to get him back to the cowshed and tied. Mr Lee firstly instructed us to keep clear of him, for although we had two ropes on him he was still dangerous. He then set off to the nearest 'phone to contact the vet with the request to give him a needle, thus quietening him. When the vet asked if one could get near the Bull, and receiving the answer "No", he then stated rather angrily, "Then how the bloody hell do you expect me to".

The suggestion that he should be tied to the back of a horse and cart was rejected in case he had the cart over, and so there appeared nothing else but get as many as we could on each rope and get him back that way. So having organised ourselves in teams of three each rope we untied and set off at a fair old lick, over ploughed land then cabbages, with the old Bull twisting and lunging, but we held firm. On arrival at the cowshed Raymond entered the shed with his rope, and hauling the old bull in we steadied his progress from the rear and eventually he was secured.

Having had his freedom for a short spell it was decided that he could not be trusted anymore and the cattle lorry later appeared. A rope was passed from the Bull into and then through the lathes of the front of the lorry, which allowed him to be untied and hauled into the interior.

The cows turned their heads to see him depart, and one or two lowed as if knowing that those secluded unions they shared in the hovel would be no more. The land girl saw him depart and although she never admitted it, she knew only too well that that little smack with her stick had caused the old Bull his life.

In the loose box next to the cowshed not only the cows we had at that time but many hundreds before had given birth to their calves, it was probably a good thing that Daffodil did not have hers there. Daffodil was to have hers where she had conceived it nine months before, in the hovel. Most calves are born with no trouble at all, but that was not to be the case with Daffodil. I never saw the birth but was told it was difficult, and when it was over Daffodil had a temporary paralysis of her hind quarters and so she lay for the next ten days. The part of the incident that brings it to mind is brought to me each time I see a fountain. Although she lay there for her own good the milk had to be taken from her, which took three of us. It was normal to take milk from the front teats first and then the back pair, but this wasn't the manner in which poor old Daffodil was milked. Fairy would stand by her with his legs astride, and grasping the two exposed teats would draw the milk from her. The milk would shoot up quite high in great jets, breaking up into droplets at its highest point, and like the fountains in any park drop away with gravity. Here though there was no pond to receive it, but merely the straw of the bedding to devour it without trace. When the front teats had been emptied of milk we would roll her over to allow the rear pair to be milked also. We didn't think at first that she would rise again, but old Daffodil was once more to graze with the herd, but never again to bear the offspring of the old Bull.

Before I leave the cowshed to once more rest in my memories I must recall David and Billy.

During the first two years of my working life I had on separate occasions the company of a school truant. One of these was Dave, and he unfortunately had been forgetting to go to school so often that he and his old parents had been taken to court. David was close to having some unpleasant action taken against him, when Billy stepped in.

I knew Billy Brewster as he was a full time Salvationist that lived in our village and, like all his compatriots, would do good wherever and whenever he could. It was then Billy who stood up to say that should Dave be left at home he would make it his responsibility to ensure he attended school.

I had left the employ of Mr Lee for a spell and it was during that period when David became my daily companion. Unfortunately, even after David was given his chance under the control of Billy, he returned to his desire to play truant. I had in the meantime returned to the employ of Mr Lee.

I was on my own in the cowshed working away the day that Billy paid me a visit. I was not pleased to see him, and even less pleased when he told me that he was seeking David, because I did not wish Mr Lee, should he come along, to think that I was harbouring a truant on his farm. I told Billy that he was not with me and in fact that I had not seen him for some time and, rightly or wrongly, was very hurt when he failed to accept that I was telling the truth. He walked up in one of the empty bays, for the cows were out to pasture at this time, and looked along the walkway at the rear, which could be seen quite clearly the whole length. The same perusal was given to the pens and bays which could be seen in the same way, but he was still not convinced that I was telling the truth. His eyes then alighted on a large pile of grass that filled the corner behind the old bull, and was indeed future feeds for the old fellow. Then, like some athlete on his starting block reacting to the starter's gun, he shot off down the length of the cowshed and sprung into a leap that would have done justice to any long jumper, landing heavily on the grass. It was obvious that he hadn't given time to the thought of the consequences had David been hiding there. I am glad that he was not. Not because of any denial to my honesty, but merely from the fact that should he have been hiding there when Billy landed with such force he would have half killed him. He eventually went away satisfied before the return of Mr Lee that David was not with me. However, it stayed with me for a long time that I had told a man of God the truth and he had chosen to disbelieve me. I think it even worried me.

Billy indeed was a good man and I am sure he helped many people through times when help to them was sorely needed. It was with sorrow I was informed years later that he could not solve his own problems and chose at the end the very sad solution of taking his own life.

Chapter XI
DOWN THE LOWER END

Down in the bottom shed of the farm, where our wagon was kept, was where I was to spend many of the cold winter evenings. It was opposite this shed that Father and I would leave the branches that we had sawn from the various trees around the farm. Now came the time to change them into logs, which were in that form as good as money in the bank. Father was good to me in as much that I was to get half shares, although looking back I am not sure that I deserved it. It was he that was really keen on the venture, and evenings after work and tea he had more than a little trouble to motivate me enough to leave the comfort of our home, that Mother lovingly created, to spend a few hours in that draughty old cart shed. Mainly I suppose that long before the job was complete I had borrowed and spent my share and so had an obligation to keep my bargain. So night after night, sometimes with the wind howling around outside and sometimes with the rain belting down on the tin roof, we pulled, chatted and listened to the crosscut saw as it cut its way through those boughs, and watched as the pile of logs rose at the end of the saw horse on which the boughs were lodged. In the end we borrowed the horse and wagon and delivered them to our pre-determined customers. At last my debt was paid and Father had his Christmas money, and I suppose the younger of the family were assured of their presents.

One of the problems of working on the farm was in fact, at least in those days, that toilets were not constructed and various places that were thought suitable were used. So the most embarrassing day of my short life arrived, as I was situated in the summer stable with my pants down. I must have forgotten that it was the day that a part time worker reported.

The part timer was Miss Smith, she was a woman of obviously good breeding, at least one assumed that much by her speech. She was a woman of around forty at that time, with rather a thin face and protruding teeth, her hair cut in quite a severe style. She always wore breeches and had her Labrador dog as company wherever she went.

I squatted against a large upright in the middle of the darkened stable. There appeared to be no necessity to hurry in this the most private moments of a person's life and all was quiet and peaceful. Suddenly the door was flung open and the light flooded in. It felt as that sunlight hit me that I was lit up by a spotlight, as would be an actor in the darkened theatre. The actor would be more aware than I was that day that he was the centre of attraction, but it appeared not to be so for Miss Smith who, without hesitation, said "Good afternoon Bill", as she floated past me, grabbed her hoe and made for the door. Not so for the dog, as I vainly tried to raise my trousers with one hand while knocking its nose away with the other. It was days before I could talk to her without blushing, but I'm sure that dog gave a sniff and kept smiling at me each time I passed it.

Opposite the buildings was the rick yard where the big day on the farm occurred. It was threshing day. Not only would all hands, that is less Fred and Perce, be employed, but extras from other farms would arrive to give us a hand. We needed three on the corn rick, three on the straw stack, at least one on the drum, and one or two taking off the corn, plus the boy.

The threshing tackle would arrive the night before. It was a common sight on the roads of those days. The steam engine with its train behind comprising the drum, the elevator, the caravan and perhaps even the water barrel, all rumbling along, with old Harry Peacock as proud as the bird whose name he carried standing aloft and who owned this train. They would travel the county and perhaps the area beyond, and always would there be his second in command, old Bert Hedger. Old Bert with the black patch over one eye and always in my young mind looking at times just as sinister as the Pirate Captain of whom he reminded me. The farm gate was difficult to negotiate with more than one element at a time and so one at a time the farm would be introduced to the train. The drum would be set up first between the two stacks, if at that time we had two to thrash. It would take some little time to get it level, and level it had to be to ensure that the long belt that would transfer the power, by travelling from the flywheel of the engine to the main driven wheel of the drum, did not fly off. From the driven wheel of the drum, which rotated a shaft, all other components requiring power received it by several other smaller belts.

The drum was fed the straw, which still had the corn fixed in its ear, at a steady rate. A revolving cylinder made up of bars would press the ears against some static metal rods shaped to

allow the cylinder to miss them, but close enough for the corn to be pushed out of the ear and drop below. The straw would be passed on by the revolving cylinder to the straw walkers. These were serrated boxes fixed to cranks at front and rear of the drum so that as the cranks revolved the straw was passed on and on until dropping clear at the rear. The corn, meanwhile, had dropped onto sieves that were constantly shaking. Beneath the shaking sieves there was a revolving axle with wide sails on it that created a wind which was directed to the sieve, blowing from the surface the small bits of straw and chaff and leaving the heavier corn clean to drop to the bottom. It would then be lifted to a slightly conically shaped cylindrical sieve. Here, as the corn travelled slowly along inside, induced by its shape the smaller holes of the sieve would allow the small seed of rubbish to drop through first, secondly the small second class corn and thirdly retain the best corn to be directed to the mouths at the back where the sacks awaited it.

It was just a little matter then to get the elevator into position and the engine set, then all would be required for a sharp start in the morning. Prior to the tackle arriving we had obtained the coal. The horse using the water barrel would soon provide that commodity. All that seemed to remain now was to comply with the law. The rick would soon become the home not only of the corn, but also the rats and mice. From where they came I know not, but come they did in great numbers and the law demanded that a wire netting fence be erected around all ricks that were being threshed to enable them to be caught and destroyed. Failure to comply with this demand rendered the offender subject to a fifty pound fine. Old Bert Hedger would, after all had been set up, retire to his caravan that had been sited just inside the farm gate near the cottage.

It was eventide when in the company of my Grandfather we approached the rear of the caravan and he shouted up at the top half door that was open, allowing the dim light to escape, "Hello Bert". A moment passed, then the pirate head of Bert, complete with his patched eye, appeared over the closed lower half of the split door. "Hello Jack", he replied, "Come up and have a cup of tea". Grandfather, with me behind, climbed the three big steps to the floor of the caravan. The body of that vehicle was high and the whole vehicle on its iron wheels had nothing in common with the modern caravan apart from its name. The inside seemed quite big, with Bert's bed at the bottom end taking up the entire width. On the left side was a cupboard that I was to see carried his food, and at its side a large box into which his worldly possessions were contained. On the other side was a kitchen range not unlike the one we had at home, in both design and size. On it at this time was a large iron kettle lazily exuding a thin trail of steam from its spout. It was nice and comfortable within the interior and the pallid light shining from the door gave the impression that it would be dark inside, but this was not so, it was in fact quite pleasant in that aspect as well. I was seated on Bert's box as Grandfather was bid to be seated on the offered chair that was beside a small table in the middle. Bert made and handed us a cup of tea each. He sat on a chair the other side of the table and a conversation was created. I was quite intrigued by my surroundings and paid little attention to the conversation that was taking place, my eyes were on my cup. Bert, I realised, was almost every day perched on the drum, surrounded by a cloud of dust, and I could fully understand that his skin was grimed with dirt, but for the love of me I couldn't see why his cups should be the same. The one I held had but one part that was clean, and that was where he had spilt the tea when he had passed it to me and it had cleaned a passage down the side as it progressed to the bottom of the cup. The passage of that tea down my throat was a difficult one, and the pleasure of that drink was not in its taste but in its completion. I have never been more pleased to put a cup down, but nevertheless I had shared a cup of tea with a pirate.

Next morning before we had arrived all was ready to go. Whether it was Harry or Bert the engine had a head of steam up and Harry was at the helm all set for the day ahead. The corn rick, uncovered from its protective coat of thatch, was manned by its crew, Bert was in position on the drum, the straw stackers stood beneath the jaws of the elevator awaiting the first supplies, Grandfather was at the rear with the corn sacks, their mouths wide open like seals awaiting their fish, and I, unfortunately, was at the side between the drum and the elevator armed with a wooden rake awaiting the cavings to come shaking out of the guts of the big machine. Harry let out the clutch and away it all went like a great big circus. As the drum got up speed it started humming and then Bert stated feeding her, holding a knife in one hand as he cut and retained the string of each sheaf, spreading its contents of straw and corn into the gaping jaws of the drum, causing her tone to deepen whenever a little more was offered her to chew. Soon the corn was shooting out the back into the waiting sacks, the elevator received and discharged the straw, and what was

going to seem a never ending vomit of cavings ejected from the back end. My job was not only to keep the rear of the drum clear from this constant discharge, but to drag it away with my rake across the road and into the hovel some twenty yards distant. Within the hovel I was to amass this large lump of cavings, throwing it high by using a cavings fork which had four long tines and appeared by its size to be hand made for a giant. I was soon to be covered in sweat to which adhered in each and every crevice of the body minute pieces of straw and chaff. Nobody was more pleased to see the end of the rick than the cavings boy.

However, before the bottom of the rick was reached the terriers would be brought in because it was here where the rats would be scrabbling about to try to find cover for themselves, and that the dogs would catch them. Those that tried to escape would of course be stopped by the wire netting. After witnessing the fight that Father had with one I always treated them with respect, and at the times when I found myself on a rick I would always have the bottom of my trousers tied with string.

There was another time than that with Father that I recall the fighting character of the rat. Tony and I had for some reason gone around to the potato shed where apart from some empty potato seed trays it was empty. The trays had been stacked one on top of the other and almost reached the roof. We, Tony and I, disturbed a rat and it ran for cover in the trays, scrabbling from one to the other making for the top of the pile where it thought was safety. It had other thoughts coming, as Tony said "Keep an eye on him, I'll be back in a minute". Off he went, only to return as he had said, but this time he had in his hand his ferret. Taking the ferret to the trays he let it loose and soon it discovered the scent of the rat and began to climb those trays in much the same way that it had done, until it reached the top. Once in the top tray the two met and I have never heard such a squealing and rattling as the rat tried to make his escape by descending those trays as fast as he could, rapidly followed by the ferret. Here and there they met and frantic scurries took place. The rat put up quite a good try, but no more than half the descent had been made before the ferret was the victor. However, the noise of that battle has always remained with me, and although I certainly had no love for the rat, I have never been a close friend of the ferret. My sympathy that day may well have been with the rat.

Close to the rick yard was the cesspit where the slurry from the cowshed would drain. Its capacity was not at times capable of receiving the quantity that flowed to it and trenches had been dug to allow the overspill to drain to the local area. There was a pump above the cesspit that allowed, by means of a handle, amounts of that stinking fluid to be transferred to the trenches, or to any receptacle. I was given the task to create layers of straw and cover it with this thick liquid to create a second rate manure. Most of the time I had to convey the liquid to the lump in an old bucket. I made vain attempts to keep my trousers clean by wearing another old pair over the top of them which, when not in use, I kept hanging up in the summer stable. It was these old trousers I feel that let me down.

After a regular few days at this task I began to itch around the knee and very soon I felt the itch in other places, until it stated to become unbearable and I went to the doctor for advice. To my great disgust and embarrassment I found that I had got Scabies. I didn't know what that was until he said it was like little maggots under my skin. I felt really terrible about having such horrible little things as company and rapidly went home to put paid to them according to his instructions.

The instructions were to scrub each of the little lumps where the little sods were hiding while I sat in a bath of hot water. It had to be as hot as I could stand. Then I was to apply liberally the ointment he gave me. Anything, I thought when I got home. However, before I could bathe it was a matter of lighting the fire under the boiler to heat the water. Once in the bath I did as I was bid. Gritting my teeth each little lump was bleeding and now to liberally apply the ointment. I liberally applied it, rubbing all over. There was a slight pause and then I felt like that poor old Turkey must do on Christmas Day. I was burning. I was out that bath, no drying, no dressing, upstairs, around the bedroom and back down again before that burning sensation diminished. Yes, I well remember that old cesspit, and although I am sorry to see buildings over the rest of the old farm, I am not sorry to see the back of it and its close relations, Scabies.

Some thirty or forty yards down the track from here was a couple of short greenhouses that had long since seen the last crop for which they had been built grow in them. They did

though, on a couple of occasions, play host to an early crop of spring greens. Their low walls stood firm, as did the rafters above them, but most of the glass, apart from the ends, had departed. They were not completely alone though for just above them in amongst the grass and nettles were a couple of pig sties.

Tony had been given a pig by his uncle and Mr Lee had said that he could house it in one of the sties. This little pig had been born to a sow that was allowed to roam with quite a bit of freedom about the farm yard of his uncle and so had the little pig in the days before its weaning. It did not take kindly to be confined of that sty and much preferred the freedom that it once enjoyed. It desperately attempted to jump out of that sty, but try as it might it was at first unable to do so. However, little pigs soon grow and this little pig was no exception. Came the day when the jump succeeded and its little forelegs lay over the top of the sides, from there with a constant wriggling of its little backside it was over. It had apparently done this a couple of times and been put back, and appeared quiet until once more it would escape. I came along about the third time and was just in time to see the last wriggle of that little backside and over it went. This time though there was no hanging about, it was off, heading over the ground to the meadows. I called Tony and we gave chase, gaining on it rapidly until it reached the fence. There we had to stop and negotiate the strands of wire, but not it, under it went and rapidly making distance from us its backside going hell for leather, like one of those athletes in a walking race. By the time we had negotiated another couple of fences it had almost disappeared into the brooklands. We put on a special effort, thinking that if it fell in a brook its attempt to swim may cause its hoof to catch in its throat and cut it, at least that is what we had heard happened to a swimming pig and we had no desire to see it happen to this one. Luckily the brooklands were rough with the dried hoof marks of the cows in what had been boggy ground and our longer legs soon caught up with the efforts of its little short ones. We turned it and chased it back and when we were close to the sties it ran into one of the little greenhouses, allowing us to shut the door. Driving it to a corner Tony said "Leave it, I'll get it in the corner", and he made a dive for it. I will never forget the next scene, because we knew what glass was and didn't give a thought to the fact that the little pig didn't comprehend such things, as it went running down the greenhouse pursued by Tony and when it reached the end rose like a steeplechaser to take the wall. Crash, straight through the glass it went, luckily without getting a cut. After that we soon had it back in its sty and a wire netting covering put an end to that little pig's excursions.

Chapter XII

THE GRASSLANDS

The grasslands of the farm stood back from the road. Beside the rick yard was the access for the cows. Here the track was rutted with the constant tread of their hooves. There was a wire gate next to the wooden one that allowed the cows to move to the rutted way, where the wagons of hay could proceed to the rick yard. Beyond these gates was a small meadow used for the cows to be collected in prior to coming into the cowshed. Next to it was the main good meadow which grew the best grass that we could produce. Beside it was a wide strip of grass that allowed the main meadow to be by-passed with access to the brookland below, and to the meadow of Chalky Ham. The access along the bottom of the good meadow was in fact the last bit of the old sunken lane, and for some unknown reason this small bit still lives on today. This little bit of land carried on until it spilled out into the brooklands, which tumbled away to another fenced off meadow at the bottom, known as Nigger Hole.

The old rotted vegetation of the sunken lane was taken each year and spread upon the main meadow as a top dressing and harrowed in. It was in this meadow too at other times that the horse with its cart was allowed to wander at will as I discarded its load of Kale, Sprouts or Maize.

However, it will be best remembered by me at the time of my last days at school. I was down the farm and was helping to drive the cows in for the afternoon milking. We had one cow with the name of Rose who had recently arrived from a farm down the end of Mash Barn Lane. The farm was an outpost of Mr Wadman and at that time its grasslands had become a part of Shoreham Airport. Rose, I have noted before, had a nice pair of horns and a large udder. This day she had a bit more and that bit was a little calf. It was but a few minutes old at the time I write of. The little fellow was trying vainly to walk, but every effort was met with disaster as it toppled to

the ground, as yet not strong enough to make the journey, at least not at any speed. I was asked to bring them along as they were holding up the herd.

The herd made their way merrily on to the cowshed and Rose, offspring and I were left to make our own way. I was behind Rose trying to hurry her along a bit, but she was more than a little concerned about her little one who was constantly falling over. I thought I could best help if I was to carry the little fellow. I bent and collected it in my arms. My left arm around its front legs, my right arm around its rear. The little fellow was still wet from its birth cloak. After about twenty yards I was pleased to put it down. I couldn't bend down to put it completely on the ground and had to let it drop about eight or nine inches and it gave out a bit of a "BAAA". I didn't quite know what it meant but Rose did, because as I looked at her she was still at the spot from where I had lifted her calf and was pawing at the ground, as I was to see the Old Bull do at a later time. I waited no more and neither did she as she set off after me. I raced to the fence and dived between the lower wires. The hindrance of her large udder prevented her catching me. I went on up to the cowshed and later she was to give Mr Lee a poke with those lovely horns of hers.

That large udder of hers was her undoing on the day we were crossing the railway to get to "over the line". The sleepers that made up the crossing also had companions that were cattle grids each side. These were triangular pieces of wood laid on their base with gaps between each and successfully stopped the cattle from treading on them. Where the rails crossed the sleepers a secondary rail ran beside them, bending away at the ends. Crossing the line on this particular day Rose got a couple of horns poked in her rear and rushed forward, however there was no way ahead and she was forced to the very edge of the sleeper. Precariously trying not to tread on or between the cattle grid she swung her leg back and in so doing her hoof travelled into the gap between the secondary and the main rail. She tried desperately to travel on but was stuck fast and the more she struggled the more secure her hoof became in that prison of rails. Soon all the cows less rose were over and safely in the pasture, but Rose was stuck firm. Mr Lee frantically called to me "Watch for the trains Son", as he set about kicking fanatically at her hock to free her. It was a frightening period because we were both aware that there was no more, at the very longest intervals, than ten minutes between the trains. It seemed as though we had been at it far longer than that when out of sheer desperation we tried a new tack. Joining hands, we pushed back from her chest in an endeavour to get her out the opposite way to that which she went in, and almost immediately she was free. She ran off to join the others and it could have been no more than a couple of minutes before the next train went thundering past. Old Rose was probably the only cow that nearly caught the train to Worthing.

Rose's maternity ward, and the main meadow of the other cows, was surrounded by a three strand barbed wire fence. It was difficult to see in most parts because of the briars that almost hid it as they grew profusely and wide over and along it. The wires of the fence were secured to posts along its length, but its security was mainly established by the strong hawthorn trunks that relieved the posts here and there. The briars tended to get unruly if left for more than one season and so it was left to Father and I to give them a good back trim. We would have liked to have got rid of them altogether but Mr Lee insisted on them remaining to give shelter to the cows. Armed with a dung rake, which is no more than a long handled fork with the tines bent at an angle of ninety degrees, I would reach up and pull the briars to me. Father would strike out with his slasher, a tool like a long handled chopper, and away would come the briars and any branches of hawthorn that required the same treatment. We would be several days at this task and would create some nice fires, which would make it a nice task on some of those cold winter days.

The brooklands immediately below the meadow held very little tasks for us and apart from running over the better parts with the horses and the mower one mid summer to rid them of the major weeds, no other tasks come to mind. Whilst at that task I do recall one very sad little incident. The mower was proceeding through a little briar bush, through which the long grasses were pushing their heads in an eager bid for light, when the blade of the mower jammed. I backed up the horses and put the mower out of gear as I was going to put my hands in front of the blade. My Grandfather had drummed the out of gear into me and I still have the mental picture he planted in my head of the young man he related who did not put it out of gear before he stood in front of the blade. When the horses moved forward as they are apt to do for no apparent reason he lost both feet at the ankle. Anyway, I cleared the knife and moved the rubbish from in front of it and saw three rabbit legs. I had seen no rabbit, nor did I now, but as I looked around I spied the

poor creature pulling itself into the thick hedge with its remaining leg, even then evading me, as I rushed to put it out of what must have been agony, by sliding down a hole that I had not previously noticed.

Below these rough brooks stood one that was far from being as rough as these. It was named "the Nigger Hole". It was a large field as the brooks go, with another quite small one at the lower end. Between the two was the place from which it derived its name, the Nigger Hole. The brooks that ran around these fields had at a couple of places got dark deep holes in them. The Nigger Hole was exceptionally large and because of its supposed depth it had a very black appearance. I was told that it really had no bottom, but in later years have seen articles in the press on such things that refer to them as knocker holes, supposedly feeding the brooks their water from very deep springs. I like the explanation, but at that time, and come to that even today, I always left them well alone. I knew that at least one man had drowned in it.

The Nigger Hole played two purposes on St Johns Farm. It was firstly the area where each year we made the hay, and secondly was the home of the dry cows who spent the late days of their pregnancies within the confines of its brooks and fences.

The mower and the method of cutting was no different from that which took place in Waddies Brooks, but there any similarity with the haymaking ceased. I would, after Grandfather had driven the horses round the first cut, be sent with the large wooden rake to clear the swathe back to allow the grass on which the horses had walked to be clear. This would normally be the last cut and each year there would be a small basin by the brook that would be skirted. The year arrived that had been and still was a lot drier than is usual and so Grandfather thought the basin could be cut. The horses being directed by him went into the basin and at the bottom their hooves started to sink. The mower, with no alternative, followed them in. Rodney and Daisy were soon squirming to get the mower through and midst their struggles there was a noisy crack and the mower pole to which they were fastened broke. We got the horses unharnessed and free of the basin and solemnly looked at the mower still within what had become its muddy prison. I was dispatched to get the cart and a heavy rope and chain. With the aid of the rope and chain the mower was dragged from its sucking grip. With the chain the front of the mower was fixed to the axle of the cart, but as the front end was still on the ground and the rear end reaching up to the sky, Grandfather offered his weight to what was the high perched seat, to act as a counter balance. However, as I pulled the horse forward the front end lifted up very rapidly and the seat lowered equally as fast, launching the old boy on a journey of head over heels that I have yet to see equalled and only just concluding before the anticipated splash into the brook.

Here in the Nigger hole there was no turner, there were pitchforks and rakes. Here there were no sweeps or mechanical loaders, there was once again pitchforks to pierce and lift each pitch of hay to the wagon. It was here also that the ropes were slung over the load of hay and the knot that they cheekily call today the lorry drivers' knot was used to tighten the rope over the hay as it had been done for many years before. It was here in the Nigger Hole that the loading had to be done correctly, as the loads were large, the journey long and very rough as the horses in trace bobbed and heaved their way across the brooklands and so up the best meadow to the Rickyard. At the Rickyard there was no elevator, but once more the system of the pitch hole where Father used his great strength to transfer the pitch from below to those above. Most of our haymaking was done in the afternoon and on into the evening. We did have a modern rake that had been purchased about this time from a farm sale in the locality and I enjoyed those rides I had on it very much, with its foot operated trip.

As soon as the haymaking was over the Nigger Hole became the home once more of the dry cows, and quite often the birth place of the calves.

Chapter XIII
THE WAR AND ST JOHNS

The war came to St Johns Farm on many days and in many faces. It no doubt had seen many changes in its time because if the name of Sompting has the meaning "the people who live by the swamp", it had probably seen the sea change into land. The railway at a later time had come to sever it into two and the texture of Chalky Ham has always made me feel that the soil arrived from some other place. The war was to subject it to sights that must have been new and will never be seen again.

Soldiers were not a common sight during my life in Sompting up to that time. I was then quite wary of them when they arrived to take over as billets the cottage and the bungalow. They were Commandos, and the war was becoming quite mature at that time. They did not interrupt my life at all and I don't think I had too much to do with them, but nevertheless was as any youngster interested in their comings and goings. In the village at the time, but not on the farm, were some Canadians. I, like others, didn't realise it at that time, but these men were part of the ill fated raid on Dieppe. Not too many of those lads came back and no doubt the last taste of England that some of them ever had was that of St Johns Farm. One did come back and it was found in a social conversation in Germany that my Sergeant Major and I shared the air of St Johns Farm together, he as a Commando and I as a Farmer's Boy.

I remember the first dog fight that took place while still a schoolboy. I was with my Grandfather down in Chalky Ham when the planes that were zooming around what we thought high overhead, came a lot lower and one went crashing into the sea. We no longer thought they were zooming, they were definitely fighting, and the horses were unhooked from their implement and the hooks hung in the ring near the crupper. Grandfather set off behind them with the reins in his hand and the horses at a fast trot, so fast in fact that they were pulling him along and I'm sure each pace he took was at least of eight feet. My legs were going hell for leather, in no way trying to overtake, merely to keep up.

Haymaking that summer of the Battle of Britain, was a most precarious affair. It seemed that we were forever unhooking the horses from the wagons, setting them free and crawling ourselves under the loads of hay.

We had in those days it seems very little to hit back with and the Spitfires and Hurricanes had not come too soon to relieve the Lysanders that had started the war at Shoreham. Then came the day that saw an anti aircraft gun set up over the railway on our best pasture and of course I was soon to say goodbye to my cowboy days, or at least mornings. The gun was a Bofor and rather than take the war away it brought it closer when on two occasions bombs dropped close to it, one making a gaping hole in the horses' field, and another over the line in the fenced pasture. The fenced pasture had to go too when the desire to grow more corn made us plough it up.

There was another morning when arriving at work after a night of yet another raid I was met by a Policeman wheeling away a burrowful of incendiaries. The cowshed had got plastered from the bombs that had found me in the Glasshouse, and then the Buzz Bomb would fly over and they never caused the farm any bother for the engines continued until they were out of range.

We had my Father in the Home Guard, and others were Fire Watchers and, of course, we had the Land Girls.

Chapter XIV
LOTT'S LANE

I have never heard of anyone in Sompting or in Cokeham that carried the name of Lotts so how this lane gained its name I never knew. It is still there today but seemingly starting nowhere and going nowhere. In the days that I recall it not only led one to the gates of the farm but carried on by in the shade of some big old Elm trees, at whose feet travelled a ditch that was designed to take the water from its surface. Having passed the farm entrance it soon started to dip sharply, coming to a halt at the bottom against a large wood and wire gate. It was the entrance to Pullen-Burry's Market Garden, or at least one of them. The gates opened and there was on the right a large black shed that served as a store, a packing shed and a lunch centre for those working in the that area. The lane, now changing into a track, split the Market Garden into two halves. On the left was rising ground that firstly rose up to meet a hedge which contained a couple of acres of ground that was owned by Russells Nurseries. It had a gate just above the one mentioned in the lane, while farther on it rose to the Elms and wire that kept out the cows in the good meadow. On the other side of the track the earth was black as coal and it was obvious that at some time it was wrested from the brooks. Beside the track ran a well kept brook that had been developed into a watercress bed. This black soil was secured from the meadow that ran beside it by a wire fence whose posts were those of living willows. They were stunted in growth by being severed about ten foot high and instead of high single growth proceeding, the tops had an abundance of new branches reaching to the sky.

There were no permanent workers in this garden, but gangs along with horses and implements would arrive at various times to sow or plant various crops, or to tend and at last to harvest them. It was very productive soil and was completely suited to the growing of vegetables.

Just before one arrived at the Black Gate there was a footpath that branched off to the right. It had along its sides tall Hawthorn hedges that almost hid from view the orchards of the Bushby's on both sides, but it did much more than that. The Hawthorn hedge was one of the most popular hedges, because of its growth and its nature, that of very strong thorns, it was always guaranteed to be cattle proof. This one proved to be boy proof as well, which was obviously the very reason it was there. The path that nestled between its high sides must have been trodden by many thousand of feet over a great period of time. From the path's beginnings here it led almost in a direct line to the church at Sompting that served the area from its originations way back in 960AD.

The path, made of a flint surface, ended in this fashion when it met the stile to Blacksmith Field, unless one again branched right for no more than twenty yards and disappear into the allotments once more through a gap in a Hawthorn hedge. The whole path was no more than about eighty yards long, and after half that length before it met the stile, the hedge on the right stopped and the open area it revealed contained a motley collection of chicken runs and sheds, the province of Mr Ashby. Also at that point was another unofficial path that carried north and separated Mr Ashby's chicken run from a narrow piece of stony Market Garden.

The path, having passed over the stile, carried on over Blacksmith Field until it arrived at a second stile. This one held a great significance to my stepmother because it was seated upon this stile one light summer evening that her first husband proposed to her. Over it and still on a straight course the path again turned to flint as it split another Market Garden of Pullen-Burry's, known as White Styles, in two. It was then temporarily stopped by a five barred gate and its small pedestrian mate beside it. Here it was to cross a road for the first time as West Street interrupted its progress. Slipping over the main road and travelling up the opposite lane of Dankton it came to a Love Gate standing beside the main one that led to the Malt House, and through it to Malt House Meadow. A Love Gate was no more than a small fence shaped as a V that lay on its side, and between its ends swung a small gate. To proceed through the gate it would be pushed away from you and you would step into the hollow of the V, the gate pulled back and you would be free to proceed. This device would be simple for people to negotiate but it would be impossible for the farm animals. If one with their girlfriend was to proceed through you would have to squeeze closely together. I suppose this action created the name of Love Gate. The Malt House Meadow would pass the path on to the park, but not before another of those Love Gates was negotiated.

The park was probably the biggest decent meadow in the parish and carried the path undisturbed until the by-pass was to cut the grassed area in half. On it would go until it met the pair of gates at Church Lane, once again the big five bar one and the small pedestrian by its side. One obviously had to close these behind you to stop the cattle from getting out. Today there are sophisticated devices that will ensure the gate closes automatically. Then there was no sophistication, but an equally reliable device was used. A piece of wire would be attached at one end to the gatepost and the other to the gate and on the wire would be a couple of old plough shares, whose days of cutting the furrow were long behind them. They cut the furrow sharp and true and in this new position they would and did ensure by their weight that the gate shut every time it was left.

For the second time the path came in contact with the road and with no more than twenty yards to travel it was home.

Chapter XV

THE BALL TREE AND THE ALLOTMENTS

Probably The Ball Tree was the centre of the area where I lived then. It was of course the focal point where all the men would at one time or other meet. It wasn't until 1934 that it became the Pub that it is today. It was before that time an Off Licence known as The Ball Tree, because of a tree of that shape that once stood in the middle of the road there, but I was never to know it.

I knew it as a young boy, but not as I recall by the name of The Ball Tree, but as Aunt Annies, for that was what the old lady was called who run it at that time. Chaps would go in and get their pints of beer, straight from the wood of course, because that was the way at that time, and carry them over to the grass bank and consume them. More is the case though that either a jug or a brown ale bottle would be brought and filled from the barrel and conveyed back home to be drunk at leisure.

Aunt Annie sold other tings that one is likely to find in such a place. I recall going into the interior through the door and finding myself in the dark confines. The counter was low and the room long, or so it seemed to those young eyes of mine, and Aunt Annie would come to greet you from some mysterious place out back. Leaning against the wall of the place just inside the door was an old upright bike. It was rusty and dirty but no one was to touch it. It was, I was told, her son's who had come on leave from the Army, obviously from the First World War, and on his last ride of the machine had rested it in that spot. He was never to return to see the new pub rise from the ruins of the old Off Licence and his old bike was never to be moved until the day the old place was knocked down.

The Ball Tree Inn that was to rise in its place was one of 'the' places in the area. The picture of a summer evening with the lights of many colours swinging sedately on their wires above the lawn at the back, while a band played pleasantly the music of the day, can still be conjured up in my mind.

Later during the war years there were to be many different nations that sent their young men to drink at its bars. Many also young lads of our own tongue but who spoke the language in the strange manner of their birthplace that made it difficult for us to comprehend. With the vast building programmes that had and were to go on we had an influx of people eager for the work, who came and settled and, of course, the thousands that came to live in the houses that they built. The Ball Tree welcomed them all and it did its best to integrate each newcomer.

Opposite The Ball Tree was Wellers Yard, well known then as it is now for its quality woodwork. Today it is probably known more for its service as an undertakers than it is for its original products.

Mr Weller had arrived in the area, I think I am right in saying, just before the First World War. He was on arrival a first class wheelwright, a task that was always in demand at that time. The skill never left him, but the occasions when he was called upon to use it did. So it was that he turned his skills to other things, and it was that I first became aware of him as much as a chicken farmer as I did a carpenter.

There was a path that run at the bottom of his yard. I always thought I was walking through it when I used the path because the wood was on both sides, leaning on the farther side against the hedge. The hedge hid from the view of the yard the thatched cottage that was the home of Tom Bashford and family. George and Vic, his two sons, were to help build their little business up to quite a stable one in the coming years. The yard stood the test of time but the thatched cottage that had started its life so many years before had probably seen all the changes it wanted to and went to join all the other cottages of that type that had gone on before.

The path, however, left the buildings behind and travelled about twenty yards between the nursery of tom on the one side and his acre attached to the allotments on the other. This acre was to be of great importance to me because for many years after this, when trying to estimate an area of land, I would visualise how many of Tom's acres could be placed within the boundaries in question.

Having passed Tom's land we would come to the allotments. On the left would be a hedge, beyond which the arable ground rose up to the nurseries in Cokeham Lane which could be seen. On the right, with the exception of another acre in the opposite corner to that of Tom's, was about ten acres of allotments. Most of them would be in twenty rods and of these there would be a fair sprinkling of well established plots that held fruit trees. We, of course, were not beyond a bit of scrumping here now and again, but the vegetables were reasonably safe. Father had a twenty rod one down here and I dug a couple as a sideline once or twice. Ten rod is quite a big area and it was reckoned that a man could dig one in a good day's work.

It was along this path that quite often Father and I would walk on our way to St Johns Farm. We would climb a stile before reaching the end of the allotments and find ourselves alongside the arable of Mr Ashby. The path would take us out to the high hedges and footpath of Bushby's. Father was quite friendly with Mr Ashby and he was a good contact to sell the vegetables that he grew in the large garden at home. I got to know him myself quite well and went plucking chicken for him at sixpence each bird. It was a task that I did not really favour, but in this world life is not always as we would like it, and so there I sat plucking chicken after chicken. The feathers from those unfortunate birds not only rising up my legs as I plucked away but getting down my neck, up my nose and in my eyes. Every sixpence was gratefully received, but certainly very well earned too.

After climbing the stile each day to get to into Mr Ashby's we would at some stage along the path disturb a goat that he had tethered there, and it became quite a part of the scene to see the goat run off on its circular journey, controlled by the chain to which it was staked. It was to be expected then that the day the goat was not there we immediately missed it. We called to Mr Ashby as we passed "Where's the old goat then", and he replied "I've killed it, and I'll have a bit ready for you as you come home". We took the meat he offered as we went home and bid our good old Mother to cook it. None of us had ever eaten goat and my brothers and sisters refused to touch it. Dad and I started on it but the first mouthful, whether or not it was tough I can't recall, or whether in our mind's eye we could see it jump on that chain each time we bit into it I don't know, but we would rather go hungry that day than eat that old goat. I have lived in the Middle East since that time and may unknowingly have been given it to eat, but as far as I know I haven't tasted goat yet.

Chapter XVI
BUSTICLE LANE

Busticle Lane I always thought as a young man, when cycling home from work, must be one of the coldest roads in the land. It started at The Ball Tree and ran north until it reached the junction with Upper Brighton Road, Halewick Lane and Bulpit Lane, a distance I suppose of no more than a couple of hundred yards.

On the right hand side of the road there was only meadows and the Beehive Stores until the early thirties, when the bungalows began to appear. Along that side of the road was a bank in which some old Elms found it convenient to sink their roots. One of these had given up the battle of survival and had fell. I know this because I must have just started school, or I may not even reached that age, when in the company of a larger boy, whose image I have forgotten, we found a ten shilling note. This note purchased the biggest bar of chocolate that the world had ever seen, anyway that's the way I remember it, although I expect it was merely a quarter pound bar. It was probably my young teeth but I have never forgotten how difficult it was to get my teeth into it. However, I did get my teeth into it and it was behind that fallen tree where eventually the biggest bar of chocolate in the world disappeared.

The Beehive Stores has previously been owned by the Fuller family, but I seem to remember Mr Woods as the shop keeper during my young life. The shop was then only the centre part, the two wings were added at different times to come. Most people I suppose shopped as we did. That is that all we required this week was put in the book, or "on the bill" as learnt to say, and was paid the following week. In this way most people owed the shop money and so were tied to him with their custom. There were boxes of fruit out front and always one containing oranges, and there were always Chrysanthemums growing in the garden at the sides. Jack Miles, a born leader if ever there was one, would use these two things to perfection to increase his diet. He would walk past the oranges and in so doing hook a couple of fingers under one, a following flick and it would land in the Chrysanthemums, which were out of view of the shop and so Jack could collect at leisure. I don't know how many times he got that way, but suffice it to say that Jack was never lacking in Vitamin C.

Next door to the Beehive was a Market Garden, and one Christmas period when we were trying our luck at Carol singing and not doing too well we climbed the fence and secured a bag of beetroot. It must have been a mild year and it may have been that the garden was closing, but whatever the reason we made more money with them than we would have singing.

I couldn't have known it long before the bungalows appeared, and when they did the population doubled and The Ball tree welcomed as many as liked a drink. The one above the shop had a large wire mesh square erected in his garden and for many years it was the home of a breeder of Wire Haired Terriers. Halfway down to The Ball Tree lived the Atrills. I don't know what he is doing today but looking back young Donald seemed to be set for the life of a business man, because in his back garden he had a thriving goat business going. I recall going up there at milking time and seeing some form of belly sling he had created to make milking easier.

Leaving The Ball Tree and walking up that side of the road one would be walking beside a low wall, behind which were the vegetable gardens of a row of cottages for some of the workers of Pullen-Burrys. There were about half a dozen of them running away at ninety degrees from the road, each with its walled-in small back yard. The gardens I have mentioned were where the washing was hung, on the washing line beside the path. There was a weakness here because one path had to suffice two gardens, and this led one day to two of the women arguing and one eventually getting hit over the head with something or other. I know a court case resolved the problem by moving one woman into a Council house which were, I might add, in short supply in those days.

These houses stood at the bottom of Rectory Road, although it looked far from a road then because it was just a flint track that led up to Rectory Farm.

The other side of Rectory Road was a waste piece of ground that bordered not only Busticle Lane but a detached house that was the home of old Jack Skinner. Old Jack was an old sailor from the First World War and the guns that he must have listened to in those days had left

his hearing impaired, resulting in his wearing a hearing aid all the time that I knew him. His kindly wife kept chickens and was kept busy with customers at her door at all times. The chickens were kept at two patches, one beside the house and the other at the back where here only son had a bit of a Market Garden. Young Jack was a strange young man and had suffered a life of a backward person, as indeed one look at his so called Market Garden would confirm. Nothing on it really grew as it should have done because the tilling of the soil it contained was far from being proficient. However, young Jack seemed content with his lot.

Any man who at any time in the village in my early life who liked to play football had done so under the management of Old Jack. He was as far as I can remember the sole member of the management committee for over twenty years. Today they have fancy names for the role that Jack played, but no one could have put more effort into running a team than Jack did. The team would be selected by Jack, the official paperwork dealt with by Jack, the pitch marked out by Jack, the collection made by Jack and even the account of the match rendered to the local paper by Jack. Quite unintentionally the park would be kept well shorn by him because he always had a bit of grass in his mouth as he ran up and down the line, now playing the part of the chief supporter. That bit of grass would be changed a hundred times as he discarded the old and unwittingly selected a new blade. His hat would either splash the mud or raise the dust as he dashed it to the earth at each and every doubtful decision against his team, Sompting. Jack was a great man and if ever there are people who deserve the BEM, they are the Jacks of this nation, and there was one to be found in nearly every community of the times I recall.

At the end of the football season there were always the cup competitions or at least the finals of the same. One season before my playing days in the senior team Sompting had arrived into two finals and they both had to be played on the same day. Nowadays we read from the sports reporters that the teams are tired, they have played too many games, too many games. Here were chaps all those years ago who not only had to play two cup finals on the same day, but had to pay their subs for the privilege of doing so. It was arranged that they would play one match in the afternoon at the Rotary ground at Worthing and after a two hour break they would move up to the sports field above at Hillbarn and play the other. They won them both and old Jack ate his fair share of grass that day I can tell you.

With the football season over you would think that Jack would sit back and have a breather, but he would have none of that, there he would be in his white coat as cricket umpire. It was at his instigation one day I am sure that Ned Brockhurst played his innings out. Ned had served in the World War but he didn't need medals to show this, his wooden leg showed his campaigns. Ned liked his game of cricket and no wooden leg was going to stop that activity. There they were then on this Saturday afternoon, with Jack in his white coat in the role of umpire, and Ned with his pads on and the large gloves on his hands in his normal fielding role of wicketkeeper.

I think it was the cowman who whistled down a pretty fast delivery, the batsman played and missed and Ned's big gloved hands missed as well, but not his padded leg. Crack! it went as the ball hit his pad. I don't know if it was a leg bye or not but I do know that over went Ned, because that ball truly was a leg break. They gathered around Ned as he lay there, his leg at a sorry angle, and then the gathering parted as Jack broke from them and went scurrying for the pavilion, only to return almost immediately with the broom handle, minus the head. First aid was applied to Ned, who carried on with the handle strapped to his leg.

I was approaching Old Jack's house one day, many years ago when it was only the occasional car that would come past. The cars that did pass were far removed from those which pass that spot today. All the older ones had what was then called running boards, on which one would step when getting into the interior. This day as I approached Old Jack's house I saw young Les Miles standing there. He had in his hands a loose bundle of string which he was trying to lodge on to the running board of each car that passed, with no success. I requested a try and was duly passed the loose bundle of string and was highly delighted at my first effort to lodge it on the running board. The car that had received my success proceeded a little farther up the road and stopped. I looked at it full of uncertainty, which changed into immediate action as it started to reverse to where we had been standing. Running toward The Ball Tree I glanced back to see that it had passed the spot where we had been standing and should I have stayed in Busticle Lane it would soon have been abreast of me. Diverting my route up the rough surface of Rectory Lane I

was beginning to fill with fear as the car reversed up there too. Deciding that I would be better off if I took a route where the car could not follow, I ran along the paths of a couple of allotments beside the small Market Garden of young Jack Skinner. The car stopped and a man got out and gave chase after me along the path. The fear inside me was now rapidly changing into panic, as paths forgotten I was running on, over and through rows of potatoes, cabbage, carrots and beans in a vain effort it seemed to arrive at the bottom of my Gran's garden, that connected with this piece of ground. I was through the gate and up Gran's garden path, looking back I was horrified to see that he too was through the gate and up Gran's path. I had reached almost hysteria as I burst through Gran's back door. It was becoming like one of those horrid nightmares where no matter what evasion one made the thing pursued you. I was screaming as I got to the bottom of the stairs for this man was through the back door. Gran ran down the stairs as I ran up to meet here and then I was in her arms, safe from the evils of the world, with her strong arms around me and my head resting in her ample bosom I could not have been in a more secure place. The man explained that I had thrown a big lump of mud, or at least that is what he thought it was, at his car and he was about to catch me and take me to the Police station. He was told in no uncertain terms to get out of the house and the garden, which he decided after tasting a bit of Gran's wrath to do. After he had gone I went through a bit of it myself. Yes, I remember Jack's house and I remember Les's ball of string too.

Eventually Old Jack had to give up his beloved football and his cricket too. He developed a stomach ulcer but insisted on going to The Ball Tree to relive again with one player or another a particular match. I believed he remembered them all as they drank their beer and Jack stuck to his pint of milk which the Landlord stocked just for him.

There came that fateful dark late November afternoon when Jack, dressed in his normal dark clothing, stepped off the kerb thinking no doubt of the late tackle of a certain game, or the day they won two cups, or was it some no ball or old Ned's broken leg? He probably saw it all in that store of memories, but he didn't see the car, nor did he hear it, but poor Old Jack was OUT.

The majority of houses in the old village in those days, with few exceptions, were tied cottages, that is until the forty Council houses that made up the remainder of Busticle Lane were built.

These were known as Millfield cottages. I had never heard of a mill standing in this area but the name implies that one did and Dad remembers it well, having more than once climbed its lofty heights.

Chapter XVII
MILLFIELD COTTAGES

Millfield was very much the area where my young days were spent. It was a collection of forty Council houses situated along Busticle and Bulpit Lanes, with an area opposite the Beehives Stores which had a short road leading to the Green.

Number one started next door to the house of Old Jack and was the home of the Steers. Nellie, until recently moving, had lived at home here with Mum and Dad and two brothers Ted and Fred, there was an elder brother but he was in the Army.

Number two as the home of the Heathers. They were a family of little people and were relatives to others of that name up the village.

Number three housed the family of Brockhurst, a brother of Ned. This family was that of Daniel. Like so many in others in the village Daniel could put his hand to other things than that from which he made his living and in this case it was boot repairs. Young Fred was just a bit younger than me but we were good friends and played many games of football together.

Number four was the home of the Styles. Mr Styles had been a carter up at Street Farm and that of Church Farm, but one day while unloading from the cart of the shackler he fell and hurt his back. The shackler duties referred to are those of the single horse on the farm who normally do all the odd jobs like carting for the cattle and sheep and fetching the straw and hay. By keeping a shackler for these tasks it allowed the teams to get on with the cultivating work without interruptions. Anyway, not being able to work, the tied cottage he lived in was required for his replacement and so a Council house was allocated. There were three boys and a girl in the family. Nipper was the eldest and I well recall him during the war, where because of his driving duties in his civilian life he was allocated to driving duties in the RAF. He drove a Queen Mary, so called I suppose because of its massive length needed for the task it had of conveying aircraft, or at least parts of them, around the country. The two other boys were Curly and Nobby, what a couple of lads they were. Unlike Nipper they were right tearaways, always so full of life. They were great fun on the football field and really got stuck in, in the days when the sport was far more of a contact game than it is today. Their sister must have had her work cut out to keep up with those two, I'm sure.

Number five was where you would go if you wanted your chimney swept. You would surely be greeted with a smile here, for one seldom left the face of Pat Kelly. The name of Pat had me bemused for a few years for it was a name that I always associated with girls, and how was I to understand all those years ago that Pat was Irish and that Pat was obviously short for Patrick.

I can picture the man in number six, but as I write the name evades me. I do remember that the house was pretty quiet though.

May had only to move a couple of doors down from her mother's house to occupy number seven. I had a lot of time for May and she was a very good friend to my old mother.

Number eight stood on the corner of the approaches to the green, half facing Busticle Lane and half the short road up to the green as though not quite being able to make up its mind to which it belonged. It had a strange shaped garden with a long triangular shaped front area which appeared to slip around the house to connect up with another piece at the back, creating the shape of a seven. The whole garden was encased in a long privet hedge that was kept to a height of about four foot six. It was this hedge that always reminds me of Mr Vincent. To clip this long hedge was a tedious and laborious task. Mr Vincent acquired a short piece of a horse mower knife and mower bed and by fixing a handle on each piece was able to proceed along this hedge, holding the bed still with one hand whilst operating the blade with the other. It was many years from that time that I saw the first hedge trimmer using precisely the same components, only now reduced in size and fitted with an electric motor. Mr Vincent could have made a fortune for himself had he have been able to put his implement on the market at that time.

Hedge trimmer or no, it was still some task to cut the privet hedge of number nine because it was at least nine feet high. Behind it, in what seemed to be a constantly damp front garden, was the home of the Elliot family. It was here that May had lived. The elder son was a lot

older than me and was, I recall, well respected. He was a very keen and a very good runner, but most of all he was I understand a newspaper reporter. He had a younger brother who was still older than I although I had played in the same football team on at least a couple of occasions. Here again I was confused by the name they called him, of Dippy. In fact, it's meaning only came to be a long, long time later when I saw his name on paper as D P Elliot.

Number ten was the second of the two houses that sat truly beside the short road that led to the green. Dressed as all women seemed to have been as I recall in those days was Mrs Davies. She was a tall, rather plump woman as once again most of them seemed to be, with her obviously long hair done up in a bun at the back of her head, she would wear a dark dress down to her calves and a wrap around pinafore. It seemed in a lot of cases that people with different names lived together in the same houses. They were either grandchildren, lodgers or, as in some cases, children of a previous marriage. So it was with Mrs Davies because firstly her granddaughters lived with her for a time, they were Pat and Winnie, also there was a lodger named Bill Leggatt. Bill was the shepherd up at Yew Tree Farm and at one time, not content with a sheep dog, had an Afghan Hound that seemed to come up to his shoulder. The hedge of number ten not only encased the front garden but ran past the house and encased most of the rear garden too. It was the bottom boundary of the green.

A pair of houses stood at each end of the green. Numbers eleven and twelve were to be found at the southern end. Number eleven was another with the high hedge around it. Mr and Mrs James lived here in the seclusion given by that high hedge and to me they always seemed out of place because Mr James either owned or managed a grocers shop in South Street, Lancing. All the others that lived in the cottages made their living with manual labour, and that alone made Mr James the odd one out.

Mr James moved out for what reason I know not and the house was occupied by the Childs family. As Mr James went so did the hedge, and with its going allowed number eleven to become an integral part of the green. Mr Childs worked at Yew Tree Farm as the poultry manager and I believe he helped out with the dairying at time to time.

The Burgess boys seemed to stay a long time at home before they set out on their own. Perhaps it was their mother's cooking as she worked away in the kitchen of number twelve. The boys were quite grown up it seems when most of us were small. I recall that on Sunday lunchtimes they would have a couple of pints down at The Ball Tree, as we were to do at a later time. On arriving home and the dinner not ready the old lady would usher them out of her kitchen, because I think I am right in saying that there were at least three of them at home at one time, and they would soon get into her way. Sitting on the grass on the green they would giggle and muck around as young men are apt to do, especially young men with a couple of pints in them, as we little ones stood around watching them, bemused by their antics and lost by their humour. They were eventually all to move out to a bungalow in Abbey Road.

Ted Steer, along with his wife Sis, was to raise his family in that house after the Burgess boys had moved on. I call her Sis at this time and it is the first time I have done so since I did that many years ago and got oh so very severely rebuked by my old Gran for doing so. So well was the lesson learnt that should I see her tomorrow I would call her Mrs Steer. Ted worked for Mr Bushby and drove their horse. I went to work one morning down to St Johns Farm to find a deep circular rut in the bedding of the hovel. It was a trench where the hooves of Ted's horse had travelled that circular journey in an effort to relieve it of the gripes, for to allow it to lie down it would twist a gut and die. Ted had other little jobs as well, and very much like my father seemed to be working all the time. Maureen, the eldest girl, would call the lady next door Gog. I would call her Gran.

It was here that my grandparents lived. They were my father's parents and spent many happy years in number thirteen.

Above the front doors of the houses of Millfield Cottages was a concrete porch top. Under that porch and behind that door would be found Tom Chatfield, his good wife, two daughters and son Billy. Most families have a relation that was affected by the war. Tom had lost a leg in the First World War and used an old motorbike and side car to furnish the lack of mobility that his missing leg caused. He worked later as a tractor driver up at Linfields on the hills. His young son Billy, at this time about seventeen, was no doubt the apple of his eye but he still had to

be disciplined. What the youngster had done this particular day I don't know, but old Tom was in a right old stink as he gave chase to young Bill. Indoors ran young Bill with Tom hobbling close behind, unbuckling his belt. Billy ran upstairs and Tom followed. There was no escape for the young un unless he did something daring and that is what he chose to do, by climbing out of the landing window and swung from the porch to the ground. That was the only mental picture I have of young Billy Chatfield. War was declared soon after and Billy was away to the Fleet Air Arm. Tom lost a leg in the First World War and a son in the early part of the Second. Years later the handicap he had lived with all those years hindered him getting clear of his tractor as it rolled over on the steep hill and Tom was gone too. Old Mrs Chatfield lived for many happy years later and the cheerfulness of them all lives on in the ready greeting of the two girls, Rosie and Flossie.

Number fifteen was where each evening Mont Perham would come home after a day with the horses at Pullen-Burrys. Mrs Perham was often along with my Mother for a cup of tea and Father got on quite well with the son John. John lived a quiet life after the war, having been knocked about quite a bit in Italy. He was an Infanteer in that bloody battle for the Monastery at Casino and finished his Army life with a steel plate in his head. He also had a sister who was named Rosie. The family had replaced the previous tenants, the Atrills, and saw Tom's house occupied by Mr and Mrs Stamp who was a bus driver for many years.

My good old friends Derek and Ernie lived with their sister, mother and father in sixteen. We all grew up pretty much together and I slotted between the ages of Derek and Ernie, being younger than Ernie but older than Derek. Mr Foster worked in the nurseries at Lancing before we worked in similar ones at Cokeham. He kept us well supplied with tomatoes having been allowed to bring home the ones that were distorted in shape or had split after a surge of growth was faster than the skin would allow. Mr Foster had had his body twisted by the horrors of the first war but managed a normal and cheerful life. The second war was to affect them even more dramatically. On the morning that the second war broke I was sent home from my paper round when the siren went, to find Eadie next door in a right "tiz waz" because she couldn't get her gas mask on. Thank God on that day and the many more that followed we were never called upon to use their protection. Ernie left us to join the Navy. He was home on one of his leaves and during the day did some gardening for his father, sowing seeds and placing little sticks at the end of the rows so that his father could see from where they should appear. In the evening he would go out with the boys and unlike him he got badly drunk on a couple of occasions. I feel sure looking back at those times now that Ernie had some premonition that something was afoot. Not too many days after his return to ship that the dreaded telegram arrived to inform his parents that he had perished in the icy waters of a Russian convoy. Derek and I were quite often in each other's company in the years that followed. It was he who had the privilege to knock me out for the first time. We had some stupid childish argument, like kids do, and Derek went to kick me because at that age I was his physical superior, and in bending to catch his foot he hit me on the chin with it and out I went, but I do believe it frightened him far more than it did I. Weeks after the telegram about Ernie had been received Mr Foster went to see how the seeds he had sown were progressing and was astonished to see that the two sticks Ernie had marked the row with had taken root as well. No one was allowed to remove them and for the next twenty years they flourished and grew into sizeable trees, always creating to us all a memory of Ernie. Progress in the shape of garages was the reason for their eventual disposal, but we will always remember Ernie and his trees.

Number seventeen. That's home. That's where I was given shelter, food, clothing, discipline, but most of all love.

Firstly, our neighbour in eighteen was Mrs Kimber, who at the time I remember had had children but they had long since grown up and left home. What discipline she bestowed on them I don't know, but she seemed to have plenty over to attack us with. Times galore she would appear to stop us playing one game or other, or to get us to clear up the bits and pieces that undoubtedly had appeared on the green. One day it all changed, Mrs Kimber left and the Groves moved in. Mr Groves was another of the carters of Pullen-Burrys and worked in the area called De Coy. Three boys constituted the family, Jack, Doug and Tony. Tom was to educate me into what happens when you have one over the eight. One Christmas, and it was a white one, Tom came home with old George Stovell. It seemed so strange to see Tom and George playing snowballs as they came up the road to the green and Mrs Groves seemed quite eager to get him indoors. In the afternoon I went into eighteen to see the toys of the boys, to be greeted by the sight of Tom lying on the settee

moaning merrily away to himself, for there was very little sympathy coming from any other source. One would think that us boys could have learnt a lesson from Tom that day but I'm sure that like me they too spent a few hours later on in sheer misery moaning to oneself in much the same way that Tom was that day.

Nineteen found us at the northern end of the green and at the home of Mr Lloyd and his good lady Mrs Lloyd and daughter Pat. There was a break in Mr Lloyd's fence for like old Tom Chatfield he too owned a motorcycle and side car. They were the only motor machines to be found at that time in Millfield Cottages. They were patient and kind to us kids were the Lloyds and I recall at least two picnics they organised with about twenty of us kids. The picnic took place at the top of Dankton Lane and Mr Lloyd would take all the goodies on his sidecar as we would all walk up there. Great fun would be had as we all tramped off together, on arrival the sandwiches and cakes would be enjoyed and washed down with homemade lemonade, games would be played, organised and controlled by Mrs Lloyd, and then the trek home, all tired and happy.

Mr and Mrs Lindup, next door in number twenty, had me in their house on many, many occasions. They had a daughter, Joan, and a boy, Tony. Tony, although a couple of years older than me, shared the many interests that I had but mainly two were in the fore, football and farming. I say he shared them, perhaps being that much older he developed them. We would spend hours with a tennis ball, tapping it to and fro or heading it against one wall or other that at that time transformed into goalposts. We were always Cliff Bastin, George Male, Eddie Hapgood or any of the popular footballers of the day, but most Arsenal players. Farming was great fun because Tony had an extensive farm of lead animals. One great one he had was a pair of horses and a plough. The plough was a great replica in miniature and outside Tony's gate, where the tread of feet had powdered the soil into dust, it made proper little furrows as it travelled the length over and over again. When it was wet the bid dining table in Mrs Lindup's front room took on the shapes and textures of arable field and meadow.

Leading us back down to the Beehive Stores along the short road down the slight hill was number twenty one. The first occupants I remember were the Shergolds. Their image is very dim, but not that of their Scottish Terrier. Their garden bordered the green with another of those long privet hedges and it was beneath this cover that that little devil would hide in wait. Soon one or the other of us children would forget a previous close shave and would get too close to the dreaded hedge. Out would dart that Terrier and grab what it could, more often than not it would be a sock, but sometimes its teeth would puncture the skin and a rumpus would take place between one parent or another.

They eventually departed and on the scene came Mr and Mrs Searle. Mr Searle had been another of the carters of Pullen-Burrys, but now he was to retire and his tied cottage allocated to whomever it was that took his place. Mrs Searle had been married before and her children from the previous marriage came with her, once again confusing my young mind with so many names.

The other house of this pair was number twenty two. George, Horace and Peggy lived here with their old mum, Mrs Stovell. George never married and was an old soldier who, when I was a young soldier in Colchester, told me to look out for a pub called "The Caledonian" because hanging in there I would find George's picture contained in a frame of Army hard tack. I don't need to tell you that I never found his picture and, come to that, I never found "The Caledonian". Perhaps after all there is such a pub and perhaps after all there was such a picture, but if so I am sure it would have crumbled years ago. Horace played many years for Sompting football team. I enjoyed watching him play and have enjoyed many conversations with him because years later he has been my neighbour.

Number twenty three was another of those houses that couldn't make up its mind whether it was in the green or on Busticle Lane as it stood like a lady on a horse, side saddle, neither I thought one thing or the other. Here lived the Miles family. They were quite a large family but I had little to do with them apart from Les and Jack. Once again I was between their ages, a little older than Les or "Darkie" as he was known, and a little younger than Jack or "Kakki" as was his sad luck to be called. They were both good looking young men, both being fit and daring. Kakki was a born leader, at least in his boyhood days, although later as a sailor I don't think he took the role he was so fitted for. There are many escapades that Kakki was involved in and I was with him on one or two, as was his brother "Darkie". I know that he of times led us in our carol singing

quests and would be the one to knock and get the money. He always wore Wellingtons on these outings and it was a long time later that I realised that a couple of pennies each time found their way inside them. They liked fishing. It was their fear of losing some lines that they had laid at sea, that caused them to put to sea to try to save them from a storm that was forecast, that was their undoing. They were two boys that had always taken risks, but they were always calculated risks, today they miscalculated and the storm struck before they had completed their task, and their young lives were given to the sea.

Harry Peacock lived next door whenever he was home from his travels with his beloved steam threshing tackle. Away from the rattles and squeaks of all that machinery rotating at the same time Harry lived a rather quiet life.

The Railway Station at Lancing was kept running very efficiently by Harry Slaughter, who occupied number twenty five. Harry was a big man and always seemed to have a small part of a cigarette in his mouth. It would remain in his mouth for the whole of its existence. I would be fascinated as I watched it because the smoke would seem to curl from it up his nose, creating a constant battle between it and the air he breathed as to which would arrive in his lungs first. He was often at home, which was amazing really for although one would see him at home, whenever one passed the station he seemed to be there also. Mrs Slaughter was an invalid and was confined to a chair. They had a son, Dennis, and a daughter, Rosemary. Dennis, with the help of Harry, had a thriving little business in the back shed. It was bicycle repairs. It all seemed to start in a modest way with mending punctures and eventually grew too big for the back shed and moved to a shop in Lancing, which not only dealt in bicycles but also in motorcycles as well. During the war the knowledge he had accrued gave him the rank of Sergeant in the Commando.

I remember little of the house next door, but am fully acquainted with those in twenty seven. Another large family lived here, the Aylmores. Bernie and Dudley were the ones of the family that I was in the company of most, but in Youth Club days there was Lilly. Fred the elder boy I had played football locally with and, of course, I saw Florrie about. Bernie was the one who was good for a few laughs when we were young and went about saddled with the nick name of Squirty.

A haircut was another of those back shed affairs that were common then and I was always sent to Alan Davey for mine, who would not only manage to pull my hair with those old hand clippers but would tease me until the tears flowed. He lived at number twenty eight. Mrs Davey came from the Scottish Islands and apart from her extremely good nature she had the greatest ability to peel a potato, discarding the thinnest peel I have ever seen. Peter, Jean and Joan were the three children of the family and were considerably older than I. Every Christmas we, that is the elder three of our family, for that is all there was of us at that time, were guaranteed to get a present from each of the Daveys. Alan was a very good carpenter and I have heard it said that he was the best and I have no need to deny that. He built the shed that stood for years up our garden.

My Grandmother Stoner was very friendly with the woman next door to the Daveys, as indeed was my Mother. It was Mrs Leslie. Mr Leslie years later was to write a nice bit for the local paper about my old Grandfather Stoner when he went to the big Stable.

The old flint pit was daily to see two generations of the Souter family as they tended their pigs. Number thirty was to see and house the third. I was to spend many hours in the company of Peter, the eldest, and to I hope share pity on his asthma as he stopped his activities so many times to try to breathe normally. A working life found me in the company of the next boy Tony. The others of the family, which included Michael, Terry and the only girl, Brenda, no doubt would be companions to my younger brothers and sisters as they grew up together.

On the corner was the house which was a lot lower than the ground around it and required steps to descend to its back door. For over sixty years a Lawson descended those steps until just a few years ago, when no more than a week after she moved, the last Lawson left the village, and the world, behind.

Bulpit Lane now took over to create an address for the remainder of the cottages, starting at thirty three. Bert, Bill and Anne were the Riddles children that lived here with their parents. Anne married Pat Kelly and no doubt it was she that kept Pat smiling all those years. Bert spent most of his life in the company of horses, as did the elder brother Harry whom I forgot to mention. I went with Bert a lot when he was on the farm, but in the days when he was a coalman I had

grown too big. His days with the horses ceased when a lorry took the place of that faithful steed and he stayed with that until he retired. Even today Bert has a full set of harness brasses and leathers that could adorn a pair of cart horses without hardly any attention at all. He was in his young days a very good footballer and had the chance to play for Brighton, but in those days the life of a footballer was not that which it is today and he stayed with his friends the horses. Bill, his younger brother, did not take after his desire to work with horses, but did his desire to play football. He was a regular for a good few seasons with Worthing.

Eadie Stovell married and obtained the name of Hale, and also obtained the tenancy of thirty four. I liked Eadie very much and never do I remember her speaking to me without there was a smile on her face and a smile in her voice also.

Number thirty five. There should be a plaque on the wall here, for this is where I was born. My parents having married had no house to go to and Mr and Mrs Tugnet allowed them the back room as they had but one son, Gerald. It was in that back room one stormy night in March that I first arrived in Sompting. It was nineteen twenty seven and the great strike was over. My Father had started out with his own horse and cart on a haulage business. The strength of the business was the haulage of pipes from the station to the local nurseries. Came the strike, no trains, no pipes, no work, no money, no repayments and, of course, no business. Perhaps he could start again, but along came I, and eventually my five brothers and sisters, and the thoughts of his own business, although still there, became more and more a dream instead of a reality.

The Greens who came to live at thirty seven came into the village as the family of a carter, as indeed Mr Green was in his early days. The three boys of Len, Les and Dave were to share with me many games, adventures and work during the years that lay ahead of us.

The Lock family lived next door and had the pleasure, as did all of those who lived in Bulpit Lane, to look out over the farm land.

I had two mates who lived in the last pair of those cottages known as Millfield. They were Norman Farrow in thirty nine and John Cobden in forty. Norman and I for about four years were inseparable and spent many happy outings together either up the hills or in the towns of Brighton and Worthing, several times having to walk home from both of them when on obviously different occasion we had spent our last pennies. Rita and Quen were also good friends of mine but his younger brother and I had little to do with each other. Their parents, Mr and Mrs Farrow, were indeed lovable people and I greatly respected them both.

John next door was the youngest of three boys, the other two being George and Harry. John was the youngest, Harry in the middle and George the eldest. It was George that first took me to school for a small payment each week. He must have had a good little business going because I think it was four of us he took altogether. Two would be seated on the carrier of his bike, one on the bar and the other on the handlebar. We would proceed along Bulpit Lane to the junction with Dankton Lane and so on down to the school at Loose Lane. There was hardly any risk of getting knocked over other than by horse and cart and that was not very likely.

Those then were the Council houses at our end of Sompting. The central point was the green, where owing to the number of children present it was nicknamed The Lambing Yard.

Chapter XVIII

GRANNIE'S

Along the top of the green were three pair of cottages. The one at the south end was number thirteen. Number thirteen was the home of my Grandmother, on my Father's side. My Father was one of just two boys and was the only one of these to have any children, and as I was the eldest I was lucky enough to be the eldest grandchild. As such I spent what must have been half of my young life in number thirteen with my old Gran.

Underneath the porch that covered the entrance to the front door there were two doorsteps, the first being large and semi circular while the second, on top of the first and close to the door, was rectangular. These steps have always reminded me of my Gran. She would every day, unless the weather made it impossible, be seen in the morning kneeling at those steps with her piece of chalk and on rising would leave for the world to see a lovely brilliant white doorstep. Everybody who called could not possibly miss that step and if they knew what was good for them they would not step on it. No one ever used the front door and so there never was any need to step on it, all callers were to call at the back door. This system was probably a hangover from the old farm cottage days when to call at the front door of the cottage required on to open and shut the front gate to protect the garden from the animals, whereas the back door invariably opened on the yard.

The small garden that stood each side of the front door and slid away around the corner to the back door was the domain of Gran, for it always seemed to be below the dignity of men in those days to be seen messing about in the small front garden. The garden was bordered all along the path with large flints that had been collected from other parts of the garden and of these there was no shortage as we shall see. Acting as companions to these flints were the row of London Pride that grew profusely by their side and kept the old English Pinks and numerous other plants in their place between the path and the ever present privet hedge.

The back door was in fact situated on the south end of the cottage, a position that exposed it to the wet quarter of the south west. This direction that in tune with other country areas was known as Will's Mother's, and was the direction that the majority of our rain came from. No doubt that at some time some farm worker had looked to the south west and saw the dark clouds forming over the roof of the house that housed the mother of young Will and had referred to it in such a manner that generations later that direction was affectionately known it seems forever as Will's Mother's.

There was in most of the cottages a short passage to the front door and in that passage on the right a small door giving access to the coal hole. This coal hole was present in number thirteen, but as the rain would beat into the corridor from the exposed opening, the Council had erected an outside door. Even after the back door was reached the passage continued for another couple of yards until it opened out into the kitchen. At this point a heavy curtain hung and not only kept out the draft that had managed to evade the two doors, but hid the gas meter that sat up high, forever swallowing its never ending craving for pennies.

This kitchen of my Gran's was I am sure the most secure place in the world and to me would forever not only bring memories of life long gone and past, but memories of love that were given with no request of return. One loved in those far oft days because when you are small you need to be loved, and in later days one loved out of gratitude of being loved by people who would prove to be irreplaceable.

The kitchen was the place where living was to be done. It was here that all the requirements of life could and would be found. It was dark in there for only a small window of a dozen small panes was allocated to allowing light to enter and that was high on the westerly side so that only the sky and the tips of the back privet were visible through it. Immediately left on entering this room was the kitchen coal burning range. It was coal burning for the purpose of

everyday use but had the ability to open at the top to allow logs to be burn in the winter evening, allowing each to sit and watch the flickering flames as they presented, one with a fantasy, another with a hope and a third with a memory, each quiet in their own world as the gentle heat of their burning lulled you into a stupor of comfort and near sleep. This range had three places for pots, the places having circular recesses the tops of which could be removed to allow more heat to the base of the pot, or for the purpose of cleaning the flues. The black lead brushes coated with the black lead had been used daily on this old range until the shine was so deep it appeared you could place your arm inside it. It was like Gran's front step, an object of pride. High above the range was the mantelpiece with its fabric fringe whose tassels would hang in unison along its length. Each end of the mantelpiece stood a couple of commemoration mugs of the First World War, one was for my Father and the other for his brother, my uncle Fred. They remained in their position long after both Father and uncle had left home, seemingly copying those that they were there to commemorate by not leaving their post. Their duties now though long since changed as they created resting places for the pipes of the lodger Joe, and the stubs of pencils and such like that Grandfather stowed away.

Standing by the side of the range, in its dark stain coat with its shining brass handles, was the door to the bathroom. It was in here until I reached the age of twelve years that I was a prisoner of Gran, as she insisted on bathing me. Here again in the interior of this little room little thought had been given to allowing the light to share the interior with us, for a window of a mere six small panes took on what role there was. The bath on one side had a narrow path along its length that led to a copper, which was really situated in a recess at the back of the range. It was from this copper, under which a fire had to be lit, that the only supply of hot water apart from the kettle could be gained. I don't think Gran ever washed me on bath night, the experience always comes back as a scrub, after which my nails would be cut and then I would be required to attire myself in clean woollen vest, I'm sure we never wore pants. My nails were and for that matter still are very sensitive and to expect me to touch that wool after they had been cut was far more than I could bring myself to do. I would clench my fist as tight as I could to protect those nails from any contact at all. That bathroom was also a haven where I spent many hours with Gran. There was until air raids made it two, one thing that Gran could not abide and that was thunder. Whenever a storm had broken, or preferably before it had done so, she would rush around the house making sure that knives and forks were put away and that all mirrors were covered and then into the bathroom. There she would sit with the small window covered by a curtain and on the fold down cover to the bath her constant companion at such times, the candle, flickering away as it stood comfortingly in its candlestick. I avoided Gran's on Mondays. Monday was wash day. Where it all came from I can't begin to think, but there seemed to be pile upon pile of washing. The old bathroom would undergo a massive attack, it would stand there aghast, just as though its mouth stood open, so its door was jammed back wide and steam would bellow forth as a procession of sheets, shirts, trousers and all the rigmarole of the fabric of life would spew out. That same evening, when the men came home, it all looked as though it had just been another day in the life of that small room. I knew better for I had been called upon to help fold the sheets when I had arrived back from school.

Next to the bathroom door, tucked into the corner and under the kitchen window, was the gas stove. I don't know for sure but I wouldn't be surprised if this wasn't the first gas stove that Gran had ever had. It was on this stove that the Sunday roast would be cooked. What was left of that joint, along with the potatoes and cabbage or probably pickles, would be Monday's meal. On Tuesday it would be either pie or a pudding and on Wednesday some form of stew or hot pot. Thursday could well be offal of some description and Friday would not be Friday without the fish. Saturday would see some meal that would differ, but most weeks the menu would be similar. They were, although quite repetitive, very wholesome and enjoyable.

Above the stove, on the windowsill of the small window, stood a receptacle that had me baffled for years. It was a pear shaped bottle with a long neck that stood in another bottle not dissimilar to that of a sweet jar. The sweet jar had sufficient water in it to enable the neck of the other bottle to remain submerged the whole time. Each day Grandfather, along with the meticulous checking of his watch, would also check this bottle. Looking at it he would declare the type of weather we could expect, or that the weather we were enjoying was on the change. These

two bottles were his barometer. No doubt there were many, many more of these about but I never saw another. I later found out that the water in the jar was, as all things are, subject to the pressure of the air. As high pressure pushes down on the water in the jar, so it is forced up the neck of the other bottle. It was therefore by noticing the level of the water in the bottle neck that he was able to forecast the weather. I thought he was jolly clever and come to that I still do.

By the side of the small window, but standing below it, stood the only sink in the house. It stood beside its companion the wooden draining board, whose colour was light brown. It was here in the corner that all the vegetables were prepared and the meals got ready. It was also here that the washing up was done with the aid of hot water either heated on the gas stove or on the kitchen range, because there was just one tap over the small sink and that was for cold water. During the evening both men would stand at that sink as their daily ablutions were accounted for. On the right just above the sink was a small shelf on which the razors were kept, below this was the leather strap over which the razors were slapped to get and maintain their sharp edge.

Those then were the main tasks of the old sink in the corner, but there were other not so regular tasks that she was used for. Bicycles were the main mode of transport for the work classes at that time and with the roads much more flinty than those we are used to today the tyres came in for their fair share of punctures. Many an evening the water in the sink gurgled merrily away at the discovery of one or two punctures. Patches, adhesive and French chalk applied, the sink reverted to her normal tasks. One of her regular tasks during the long dark winter was in the company of my Grandfather to wash out and prepare for the next day his carbide lamp. Although battery lamps were in at that time my Grandfather stuck loyally to his old lamp. It consisted of a small water tank at the bottom into which a piece or a couple of pieces of carbide would be placed. The action of water on the carbide gave off a gas that could only escape through two small holes in the main jet that was positioned above the tank and behind a glass front to the lamp. The escaping gas, when lit, gave sufficient light when thrown through the glass to allow the rider to see his way. Each night those jets had to be cleaned and the interior of that lamp prepared for its consignment of water and carbide in the morning. The bicycle to which the lamp would be fitted was a heavy upright affair and Grandfather would never mount it in the way that is seen today, by placing one foot on a pedal and throwing the other leg over the saddle. He, like most of his age group, would have an extension fitted to the rear wheel spindle and by standing at the rear of the machine, with one foot on the extension, he would propel the machine forward with a push from the other leg and then by using the extension rise up and forward to be seated on the saddle.

Next to the sink, within the wall that ran at right angles to it, was the door that not only gave access to the front room but was, until many years later, the only way to get from the kitchen to the stairs. This meant that a journey through the front room was necessary each time you wished to reach them. Many years later these doors were blocked off and another made in the wall opposite the front door allowing the front room to be isolated if that was what was required.

All around the kitchen close to the ceiling ran a shelf that in the case of Gran's, and for that matter many others, had a trimmed wall paper fringe decorating its edge. The shelf was used for many things in the different houses but in Gran's it housed mainly her needlework basket and the radio, which had little use until the weekend. Below that shelf along that long wall of the kitchen were three hanging things. Centrally was the calendar, carefully prepared with rings around the dates that should not for one reason or another be forgotten. Each side of this was a picture. On the right was a copy of that famous study of an antlered deer, "The Monarch of the Glen". I can recall it now standing in the deep heather, its head held high displaying that glorious set of antlers, but its eyes clear and aware of its surroundings and the obvious possible danger. I have it still, but today it would look out of place to me in my more modern home. I would prepare to keep it and to know that it once adorned my old Gran's wall. The other picture was a complete contrast in style to that proud animal. It was in fact cut from a calendar that was given to Gran by her butcher. Each tradesman would give their customers some such token of thanks at Christmas time for their loyal custom all the year, now we have to give them. This picture of a little girl standing there, about four or five years old, and in her hand was a bottle of milk with a teat on, drinking from it was a young lamb that stood on its rear legs, its front feet upon her chest, was cut from the calendar of Bernie Hodson the butcher. The year was one of those in the early thirties

and so she and I were pretty much the same age. She was, although she never knew it, to grow up with me. Over the next couple of decades as her likeness hung there never ageing a day, Gran and I would discuss and wonder her progress as we together proceeded from one age to another. Infants to juniors, juniors to seniors, seniors to leaving school. So it was with never ever being aware of it she shared the lives of Gran and I. She too is probably now a gran, but in a way she is lucky because to me she is still a little girl of but four or five. It was, we were once told, a local photograph and so after all perhaps at some time we have met.

Grandfather was a short man of no more than five feet six inches tall. A balding head surmounted a face that wore a moustache trimmed in the fashion of the time, much associated with the soldier of the 14-18 war. His clothes were of the hard wearing type that all working men of the day wore, but he never wore any other footwear than that which he called his South African boots, a heavy tipped and hobnailed leather boot. His chair was beside the curtain which kept the draft from the room. Behind the curtain hung his jacket with the large interior pocket of the poacher. He was forever going to that jacket whose pockets contained a various assortment of patent medicines, most made by Beechams. It was a standing joke that should old Beecham die he would leave Grandfather in this will, out of gratitude for the amount of his medicines that he consumed.

He spent many hours paying attention to his feet. He had trouble with corns and two or three times a week would see him in the light of the candle that flickered its light on the floor in front of him and armed with his trusted pocket knife he would pare off the top of the offending protrusion of hardened skin. Whenever he obtained new socks he demanded the toes be removed and my Gran kept him supplied with several sets of rags that he would wrap around them. Toe rags, I was assured, were a popular piece of clothing in his young day and he never changed from the habit of using them.

Joe Brown had been taken in as a lodger when he was a young man and I was never quite sure if he was related or not. Grandfather's sister, Annie, had married a Mark Brown, who was Joe's uncle, so whether relation or not the ties were close. The temporary accommodation that was offered him lasted until his death some forty years later.

Joe was a bigger man than my Grandfather and had a heavy red face that went well with his red hair. He had been a soldier in the Great War and saw action fighting the Turks. All the time I knew him his working life was filled with the driving of a tipper lorry locally delivering sand, ballast and such like commodities. When relaxing he loved to smoke his old pipe. I well remember seeing him sitting in the garden one fine Sunday reading the paper and smoking his beloved pipe, but also operating his sparrow trap. For his trap he used the garden sieve, a circle of wire mesh surrounded by a circular side of wood about four inches deep. This would be propped up with a short bit of wood that had a piece of string tied to it which trailed away until the other end was arrived at in Joe's hand. Beneath this "Heath Robinson" affair some bread was scattered as bait and each time the unsuspecting sparrow was attracted to it the string was pulled and the sieve fell, trapping it. Joe would painstakingly pluck and draw these little birds and when sufficient had been caught Gran would make him a sparrow pie. Joe liked his pint on a Sunday lunchtime and must have liked the company of his friend even more, because although there were public houses so much closer he would cycle all of four miles to the "Rising Sun" at Beeding to drink his favourite beverage in his favourite company. He never had more than a couple for he knew that as soon as they started to affect him and it showed, Gran would close the door on him for she disliked drinking. "Filthy old beer shops" she called them.

Through the door to the front room was like stepping into the past and years later when I had children my boys would select the right phrase when they would say "Can we go in the museum Gran?" This room, that was only used at Christmas time, was to my Gran a hive of memories.

Behind the door was a large picture of a young man. He was quite good looking and held his head up high, obviously proud of the sailor's uniform that he wore. It was Gran's youngest brother, Jack, and the sailor's uniform was the last clothes that he wore because he never returned to have another photo taken.

The heavy curtains hanging over the back window subdued the light that tried to enter and made the green baize cloth on the table beneath even darker, but this shaded area was liked by the big aspidistra that stood upon it. It was a possession of Gran's mother and I now have it. It must be well over a hundred years old without being disturbed and at the last count had seventy five leaves. It is too vast and old fashioned to be on display and now spends its years growing older in the quiet spare bedroom.

Built in cupboards and a dresser were standard fittings on the wall that separated the house from its neighbour, but not so the large dinner service that proudly presented itself for approval. Situated among these pieces were mementos that I knew not the origin, but they had a place in the life of Gran. High on the mantelpiece with its tasselled cloth cover stood the big marble clock and, far below, the open fireplace encased by the shining fender with its brass hearth set reflecting what light rays had managed to reach it. A table stood back in the recess beside the fire and seemed as though there was no room for any more photos on it, as each new member of the family took its place among them.

Above this table, hanging on the wall, were a pair of pictures depicting a man and his noble friends, the heavy cart horse. The first of these was "Noontide". It was a scene taken quite close to the farm buildings which could be clearly seen between the trees that separated the field from the farm. The trees half stopped the view of the whole farm but could not even check the chicken that had overflowed from the yard to the newly ploughed soil, at which they scratched busily. The horses were still at the front of the plough as the carter stood between the handles of the stationary implement, awaiting the arrival of his wife and two young girls who were struggling over the new furrows with a basket whose coloured tea cloth was creating a mystery of its contents. It was a situation that even then had disappeared but I am sure that Gran, as a little girl, had been involved in similar scenes.

The other was "Eventide" and depicted the carter seated sideways on the horse, plodding homeward. A most pleasant form of travel that I was lucky to enjoy many times. He was leaving some buildings behind him so whether one is expected to assume he stopped for a well earned pint I am not sure. The horses' heads are low, assuming their labours have had a tiring effect upon them and the breath is showing in the evening air, making one feel that the setting sun is taking the warmth of the day with it and that the comfort of the stable and the cottage awaits around the next bend.

Situated by the wall opposite the fireplace was the sideboard, on this the pride of place was given to the stuffed birds in their glass case. Inside the sideboard was the biscuit tin that each of us, as we visited Gran, would be asked to fetch to allow us to select from its contents the biscuit we desired. Above was another pair of pictures that I have today. One was "The Sailor's Goodbye". Here was a sailor arriving on the jetty, one assumes to join the "Iron Duke" which was the large warship that lay out in the harbour. This ship was sunk before the First World War and so one accepts that the picture depicts a scene of the late eighteen or early nineteen hundreds. The second of the pair of pictures shows the sailor hurrying down the country lane and arriving at a small cottage situated high on the bank, surrounded by a full flowering garden. With a shawl around her and a stick in her hand for support his mother hurries down the steps to throw her arms around her son in his sailor uniform. It was called "The Sailor's Return".

The three piece suite that stood in the middle of the floor would have stood there forever if it was to be wear that would eventually cause it to be disposed of, for as far as I remember it was but Christmas time that it was used.

Upstairs was a very quite place and had a very solemn air about it, caused probably by the very dark stain that was used to cover the doors and banisters. It had three bedrooms. The main bedroom was that occupied by my Grandparents. The front bedroom was that put aside for Joe. When I stopped at Gran's overnight I had the smaller back bedroom. This had been the room of my Great Grandmother who had come to live with her daughter, Alice. They had lived in Hurstpierpoint, my Great Grandparents. The old man had loved his stroll and during that activity would take a rest on the seat beside the memorial. He was found there one day; he had taken his last stroll and the rest he took that day was his longest and his last. Gran had her mother to live

with her and oft discussed her with me and expressed her sorrow that I had never met her, because she had died the year before I was born.

So it was that I was to sleep in her mother's bed. It was a great big feather bed made, said Gran, of real duck down. I had great trouble with my small legs in trying to climb upon it, but managed with a little help. Once upon it I would sink into its luxurious softness and it seemed lay within rather than on it. I don't suppose at those early times that I was much more than four. I remember laying there and looking at the window one night when the wind blew strong and the rain battered against the pane. I had a feeling of continuity and belonging, of safety and warmth, and I am sure I smiled and said to those persistent raindrops "Bash away, I am safe, you can't get me".

Saturday and Sunday tea were pleasant occasions in Gran's kitchen. The table cloth was always crisp and clean, having gone through the Monday ordeal of the bathroom, and was covered it seems with plates of bread and butter, of celery, of salad, of cake and sometimes winkles which Joe would go and collect over the river at Shoreham. Gran would boil them and I would listen to their sounds as they bubbled away in the water. Did they cry out, or did I just imagine it? After tea on Saturday the wireless would be switched on and I particularly remember and like the introduction to "In Town Tonight". One would hear amongst the notes of the introduction music the sound of London traffic, followed by a voice "Stop-we stop the sound of London's traffic to bring you some of the interesting people who are In Town Tonight". On Sundays it was Radio Luxemburg and Mr O K Sauce, and when Aunt Kit was to tea all had to be quiet as she listened to the week's instalment of "Stella Dallas", probably the forerunner of today's soap operas.

At the bottom of the stairs was the larder. It was in here that Gran would make and keep her orange wine. Grandfather loved it and I don't think he was ever forgiven the day that Gran came back early from a visit to a friend to find him and Joe having a jolly good old drink. It was for the Christmas that she always made it. I was always surprised that she made it at all because she hated pubs, "Dirty old beer shops" she always called them, and I suppose that one of her big disappointments in life was when I, "The apple of her eye", made a habit of using them. Still, that was at this time, way in the future. The larder also contained pickles of many kinds and she even had pickled eggs in there. Gran had learnt many things in her young days and she put them to good use, as her larder would show.

The period of time that I write of Gran, which is the thirties and forties, has long since gone and at that time she would talk to me of a life that was as different to me then as the life I recall is to those of today. She talked of Hangleton and lived there for some time, but I am not sure if that is where she went to school. I know that she made a point of saying that as soon as she left school her box was already packed and she was off to service. In those days it seems that as soon as the opportunity arose to rid the house of one less mouth to feed it was grasped.

She went off to a house in Brighton to serve and live in. The life was hard but she said they were good to her. They clothed her with her uniform and fed her good food and I am sure she said she got no more than a pound or two per year. She managed to get home now and again and was given bits and pieces of food to take with her. The cook was her immediate employer and was very strict and accepted the responsibility of the young girls under her, not only in their work but also in their morals. Gran tells of one morning that she had off, with instructions to be back at a certain time. It was unfortunate that the said time to return to the house coincided with the passage of Queen Victoria along the Brighton sea front. I was elated as she told me this story, to think that I was listening to somebody that had actually seen Queen Victoria.

She on this occasion defied the cook and remained to see the famous lady pass. No sooner had she passed, however, when fear rose within her and she rushed back to receive cook's displeasure and punishment. It was during the days of the gas lamp and her punishment was to stand on a chair by the gas lamp with its mantle removed, thus leaving an open flame. She had to obtain from the scullery the small saucepan used for boiling eggs. With sufficient water and an egg within it she was now to stand holding this pan over the naked flame until the egg was hard boiled. It was, she had said, a punishment that not only made the arm ache but the whole body. She was at a later time a maid at The White Horse at Steyning and responsible for the bedrooms,

but disliked the job I fell because of the coarse types, as she called them, that used it. The White Horse still stands but the part that she worked was destroyed by fire many years ago.

My Grandfather's parents lived in Steyning at that time, which was at the back end of the last century, and no doubt that is where they met and married. Grandfather had driven a horse on the Hove Gas Board and I was once the proud possessor of a photo of him, his horse and van, and a framed certificate of third prize in the Brighton Horse Show of 1903. On being married they moved to a farm cottage at Horton, near Smalldole, where their two boys were born, and Grandfather was a carter on the local farm.

Out the back door of Gran's was my Grandfather's domain, the garden. It could not be clearly seen from the doorway because of a large lilac tree that grew there, not only to bestow its beauty each year with its bountiful cascade of purple flowers, but also to help shield the back door from all that dirty weather that came from over Will's Mother's. To the right, with its door facing the same direction as the back door and adjoining the house, was the toilet. It was a draughty place and about three yards too far away from the school, as I found out to my horror one day just after I had started, when feeling the need I ran all the way home and using the short cut up Gran's path was about three yards short when disaster struck. The door faced the garden path.

The garden path ran for some thirty yards in a direct line to stop at the chicken run at the bottom. Its surface was made of flints that had been collected from the garden, not that they would seem to be missing for the surface still held an abundance of them. By its side the path had the company of the clothes line for the best part of its length. Along this path on a Monday one could be sure to see Gran probably scuffing along in an old pair of Grandad's boots and his old cap on her head as she hung out, and later brought in, the washing. Around the back of the house was but a small bit of garden, but it was here that the water butt diligently collected the water that ran from the roof. It was this collected water that Gran preferred to use for the washing. Also hiding at the back of the house was the big old mangle that would receive into its big wooden rollers the washing, and by turning the big iron wheel by its handle, which I would beg to do no doubt hindering Gran on her busiest day but nevertheless allowing me to do so, the excess water was wrung from the clothes before hanging.

Around the lilac tree was the only flowers that my Grandfather tended in the garden. He did attend other flowers but they were at his work. He was about this time sixty years of age and held a steady job as a gardener for the man for whom he had laboured quite hard in previous years. He was a good gardener and I was privileged to act as his garden boy. I had dinner with my Grandparents on Sundays and was expected to earn this by my efforts with Grandad, or if it was raining, on my knees polishing the front room floor, as if it ever needed it.

As one started to go down the garden it would be hard not to notice the big apple tree that was growing there. This tree could be said to be the apple of Gran's eye, because it was grown from a pip by her mother and nothing it seemed at that time would allow her to see it moved but, progress being progress, it moved on long before Gran. However, at this time it had many more fruitful years in its place at the head of the garden.

The garden produced a multitude of different vegetables but I particularly remember the trenches of celery and leeks. These were grown to perfection. How he did that on these stony rods of land was difficult to comprehend as these crops were normally associated with soil of a texture quite divorced from that present here. He was always experimenting and I recall one time where he attempted to plant late potatoes in between the rows of wider planted early varieties. This particular experiment was a complete failure but that did not deter him.

The chicken run at the bottom of the garden was the home not only of a dozen hens but also of the old cockerel. From this family not only came the eggs for the kitchen and table, but no spring would be spring without the pleasant sight of a hen with her brood of chicks. Another run was erected to the right of the main one and it was in here that the Christmas poultry would be raised. No little birds were these, they were reared with great care and it was not only their size that is remembered, but I am sure the flavour of these birds had something that seems to be missing from those we find in the frozen store today.

Where Grandfather worked the box was keen on pigeons and it was often that one was given to Grandfather to put down, but instead he brought them home and caged them in this run. At another time he came across a clutch of pheasant eggs and put them under a broody hen. The resulting chicks made their home in that run too but I do believe that one by one they found a way out and escaped to the wild, only to become the target for some gun I expect.

It was a good job they didn't run next door because in the time of the Burgess boys they had a fox cub that had been acquired from some source tethered at the bottom, much to the annoyance of some of the neighbours who swore that it would one day get loose and kill most of their poultry. It never did, but what became of it I don't know.

Beside the chicken run was a little gate that led not only into the ground that young Jack Skinner rented but also by means of a path to the flint pit. The other side of the gate was the garden shed. This was the place that the rabbits were kept, along with all the garden crops that after harvest required shelter from the winter frosts, such as the onions and potatoes. Amongst the assorted boxes that had accumulated here there was one that contained nails and bolts and such like, as well as an old pistol. I was not allowed to mess about with it but as it was all rusty I don't suppose for one moment that it could be fired, and anyway, there was no ammunition. It was not a big pistol and had a revolving chamber that held six rounds. I spent many happy hours down there with this favourite of mine, but always ensuring that no one was about to see me.

Each weekend in the winter one task that was always done on the Sunday afternoon was that of chopping the wood. Not only that which was required for lighting and needed to be chopped fine to allow it to easily catch, but also the logs for when the kitchen range was opened up in the evening. This was done with the crosscut and the axe but sometime the stubborn old bit of Elm would require the sledge hammer with its mate, the wedge, to prepare it in its usable size.

Grandfather was very keen on politics and whenever the opportunity allowed he would discuss the world problems with one of the neighbours as they stood each side of the low privet hedge. There was at this time plans afoot to build the by-pass and nothing would convince him that the purpose was other than to enable the faster progress of the war traffic which he said would very soon travel along it. Russia ... I well remember his description of that big country. "She is", he would say, "A steam rolling nation and would crush any country that should come up against her".

It was true that the by-pass played a big part in the easy progress of war transport through the village. It was true that Russia would crush anyone that came up against her, but Grandad was not to see these things. Early in the war he was missing from his garden, his views on world politics would be heard no more. The front room that he had seldom used became his bedroom. I was never allowed to see him as he deteriorated in health. Gran said that it was better I remembered him as he was. I have since been very grateful to her because that is how I see him today, cleaning his lamp, mounting his bike, creating those lovely vegetables and spouting his politics over the privet hedge. Gran was to live for another thirty odd years and the garden was to be tended by Joe for a good many years as well, but with Grandad's passing things were never quite the same again.

Chapter XIX

HOME

Just four doors along the top o the green from my Gran's was my home. We moved here when I was probably about three or four, I don't remember actually arriving at this house, but definitely remember starting out from our previous abode. I was seated on a farm cart beside of Father, the reins in his hands as "Farmer" his horse clopped along with the cart that contained our complete possessions and, to make things worse, part of that load was a rabbit hutch. The house was the same as Gran's in construction, but that is about as far as the likeness went. Soon, though, with the goodwill of the family and friends bits of carpets were on the floor and odd bits of furniture adorned the rooms. It was a house with bits and pieces in it that over the years got transformed into a home by the combined efforts of my Father and Mother.

Mum was a little dumpy woman and although I shared a part of her young life I always seem to recall her when she was in early middle age, at which time she had given birth to myself and six other children. She was the eldest of four children and often told me that her own childhood had not been that of a happy child. As soon as she was able to work she was dispatched to service, although she came home at night. Coming home at night was not a blessing to her because she was then expected to start over again within the home. It was while she was working at the old Lancing Manor, that at that time had ceased to house a family and was now the overflow accommodation for the inmates of Lancing College, that she met my Father. Father had left home and was in lodgings at North Lancing, almost opposite the old farm that stood there in those days. The old farm had a couple of cottages by the side of the yard and it was in one of these that Mother lived with her parents. They carried out their courting locally and it wasn't long before I made it known that I was preparing to come into this world. They got married in North Lancing church and at first lived in one room at the Tugnets but on my arrival had to leave and lived in the farm cottages, that is until the farmer got to know and he got quite nasty about it and sacked my Grandfather. That incident did little to cement a good relationship between by Grandfather and Father and so it was a blessing that a Council house was allocated.

Mother was graced with a fine personality, this combined with a ready smile and an infectious laugh made her a great favourite, not only with the adults but also with the children, or probably more so with the children. Over the next twenty years she gave birth to us seven children, but during that time there was never a moment when any child less fortunate than us did not receive a welcome in number seventeen. Some of them were noted for their dishonesty, but never was anything missing from her home. Many years later some of those she befriended would revisit her and they would be as welcome then as they were before. I expect her compassion for children stemmed from her own sad childhood.

Whenever I look in the mirror today I am reminded of her, because she bequeathed to me not only her protruding teeth but the small mole she wore by her nose also.

There was always plenty of work for Mother. Once I was born she had a baby every three years. Six of us are alive today, the last birth was stillborn and was a blessing in disguise because it was a little boy who should he have lived would have needed her constant care, during a period of her later life when at last she was allowed some freedom. Even then, free of children, she loved the work of a home help and would derive great joy from the old people that she then served.

During the growing up stage of her brood times must have been hard for her with the little housekeeping that was available. She was a past master at creating some dish or other with what seemed half of the necessary ingredients. It derives from this that we all grew up to feel that Bubble and Squeak could not be real Bubble and Squeak unless it was slightly burnt. As we grew older and congregated at home in the kitchen at a time when she was baking she would create a mock anger as we proceeded to devour her creations as soon as they appeared on the table. She was really quite pleased and very proud of us all. During those years she was pleased to have the facility of "put it on the bill" down at the Beehive Stores, and I know that more than once the crisis

of paying the arrears was not always easily solved. Our clothes were nearly all purchased from the tally women. The tally women were two sisters who travelled from Brighton once a week with their suitcase and were good to Mum, so good in fact that she continued to use them long after she had the need and in fact until old age caused them to cease their travels.

Although she had often commented to me that her childhood was not all it could have been, she maintained a keen sense of duty to her parents and loved her Father deeply. When they both became bed bound in their eighties she took her turn every third night by their bedside, although she herself at that time was not sharing the best of health. Earlier in time when she had complained to us of headaches and we had urged her to visit the doctor she did so, but took little heed of his advice and failed to take his medicines as well. She had been sure she would not make old bones. It was true she didn't make old bones and in fact the parents she lovingly tended outlived her.

Mum was loved by all and the floral tributes she received was testimony to that fact. However, I felt the little story a woman told me soon after she had departed sums up my old Mum. It appears that this young woman, who was not a local but had moved into Millfield long after my time there, was walking up the short road to the green after having visited the Beehive Stores. Trotting along beside her were her two young children who were continually whining to her that they wanted a rice pudding for dinner and were constantly told by their mother that she had not the time to make one. My Mother was, she said, following on behind her in the same direction and although they lived in the same area she did not know her to speak. Later that afternoon she said there was a knock on her door and when she opened it there stood my Mother with a steaming rice pudding in a dish, saying that she had heard the children and didn't want them to be disappointed. At one time Mother had Father, myself and my two brothers working in the harvest and my youngest brother always tagging along. Each of us would require sandwiches for morning break, lunch and the evening snack, as well as a hot meal when we arrived home at about nine or ten o'clock. She never complained of these chores although they must have been a great worry, as well as hard work to comply with those requirements.

However, earlier in time her patience used to wear a bit thin here and there as we each approached and gained adult life.

Dad was in his young days, I am sure, quite a handsome young man. He always lived with a burning desire to be his own master and had once had the privilege of tasting that status.

He was born at a place named Horton, close to Smalldole, and moved to Sompting at the beginning of the First World War. At that time young boys, providing that they were going to work on the land, were allowed to leave school at the age of twelve. He took advantage of this and at that age started work on Pullen-Burry's. His first task was in the watercress beds but it was not long before at that young age he was in the company of others driving a horse and van through the early morning hours of the night to Brighton market with loads of the various vegetables that were grown by them at that time. Sometimes the whole load of a van might well comprise of leeks alone. In his early twenties he acquired his own horse and cart. It was, it is true to say, on repayment, but so early in life he was his own master. At that time there was a great boom in the building of greenhouses in the area and he had acquired a lucrative contract in hauling from the station yard the pipes for the hot water system. Then it seemed without warning the great strike arrived, there were no trains, there were no pipes, there was no money coming in, there was no repayments and, of course, very soon there was no horse and cart.

He worked then on the farm at Halewick with the horses and in the company of his old mate Bert Riddles. He was then in his mid-twenties and Bert was just entering that decade of life. The farm on which they worked incorporated the hills to the west of Lancing Clump. As I write this Dad is in his early eighties and Bert in his late seventies and they can quite often be seen together, walking those same hills. Nowadays alas not only Dad and Bert, but also the hills, look so different.

When the farm was sold for building Dad moved on to the beckoning higher wages of the building industry. The next few years in our area saw buildings grow far more quickly and far

more profusely than the crops they had replaced. Dad moved with the sites from Sompting to Lancing, Worthing and Shoreham. The building industry's hunger knew no bounds as it gobbled up farm and nursery as fast as it could. Owners of land were receiving sums of money that would have taken years to accumulate in the growing of crops or from the rents of those that did so on their land. The only thing that seemed capable of stopping this transformation was war, and war arrived.

As the storm clouds had grown, so had our family, and the outbreak of war saw our total of children as five. Dad was back on the land and at an age group that did not require him to be called up, but to work at home and, in off working hours, to become a member of a Demolition Squad and later a member of the Home Guard. The requirement of home grown food created a great deal of extra work and at times there never seemed enough hours in the day to get it all in. Dad forever seemed to be working and then going on duty in one role or another. In the early part of the war he was on the hills, sinking great tree branches in the earth where the terrain was clear in order to deter the landing of gliders and planes.

Dad's interest in horses, in agricultural shows and ploughing matches that had been passed on to me had to be almost forgotten, for the early part of the war at least, and the walks that I had often taken with him were now unable to be taken as certain areas became out of bounds to all those without the special requirement to enter. One walk I well recall on a Sunday before the war was along the path above the gentle grazing valley that has now become a tip. It was on this walk that in nineteen thirty eight the great Zeppelin flew gracefully over.

He had a great love of farming and would take great interest not only in the work that we did in our small farming world, but also in that which went on in the farms around the village, each of which he spent a period of time on in the coming years. In between times his own land to work was only to be his large garden and an allotment.

Our house then at number seventeen was the same in construction as that of Gran's and stood in the same direction. It was there that the likeness ended. We too had a privet hedge as did Gran's, but where hers was regularly clipped ours was quite often in need of a good cut. The long sprigs of privet that grew from our hedge would amalgamate with Gran's discipline when as was often the case we would ignore Mother's call to come in during the long summer evenings. Gran would then hurry along the top of the green and select a long strong privet shoot and situate herself at a strategic distance from our gate and start calling us. She would to us elder boys indicate by vigorous movement of the privet, accompanied by a vocal command, our need to get in the house quickly. We each in turn would ease forward toward the gate, knowing that only one at a time could pass between the posts, and decide at what time and distance we could break into full speed to allow us to pass between them before that privet in Gran's hand stung one behind the knee. There were occasions when one could clear the gate unscathed, but they were not often and when they did occur one would laugh at the others as they entered the house rubbing the stinging skin at the back of the knees. Mother would oftentimes laugh with the victors, much to the annoyance of those that got caught.

Here behind the privet hedge there was the same step, but this one bore no evidence of a daily white. Mother had no time to spend on such non-productive chores. Here too was the same size garden, but again here there was no flint bordered path, no rows of London Pride, just patches of soil that undulated where one or the other of us had made holes, the evidence of our efforts plain to see by the discarded tools. I am amazed sometime(s) to think that there was any soil at all remaining because one of my earliest memories of that garden is when I so happily received, probably for a birthday present, a wooden horse and cart. From the first receipt of that cart with that little horse in the shafts, it seems forever that I was filling the cart from that garden and taking it to the rear of the house.

To make the journey from the front to the back of the house with that horse and cart meant that I had to pass the back door. It was here too that this house differed greatly from Gran's. Whereas she had, should her lilac tree not have hidden it, a free view of the back garden, here the only view was that of the back door of the next house some mere four or five yards away.

In order to create some form of privacy a hedge was planted between the two. It was a failure, which was not a complete surprise seeing that the hedge comprised of some Horse Chestnut saplings. This point between the two doors was the spot that my Mother recalled many times in later years when she related the story of the butcher's boy. It was a hot summer's day, which was the reason that both doors were opened at the time the butcher's boy arrived with meat for Mrs Foster who occupied the house next door. The boy obviously felt hot and sticky from pedalling his bike up the short rise to the green after the journey from Lancing. He became aware of his thirst about the same time that his eyes alighted on the bottle of pale liquid that stood on the table. He had called twice and there was no response to his calls. It was just the work of a second to dash in, grab the bottle, remove the stopper and take that longed for swig. In the next second he did just that. No sooner had the liquid passed his lips he rushed to the hedge calling to Mother who he had either seen or heard in the kitchen, "Missus, Missus, what's in that bottle?". Mother looked and found it was Parazone, a domestic bleach, and readily got him to rinse his mouth out, and he luckily was sick. She quite often laughed at that poor butcher's boy and was sure he did two things in future. Never touched things that were not his and soon learnt to read.

We in our house had a passage to our back door as indeed did Gran, but with ours, not being directly exposed to the southwest there was no protective door. There was a coal hole that saw coal, but not as often as we would like and we, through the efforts of Dad, used wood whenever we could. The back door and the short passage beyond with the curtain hanging and vainly fighting the draughts was the same, as indeed was the high shelf with the gas meter that had an even greater hunger than Gran's for pennies. Inside the kitchen was a lot lighter than Gran's and was full of activity. The same type of range was in the same place, but there the similarity with Gran's disappeared. Our home was there to be lived in and there was seldom time without the inclination to have things shining like Gran's. The bathroom saw the same activities as Gran's but the content of the washing changed and I would hate to think of the number of nappies that Mum washed, not only in the bathroom but in the kitchen sink as well. It seemed in those days that it took longer for a child to get clean and no doubt with Mother that no sooner had she finished with nappies from one child she was starting on those from another. The sink had the same functions here as its likeness along the green but was far more often in use. The razor that was on the shelf was so different too. The handle long since had given up the struggle to be attached to the head without the support of shims of paper to hold it tight. It shaved Dad, although he shaved but every other day, and when the time came it shaved me. It also I have no doubt inducted my brothers to the ritual before finally giving up the ghost. The gas stove played host to many joints of meat in its life, but in my young life until I left home, it never entertained a turkey. It did, though, in its cooler periods be visited by a few mice. What the attraction was in the gas stove I don't know. I remember coming home in the late evening when I was older and found Dad seated on his own in the kitchen. As I went to speak to him he quietened me with a signal of his out stretched finger to his lips. The quiet heightened my other senses and I was immediately aware of the hiss of escaping gas coming from the stove. Dad had apparently heard the mice paying one of their visits to the interior of the stove and had crept quietly forward until he was able to reach and switch on the taps. In a couple of minutes, or at least looking back it seemed like a couple of minutes, he got up, switched off the gas and opened the oven door. There within the stove on the metal tray were two mice looking as though they had just left the Ball Tree having had one too many. It was no trouble at all for Dad to get hold of them as they wobbled away across the tray.

The high shelves that ran along the wall were the home for Marrows and Pumpkins during the autumn and on until they were needed. They perched up there looking down at the activities that took place below them, no doubt bemused at the mornings when three or four of us were getting ready for school. We would never be late mind you because Gran was keeping a beady on the departures from the green and had we not departed by the time she thought we should she would come dashing in to help raise a smile on the faces of those yellowing Marrows as the chaos was sorted out. What a relief it must have been for Mother once we had departed, but of course at the time that four of us were at school there were another two at home to keep her busy.

The front room here was no museum, having moved in with the contents of a cart, less the rabbit hutch, there would have been room for many exhibits. However, we collected the pass ons from others in those early years and most pieces of furniture that we acquired had spent long lives in their last home, so it was not probably surprising that the springs and stuffing were quite often making themselves seen. The room was quite large and when we first arrived there were just the two children, my brother Dennis and I. I must have been a very selfish little boy at that time because I tried to disown my brother. He had been named Dennis James and as Mother was friendly with a Mrs James at that time I could not be convinced that Dennis James was not her little boy and didn't have to come and share what had become a province completely of my own. By the time brother Brian arrived I was at school and was beginning to realise that living in a family meant sharing everything, and giving love as well as receiving it. It also meant I found out sharing one's accommodation with that never diminishing rack full of airing nappies. A place too always had to be found for the pram that became as much a part of the home as any other bit of furniture. My sister Margaret arrived. What a fuss was made of the first girl, and she was duly named after our royal princess, Margaret Rose. The coming of my youngest brother Colin heralded the war. It also brought to our front room the biggest and strongest and easily the ugliest piece of furniture that we were ever to receive. A Morrison table shelter. It stood all of eight feet long, four feet wide and about three feet high. Around its sides were square wire mesh. Before the arrival of this monstrosity the safest place we were told was under the stairs. Now, however, should we all be in this rabbit hutch with its strong steel angle iron legs and massive steel top, the whole house could fall down and I am sure we would all have been safe. I do know that it gave my Mother a greater sense of safety for her young that that which she had possessed before. We gave shelter too to our Gran who would come along and help Mother with her flock, squatting under that table with little Colin in her arms. The one trouble that we possessed with the table was that we were unable to stretch to having sufficient bed clothes on the bed and have enough to cover us in the shelter as well. Came the night that Father was out on one of his duties and the siren went. Down the stairs we duly do, waking the young ones to convey them down to the waiting table shelter, Mother hurrying them along and me, now the eldest and of course man of the house, carrying one of the down. No sooner had we got into the confines of that table, below the steel top, than complaints of feeling cold were heard, which I suppose was not surprising seeing that no more than a few minutes ago they were lying in their warm beds. I was requested to go upstairs and collect the bedding from the beds and bring down so that we could all cuddle together beneath them, sharing our body heat. From which bed they came I know not, but with an armful of bedding carelessly encircled in my arms I stopped on the landing, attracted by the search lights and sound of guns. I stood there no more than a couple of minutes watching what I was going to see many times later on the cinema screen, when I heard the whistling of a bomb as it made its rapid journey to the earth below. I was away in a flash, but the first step I took was on to the end of one of the blankets that I held in my arms and over I sent, head over heels down the stairs, making my Mother think by the commotion I made that we had received a hit.

That old table shelter stayed with us through the war and then, like the tape that criss-crossed our window panes, whose task was to lessen the danger from flying fragments should the glass break from the blast of a bomb, disappeared.

The old front room looked lived in and was where we learnt the art of loving, not that life was all love in those days. I never forgave myself over the day as we grew older that brother Den and I had a disagreement and during my violent outburst pushed him into the corner. Unfortunately the corner I pushed him into was the one that Mother had placed her whatnot, on whose shelves her few prized possessions stood. It was the end of her wonton, or her prized possessions, and of my living there. I packed a few things and left. By ten o'clock that night I was back. There was no where to go and I knew that old front room and felt secure there. It was not until I had to that I left, and then I was eighteen.

Over the years the room filled with the little things that were acquired along the path of life. There were two seascapes that hung on the wall and gave Mother great pleasure and, of course, there were the photographs that grew in number with time. There was, though, no china to be displayed because it was a big enough problem to keep up with the breakages of everyday. The place on the dresser where they would have been displayed was eventually filled with the trinkets

that could be kept out of harm's way. The cupboards below were filled with old copies of the Farmers Weekly and the coverless books of children's tales and nursery rhymes, all mixed up with the pieces of horse brasses that had seen better days. These cupboards were often cleaned out, if only to find the mice that strayed within.

There always seemed to be a baby around in the front room and a never closed door allowing the visits of many visitors, any one was made welcome in the home of my Mother and we were all free to bring our friends home at any time. Dad would take great pride in keeping the house warm and he would be delighted when we all had to draw back from the first that he roared in the grate.

We were luck in our choice of parents, for although we never had too much of anything we never ever went hungry for food and love. It was true thought that by the time our Mary arrived Mum's patience was growing a bit thin.

The dramas of family life were there in the front room. There was the time when I was very small and the room was full of people who seemed very sad and tearful. My brother Den had double pneumonia and laid in the front room on a sofa. After days I recall the words "the crisis is over" and he was back from the brink. For weeks, it seemed, after this he was given preferential treatment and enjoyed treats that were denied me. It was Den too that broke his leg. He had taken Dad's big bike and being too small to ride it with one leg each side of the bar had ridden with one leg through the bar onto the pedal, as we all did on the big bikes, when over it went and his leg went with it. Brian either fell from or ran into a pony and cart and got knocked about. Then there was what to do with Margaret's vaccination. It was customary to have it done on the arm but the doctor said that as it would show later in life when wearing an evening gown it would be better to put it on her leg. Needless to say in later life she found no occasion to wear an evening gown, but needed to wear a mini skirt. Colin had a nasty skin complaint called infatigo [impetigo] eczema, and to stop him scratching his face had to wear for a couple of weeks sleeves of corrugated cardboard, while a total of a one pound jam jar full of grey ointment was applied to his face. He was only about two years old at the time and so it was quite a traumatic experience for him.

We had our share of games in that front room, what with the board games of Snakes and Ladders and Ludo. We had a party here and there too. How one party came to be I will never know, but came to be it did. The party goers were all older than me and Dad was joining in with the games. They were playing a game called forfeits. How the game was played I know not, but I do know that if one cannot answer the question they are subject to a forfeit. Dad's turn came, he failed his question and duly presented himself for the forfeit. He was given the choice of two. What the one he declined was I do not know, but I am aware that he chose "a Seaman's Burial". He was bade to lay on the floor and Mother was asked if they could have a coat. She got an old coat from the kitchen and it was laid over Dad. Something was whispered in Mum's ear and she scampered away silently chuckling, only to return almost immediately with a jug full of water. Taking the jug from Mother, some nautical words were spoken as at the same time the arm of the coat was held upright and the contents of the jug poured down. Poor old Dad, he did not see that at all funny and the party concluded almost immediately.

We read a lot in those days, at least I did, but our books didn't last long. We of course had no television and at the time I recall now no radio either, but we did obtain from some source a gramophone. Our poor parents. I am sure that they were sorry the day we got that. It was a constant argument who should wind it up with each one of us wanting to be the one to turn its handle. It had a small tin of needles, one of which had to be fitted for every couple of records played, that is if one wanted a good output. So, the gramophone and its quarrels were one source of nuisance, but surely the main one must have been that we had but one record. One side was a rendering of the "Whistler and his dog", while on the other was "Old Black Joe". That gramophone and its friend the record didn't have too long a life in our house and I don't think my parents mourned its passing.

The stairs in the house that felt the clatter of children's feet a hundred times a day had been painted with a dark stain, but the sliding of the tiny hands on the banisters that accompanied those rushing feet had worn it clear in places. They led to the top landing and the window from

which I had viewed the air raid. Beside the window was a cupboard that housed what my mother feared to have to use. It was a baby's gas mask. We had in the war all been issued with gas masks and there was very little to choose between any of them, except those issued to children under five, who had what was called a Mickey Mouse type. It was designed with the same principles as the adult one but in the exhaling a rubber nose piece had been added and would vibrate each time the child exhaled, causing an amount of humour and thus in the child overcoming their fear in wearing them. With the babies this was not so easy and the baby had to be inserted into the apparatus and a pump operated outside to keep the filtered air circulating. It was indeed a good job all round that none of those contraptions were needed.

The bedrooms numbered three. When we were at full strength Mum and Dad had the main bedroom. It was the only room upstairs that had a fire place, small though it was. It was in this room that apart from Dennis and me the family were born, and about the only time that little fire was lit was on such arrivals. The two girls, Margaret and Mary, had the front bedroom and shared a double bed. The spring had seen many years of life and each one that slept in it was projected to the centre. Later, when any of us when married came home, we were given that room and that bed and should we have argued, that bed had a way of making one forget such things. The remaining bedroom was for us boys to sleep in. We had but two beds in there, one was used by the two middle boys, Dennis and Brian, while my younger brother and I shared the remaining one. Until such times that Colin was old enough to sleep in a big bed I was privileged to have the bed to myself. The bed that my brothers used had been a hospital bed and how we came by it is a mystery to me, but there it was in our bedroom, complete with the handle to raise the head up and down. Much fun was had with the winding up and down of that bed, but little success in the boys getting to sleep, until eventually the handle was taken away and hidden. As I grew older I was allowed to stay up later than the others and I suppose as they too got older so the privilege was bestowed upon them. However, I remember one night when I followed Father up the stairs after continuous warnings to go to sleep had echoed up the stair well and received no action from the recipients upstairs. In the bedrooms of those days there was nearly always a toilet set comprising a jug, bowl and jerry. They were, incidentally, very much sought after in later years by the Americans. At this time only the bowl and jug were present in that room. The noise that Father had been trying to quell by means of his commands to go to sleep had come from the boys who had made a fire of paper in the jug. By the time we reached the bedroom they were both in bed feigning sleep, while under the bed where they had pushed it was the jug with flames jumping out over the lips. Father quickly pulled it out and doused the fire and commenced to create burning sensations on my two brothers, where no flames had touched. In the summers those bedrooms were hot, particularly with two sharing what was not a big bed in the first place, but in the winter it was very cold because there was as I have said no fire and even the chimney breast was encased in the large bedroom. The winter saw us take our coats up with us and throw over the beds to supplement the scarce bedding we possessed.

However, it was never cold enough to stop us being awake at the crack of dawn at Christmas, and as much excitement was abroad in us then to receive a stocking that we had excitedly hung up the night before and was now filled with sweets and fruit as is today with all the expensive toys that children get. As time went by the stocking became a pillow case, and then one year I awoke to a cardboard box, it was long and wide but not very thick and I was overjoyed to find within its confines a bagatelle board. It was the best present I ever had, apart from that wooden horse and cart all those years before. There was never an abundance of clothes for us to wear and so no need for any large wardrobe and our room did not contain one, but it did have a built in cupboard that would have served that purpose should we need it to do so. It was though not the interior of that cupboard that comes to mind, but the recess above it where it failed to reach the ceiling. It was here that, having realised I would be called up for service in early '45 I drew out my life savings of thirty five pounds, and placed in that recess. Gradually, and then all too quickly, I would reach in for my hoard and another couple of pounds would be peeled from that ever reducing roll until it was gone and I left that room.

At the back of the house with the door at the side was the toilet. It was a bucket affair with a door at the back, low and small, from which to remove the bucket, and also to introduce that tender part of one's body to the draughts of the cold north west. When the wind was kind

enough to blow from another direction many interest periods were spent in that little house, reading bits and pieces from the square of newspapers that furnished its seat, and the frustrating task of looking for the adjoining square when something of real interest had been found. The days of filter tipped cigarettes were not upon us at that time, that is with the exception of one named De-Reske, and so all ends that were discarded contained tobacco. The larger of these discarded ends were collected by me and hid upon the top bricks of the wall. I would creep away to the toilet and smoke these ends, sitting there puffing away, the smoke belching forth from my mouth and my head swimming with the poison of nicotine that took me nearly forty years to finally avoid. Years later, that old toilet became the coal house, the bucket became a modern flush toilet, the toilet rolls that only the posh used were to be used by every body, the smoking of tobacco would be frowned upon and the collecting of other people's throwaways repulsive, but for the love of me I can never tell when the wind's in the north west.

The boundary fence between our house and that of the Fosters next door ran at an angle of forty five degrees until it reached the high flint wall and came to an abrupt stop. At first on leaving the house the path skirted the side of the garden, but before reaching the wall it turned sharply to the right and ran parallel to it, so splitting the garden in half. We were lucky to have the largest garden of the whole forty houses and must have been over thirty rod. At the back of the house, between us and the Groves family that lived next door, a high privet hedge defined our border and ran again parallel with the path, even turning at the same point to conclude at the bottom where it met the fences of the Farrows. The garden of the Farrows and the Cobdens marked the extent of our garden. The first part of the land at the back of the house was difficult to cultivate because it spent the greater part of the day in the shade and so became the place we would park old bikes and four wheeled trucks and such like. Up at the point where the path turned to the right was a spot that I shall always remember. We had at last acquired a radio. In those days they needed a high aerial to gain the best reception and father had gained a very large scaffold pole that was sunk into a large hole and marked that spot for quite a few years. We, at that time, had no electricity in the house and so a couple of batteries had to be purchased to obtain the power for us to receive that magic entertainment of the wireless. There was a large battery and a smaller one called a grid. There was also an accumulator. It was a glass container set in an iron frame to allow its carriage, and its carriage became a bit of a drag, because this accumulator needed to be recharged every ten days or so. One of the shops up the top of Ball Tree Hill had adapted his garage for this purpose and we were journeying there and back. However, the pleasure we received from that old radio made the journeys all worth while.

The garden was a great asset to Dad when working on the buildings when he was able to devote the time that it needed for its cultivation. We always had ample vegetables for our own requirements, with so much over that he had several customers that he regularly supplied. Flowers for cutting were also grown by him and sold to one shop or another. How he managed to grow so much was a mystery because the ground was covered with flints, but in among these the carrots appeared to be in their element. I too was given a small patch at the very end as my own garden and derived great pleasure from it, but I am afraid I never had the patience to wait until the root crops had fully developed, and was constantly digging them up before they fully cropped.

Where the path met the flint wall Dad had got Alan Davey to build him a lean to shed. It had a door one end whilst on the other was a window that contained no glass, relying on wire netting and a sliding cover. This shed was the home of the garden tools and all the garden sundries. It was the home of the seeds that wintered here and the frost proof home of the crops that had been harvested and required for winter meals, such as potatoes and onions. Always, too, it was the home of the rabbits. These were bred for the meat and most of them were sold. There was some tar lettering on the side of that shed for years that could be seen from the road junction by the garage and originated from the artistic hand of my brother Den that read "Rabbits 6D Each". Yet those rabbits, as it is with those he keeps today, had a secondary purpose and that was for their manure, which is one of the reasons he is capable of raising such good crops. That shed was also a good place for us kids to escape to in the rainy days. We at one time I recall had an old blanket hung up in the middle and presented shows. What the content of those shows were I have long since forgotten. As I got older there was another reason for me to remember that shed. Seeds and vegetables were at that time sold by quantity and not weight in very many cases. In the shed

were several gallon measures that contained seed of the pea, bean or onion. During the process of looking for something one day I knocked one over. All the seed spilled out and was followed by a fair amount of small change. Realising that I had stumbled upon Dad's secret I put them all back. It appeared a long time later that each week when Dad got paid he would empty the remains of last week's pocket money into these secret containers. It is these years later that I must admit to shamefully helping myself to enough for a packet of fags now and again.

It was almost a ritual that most of the men would be in the garden on a Sunday morning. It was also a ritual to empty those toilet buckets at that time as well, so it would take little imagination to understand that there was only a little of that fresh country air around Millfield on a Sunday morning.

The high flint wall that ran along the back of the garden was also on the other side the support for some pear trees that were grown by Pullen-Burrys. It was a constant worry for our parents to stop not just us but our mates as well from helping themselves to those fruits whenever they could.

In a lot of the gardens during the war home dug air raid shelters existed and although we were constantly digging holes, much to the annoyance of our Father, we did not complete the digging of a shelter for ourselves.

Several times from that shed of ours the rabbits were set loose and a great chase was necessary to round them all up. Once it was even set on fire, at a time when we had cockerels as well as rabbits. This time they were let out to save their lives. It was once, too, the home of four little pigs, but their story I will come to later. The long garden, with access over the fence at the bottom into the garden of the Farrows, was also a great escape route for us boys when we had got Dad on the war path for one reason or another. We would return by the same route, creeping down to the house over the last bit and checking with our brothers if the coast was clear to come in.

Chapter XX

THE GREEN

The green, which was the central point of the whole of Millfield Cottages, had been the central point of other collective units before. It was, many years before, the field in which the mill stood and from which source Millfield gained its name. In the First World War it was a prisoner of war camp. It had done its work, it had played its part in war, now it was to become for me and so many others the place of play, before passing on to its next stage, which was to be covered with tarmac.

The small road that led to the green from Busticle Lane hardly changed at all. It widened out at the top to allow the vehicles it brought to the green to turn round. With the passage of time these vehicles changed from the horse drawn to those served by the internal combustion engine, plus a host of others, including bicycles, scooters, trucks and tricycles. The fence at the top, which was there to stop this procession of vehicles running on the grass area, had to be changed several times. Twice it was made of wood and once concrete posts with round metal bars between.

The green had been designed to be a rectangle of grass sloping down in the direction of Busticle Lane, surrounded by a tarmac path around its perimeter on which it was anticipated people would walk to get to their houses. It was, of course, not to be so and the tenants, as indeed every one was in those days as these were Council houses, tended to walk the quickest way to their gates from the top of the road by walking over the grass. The years and thousands of footfalls later the grass in those areas disappeared and from the air the green would look similar to the Japanese flag, referred to as the "Rising Sun".

Situated on the high ground, as it was, the green was nicely drained and was never muddy. I don't recall it ever being cut but the grass was by its nature quite short. I know not the type of grass it was, but I do know it carried ears like that of the Barley and when plucked could be thrown in a similar manner to that of a dart. It also had the mystery of being able to be placed on the arm and travel along the skin by its own motivation. It had one aggravating habit and that was to break up and cling in its small dart-like segments to all socks and wool-like clothing. The green followed the seasons in its attractions to the children. Changing over night, it seemed, from football to cricket, skipping to hopscotch. When it was football the gardens at the ends, with their privet hedges conveniently creating goals and their bountiful branches acting as nets, became in danger of being invaded time and again to recover the ball. The houses at the top and bottom seemingly safe from the football came into their danger period when cricket started. The season at times coming to a brief halt with the breaking of a window, only to gradually start up again after a few days. The skipping was a relatively harmless activity, with the girls their knickers with the elastic legs holding the hems of the skirts that were roughly tucked within them, giving way to the chalked tarmac paths that seemed to annoy some as hopscotch took over.

The paths that were worn across the green hindered the ball control of football and created hardship when fielding at cricket, but certainly enhanced the game of marbles, or allies as we called them. At that time the chalk marble and its game was almost completely replaced by the glass ally. The mode of the game changed from static to that of a mobile one, where one ally was rolled after an opponent's in an attempt to hit it and having passed it then the opponent had his turn. In this form the game could and was played on the way to school, only now the gutter would be the arena and not the green. The long evenings of summer were it seemed, looking back, so long and so sunny that the green was loathe to say goodnight to her young and revert to the quiet of the late evening after the ringing of so much laughter and the trample of so many energetic young feet.

There is no doubt though that some of the elders living in the green's houses longed for the quiet of the late evening, especially after the noise of a long game of kick can wallop. Here was a game dearly loved up at the green. It was a game closely related to that of hide and seek, where one seeker had to find those that had been given time to hide, but with a few variations.

Firstly, the seeker would be selected by means of the pointing of a finger at each one in turn to coincide with a word of the rhyme, the one who was pointed at as the last word of the rhyme was said was he. The rhyme would go "Eany meany miney mo, catch a nigger by his toe, if he hollers let him go, eany meany miney mo." How sad all these years later that that innocent little rhyme, which to us kids had no meaning at all, would be classed as offensive.

Having selected the seeker a tin can would be placed at the top of the road and the best kicker nominated to kick it as far down the road as possible. While it is being recovered and replaced on its original spot, all hiders had to get to their respective hiding places. As each was seen by the seeker he would call their name and knock the can on the floor three times, whereby the hider must report to a collective area by the can. They would only be released when one of the hiders is able, as the seeker extends the area of his search, to break cover and kick the can again down the road. It was a noisy game and voices would be raised, not just in excitement but also in argument as the game proceeded, and quite often we would be watched in this game by some of the elders at the gates, obviously envying the vitality and innocence of the participants.

Sometimes, then, the green would be the arena of Wembley and others the greens of Lords or the Oval, as the sports of football and cricket were contested. There was, though, one time of the year when owing to the influence of the Olympic or the Commonwealth Games, or merely the sports day at school, that the green would become our athletic arena. The long jump, high jump and putting the shot using a cricket ball were sited anywhere on the green. The short sprints would be from one hedge to the other, with the longer sprints and middle distance races occupying the tarmac path around the perimeter.

There was no planting, no preconceived dates to our games. They were decided on in a few moments. However, once decided upon the organisation went forward rapidly, as it is only possible to do with children and using children's minds. I remember once being the long jump champion. It wasn't so much the distance that I achieved but the fact that on landing I slipped on the damp evening grass and severely hurt my backside. The marathon was no set distance but was always won by the competitor who could travel the perimeter the most number of times. We would all start on this event and then as the race proceeded, one by one we would drop out until the champion was left to run on his own. My uncle, who was a few years older than me, took part one year and was very soon the only competitor left. How many times he had completed the circuit I don't know but he would have completed a lot more had it not been for the little Scotch Terrier that lived with Mrs Shergold. That little dog had hidden itself under that large privet hedge and no doubt had got fed up with those legs passing his hiding place. At last his patience was running thin at about the same time as my uncle's stamina was getting low and as the legs ran slowly past he dived out to sink his fangs in one of those tired calf muscles.

Whereas some children are athletic, others can be very studious, and even others acrobatic. This last category got their chance to practise up at the green when the wooden fence was taken away and a fence comprising of concrete posts and metal round bars between replaced it. They would demonstrate their capability to twist their bodies in so many different postures that one would think their arms would come out of their sockets. I, like all the others, tried to copy those with the better skills, but having landed on my head more than a few times settled for the fact that perhaps I was in the athletic or the studious group.

These railings that gave so much fun to those that could take full advantage of them were of course there for a purpose other than that. They were to stop the vehicles that came up our small road from proceeding on to the green itself. The pole at the ends was removable to allow vehicles that required to have access to the houses. They were padlocked but obviously someone had the key.

The vehicles that entered our road were very varied. Mr Kennard the milkman would come on his bicycle to which would be attached his small milk churn, that in turn filled a smaller one that accompanied him to each door where, with a half a pint ladle, he would pour the requested amount into the customer's own jug. I was very small when I witnessed this transaction. I would not have seen it a few years later, not because progress had changed the way of things, but because Mr Kennard won the Irish Sweepstake and about thirty thousand pounds, and his desire to

ladle out half pints of milk rapidly diminished. He was quickly followed by the pony and float from Halewick Farm. The pony harnessed to the front of that large wheeled float appeared to be lifted almost by the curving shafts as it trotted along. There was a low step at the back of the float to allow the milkman to get up and in the body of the float where the bottles were carried. Along the front of the float, raised up behind the pony's rump, was a horizontal bar about eighteen inches long curling at the ends into rings. It was within the confines of this bar that the reins rested, allowing the milkman to control the pony from the very rear of the float.

The milk delivery vehicles were to change drastically in the coming years. The road up the green saw firstly the heavy pony called a Cob pulling a float with four wheels a lot larger than those of the past, with a cover for the driver in the front and a large area for crates at the rear, above the four wheels on which it was constructed. This in turn gave way to a similar vehicle in design and structure, but with the internal combustion engine as its motive force. This vehicle differed from the pony powered one in its descent of the road to the green, as my brother Dennis was to find out. The pony needed the command "Giddap" and away it would go, but the motorised one needed the hand brake released and my brother found to his horror that once that was done it commenced its journey and no amount of commands of "Whoa" was going to stop it. However, apart from the strong complaints of the milkman no real damage was done, as the float came to rest in Busticle Lane completely intact.

Other horses pulling their loads would arrive at the green. There would be the baker from Broadwater who would arrive with a horse as big as those used for racing, pulling a four wheeled covered van with the driver's seat at the front over which the roof of the van would reach. I would love the arrival of this vehicle should I be around, readily running to it at the wish of my Gran to collect her cottage loaf. This loaf would be constructed by the baker in such a manner that four pinnacles would be protruding from the top. These could easily be pulled off and one would be removed for me by Gran and, accompanied with a hunk of cheese, I would readily devour it. I suffered even at that young age with indigestion on consuming it, as it was still warm, and would burn my hands as I ran across the green with it. The enjoyment and pleasure of its taste far outweighed any discomfort that followed.

Mr Stanley, in his striped apron that tied behind his neck which held above it a large red face (I don't think I ever saw a redder face than his), would in the company of his pony be another weekly visitor. His cart would be merely a platform above a pair of sprung wheels on which he would sit, his legs dangling from the side in front of the wheels. However, when he arrived at the green it would contact a selection of fish. Fish was a regular weekly dish with us in those days, especially when Mr Stanley would arrive on days other than his regular one, the platform piled high with either herring or sprats. They would be at bargain prices because there was a glut of them and he would be called out "Fresh herring twelve a shilling". Soon trade would be brisk and after a few other calls he would be trotting back home to Portslade from where he had departed a few hours before, that laden platform now empty, the sodden boards the only witness to the load they had carried.

Now and again the light clomp of the pony on our road would be replaced with the heavy clomp of the farm horse as it pulled its cart or wagon containing logs, manure or, as mine did on many occasions that I drove up there, potatoes. I well remember one such arrival. It was that of Mr Wady from Yew Tree Farm with his old brown horse pulling a wagon load of wood that was unloaded for old Bill Leggatt in number ten, where he lived as a lodger at that time. It was not so much the journey to our green that creates the memory, but that of the journey back. It was Saturday afternoon. Mr Wady was using the wagon in his own time and so allowed seven or eight of us a ride back to the farm with him. On the way he stopped at the shop, buying all of us some sweets. It was a treat to get sweets from your parents in those days, but to get them from some other source really was a pleasure. Well, it must have been for me to have remembered the incident these fifty years later.

Other visitors to the green that were very welcome to us, but no doubt a nuisance to our parents as we clambered for pennies, was the ice cream men. Firstly there was Walls with their ever popular "Stop me and buy one". They sold lollies far removed from those sold today, but

obviously the predecessor of it. It was triangular in shape and encased in a cardboard type cover about five inches long. They were nothing else but frozen coloured water but by golly to us kids they were lovely. The vehicle that these were sold from was a tricycle. It comprised a large box with a wheel each side, behind which was a frame that housed the back wheel, above was the saddle on which the seller sat. This vehicle as I have said was a welcome sight, but nowhere near as welcome as the sight of Mr Rowland's motorcycle and side car, because within the sidecar was the soft ice cream made by Mr Rowland and his wife in their house just down the road. It was a delicious soft ice cream, the like of which I cannot find today. Occasionally other ice cream firms made an appearance but those two were our regular ones.

Apart from the motorcycles of Mr Lloyd and Mr Chatfield few other motorised vehicles ever drove up our little road to the green in those early days. This was, though, the age of the bicycle and nearly all the adults had one, at least the med did. The days of living on the job had in so many cases disappeared. The bicycle was needed to shorten the period of time needed to get to the place of employment. As it was the age of the bicycle, so it was the age of the four wheeled truck. Every boy worth his salt at some time or other had or did own one, some far more sophisticated than others. Some had been put together with some form of skill. Others, like mine, would never hold together for long periods. They were constructed of a short plank to which at one end was fitted a box. Beneath the box was the rigid axle on which was a pair of pram wheels. On the front end of the plank another pair of pram wheels were fixed at a central point only. The attaching of the box to the plank was by means of nails which were often recycled from some other source. Axles were attached by much larger nails that were bent over after they had been driven half their length into the wood. The front axle was oftentimes fixed to a piece of wood in this fashion, the piece of wood and plank having a hole burnt through them with a red hot poker. A bolt would be inserted through and a nut fixed on the other end, thus allowing the front axle to pivot. Where these bolts were obtained from I am not sure, but I do know that all of them were not obtained through honest means. Sitting in that box with others pushing your back, your feet in front placed each side of the plank on the axle for steering, great speeds could be achieved. Many accidents took place allowing many old friends of the green to proudly boast of a scar on their knee from one of those rides.

The green today has sadly gone. A tarmac road has replaced it. The road from the Beehive is a pedestrian walk allowing no other vehicles the opportunity of adding to the list of those of old. Our goalposts comprising of the hedges that encased the houses at the end of the green have gone, along with the houses and their gardens, the road extending now to Rectory Road. The large gardens at the back have become a long row of garages. No more athletic meetings take place around the perimeter path because there isn't one, but if you stand there and close your eyes you can, if you strain the ears, hear the cries of those kids in those far off days and the rattle of that old tin can in their game of "Kick can wallop".

Chapter XXI

BULPIT LANE

Bulpit Lane has long since lost its purpose in life. It existed before the by-pass was built running from the Hillbarn Garage to a T-junction with Dankton Lane.

The houses of Millfield that face the by-pass were in those days only gained by travelling up that old lane and as I was born in one of them I suppose it was the first road I ever lived in. I was, though, too small to remember it then, but came back before my school days in the company of my Mother to visit Mrs Tugnet. She had kindly allowed Mum and Dad to rent the room, just after they were married, into which I was born. They had but one child, Gerald. He loved to tease me and Bulpit Lane creates still a faint memory of riding down sitting on a plank that protruded from the side of his pedal car. I sat on one end overhanging the car whilst he sat on the other within. When maximum speed was attained he would remove his weight from his end and I would go tumbling down. This happened long before I went to school and I hope school soon gave me enough sense not to sit in such precarious places.

Bulpit Lane was our route to school. George Cobden, who was some five or six years older than me, had the charge of escorting me there. I was though not his only charge, he had a brother, Harry, about my age and also two others in his daily care. He got paid a small charge for taking each of us so he had a thriving little business. It was quite common for us all to go on his bicycle. I don't quite recall how it was done but feel that two of us small ones were strapped on to the carrier above the rear wheel, while one was seated on the bar of the bicycle, the other balanced precariously on the handle bars. There was of course no chance of running into traffic in Bulpit Lane, with very little in the confines of Dankton, but as West Street may well have caused problems George unloaded his steed for the last few yards of the journey, more to evade the eagle eye of the teacher than avoid any traffic.

The old lane, like all of its contemporaries, was of a sunken nature and suspect they were created in that fashion to get down to a solid bottom to avoid them very soon becoming a collection of deep ruts. This old lane then had the cottages of Millfield on one side with the bank on the other rising up a short hill that concluded about thirty yards past the last of the cottages. The cottages were now replaced with flint wall, whose task was to separate the lane from Pullen-Burry's market garden. As with the flint wall at the top of our garden, this also was used to secure pears to. This was a great spot for scrumping, not only was it pretty secluded but the pears were exposed only to the south, the environment this created for them seemed to suit them, producing by far the better pears.

The high bank at the top of the hill opposite the wall was the home of three or four of those old Elm trees. The big knarled branches hanging over the field surely must have been created for the attachment of a rope and an old tyre allowing many happy hours to be spent either swinging or climbing that old rope. I remember those old trees for something other than pleasure as the memory they bequeathed to me. Sompting, as I have said, was made up of four different areas at that early time. There was Sompting, comprising those that lived in the area of the Marquis. Lower Cokeham, those living south of The Ball Tree, Upper Cokeham, those living north of The Ball Tree, and Loose Lane obviously made up from the Orchard Cottages area. In ones and twos all seemed to play well, but once in a gang we seemed to become very territorial. It was after one such territorial meeting that, being one of the smallest in our gang, after we must have been routed I got caught. I was tied to one of those great old Elms and although I don't remember fully probably spilt a few tears. I was to spill a few more because whether it was that my gang thought the opposing stronger group were still in the area, or whether they just simply forgot me I don't know, but I must have spent the best part of two hours secured there.

The lane continued after the hill on a reasonable even course until it rose slightly again just before reaching Dankton. Opposite this junction was a stile which led to a path that was the way to church from our area.

There was a day when being in the company of Jack Miles, Ernie Foster and his young brother, Derek, we set out to some forgotten destination up the hill. Our route should have taken us to the junction of Bulpit and Dankton, but following the lead of Jack and Ernie, our elders, Derek, my younger companion, and I climbed up the steep bank by those old Elms and set off across the field. It must have been late summer because the field was sown with Mangolds which had been singled. Their big light green leaves were covering the distance between the rows, protecting from the late summer sun the swelling fruits beneath that glowed in our eyes as we cast them down to find our footing between the reds and yellows. I knew we were not really supposed to be within their ranks and like the rabbits that sometimes hid there, was prepared to bolt for the nearest cover should we be accosted. We had covered about three-quarters of our passage through those leaves when a call of "Hey there" was received. Looking round in the direction of the call, which came from the old Elms, a large man in a light tweed suit with a hunting type trilby hat was seen to be rising from the depths of the old lane. I was surprised that we didn't run, but taking our cue from the two elders we all trooped back through those old mangolds until we came to this man.

"I'm looking for someone to come pigeon scaring for me" he said when we met. "I'll give you a shilling and my bike to come home on". Much to my surprise Jack and Ernie agreed to go with him. Waiting no longer I grabbed Derek's hand and flew off to those big old Elm trees. All the time echoing through my head were those warning words of my old Gran, "Don't you ever go away with any strange men".

Arriving at the big old trees and scrambling down the bank between them, in so doing almost falling on the bicycle that lay there half submerged in the tall grasses and hedge parsley that adorned the lane's flanks. We stopped halfway down Bulpit Lane to see the bicycle disappearing out of view with the big man sitting on the saddle, the two boys' arms around each other sitting on the carrier at the rear.

Down Bulpit we went to the corner of Busticle Lane. Along to the Beehive and then up the road to the green, across the green and we were soon knocking a frenzied alarm on Mrs Foster's door as Derek went rushing in. Mrs Foster was there in an instant and we were blurting out that Ernie and Jack had gone off with this man.

We, that is Derek and I, were in a panic on the way home but it was nothing to the pandemonium that was now set in motion. Mrs Miles was informed. Mr Foster seemed in no time to be home from work. The police arrived up at the green, a sight that was not often seen unless one of us had not just got into trouble but had been caught. There was a policeman with his tall helmet, and then one arriving on a motorcycle wearing a peaked hat, for this was long before the law requiring crash hats had come into being.

Derek and I sat on the green whilst the policeman with the big helmet knelt by our side writing down the answers we gave to his questions in his notebook. What those questions were now is difficult to recall, but I well remember the laughter that one of my answers caused when I had stated that his trousers were tucked in his socks, while making a vain attempt to describe his plus-fours.

As the day went on the comings and goings were getting more numerous and as morning changed to afternoon it seemed that all the men of Millfield were taking part in the search, each returning to the green reporting negative results of their nominated area. The day was beginning to come to an end and the slightest hint of evening was upon us, the air cooling with the failing light, when the search proved positive. Ernie and Jack had been found some miles away from home in an area that was foreign to them. They were, thank goodness, unharmed. They had apparently been pigeon scaring and had received, clutched in their hands, the shilling as promised, but there the man's promise ended. He had left them stranded in a place they did not know without the means to get home. I know that they never did locate that man. I know also that those words of old Gran's were now very deeply etched on my mind. As for Jack and Ernie, they really had nothing to fear from the land for it was the sea that finally claimed them. Ernie just some seven or eight years later in the cold sea during a Russian Convoy, and Jack many years after just

a mile from our shore in a fishing accident in the company of his brother. As for Derek and I, we are still here, long after those big old Elms of Bulpit Lane disappeared.

Just up from Millfield in that flint wall was a gate which allowed access to those on foot into Pullen-Burry's nursery. I only recall it being used on no more than a couple of occasions, but the two steps leading up to it, that was another matter.

After I had left school and during my young teenage years my best mate was Norman Farrow. He lived at the bottom of our garden and I would very regularly cross the fence into his garden as I went to call for him. We would nearly always make for the step by that door. Sitting there and looking up across the by-pass, because by now that had arrived, we would have a clear view of the Downs. Sometimes it was just minutes, others it was hours that we sat and discussed where we would go that evening, or at the weekend, or it would be the work we had been doing, because at that time I was farming and Norman on the market garden. We spent lots of time at the pictures so that was quite a topic for discussion, and of course as all young children growing into adulthood, our often pathetic summing up of the facts of life. We walked a lot in those days too, mostly over the hills in one direction or the other, but on several occasions from Worthing in the late evening and at least once from Brighton, when the last feed of fish and chips had swallowed the last of our few pennies. I was lost for a time after Norman, who was my senior, was called up the Navy.

At the far end of the Lane where it joined Dankton the wall finished allowing a stout tall fence to take its place.

With the coming of the by-pass the old lane became redundant. It was offered alternative employment for a few years as a footpath, but fewer people trod its floor as time went by. Houses replaced the old nursery over the wall, but the old flint wall stood its ground. Today nature is trying its darndest to take over and has almost succeeded, because the young grandchildren of those old big Elms are trying desperately to settle there and with the help of a few briars deny access to us humans. However, all the time that old flint wall stands its ground a few of us will always call it Bulpit Lane.

Chapter XXII

RECTORY ROAD

As Bulpit Lane acted as the northern border of Millfield, so Rectory Road became the southern one, although there was an area of land between it and the gardens belonging to the houses of the green.

They both had the same starting line of Busticle Lane and ending with the same line, that of Dankton Lane.

As soon as the road started it commenced to rise and did not take long to pass the back yards of Busticle Cottages, whose front gardens you may remember ran down to join the ground of The Ball Tree. On the right at this point was the rough ground beside the house of old Jack Skinner. Young Jack, you will recall, had an allotment and this was part and parcel of the land that was worked by Jimmy Richardson who had about an acre and a half beside Rectory Road.

Firstly on the right stood his greenhouse, quite a good one it was at that. Here Jimmy raised his tomatoes and with the exception of a piece of land alongside it, where each year were raised his wall flower plants, the remainder of his land he rented out. It was probably a thriving little establishment at one time, encasing a large chicken run as well as a couple of pig sties. Jimmy only worked at the greenhouse at weekends, or so it seemed to me, because I don't recall seeing him in the week. On Sunday mornings, which was the time I was sent to him, he seemed always to be found in his packing shed standing by the road as a companion to the large green corrugated iron garage that stood at its side. He called it a packing shed and in days before these it may well have been, but there was very little to pack at this time. The packing shed was dark once inside it until your eyes became accustomed to the light, which was only allowed entry by the window at the front. On a bench by that window were his scales and a pile of tomatoes that never seemed any bigger or any less whenever I went there. It was for my Gran that I went to him because at home we seldom needed to buy tomatoes. Mr Foster next door worked at Thompsons Nurseries at Lancing where one of their main crops was tomatoes. Tomatoes like water and after they have had a good drink sometimes have an extra surge of growth, when the interior of the fruit grows faster than the skin and as a result the skin breaks, making the fruit unsaleable. When this happened, as it often did, he would bring home more than he required for his own needs, passing the surplus on to us. Jimmy was a pleasant man and at one time we rented the pig sties from him. Just a little higher than the pig sties but no more than five yards above them, the land dropped away vertically to the floor of a flint pit. No doubt many years before the pit had been part of a much larger enterprise than that which Jimmy had today.

Back to the road that climbed, not sharply but steadily, and as it did so the southerly side of the road was bordered by heavy wooden boarded fences on which grew more pear trees. It seemed at Pullen-Burry's that any where there wasn't a wall they would put up these heavy board fences on which to grow their pears. These fences with occasionally a hedge as well as flint walls would separate and protect the land in small parcels on which they grew their commercial crops. They had large areas of land all over the district of Sompting. Some reclaimed at some time from the sea, some flinty like that of Rectory Farm and some flecked with white as at Lyons Farm, where the soil was the south facing bank of the Downs. With all these different soils they could and did grow all types of vegetables in areas that were likened to their natural environment. Here at Rectory Farm they had a lot of greenhouses which would for some crops create the environment that best suited to their growth and maturity. They were lucky to have so many experienced men at their disposal at that time, each expert with years of experience who would specialise at one crop.

They had innovated a set of travelling greenhouses that were a great asset in the growing of lettuce, a crop for which they were noted. These greenhouses were built with wheels similar to those of a train. These, though, ran on concrete bases and could be propelled very slowly by means of large hand turned wheels assisted with sets of gearing. The idea of this system was that the concrete bases would be laid to allow the houses to move along them about three or four times

their width. Thus a crop could be sown and started into life, after which they would like an animal be weaned as the house was wheeled along to raise the next batch and, having arrived at the end, return to start the process all over again.

Rectory Farm in those days was the Headquarters of the Pullen-Burry empire. Here were the packing sheds and here also they made their own boxes. I have seen Peggy Souter sitting at what seemed then a very complicated machine, punching nails into short planks of wood that would soon be turned into a bushel box. Everywhere there was a collection of sheds there was a stable, here too then one could be found. Also to be seen was the cart sheds, with the shafts of the cards either resting on the ground or reaching to the sky like a giant pair of outstretched arms. The sounds of the blacksmith's shop along with the aroma that could only come from such an establishment was here, to shoe the great number of horses they possessed, also to repair and maintain the numerous implements that a great enterprise such as this possessed. At this time, also, the smithy was gradually becoming the home of the mechanic as lorries became part of the big machine. Each of the salesmen had their own lorry and would not only sell but carry their own orders. Two at this time were Mr Smith and Nipper Styles. Almost everywhere could be seen the lumps of coal that stood beside the stumpy chimneys of the stokeholes, and the cinder road evidence of the passage of thousands of tons of that black fuel. The traffic into Dankton Lane was sufficient to have erected large mirrors at the exit to allow drivers a view of the lane before they entered.

It was difficult for me to imagine then, and even more difficult when I see a boy of thirteen years today, that my Father was that age in the First World War. I find it even more difficult to see him at that age entering that farm at midnight and going to the stable. There feeding his horse and harnessing it as it munched contentedly away and then leading it out to the yard and attaching the harness to the shafts of a van that was already loaded with about a ton of vegetables that were to be delivered to Brighton vegetable market in time to be sold to greengrocers in the early hours of the morning. Yet that is what was required of him and that is what he did, sometimes in the company of others, but oftentimes on his own. With the exception he says of one or two drunken soldiers helping themselves to an apple or a pear now and again nothing untoward happened to him. He did say though that Edward Street in Brighton, where the horses were tethered for a rest, was always occupied by a few drunks having a set to. So as I write this some seventy years later the times don't change much, do they?

Back down the road then to Jimmy's packing shed and his next door neighbour, the flint pit. Most roads other than main roads at that time and before constituted in their make flints only, creating a constant demand for them. Any land therefore that held flints in great number was vulnerable to be used for this purpose.

The land that was here before it was dug away was at one time worked by my Grandfather, who tried desperately to make a go of market gardening after concluding a day's work for a master. Dad reckons he hasn't seen a man work harder than his father did amongst those plants and stones. He saw him once up there planting Brussel Sprout plants by the light of a hurricane lamp. His labour it seems was in vain and in the end he gave up the struggle to concentrate on his back garden only. I am, though, honoured and proud to hoe my garden with the same hoe that Grandfather Lindfield used in that vain attempt at self-employment.

Although Grandad's attempt to work for himself fizzled out there was to be many, many hours when he would be working on his own. He worked for a firm at Shoreham who bought the ground that he once slaved on in the evenings. His employment with them was to transform that land into a flint pit. He was the man who wheeled away the first barrow loads of soil from what was to become a vast hole.

It was many years later when I was to get to know the flint pit. Grandfather had at this time progressed from the pit to the driving of a steam traction engine. A steam traction engine would pull trucks behind it in similar fashion to those of the railways. These trucks were of seven cubic yards and the engine would oftentimes pull two or three of these at a road speed of five or six miles an hour. I suppose it must have been one of my earliest memories to be taken by my Gran over to the pit and handed up to my Grandfather on that big monster engine of his. It was an

experience that didn't please me too well and my time up there in the company of Grandfather was very shortlived. The work on those early road transporters was very hard indeed because there were no tippers, no mechanical loaders either. A lot of the work I was told later was to put those flints on rail trucks. In the evening Grandfather and his mate would load by hand those trucks using a flint fork, a tool of the same shape as the modern dish shovel but with spines in the position that the blade takes. Early in the morning it was off to the goods yard where those same flints would be transferred, in the same manner as they were loaded, into the waiting railway wagon. It meant, of course, a very early start to the day as the engine could not be moved until a good head of steam had been produced.

I don't expect the early mornings ever worried my Grandfather. He had most of his life before this time been involved with horses, where the day began long before the horse and wagon were on the road. He must have been a good horseman too, because I once owned a photograph of him, when employed in a short break from the farm, on a wagon with a smart horse in the shafts belonging to Hove Gas Company. Along with it was a certificate for third prize in the Brighton Horse Show of 1903.

By the time I really got to know my Grandfather he was employed as a gardener, and it was as such that he taught me many things of the garden, an education to be enlarged by my Father. The war was young when Gran's old front room was changed into a bedroom and I was no more to listen to Grandfather's politics over the garden hedge, and no more knowledge of gardening was to be passed on from his lips, as cancer forced him to his bed. He passed on and for a long time it seemed to leave a great hole in my young life.

By the time I was big enough to know the flint pit properly it was but half of its eventual size. Now it was worked by a Mr Dunk who lived in a green wooden bungalow that had been erected in the pit, beside the road to the farm. I used to think that the man led a very lonely life because I recall no other employees in that pit.

The face of the pit was about twenty to thirty feet high and its floor was covered in miniature mountains of light yellow, some bald, while others would be capped with hair of tall waving rye grass. These miniature mountains, numerous in number, contained many peaks, each marking a different age of the pit's life. As different parts of the pit face were worked, so different areas were allocated for these mountains to grow.

To work the pit it was necessary for Mr Dunk to prise away the top of the pit face with a crowbar so that small avalanches of soil would cascade to the pit floor. Lower levels would be tackled with a pickaxe. Equipped then with three wheel barrows, his pick, fork, crowbar and a series of planks, Mr Dunk would set about his task, which was to make available the flints. He would select from the fallen spoil the large flints and place them in one barrow, which when full would go to make a separate pile. These no doubt would be purchased and taken to a knapper, who would trim them for building those beautiful old cottages we so admire today. The remaining spoil would be forked or, if dry, shovelled into a sieve that would lay in one of the two remaining barrows. When full this sieve would be shaken, allowing the yellowish soil to drop through into the second barrow and the sought after flints remain in the sieve to be tipped into the third barrow. The soil barrow would be filled far more times than the others and each time it was it would be wheeled away along a series of planks, eventually to be tipped creating the mountain like appearance of the pit floor. The flint barrow, when filled, would go to make a very uniform collection. Each of these piles, should there be more than one in the pit at any given time, which there oftentimes were, was of uniform dimensions. What those dimensions were I do not know but they were essential for the payment of Mr Dunk's labour and merely measuring their length and width gave the cubic capacity in yards, the language of his financial reward.

Mr Dunk was still busy with his labours when I started my employment in the pit. I was though in no way interested in the flints, nor was I big or strong enough to mine them, because I was a mere ten or eleven years old.

The early excavations of the pit which my Grandfather had played a part in were now well into their second or rather third period of life. There were two rather large but rather

ramshackle gatherings of pig sties, chicken runs and rabbit hutches. The gatherings by the pit gate were those owned by the Souters, the old man had once been the chauffeur to Mr Pullen-Burry and his son Ernie, who was a bus driver. It was the largest gathering of the two. I went to the one in the far corner that belonged to Fred Burgess and could easily be reached from the bottom of Gran's garden. Fred's family lived next door to Gran and so the brothers of Fred, who in earlier times had amused me as they lay on the green, now oftimes gathered at the pig sties on a Sunday morning. Fred was the eldest of the family, had bought his own bungalow and lived nearly at the top of Mickey Mouse Town.

Fred was a loveable chap, always ready with a smile and had the most endearing chuckle I was every to hear, but hear it in plenty I did in those days of employment in the pit. Fred had been to that terrible war. He walked about with the obvious legacy of only one arm. Talk I remember was abroad that poor old Fred was knocked about the body quite severely too. I don't think it was ever possible for old Fred to have a family and perhaps that is why he was so good to me. He was engaged to be married when he went to war and although he came back only half the man he was when he went, his fiancée stood by him and they had a lovely long marriage.

My task for Fred was to collect three times a week the swill that was saved for him from about twelve different houses. The trouble was that those houses were spread over quite a wide area, reaching from Abbey Road in one direction to the top of Mickey Mouse Town in the other. This house at the top of Mickey Mouse Town was that of Fred himself and on several occasions I had to wheel truck loads of manure up there on my outward journey. On one such trip to Fred's house he took me round the back to see his greenhouse, where I was thrilled to see what was my favourite vegetable at that time growing within. It was the cucumber and the sight of those vines with their numerous fruits hanging was one that thrilled me. I went home that day not just with one of my favourite fruits plucked straight from the vine, but also the desire to grow them myself one day. These days I grow them every year, but whether it is my imagination, or my rosy picture of the past, but how ever I try they never seem to hang in such profusion that the mental picture I retain of that day.

The other part of my employment gradually increased as time went on, until at weekends I was cleaning out the sties, boiling the coppers of swill and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons being in sole charge of pigs, chicken and rabbits.

How long it was at this employment that I received a shilling a week I can't recall, but I do know that that shilling was saved by my Gran to make a contribution to my clothes. One day Fred gave me a thrilling choice, I could, he said, continue to be paid a shilling a week, or I could forgo the shilling and instead have for my very own one of the piglets from the newest litter. It would he had said be kept with the others, and kept by him, until they all went to market. I jumped at the chance and it was eventually sold at four pounds and sixteen shillings. It coincided with a week when on holiday from school I had worked a week on the farm for sixteen shillings. Gran smartened me up and together in the company of my five pounds and twelve shillings we caught the bus to Worthing. What else we bought in Worthing that day has long been forgotten, but I well recall the fish dinner we had in the Southdown Fish Restaurant and the first long trouser suit of my young life.

The feed shed of Fred's piggery was a regular meeting place on a Sunday morning of Fred's brothers and others who lived close by, but it also contained the meal, the midlands, the flaked maize, the corn and the crushed oats. These were the foods that fed the animals in this corner of the old pit, supplementing the swill contributed by my thrice a week round. At Christmas each of those contributors received either a large table-ready rabbit or a cockerel.

There was another memorable day at Fred's place. It was the day that one of the sows farrowed producing fourteen little piglets. It was normal to allow the sow to rear no more than ten, consequently four were selected and placed on one side to be destroyed. I could not bear to see them end their life so soon and asked if I may have them. Fred readily agreed, because I feel he had little desire to carry out the task that otherwise would have been his. I rushed home to Dad and told him. At first he refused, but my continual requests not only weakened his refusal but also enthused his hidden desire to have a go at rearing them. There followed a lot of hectic

preparation. An orange box was located, filled with straw and placed in the shed. A heater was placed close by, a baby's feeding bottle was acquired, not a difficult acquisition in our house, a teat was purchased from the chemist and a bottle of milk warmed.

So started the reprieve of the four little pigs. The first morning saw the sad departure of one. On the third morning our herd was reduced to just two. From then on it was obvious that the remaining two were going to make it. Dad rented the two black pit sties from Jimmy. Dad was in the pig business. As time progressed one pig grew at the normal rate while the other stood still, until the day arrived when one could walk under the belly of the other. Eventually economics decreed that the runt, the small one who was eating as much as the other but not changing it to pork, would have to go. Shortly after his departure the other was sold and four more purchased with the proceeds. These grew and were sold, but then the war came, animal feed was rationed as well as ours and so Dad's attempt to start pig farming came to an abrupt halt.

Other small enterprises had their beginnings in the old pit, but when I stopped my employment for Fred and when Fred stopped his pig farming are questions of which I have long since forgotten the answers.

The old pit lay empty for a fair time. Then activity was brisk again on its floor as the pit sties were swept away, the yellow mountains of Mr Dunk were either levelled or taken away and the flint floor was covered in concrete. Rising from the floor today are buildings far more uniform than those yellow mountains, as today's warehouses create another lifestyle of that piece of ground. No doubt many moons from now it will play other roles in front of other people, but I wonder if it will change its cloak as many times for another audience as it has for me.

Chapter XXIII

WEST STREET

I suppose it could well have been said at this time that West Street was Sompting. Commencing at The Ball Tree, or rather Aunt Annie's as we knew it, it ran the whole length of the village until it reached Broadwater. Each other part of Sompting at that time started from West Street. The area beyond The Ball tree was really Cokeham.

Standing at the bottom of two hills was Bashford's old cottage. One of these hills was Ball Tree Hill, that led the road away in the direction of Cokeham, while the other hill was the beginning of West Street.

I don't know what age my Father was when he started his first job as house boy to the Bashfords. Among other duties his task was to clean the two boys' boots, those of Tom and Allan. No doubt at times he saw many men come and go into old Aunt Annie's, buying their beer then retreating to the other side of the road to drink it. The old place was only an Off Licence until 1934, when the present Ball Tree was built.

The Ball Tree in those early days possessed a large garden at the back from where on the lawns in the warm summer evenings a small band would create music which would drift over the beginnings of the street. Also belonging to the Ball Tree was a little brick built shed with large glass windows that stood in the wall bordering the road. No footpath existed and the only use I ever saw that shed put to was as a meeting place for the young footballers of that day. They sometimes got quite rowdy, no doubt upsetting their neighbours who lived in the tiny little cottage next door. I have never been inside it but should I have done so I would have entered through a door that too was the border of the street. It has been closed these many years and from the looks of it from the outside it would be difficult to imagine more than one room downstairs and but one room up.

Opposite this little cottage, protected from the road by its three foot high flint wall, was the yard of Wellers, the carpenter and the village undertaker. They were very much quality carpenters and were for a long time the employers of Ned Brockhurst, he of the wooden leg. A lot of their work was the making of garden sheds, chicken houses and the such. Mr Weller lived at that time in one of the lovely flint cottages that stood slightly back from the road and had the relative luxury of a small front garden. The cottages were built with large flints such as those that Mr Dunk may well have selected and had been despatched and returned from the hands of a master knapper. The interior faces of those flints faced the road, making a lovely sight. Decorative and attractive they may well be, but today they are not used in house building. It is surely not because they are inferior to present day materials, and I am sure that it is not because we do not have those with the skill to build such places, although they may be few in number, so surely it must be either the cost is too high, or that we just haven't the patience or the time.

Whatever the reason I am sure the Wellers were proud to live there and even to this day the daughters of the family still reside in that first cottage.

Their neighbours of those days have long since departed to the land of the Australians, so long in fact that there are probably two generations that are born and bred Australians who proudly carry the name of Rowland. It was a name that was well known to all the children that lived in the village at that time and probably to many hundreds of building workers who later rapidly changed our quiet country village into whatever it is called today. The Rowlands made their own ice cream, selling it from their door. The door of that second cottage in which they lived, like my old Gran's, faced Will's Mother's and was therefore in line for some very wet weather. Protection from the worst was afforded when a wooden porch was erected. On the inside of one of the supporting laterals stood a hand bell. What a pleasure it was to proceed to that door with a penny clutched tightly in the fist of one hand whilst with the other the bell was rung. Mrs Rowland would come to the door and we would depart with a cornet of the loveliest creamy

ice cream that could be purchased anywhere. The bell, or at least a very similar one, would be heard at other times when Mr Rowland would adapt the sidecar of his combination to carry around to his customers that same commodity. Once the building started to get underway in our area there was a captive clientele to anyone who had the commodities to sell and the credit to offer, as Mr Rowland assessed. The ice cream would be changed for that of tobacco, sweets, papers and any commodity that was saleable. He would proceed once, twice a day to the numerous building sites and business prospered. He offered those with their pocket money spent credit. There were very few that owed Mr Rowland very large amounts for very long. He was a hard man physically and would very soon impose his authority on his debtors. Through sheer hard work and initiative his business flourished and with the combined efforts of his wife and himself they managed to build a little shop where the wooden porch had been. Now the sales from the house could include the commodities that up to now had been sold only from the sidecar. Things progressed until for reasons of their own they could sell up and disappear to start a new life in Australia.

Before, well, some time before they departed, I was to get to know their son Lee very well. He was at least a couple of years younger than I and while he was still at school I was minding my herd of cows over the line. One day whilst playing truant from school and wandering anywhere to avoid being seen he came across me in that little shanty of mine among the Hawthorns and Elders. There was no doubt this was he though the perfect place to lay up in the daytime with little risk of being seen. From that day and for about the next three weeks I not only had young company each day, but lived in what I then thought was luxury. He asked that first day if I would mind if he came the next, and replying that he could please himself he said he would seem me and would bring a packet of cigarettes. Next day he brought me Player Weights and during the next three weeks I went through the whole range of cigarettes on sale at that time. There were Capstan, Players, Gold Flake, Craven A, Woodbine, Park Drive, and I even got to trying a clay pipe and half an ounce of digger shag. All good things have to come to an end they say, and so it was with my young companion and I. How it was he got found out I am not sure, but one day when we captured a slow worm, that many would mistake for a snake, he put it in his satchel. Forgetting the contents of his satchel when he arrived home, probably because he was concentrating on not slipping up with any comment that would betray his daily destination, the slow worm slipped out of his school bag and slithered away. During the mad scramble to catch and dispose of it, followed by the close interrogation of how it came to be there, suspicions were aroused and I think the truth was learnt. Not only did I lose my daily supply of free cigarettes, but I lost the source from where I could obtain them on credit because it was a long time before I could pluck up enough courage to enter their shop again.

Opposite the cottages of flint were the two alms houses of the village. These were bequeathed to the village about the turn of the century. A trust fund was set up in the memory of the Penfold family. Times were of course far different then than they are today, and it didn't matter how old, how infirm, how poor one was, there was little to be obtained from the state. If one got too old and had no family who would not just have you, but want to have you, it was the workhouse, where many an old couple after forty or fifty years together were separated for the first time.

It was then during that period that these cottages were bequeathed to the village, and not only were the old of the village to live in them rent free, but they were to receive weekly the sum of two shilling and sixpence from the trust. The trust also supplied those in need within the village a hundred weight of coal at Christmas.

My old Gran was many years later to spend her last days in one of these, but this was long after the trust had dried up and the Council had taken them over, making them subject to the same rents as other properties.

For the whole length of West Street there was not a stretch that did not have at least on one side of the road a flint wall. These walls were made up many years before from the flints that littered the fields. Women and children were, according to my Father, sent to the field to collect the flints. They had with them a half yard box with no bottom into which they would throw or place these pickings. These boxes were not for carriage but merely for the measurement of their

labour and therefore to measure their remuneration. The box, having been recorded, would be lifted clear of the flints by the handles that were part of their make up and moved on to their next position. Father was told by his Father of some field that had been picked so clean of flints in this manner that the whole metabolism of the soil was unbalanced and no further crops could be grown in its soil.

For a great part of this road there were no footpaths and in the days when the horse was king of the road I doubt if any were really needed, but with the coming of the motor car it was an entirely different story. Walking along that road with a wall each side of you and a car approaching in both directions I well remember gave one a feeling of slight panic. These were of course the days of the village before the arrival of the by-pass, when I and my friends from the Cokeham area would make our way to school, my days under the control of George Cobden over. Goodwood Week was the most frightening for the parents of us young scholars, for it was during these weeks that West Street saw its heaviest flow of traffic. Many parents would keep their children away from school at that time, thinking the risk was too great. This fear became a reality one day when the little boy that lived in the last bungalow opposite The Ball Tree was run over and killed by a bus. His parents were so obviously distraught that they could not face living within sight of that terrible blight to their lives and within days had moved away.

The flint wall then that bordered the road on the same side as the Rowlands' shop was about four feet high and separated the road from firstly Bashfords acre, followed by the allotments, until it concluded at the top by the intervention of a five-barred gate whose task was to allow vehicle entry to the allotments. This wall of flints was about four feet high and surmounted by a crescent shaped cement cap. Youngsters in African tribes had various initiations that having passed would allow them to be recognised as those possessing various talents and skills: I didn't think that we had such things, but thinking back to those days one, it seems, was forever, in a very different way from those young Africans, having to prove oneself. This wall was to me one of those tests, and of course also to my fellows. It took many, many times and more than one or two falls to eventually stand, balance by your own skill and then set off, finally walking that top and so join the superior beings.

On the other side of the road at this point was another wall that was at least twice as high as the wall we walked, hiding almost completely whatever was beyond. However, the roof and the doorway with the step beyond showed a big old house. Here for many years we never entered, apart from those heady evenings of carol singing that came each late December. Many years later, before its final demise into blocks of red flats, it was the surgery of one of the doctors. The high wall continued until at the top of the hill, almost opposite its companion in the smaller wall, was another five-barred gate. This gate opened to a wooden garage by whose side ran a wide, white flint chippings path to a house that paraded great areas of white painted window frames. This was the house of Miss Honeywill. Miss Honeywill was the daughter of a past vicar of our parish. If her father was anything like this daughter that he had left behind he must have been a very busy man, because it seemed that everything that happened in the village, and anything you wanted, could only take place or be gained with the permission of Miss Honeywill. She was obviously a very active woman and as far as I remember very well liked and was remembered for many good deeds, but at the same time, of course, was ever ready to pour scorn on those who did not tread the path of life as Godly as she. The house possessed large gardens both front and to the rear and although the house still stands very much the way she would have liked it to, the gardens have been drastically reduced.

Next to the wall that encased the home of Miss Honeywill was the entrance to a courtyard, and to a house that was the home of Mr and Mrs Bury. The front of the house was in fact the rear wall of a courtyard and also the boundary of an acre of walled garden that had at one time been worked by the Bashfords. It was mainly orchard, or so I had been told, for I was never to proceed behind that wall.

The houses that stood against the road at the front of that courtyard, with the smallest of front gardens, were Blacksmith cottages. Many of the employees of Pullen-Burry's were over the years to live in these abodes. Among these were the Groves, who were at a later time to become

our neighbours at Millfield. Another house at one time housed the Lassitars. These houses had little of the modern things that are taken for granted in the homes of today. There were two other cottages at the far end of this particular piece of land that were the homes to two families of the Kennards. In between these was built a modern block of washing facilities allowing all the occupants to share in the more modern ways of that day's society.

These facilities were built on the site of two very old cottages indeed. My family should know one of these because it was the first house they lived in in Sompting. How it was that they came to live in one of them I am not sure, but I feel it was because my Grandmother was to work in the house of Mr Pullen-Burry.

It was during the First World War when my Father was coming up to ten years of age that they arrived from his birthplace of Horton, a small collection of farm houses just short of Small Dole. The pair of cottages were most unusual. It appeared that a hole had been dug and the cottages built within. Their windows of the downstairs rooms were half below and half above the small front gardens. The upstairs were, therefore, only just above ground level and was gained by climbing a rickety old ladder. There was very little privacy available and almost every movement of those next door could be heard. The next door neighbours at that time were Allan Davey and his new bride. They still live in Lancing, some seventy years later, now of course both in their nineties.

My Grandfather at this time was I understand suffering from ill-health, caused probably from living in these damp circumstances because of course there was no such thing as a damp course and standing in the hearth looking up the chimney the sky could be seen. Gran sought the assistance of the doctor and the help of Mr Pullen-Burry to obtain better accommodation. They were allocated a Council house and in fact became the first tenants of Millfield Cottages.

It must be understood that all the houses of Sompting, apart from the larger ones such as Miss Honeywill's, Mr Lee's and the people of secure means, were tied cottages that went with the job. The coming of Millfield Cottages and their associates were a great stride forward for working people whose hope at that time to own their own home was just pie in the sky.

There was a time during those early days living in that old cottage, Father said, when mules' shoes would now and again come crashing against the wall of the house. They came from the shoeing process of those animals which were owned by the army and were shod in the smithy that stands opposite this spot today. Its called the Smithy today, but now is a smart little bungalow. When Dad arrived it was a hard working smithy and wheelwrights. It was here that Mr Weller set up business when he first came to the village. His prime trade was that of wheelwright. It was here in the smithy that the hubs, spokes and felloes would be made and the equipment available to set the iron tyre on the assembled wheel. Firstly the tyre had to be heated to allow the metal to expand before being fitted to the wheel and then dowsed with water to quickly shrink it and so fit snugly on the wheel. Whether or not it was through this process, with its abundant use of water I know not, but over the hedge at that spot in my time was always, at the right time of the year, the home for plenty of frogs. The smithy was very near the end of its working life when I first knew it and very little work of the nature it was designed for took place. It was apparently a very good example of a smithy of that day and I was told a miniature model of its interior was on display in a museum in London for a long time. The coming of the pneumatic tyre tolled the death bell for thousands of the wheelwrights and another skill was destined to be virtually unpractised. A cottage stood next door to the smith but the occupants in the 1930s were far removed from that of a smith. The owner, or at least occupier, at that time was one Miss Randolph with her companion who I think had the name of Symonds. I do know, though, that my friend's auntie worked there for many years, but I don't think Norman Farrow paid many visits to her at that house. The house had been built in the corner of Blacksmith Field which would tend to make one think that the smith in the early days of his business at that spot had been a bit of a land owner, but that is purely guess work.

Blacksmith Field, in which the house stood, was one of the key grazing fields for the dairy herd of Yew Tree Farm and was the same field that the bullocks could be driven down on the journey to Waddies Brooks. The field stretched out before one's gaze, stopping only a the

high embankment of the railway in the far distance. It was separated from West Street by a low flint wall that had at this time half crumbled away and been supplemented by a metal fence that had become twisted and distorted over what must have been its long life there. As if nature failed to trust the security of that wall and fence it sent its brambles to attempt to grow along its length, but the poor soil available between the crumbled flints and mortar made the attempt a very feeble one indeed.

The good meadowland at the top of Blacksmith very slowly sloped southwards as it proceeded to the brooklands below, edged both on the east and west side by high Hawthorn hedges, although the western one was supported by a few Elm trees before it became established. This top area was often the site where we would have a short game of cricket on the way home from school. I say short game because we would play with Doug Groves, who lived in Blacksmith Cottages, using his kit. It was uncanny that as the owner of the kit he had the right to the first innings and very soon after his dismissal he would have to go for tea.

The meadow ran at an even width as it proceeded south. Firstly on the east side its neighbour would be the allotments and then the acre of Mr Weller's chicken runs. On the west it would continue on its way until rudely disturbed by Escatt Philips' arable field protruding into its path. Just before arriving at that point a stile had been unobtrusively set in the hedge and was part of the footpath from Lotts Lane to the church. This path crossed the meadow at its widest point, where the grasslands ran back after Mr Weller's field, to firstly a mixture of fence and hedge by the path to the allotments, another stile and then a higher hedge and fence that kept the cows, and tried to keep the boys as well, out of a small orchard, and on to a row of old Elms situated in a half circle to curtail the southerly tumble of the grasses. These Elms were great friends to many, many people in their long lives. Sompting was filled with these great trees and during the great building spree they were cut down with gay abandon. I often wonder if nature, angry at these indiscriminate acts, thinking in later years that if you don't want us then we'll go, sent the little beetle that caused Dutch Elm Disease to take the rest away. These great old trees in Blacksmith, with their deep crinkled bark, seamed like the lines on an old man's face, seemingly pleased as the ropes were secured to their extended arms, with the whoops of joy resounding across the meadow as youngsters swung around their base. Their leaves appeared to fan the air above the tail flicking cows who enjoyed their shade on those hot summer days. The boughs dipped as if to hide prying eyes from the young courting couples that lay beneath their privacy. The coming of the war brought the explosion of a bomb no more than twenty yards from their exposed trunks, but they stood firm. The whole village was up in arms as they tried to stop the building of metal trees called pylons in their meadow. The village lost and the old Elms accepted the strangers, who were to spread and corrupt the skyline in all directions. They could accept most things but one thing that beat them was progress, and today not one of the thousands of Elm trees that stood in the village when my Father arrived, remains.

Past the big old Elm trees a fence took over the duties of a boundary and travelled at almost ninety degrees from the trees until it reached the top of a southerly row of Withies. These trees were to act as the boundary of Pullen-Burry's, while no more than thirty yards to the west was a vertical bank with trees and bushes on its top which would run parallel and take over the duties of separating Escat Philips' arable field, aided by a wire fence. A sloping southerly bank led the grasslands down from the good pasture of Blacksmith to the increasingly coarser grasses of the lower lands. Blacksmith some years was given over to hay making but this narrow belt of land was never included. When the bottom of Pullen-Burry's ground was reached on the east side a thick hedge and a ramshackle gate stood. It could be erected to stop any southerly trek of the grazing cattle, but more often than not it was only erected to stop the return of the dry cows that were sent to graze here.

The ground dropped away to the left here, leaving Escatt Philips' ground higher than ever. The left sloping ground stopped any forward journey into the brooklands of St Johns Farm. Here the land was I would have thought below sea level. Today the whole area is a sea of six or seven feet high reeds and any thought of haymaking in that area today is completely out of the question.

The whole area is caught between the sandy bank of Chalky Ham of St Johns Farm and the vertical bank of Escatts. I had previously tried to imagine how Chalky Ham had been filled, but now looking at the bank on the east and a bank on the west it seems more likely that the area between was dug out to make the high railway embankment that runs through that area. Perhaps after all the sea had flowed through the area many years before and was responsible for the sand deposits on both banks. There appears to be no record of such a happening and certainly no memory so I don't expect we shall ever know.

Escatt Philips' field stopped short of the railway and the sloping bank slide around its southerly bottom to meet the gate of Loose Lane. The gate from Loose Lane was the same one that wagons and horses would make their way to over the culvert which bridged the brook that ran parallel with the railway about thirty yards to the south.

Within the brook beneath the culvert was the home each year of thousands of tadpoles and newts. There surely cannot be anyone of my age group who has not at sometime trooped off to that spot armed with the old jam jar around whose rim the trusted string handle had been created. Breaks in the tadpoling allowed the racing of various sailing objects through the hidden tunnel of that culvert. The journey home, it is sad to relate, oftimes saw the disposal of the catch, but those that survived were avidly watched as their transformation from tadpole to frog took place.

The hedges, the brooks, the trees and the grasses were the hunting grounds for birds' nests, mushrooms and blackberries as the passing seasons of the year brought each quest into its time and place.

Opposite the crumbling wall where the brambles had their fight for survival was another of those flint walls. This one had the duty to separate a small field of grass from the road. It belonged to Pullen-Burry and like all their properties had at its beginnings the black gate. Behind this black gate and slightly to the right, so that its back came up against the wall of the house that one of the Kennard family lived in, was a black shed also. It was quite a large shed as far as sheds go and had an open front. This field and shed was the summer evening and weekend home of the horses of Rectory Farm. The field, in places, showed the marks of past excavations which caused the surface to undulate quite extensively. There had been many tons of soil removed in the past, probably for the purpose of potting in the attached nursery. The horses paid no heed to the surface as they ate its grasses, or trotted its perimeter, or even stood on those hot days in the shade of the black shed, and with tail and twitching skin kept the flies at bay. They were glad to share its freedom. The wall that led this little field along to its neighbour had over the years taken as its lodger several plants of the clinging ivy, whose presence broke up the grey of the wall with their dark green leaves.

The neighbour was the Old Rectory. It was and still is to me a rather ugly looking large house standing back from the road, with its crescent shaped drive leading from an early break in its flint wall and returning to the farthest point of it. I never ever knew the vicar to live in this house, but I suppose he did in those days long ago when the vicar was also a large land owner. It would seem logical that the neighbouring farm, holding a name like Rectory Farm, would have been part of that land owned by him and no doubt far to the north east Church Farm, that stood as a companion to the church itself, would have been also. If that surmise would have been correct then the fields between would certainly have held their cattle and crops.

Those statements are suppositions but the facts are that the large house was then lived in by the Pullen-Burrys and that my Gran worked within its walls. I never went within its doors but Gran told me that there were great big rooms connected by long corridors and winding stairs. She worked there when she first came to Sompting and was still working there when I was born some thirteen years later and so I expect she knew it well. When I knew it the old man had died and the son and daughter remained, but the old house was not to entertain them for long. Although the estates that carried their name were quite large it seems the money that they once could muster had, like their parents, departed also. The sister lost her reason and the brother took her to a house way up in the hills at Lychpool, where here days were spent away from prying eyes and her loud cries that accompanied her state of mind were made to the clouds and skies above her. After she

had passed away the brother returned to live his last days in the relative peace of what was at one time one of his workers cottages in Cokeham.

The large gardens that sided the crescent shaped drive were for the most part the home of many large shrubs and the wall that skirted West Street was overhung by large Horse Chestnut trees. These old trees were the production plants for the hoards of conkers that supplied generations of youngsters. They were no doubt the cause for many a caning, as arrival at school with pockets full would mean the confiscation of the conkers and the accompanying punishment. The large old house stood back watching our efforts as pieces of broken branch were thrown to dislodge the fruits. Little stirred within the house to bother us, for not it had reverted to a convent and the Nuns led their quiet life in the large house almost hidden by the shade of those big old trees. It was much easier to collect the conkers from the ground but we kept to the road because at the end of the crescent shaped drive was the lodge house where, unlike the Nuns, the occupier was not adverse to giving us a clip around the ear should we be caught.

On the other side of West Street at this point was something little seen in the village at that time, a footpath. The only trouble with it was that as we made our way to school in our newly shone shoes the cows of Yew Tree Farm had preceded us at an early time in the opposite direction, heading for Blacksmith Field. If someone had told them that footpaths were not for the likes of them they had heeded the words little. Had someone told them that there were a time and place for most things, they had heeded even less, because the path from here on was treacherous, either from the fear of slipping, or arriving at school with more than Cherry Blossom on your shoes. At other times this piece of road was a joy to travel. With a good kerb it was great for a game of allies in the gutter, as one rolled one glass ball after the other, with some third party guarding the drain grating with their shoes. Other times, with the smooth tarmac that the surface of the road held at this point, it was ideal for the whip and top. There were some real experts at this game, either with the top known as a turnip because of its shape, or that of the window smasher because of its regular failing. Beyond the footpath stood a break in tradition, because here was no flint wall but a short fence. However, the tradition of Pullen-Burrys to grow pears on anything that stood upright was still practised, although the fence was no more than three foot six inches high. This parcel of land in the shape of a rectangle reached down to join the field of Escatt's. It was split in two by a high wooden fence across its width at the middle, on which again the pears were trained to grow. Everywhere that Pullen-Burrys had a piece of ground there was a black gate, mostly five-barred as this one was, but immaterial what design, it was black. The black, though, was more the nature of pitch than of paint. By the side of this one that bordered West Street opposite the entrance to Dankton lane there was also a small pedestrian one. This small one gave access to the footpath to Lotts Lane which at this point travelled diagonally across the arable field, sheltered from the north by a Hawthorn hedge. To enable one to pass on into Blacksmith Field a stile was erected in the thick high Hawthorn hedge and was coloured white. It was from that stile that the area got its name of "White Stiles".

This stile has a significance not so much for me but for my Stepmother, who sat upon its white woodwork some forty three years ago and received a proposal of marriage from her first husband. I often wonder how they were dressed at that time and if in their wildest dreams they could have imagined the changes they were to see in the old village and the future of that old stile.

No more than six or seven yards along the road from the gates leading to White Stiles was another gate. This was the entry to the "Front Meadow", which was the second of the grazing fields for Yew Tree Farm. For many years in Sompting football was played on the Recreation Ground, but today it is a different recreation ground, it is once again the site of front meadow. I say once again because it was allowed to be played here in the years before Sompting had a recreation ground. My Father played football on it, that is until he hurt his leg and as a consequence Gran burnt his boots. During my young years there was a fence separating it from White Stiles with a metal fence from the modest traffic of West Street, while a motley collection of Elm trees, Hawthorns and the twisted strands of barbed wire protected Loose Lane. While a similar collection at the bottom separated it from Escatt's arable, it allowed the cows to continue to munch its greenery and sit and chew the cud until called to once more go through the twice daily ritual of milking. Just inside the gate on the left was the pond that at some future time disappeared

without trace. Today, with its football pitches, its cricket wickets and the little school overlooking it, it still grows green and the name of the little school retains the memory to me of the old market garden of White Stiles, and to my Stepmother her proposal of marriage.

On the opposite side of West Street here was the junction of Dankton Lane. Next to that was the beginning of Yew Tree Farm. This was quite the biggest collection of buildings along West Street. Firstly the flint wall encasing it was low and allowed one to look through the high wire netting to the undulating surface of the chicken runs. Here were what we would call today free range chicken. They were contained in an area of ground that must have been at least half an acre which was surrounded by a high wire netting fence. There were a couple of large wooden chicken houses that could be walked through without having to bend, with nothing to impede your progress. Down the middle were the laying boxes into which the hens would lay their eggs. They were fed a corn diet that would be strewn upon the ground outside and quite often the ground disturbed to allow a lot of scratching to go on. Mr Childs looked after this enterprise after the passing of old Mr Lindup, who died of lockjaw after cutting his hand on some rusty barbed wire.

Next to the chicken and separated by a high flint wall was the entrance in West Street of Yew Tree Farm yard. In fact there were two, because the main yard had in its centre a smaller one. Within the centre one could be found the cowshed and the stables. The cowshed must have at that time had ties for forty or fifty cows. Mr Etherington was the cowman and under him was a second cowman, plus a couple of casual milkers who had other jobs on the farm but were co-opted for this task. It was reckoned that a dozen cows were enough for one man to milk. The cowshed had a smell of its own which was that of stale milk, and was an odour that one had to get used to. On the other side of the inner yard was the stable. Now here was a smell I loved and still do, although there is little opportunity to savour that aroma today. It was about a five or six horse stable and was the home of the horses under the control of Mr Scrace and Mr Wady, they of the vocal choir of Waddies Brooks. The odd horse was the shackler and one was to be found on all farms. Shackler meaning the horse and cart that was used to do all the odd jobs, thus leaving the pairs to get on with the major cultivating tasks. In the middle of the inner yard were the dung lumps that would rapidly grow during the winter months when the cows were confined to the cowsheds for long periods. My Brother, Brian, was in charge of the shackler for a time so he got to know this yard far better than I.

The outer yard he got to know even more, for here was to be found the straw stack and the mangold pie. Here in the winter months would be a daily hauling task for the shackler as the appetite of the cows was at its highest. It was here, too, that the pigsty could be located and it was not uncommon to see the sow and her litter free to roam the yard. It had been from here that Tony got his little pig so it was not surprising that he soon became frustrated with the confines of his small sty after the freedom of this vast yard. The cart sheds were here too, some with carts, some with wagons and one that had already accepted progress, because there within her confines was a car. There was something romantic about the sight of the cart or wagon, their shafts resting on the floor of the old cart shed. The wagons with their ladders front and rear, standing always ready in the anticipation of the future sunshine and load upon load of hay and sheaves. Whereas the car looked completely out of place and dripped black pools of oil that not only looked ugly, but commenced to do away with the odours for which the farm yards were renowned.

The wall that carried on after the passing of the farm yard had little distance to travel before it was broken again, this time by the gate to the domestic yard. This was much smaller than the others and had a base of white chippings similar to those of Miss Honeywill's drive. It was the home of the hunters that the daughters of the house would ride, but one look at the buildings within its confines would readily stir the imaginations to the industry that took place here years before. Here would be kept the carriage and the smaller vehicles of traps and Governess carts. It would be here, also, that the making of the butter would take place, with one of the maids rotating that butter barrel under the watchful eye of the housekeeper. Here, by the looks of the chimney that protruded from the roof, the washing was likely to take place. Yes, even today if you stand at its gate looking within and let the mind wander with a little licence, all these things can be seen as the bustle of activity would seem constant as first one and then the other of them would take place. However, in reality it is hardly ever that one catches a glimpse of any one in that yard today.

All these activities that we must assume took place were to aid the running of the large farmhouse that stands beyond the next wall. This is Yew Tree Farmhouse with the three Yew trees that stand behind the substantial wall testifying to its name. It is a lovely house, with its two gates allowing the half circular drive to enter and pass its distinguished front door. I was never of course to pass into the house but it has always left its mark on me. It had large deep windows both on the ground floor and the first floor. So it was like a camera that opens its shutter, whatever is seen is portrayed upon the negative, an imprint was made on my mind. I was coming out of Loose lane that is opposite the house, standing in the cart with the reins of Daisy in my hands when my negative was imprinted. I had looked up quite casually at one of the upstairs windows and my young fifteen year old eyes alighted on the naked form of a young female for the first time in my life. She looked really lovely and that fleeting glimpse that was imprinted in that fraction of a second was never to fade all these years later.

The house, as I have said, was really distinguished and really old. I know not how old it is but have no doubt that it probably equals the buildings who for over a hundred years have sat on the site next door. Today it is one house with a garage as part of the ground floor. It was then, in complete contrast to the farmhouse with its obvious collection of large rambling rooms, a pair of small farm cottages. In one at that time lived the shepherd of Street Farm, while in the other a good friend of mine with his family, Geoff Gatland. We shared a good few years together at school but I recall a night some year or two after school in the company of Geoff. We were standing at this gate one latish summer evening when the heat of the day had cooled and the evening dark was settling to give the sun a rest. During our conversation the siren sounded and the dark of the evening was soon pierced by the stabbing beams of the search lights as they probed the sky. It was not difficult to hear the prey they sought as the throbbing engines filled the sky high above. Somehow it had become easy to distinguish the sound of our planes from those of the Germans. Ours caused the air to be filled with a continuous drone while the German was that of a constant throbbing. Our young eyes were scouring the sky to see if the searchlights could pick out their prey, when Geoff said "In a minute old Billy will come out", old Billy being his neighbour, "And he'll say, 'Over again then young Geoff, where do you reckon they're off to, London?'" The words had hardly left his mouth when the next door opened and the big bulk of Billy alighted from the door. With hardly a look in our direction he repeated Geoff's forecast word for word as he did apparently every time a similar occurrence took place, as it did most nights at that time. These two cottages carry a plaque stating that they were built at the instigation of one Mr Crofts in the year 1874. Looking around this little gathering close to the Yew Tree Farmhouse it would be not improbable to presume that they had all been built around that time.

Every little collection of houses had at that time it seems a little shop. Billy Boxall had such a little place that could be reached next to the house of Geoff by climbing the three brick steps to the door. Open the door and one seemed to be in a small hall and had to turn sharp left to enter the small dark shop of Billy's. I say dark because the light from the road end came through a pane filled window that was not over large, half of which was hidden by its contents. The other end there was a door from the living quarters which allowed light to enter when it was opened, but appeared to lose it quickly as the bulk of Billy filled it on the way to serve you. Behind his great frame as he clumsily turned to serve were all the sweets of the day, the sherbet dabs, the toffees, the halfpenny chews, the lemonade powder that was lovely to eat with a wet finger but stained lips and fingers alike. It was a haven of delight for those little friends and I, as halfpennies were spent as though there was no tomorrow. Billy and his like were the corner stones of village life. They have now after Billy's passing these many years changed his little shop. It has been extended, modernised and turned shelf service, mind you it was self service for one or two, years ago, but Billy didn't know. However, perhaps he is better off where he is now because he would never be happy in what was that little shop of his today.

Next to the shop the wall dropped back twenty yards from the road, enclosing a patch of ground that was owned by the church. Behind the shop and tucked neatly in the corner was a small brick building that was hired out for committee meetings of one kind or another. Next to it in the back wall of this enclosure was a wooden gate within the wall and of the same height that hid an acre of ground that was worked by the Towns. A short track lead from West Street to this gate where the rest of the enclosure was taken up with the Reading Room.

The Reading Room was one of those properties that could only be hired by the permission of Miss Honeywell. On no account was there to be any alcoholic drink consumed on its premises. It was, and for that matter still is, separated from West Street by a wall of three or four feet in height. The difference today is that within that wall years ago was a set gate, behind which on the exterior wall of the building would be a large display cabinet whose contents would inform of future events within the village. Now there is no board and the gate way has long since been bricked up.

Within the interior of that room many different occasions took place. Probably the earliest one for me must have been about 1933. It was a play produced by the school of Snot White and the Seven Dwarfs. It was one of the dwarfs and had, as far as I recall, the only speaking part of any of them. I remember dishing out from a large bowl the porridge at breakfast time, which looked very much like paper confetti to me. What makes me remember that play is not for the lines I spoke, nor the leading lady, Snow White, for I have long since forgotten who played the part, no, it was because of my dress. I wore a pointed little hat, also a beard that was stuck on my chin hurting terribly each time it was removed and tickled madly each time I wore it. However, it was neither of these. The girls had been requested to bring to school pairs of stockings and knickers, and the dwarfs had to wear them. I am sure that my face was crimson the whole time I was on the stage, and the embarrassment imprinted forever in my memory.

I went to the Reading Room many times for the Youth Club, enjoying those evenings very much indeed. I was at one time the youth club captain and was quite proud to be so. We had a football team but were not proud of our first effort when we lost eleven nil. Boxing was another sport that was practised but not competitively, having in fact no ring at all, but two very good exponents in Dessie Smyth and Jimmy MacGregor. Dessie came into the village when he was about five. He was one of an Irish family of two boys and three girls. Little did I know then that in later years one of his sisters would become my Auntie. Jimmy arrived from Scotland when he was about seventeen. It was difficult to understand him at first, yet in a short while we were good friends and I spent many happy weekends sleeping in his house and enjoying the generous hospitality of his family.

We had our own kitchen that supplied us with tea and buns which was very efficiently run by the capable Joyce Stovell, who was later to become the wife of Dessie and unfortunately, much too soon in life, his widow, and Winnie Martin, who was later the sister-in-law of Joyce. The surrounds of the room were the bedding area for numerous shrubs and nothing would give Laurie Stringer more pleasure than for one of us to bring a girl outside on a dark night. He had the ability to turn his eyelids inside out and having done so would hide in one of the thick shrubs. When the girl we escorted walked by his particular shrub he would switch on his lamp, shining up from his chin, and the result would be truly frightening, causing the girl to go screaming into the room.

It was the home, this Reading Room, of the village concert. I suppose today in the age of television they would definitely be a non-starter, but in those days they managed to fill the hall and were in fact quite a giggle. The comedians were pathetic really, as indeed was often the soprano. Quite often the singing saw could have done with a few more weeks practise, but there were some good musicians with the different instruments. Rosemary Slaughter, who was rather a big girl, would dress up, getting a good response from her "Why am I only the Bridesmaid and never the Blushing Bride?"

I won my first raffle in the precincts of the Reading Room, but then I could hardly fail because it was a union meeting of farm workers and only twelve of us turned up.

Opposite the gate to the Reading Room was another small gate in another small wall. It was the entrance to a terrace of twelve houses carrying the name of Orchard Cottages, but as the end of that terrace bordered West Street, I would rather say that they were in fact in Loose Lane. They possessed small back yards that were abruptly brought to a halt by another of those tall flint walls. This was but one of the four tall walls that encased each side of the walled in garden of Billy Boxall. Billy would tend to the shop himself at the busy times of the day, but at other times would happily pass that duty to his wife, spending other parts of the day in the confines of his

garden that not only made him self reliant with vegetables and fruit, but gave him a surplus that could be sold in the small dark shop.

This part of the road was another danger spot of West Street because it was here that the high walls were both sides of the road. The wall opposite that garden of Billy's was only broken by a couple of big black gates, which didn't make it very difficult to realise that this too was a property of Pullen-Burys. This was Long Dole and here, very soon after we left school, Dad was employed using the clapper board to scare the birds away from the various fruits that grew within. Long Dole has always made me wonder if land owners were more intent in keeping unauthorised people out of their property then than they are today, because the crescent shaped tops of the walls were deeply embedded with broken glass. Apparently this practice is now illegal, but does it mean that as this wall must have been built about a hundred years ago the crime rate was just as prominent as it is in our times, considering the much less population that existed in the village then?

This nursery and the others in the village gave work to fifty or sixty people at that time and now all of them are empty and decaying, although unemployment is rife.

Opposite Long Dole Nursery and next door to the walled garden of Billy Boxall is the entrance to Street Farm. This was one of two farms that were in the tenancy of Escatt Philips and ran from the highest point of the first hills of the Downs to the lower reaches of the brooks until stopped by the railway.

The farm is quiet today in comparison to the activating that once took place within its boundaries. The buildings were again the bar, the walled yard, the hovel on the one side and the stable type buildings on the other. However, this set of buildings were larger in that the barn became the central building, standing north and south. Some of the buildings had been added at a later time so that there was a yard enclosed on its eastern side. This yard had a hovel on its northern side whose back wall was that of West Street as well. The southern wall was that of the cowshed where a herd of some fifty or more cows were attended to. To house this many cows and the associated out houses for the food stuffs the cowshed extended past the barn and became the southern wall of the western yard as well. The northern wall was again the wall of West Street and against it was built some loose boxes that were the home of the bulls. I say bulls because a couple would be kept.

An open yard would be found between the closed gated ones of the buildings and the exit into West Street, where would be found the cart sheds that would house not only carts but wagons and implements as well, space prevailing. The gate to the inner yard stood in the wall next to the dairy above which was a loft containing the special feeds of cake, oats, barley and the like. Another gate was situated between the two yards with a further one in the western wall that gave access to the meadows. It always seemed that Escatt's methods were far more superior to those of his neighbours. The narrow gauge railway that ran the length of the cowshed was an example: whereas the others would wheel the muck out in wheelbarrows, on Escatt's, steel tipping trucks would trundle along and tip the contents each side the rail to allow the shackler to cart it away as and when time allowed.

Around the farm there were always several ricks of which at least one was of straw and another of hay. The ricks on this farm were always a credit to it, not only in its building but in its thatching too. A chap named Carter was the man responsible and was another of those occupants of Orchard Cottages.

Thatching would always be carried out as soon as it was thought the ricks had settled. Wheat straw would be used for this task. The straw would be placed in a pile and then damped down.

Normally like a bricklayer on the building would have a labourer, so would the thatcher. Where the building labourer would have a hod, the thatcher's labourer would have a couple of dogs. These dogs were in fact a couple of branches of a tree about half as thick as a man's wrist that had been cut from the tree just where they had forked form a 'vee'. A hole would have been

made in one of the ends to enable string to threadle through creating the ability for the dog to be secured to the ladder. The labourer would pull the straw by hand from the dampened pile and lay it in the dogs, carrying it up to the thatcher when full.

Thatching in its simplest form was to lay the straw each straight handful pushed tight against its predecessor then tied down with string that was attached to spars. A spar was a Hazel rod that had been quartered and pushed deep into the rick. This procedure would commence at the bottom of the roof and proceed up, one layer overlapping the previous one and being combed until the melded together before the final tye was made. The roof would be covered in this way about four feet at a time, the thatcher working from his ladder until the job was complete, the final touch being the trimming of the ridge and the eave. The finished job not only carried out an efficient task but gave every one around the place a sense of pride.

The meadow that the gate in the west wall of the yard allowed the cattle to proceed through ran south for a long way, with an arable field on its left separated by a wire fence, while on the right was a row of large old Elm trees. It ran for at least eight hundred yards and being only about forty or fifty yards wide gave one the feeling of looking at a racecourse and that, in fact, is what it is called. Out of sight it got lost in the fields that bordered Loose Lane.

Next to the racecourse along West Street, using the line of Elm trees as one border and a high flint wall as another, with a wire fence enclosing it at a depth equal to the length of the flint wall, was another meadow. It has a five foot wall bordering it from West Street and here again is the unusual sight of a footpath. Centrally along this wall is situated a gate. This gate was once bricked up and two others made, one each end of it. When that was done a horseshoe shaped track was made within the new meadow and huts grew where only grass had grown before. This all happened in the Second World War when the cows were forbidden its area because at that time it became for the Germans a Prisoner of War Camp. We, that is us kids, would oftimes see them playing football in the centre portion that had managed to retain its grass. That is as much as we wanted to see in those days because we were taught that they were evil men. They were of course, as I was to find out for myself, just young men caught up in something they didn't fully understand, as I was to do at a later time.

Was it before, or was it after? I don't know now but at another time it became a camp for girls and boys who manned the aircraft guns and other instillations in the area. It was the camp that would be the last home for four of them. One day the enemy aircraft crept in low and fast, dropped their bombs and away, and with their going those young lives went also.

The war over, that meadow still had a part to play as those that had been captured in the early part of the war, especially those who had been wounded, were repatriated and this was their camp. There were shortages at this time but this was a time that The Ball tree and The Marquis really had a good harvest. Now the camps have gone, the earth has since grown corn, the middle gate has returned, but the patches at each end of the wall remind those that know of its previous history.

Opposite this field is that grand old pasture the Park. I can't find anyone who has ever seen the Park ploughed and in fact I shouldn't be surprised that somewhere there is a piece of paper that forbids it. It was to the Park that the dairy herd would cross West Street four times a day to get to and fro the cowshed. The gate that allowed that access in the western yard has these many years been bordered up, but the gate in the Park fence still remains. The high flint wall that separates the Park from the Long Dole Nursery has given shelter to many thousand head of cattle, that's to be sure. The top reaches of the Park were oft times the area of the haymaking days, a fence through its middle prevented the bottom to be put to that use as often. When it was used for this purpose a central gate was used in West Street that apart from the recess in the bank has disappeared this many years. There is on the western border another flint wall that not only separates the Park from Church Lane but holds back the earth that must be at least three feet higher than the level of the lane.

Along West Street about half way between Church Lane and the central gate there was always to be seen flowing water. It came from an underground spring. Perhaps it was the one that

later in its journey would feed the Nigger hole, I don't know. Although it had been running there for perhaps over a century, whenever I pass that spot I look for it, but like the camps opposite it seemed to have disappeared forever.

Beside the field that once housed the Prisoners of War the high flint wall became the eastern boundary of about five acres of market garden. The market garden, like the house that stood beside of West Street, held the name of Stocks. It was in that house, Stocks, that I was introduced to the mysteries of Committee. Then I was the leader of the Youth Club and as such was duty bound to attend. Those committees have long disappeared, along with the house that was demolished to make way for the flats that stand on that spot today.

1890 saw the erection next to the lane to Decoy of the four houses making up Southview Terrace. The Terrace stood firm and proud then ready for a lifetime ahead, today they stand equally proud and ready, it seems, to stand for a great number of years yet. Today its neighbour the Post Office sells its stamps and orders, and dishes out pensions probably to those who many years before entered that same door, but then as little children. It wouldn't be just the Post Office then, it would be Atterbury's Stores and all of life's requirements could be purchased there. I have the story to tell later of one such person who shopped there over seventy years ago.

On the opposite side of the road from the lane to Decoy stood the old pub, the Marquis of Granby. There stand a pub of that name today on the same area but standing back a bit from the road. It was 1937 when the old one gave over its space to the new. The old one was an Inn and really dealt with the traveller. It had wooden steps to its front door while along its frontage were the rings where the travellers and the carters could tie their charges whilst they took to the beverages of mine host.

I never was to see the interior of the old pub but did on many occasions visit the new. I was seventeen when I first called there for a drink with Jack Chatfield, his sister Alice and three others whose names I do not recall. We had each ordered a half of Shandy. The landlord served us and then craftily slipping past us bolted the door, returned to the bar and called the police because we were under age. We were not aware of his actions until he made the call, when we unbolted the door and scarpered away into the night. The landlord went to clear away our drinks that had been left on the bar but Jack remained and bid him leave them because he was eighteen just two days before. We unwittingly helped Jack celebrate his birthday in the bar of The Marquis, unfortunately on his own.

It was not too long after that incident that I was in The Marquis again to the sit down meal of the football club. We had a salad meal, a part of which was Cos lettuce, my favourite. However, that night I was to leave them merely because I had no idea how to tackle them in company. That same night, however, I listened to a chap sing a version of the "Farmers Boy", which I have rendered on many, many happy occasions since.

The White House stands next to The Marquis and over the years must have received many coats of white paint. It stands out clearly behind its flint wall. The place next door did not in its past, according to old tales, want to stand out at all because it is the Smugglers. Tales of this little place have been rife since I can remember, that here there were in days gone by smugglers, and if all those years ago water of one kind or another was to wash up here perhaps after all there is some truth in them. However, in my time its been a house, a tea shop, an antique shop and today a very popular high class restaurant.

Its neighbour as we proceed along is an entrance to a nursery. From here on along the road and northerly of it there still is a mass of flint walls separating small enclosures of nursery and private garden alike. It doesn't just keep itself to the northern side of the road, but here however it is the northern side and the greenhouses it encloses begin to show their age.

Beyond the entrance are nowadays two new buildings, a bungalow and a Vicarage, the fourth such building that adorns the village. Each in turn getting smaller in size as the fuels that progress brings become dearer and dearer, making the bigger houses become more difficult to maintain.

A narrow footpath with high flint walls runs beside this one, turning left after about fifteen yards, then right to head due north, leaving in its side the scars of one time gateways to the unseen depths behind the walls. As it left West Street on its northern journey it skirts a building that at one time were the stables and coach house of one of the big old houses that adorn this street.

Opposite the Smugglers stands the house called Brooklands that obviously watched the builders at work when Southview Cottages were being constructed, but I wonder if it was there before its other neighbour.

Many happy hours in the years beyond those of which I write have been spent at the table tennis table. It all started in that little neighbour of Brooklands. The pointed arch door that allowed access from West Street opened on to a couple of steps that led one to the interior of the Salvation Army Hall. Here, not only did I make the acquaintance of the table, but also first met Billy Brewster. We would play games and drink cups of tea, and all for the price of a couple of verses of "I'm H A P P Y, I'm H A P P Y" or "We are Fishers of Men". What good dedicated people these Salvationists were.

Salvationists dislike intensely the demon drink, yet here was this little hall situated in a small village with a pub no more than thirty yards in both directions. The Marquis had a competitor in the Gardeners Arms that stood those few yards away from the hall. This was a small pub and for the many years before it was modernised one could not "swing a cat around" in the little public bar, but nevertheless it must have made the landlord a living because it must have been there for at least seventy years. It had at the rear on the western side some out buildings that at sometime or other must have been the home of a horse and a coach.

Between the two stood three cottages and a terrace of six; Lattimer Cottages and Edwards Terrace. Where all the families lived up at this end of the village I am not sure, but there were the Kennards, Riddles, Ives, Richardsons, Goldsmiths, Paynes, Lassiters, Duffields, Wests and others whose names at this time fail to come to mind.

Opposite the Gardeners Arms are probably the two oldest properties in the village, firstly Myrtle Cottage with its walled gardens and its blocked up doorway to that walled footpath, as well as its stable and coach house in its small coach yard. Then Trelawneys Cottage, where the ivy had tried desperately had to devour it as it stood looking over the walled acre garden opposite.

The cottages of Rooks Acre stood next in line. What a lovely name that is. Numbers one and two lay back from the road and for many years have made one abode for Vic Ives and his family, who live there working the nursery to which the cottages belong. Vic came back from the war with a damaged foot but he never allowed it to deter him from a successful life as a small nursery man.

His neighbour is a substantial house called West Croft that appears to stand aloft on the rising ground giving it a commanding view to the south.

Southerly there is little to see these days, the market garden ground that stands there has not been worked for over thirty years and now and again plays host to a horse or two. It was once worked by the occupiers of Burry Cottages which stand at the end of this piece of land. Four in number they run at right angles to the road.

I had reason to know Burry Cottages. It was behind these, beside the track that leads to the market garden from the western end, that the local road sweeper of years ago would make one of his bases. This old boy, with his slouch hat drooping down over his moustached face, under which his neck was adorned with his coloured kerchief, his braces and large leather belt holding up his trousers with belted knees that brushed against his heavy boots, was one of my customers. Each of these characters, and there were two or three, had areas of the district to clean and maintain. They had a wheelbarrow, shovel, broom, swaphook and a spade with which to carry out their tasks. These tasks entailed the sweeping of the roads and carrying away the sweepings to be

tipped at these bases, where with my horse and cart I would collect and transport away to the various disposal points. Burry Cottages was one such base.

The six cottages of Western Terrace were opposite this point and farther along, after passing today's New Gardens, were the last of the workers' houses in Sompting and these were West Out Cottages, the home of others as well as an old school friend, Basil Payne.

The meadow next to the West Out Cottages was the home meadow of Upton Farmhouse that stood and still stands high on the bank above the Street. Several steps had to be climbed to reach its large and prominent porch and door. It is quite an imposing house and by the number of windows contained several large rooms, both on the ground floor as well as the one above. This house at that time was the residence of Charlie Philips, a brother of Escatt and the tenant farmer of Upton Farm that could be seen from its windows, slowly sloping down in the front to the brooklands, while at the back it climbed high up in the hills. The courtyard that stood at its side was quite large and had obviously in times before these housed quite a few horses and carriages. It had like the other farms outhouses. Beside the courtyard and gained from the exit from it was Lambleys Lane, the western boundary of Sompting. The date of this farmhouse and its outbuildings is not to hand, but it was in the days when the little toilet house was situated away from the main house, as here, where it stands at the back in silent isolation.

Opposite the house are the farm buildings and walled garden associated with the tenancy of Upton Farm. The organisation of this farm appeared by the layout of its buildings to differ slightly from that of others in the area. The gate from the street opened out into the main yard with another on the other side of the walled yard allowing access to the meadow land beyond. All land on that side of the road belonging to this farm was grasslands. The cowsheds were on the left of the yard and any hovels, rather than be situated centrally, were in fact out of sight of the main yard. The two yards that the farm possessed were on the eastern side where one appeared to be the collecting yard where the cows would assemble, prior to as well as after milking, with the other gave the appearance of being permanent housing for some milkers or fattening cattle. On the right of the open yard was another building that was two storey and possessed a set of concrete stairs that led one to the first floor. Here on the first floor no doubt the concentrates were to be kept, along with any corn that had been allocated for feed. The ground floor was that used, I expect, to mix and prepare the feeds in much the same way that we did at St Johns Farm. Attached to this building, but at the same time giving the impression of being separated, was a much smaller building outside of which today stands the rusting remains of the farm pump. This building was obviously the dairy and within the yard during its lifetime I recall the stacks of hay and straw. The dryer meadows of Upton Farm were those close to these buildings, while others surrounded by the large Elms that seemed to grow in profusion within each hedgerow became increasingly wet as they proceeded a greater distance from the buildings.

Two families that deserve mention in those days were the Duffields and the Langridges. The Duffields were the landlords of The Marquis, their sons were great sportsmen and Abe played football for Portsmouth. The Langridges along with the Duffields were sportsmen of some repute too, having represented their county at cricket.

At times I was privileged to travel by bus to Worthing with my old Gran and sitting on the top deck looking over the hedges and walls of Sompting we would pass three quite big herds of milking cows. Today there are no cows at all in the village. Times do change.

Tommy Farr fought Joe Louis during the thirties in the small hours of the morning according to our clocks. A little later that morning a sports car was speeding through the streets of Chichester heading for the open road. About the same time Charlie Philips' carter, who had no time for boxing, was rising from his bed. The time had arrived for a new day. The car hummed its way to Arundel, the carter drank his tea as he belted his trousers, others in the village discussed the fight they had heard on the radio. By the time the car had reached Arundel the light was beginning to break and the little MG hummed happily as did the occupants, a young man and a young woman. The carter had reached the stable, where gathering the halters made his way to the meadow to collect his horses for the day's work. Fate had written her pages and each of these people were acting their parts and no power could stop the next minutes. The car sped away down

West Street from the Downlands, the speedo building up to read eighty miles an hour, well the hour was early, the road was clear. The carter caught his horses but they were skittish this morning, one breaking away obviously not relishing the thought of the day's work ahead and galloped off to the open gate of the yard. Those boxing enthusiasts making their way to a couple of hours sleep head the terrible crash. The horse had galloped through the gate at precisely the same time that the little car reached it. They collided, the two young people were killed, the young girl mutilated on the small windscreen and the horse cut to pieces by the torn and jagged metal. The fight fans arrived to remember the night that Tommy Farr fought Joe Louis.

West Street stands today not too different from those of forty years ago. Now it's a lot quieter, a lot more neglected, and I wouldn't be able to name more than half a dozen that live beside her edges.

Chapter XXIV

DECOY

Decoy, when we spoke of it in those days, conjured up a picture of a very large market garden which no doubt had been a farm many years before my time. The sea had rested upon its acres in the long years before, when the village had been established, of that there can be little doubt. The earth was that of black sand, similar in texture to that of the Fens.

Decoy was reached from Sompting by a flint road that had its beginnings opposite The Marquis of Granby. It slipped between Stock House and the cottages of Southern Terrace to make its way through other market gardens, as well as between meadows of the local farms.

The Stocks Nursery on the left, with its half a dozen low greenhouses, was the first that came in view, again being worked by the empire of Pullen Bury's. Opposite Stocks' entrance was a pond known as Mares Pond. This name was applied to the eight and a half acres of good land that was also worked by that big firm.

Then the meadows to the right and left were those belonging to the farms, firstly on the left Escatt Philips and secondly on the right his brother Charlie. Before either of these were reached, though, the road carried out a severe bend, straightening again before eventually arriving at the black sheds that were, in fact, stables. It had arrived at Decoy.

I was never to make many visits to Decoy but did make at least one to these stables where I watched Tom Groves, whose two horses were housed here, shooting with an air rifle the rats as they crawled along the top rafters. I was rather jealous of the young boys who started work here as pony boys. I don't really know what the purpose was but they had at Decoy at least two ponies who would be harnessed exactly as the horses and pull almost identical carts and implements, but obviously scaled down. No doubt the ponies were ideally suited with their smaller hooves for the task of hoeing between the vegetables, whose stalks were far more subtle than those of the average farm crop.

How many acres there were within the area of Decoy I don't know but there were several different fields and Father told me that one of them had an area of some twelve acres. Father worked here when he first left school, his first task among the watercress beds of Southways. One crop that the soil was ideally suited to grow was that of leeks and when Dad drove with others to the Brighton market he said that some loads comprised completely of this crop. The black soil was also favoured for the massive sticks of celery that it was capable of producing.

The whole of the Decoy area was enclosed by Poplar trees, some of which live on today, but only along the boundaries with the farms. Factories, houses and rubbish tips are all that stands on that soil today.

Chapter XXV
DANKTON LANE

Dankton Lane was the second lane that ran north from West Street, the first being Busticle. Whereas Busticle Lane ran but a couple of hundred yards at the very most, Dankton was to run north until it got swallowed up in the hills.

It started from West Street at the point of Wadman's chicken runs and whereas West Street bordered the southern end of these, Dankton bordered the east. The same type of small wall with its high wire netting fence bordered the chicken, running but three-quarters the length of the wall before a northern boundary of wire netting enclosed the chicken completely. There was still about ten yards of the wall to run until it met a farm gate above which a northern wall enclosed the remainder of this patch of land. It extended westerly until another gate parted it from the outer yard of Yew Tree Farm, where about twenty hens lived the life of the real free range chicken by gaining their livelihood from the droppings, spilt food and scratchings of the yard.

Between the two gates above the chicken was the home base of Harry Peacock and his threshing tackle. It was here he would return, his engine rumbling along with its train of implements swaying slowly but drunkenly behind it. Here it would be cleaned, repaired and serviced.

The caravan parked by the northern wall would be the home for a while of old Bert Hedger. It must have been a great pleasure at these times to be close to all the amenities that he needed after weeks sometimes of living miles from the beaten track.

Over the northern wall was a track that led from Dankton Lane, by access through another gate, to the dairy of Yew Tree. The dairy was situated in the end of a barn-like building that stood above the farm yard, but on the southern extreme of a large meadow. It was in fact a Malt House. The making of malt was achieved by soaking good quality barley in water and then allowing the grains to germinate. Once the grains had germinated they were quickly dried and the resulting consequence is malt. I had never known the building used for that purpose in my time and neither had my Father. There was no brewery in the local vicinity but I was told that at one time there was a New Street Brewery in Worthing, if that were the case no doubt in days gone by that would have been the market for which the malt would have been prepared. During the time I was to know it, apart from the area used as a dairy, the building was used as any other barn.

Beyond the Malt House in a westerly direction the meadow carried on until it was stopped by the high flint wall of Long Dole Nursery, that acted as the boundary in that direction for about a quarter of its length, where a wire fence then took over the duty, once again helped by a couple of those big old Elms. The journey north came to a halt at a Hawthorn hedge, that is in the days before the by-pass, that ran across the top of it back to Dankton Lane and the junction of Bulpit Lane. At this junction situated in the hedge was a stile that allowed churchgoers to climb over and proceed along a path on the northern side of the Hawthorn hedge. The big Elm trees that helped create the westerly boundary were not alone because across the middle of the field running east and west was a complete row of them that did nothing else but create shelter for the cows in the meadow and break up the cold north wind before it reached Yew Tree Farm. A wire fence ran alongside Dankton Lane as the meadow made its way south to the aforementioned gate. Beside the gate at the bottom was what we called a love gate which was created like a 'vee'. It had at its opened end a small gate that swung between the jaws of the 'vee'. Thus one could push the gate away from you, step into the space, pull it back and step out on your way. Should a couple pass through together they would have to cuddle together to allow the gate to swing back, these negotiations obviously giving it its name. This meadow, obviously named Malt House Meadow, was the third of Waddies grazing meadows and the milking herd would graze these meadows in turn. A footpath crossed this field and made a beeline for the church, negotiating a stile in its westerly fence about in line with the row of Elms.

Once over that stile the area of Mr Wadman was left behind and one was in the grassland known as the park, a field within the farming area of Escatt Philips. Within the park, south about twenty yards from the stile, was the high flint wall that created the northern extent of Long Dole Nurseries. It ran east for about fifty or sixty yards and within the meadow its sight was hidden by

a complete band of Fir, Hawthorn and other trees that reached about fifteen yards northerly into the park. It gave considerable cover at that time and was known to us kids as "The Plantation".

We kids at times played in the plantation although the practice was frowned upon by the farmers. Young Geoff had gone there on one Saturday afternoon and was climbing away in one of the trees when a young lady with her boyfriend wandered within its privacy. Geoff kept still and quiet because he did not want to be caught in an area that was really forbidden to him. The question he may well have asked himself as to whether he should remain still and quiet where he was or simply climb down and slip unseen away was answered emphatically when they chose his very tree to lay under. Geoff in later years may well have read many books on the birds and the bees, but none of them would have taught Geoff half as much as that which he saw in his high and silent post that day.

A big metal pylon came one day to set itself in the midst of Malt House Meadow. The by-pass cut off its top, allowing the footpath to proceed along the southern side of the Hawthorn hedge. The beetle came along with the dreaded Dutch Elm Disease to destroy the big old Elms. Waddies herd of milkers disappeared in the tide of progress. The Malt House was razed to the ground. The westerly fence was pushed aside and the meadow was incorporated into a part of the park in which only beef cattle graze these days, otherwise it hasn't changed.

On the right hand side of the lane was, and still is, the small lodge that has stood for many years to house the employees of the old rectory, changing in person and category as the role of the old house itself changed. It stood next to the stable which is still its companion today. However, it must have been many years when last a horse or pony entered its door. I was first introduced to its interior when the old house was living its part as a convent. The stable had been given over to the priest who had had it converted into a youth club. My good mate Norman was a Catholic and as he was allowed to take a friend along I was invited. It was within the confines of that small flint built stable that I was introduced to the mysteries and eventual hours of enjoyment of the Billiard Table.

Next door to the stables as one proceeded up the lane was the double gates that had many years ago been the access to the horse and carriage and much later, in the time of the Pullen-Bury's, their car, driven by Mr Souter.

The open gateway to the yard of Rectory Farm was next in the procession up the lane. Just inside the gate was a mirror that gave an early view of the lane to those requiring exit. A view inside saw the building used as offices and if one entered it would be plain to see that the high flint wall that continued to border the lane was also the back of the implement shed.

At the end of the implement shed the wall gave way to four cottages that stood back from the road and in which further employees of that nursery lived.

Once the cottages had been passed the wall continued, only broken once by a large gate that was made of boards so that any sight within when they were closed was impossible. When they were open, which I was only to know on a couple of occasions, the stokeholes and greenhouses came into view.

The long high wall finally concluded at the house that still stands today. It was then the house of Mr Prail. Mr Prail was the general manager of Pullen-Burys at that time and it seemed that the Pullen-Bury family had lost all control in the running of what had become a vast enterprise.

Mr Prail will be remembered by me for two particular events. The first of these was not so much Mr Prail but the bread that he ate. It was that of Knowles Bakery and was delivered to his house by a young chap in his late twenties, with the reddest of hair that one would wish to see. Having made sure we were in the safest of places we would taunt that young man with calls of "Rednut", "Fiery Head", "Ginger Bonce" and so on. He would give chase but after about twenty yards, as we scampered away laughing, he would give up. We, that is Gerald Tugnet, Tony Lindup and I were in the Malt House Meadow with the safety of the fence between us when Ginger arrived to deliver to Mr Prail. We started our banter, "Ginger Bonce", and almost immediately true to form he gave chase. Through the wire he climbed as we laughingly ran across the meadow. After twenty yards of running the laughter stopped, but Ginger didn't. Another twenty and it was obvious that today he wasn't going to, that much was plain. We split, Gerald and me running in

the direction of the northern fence, with Tony heading for the Plantation. Perhaps it was because I was the youngest and smallest and he thought that I would be too easy a prey that he set after Tony. After a short distance we, that is Gerald and I, were able to stop and watch the uneven competition that was taking place below. The farther they ran, so Tony was tiring and Ginger was gaining rapidly. Soon Tony was caught and we watched as we thought Tony was in for a clout around the ear, but what a surprise we got. Ginger got hold of Tony, stripped his trousers down and bit his naked behind. Tony has these many years been a very successful businessman in New Zealand and no doubt treats his customers to much respect, especially the ginger ones.

Once past Mr Prail's house the extent of the nursery fell short of the lane by about five yards allowing a small strip of conifers to fill this piece, through which over the years the kids had made a hidden path. The nursery has long since been built on but it is interesting to see that that five yards separates those buildings from the lane even today. The lane here reaches Bulpit Lane and as it crosses the junction leaves the land of Pullen-Burys behind.

From here on the lane would have, for well over a mile, arable fields to the left and right as neighbours while it proceeded on its northern journey. It would though have to guess what they looked like because high banks each side kept the lane secluded and sometimes shaded as it passed under one of the old Elms that as usual were present on the bank. This old lane was a regular haunt of us young uns. In the late May evenings we could oftimes be found in that late period of the day, and late it was in my early teens, because we enjoyed double summertime. Double summertime was a wartime innovation that would allow extra hours of daylight to help farm for the extra food that was necessary to produce at that time. It would in the longest day be almost eleven before darkness finally fell.

Those evenings then would be engaged with long sticks trying to catch the large flying beetle that would inhabit that area during this period of the year. We may well be playing tracking, as the hidiers left the trail we were to follow by chalk marks in the shape of arrows, or creating signs with sticks or stones. We had this one early evening, just before harvest time, followed one such track along Bulpit Lane and had only just arrived at the junction with Dankton when we saw and then heard Mr Prail. He was standing just inside the first field, high up on an old dung lump directing his eyes and his voice to the field of ripening wheat before him. It soon appeared that the hidiers for some unknown reason had decided to hide in the wheat, much to his annoyance. He had a man running around the top of the field attempting to catch the lads within as they broke cover. It seemed ages as they crawled around within the cover of the wheat to stop being seen, and every now and again a head would appear above the standing corn to get their bearings, then disappear again as they attempted their escape. During the next half an hour first one would break cover and run off up in the woods or over the meadows to safety, each from a different part of the corn field. No one got caught but the last, who I think was Len Green, had holes in the knees of his long trousers where he had travelled such a long way within that wheat field.

Nowadays it would be a long way one would have to travel to find a corn field that didn't contain tractor tyre marks, but then it was thought a criminal act to venture into a standing crop.

The banks and hedges of that lane would at other times have us out with our barrows and trucks collecting their trimmings to bolster the size of our bonfires as November the Fifth drew nigh.

The lane, after leaving the junction with Bulpit, climbed quite steadily. It was here that the horse and waggons would carry corn straw, hay and other commodities either away from or to the farm. If going up the hill away from the farm it would be necessary to rest the horse, but should this be done on the gradient the waggon would roll back giving the horse no rest at all, and so a scotch would be fitted. A scotch would be no more than a small wooden roller that would run behind the wheel, connected by a chain to the axle on the inside and the hub pin on the out. Now when the waggons were stopped the wheel came to rest against the roller giving the shaft horse a complete break from the weight. When travelling downhill the weight of the waggon would be too great for the horse to hold back by sitting in the britchen and so a skid pan would be brought into action. A skid pan was a thick iron shoe on to which the wheel could ride. It was attached by a chain to the body of the waggon and once the wheel was set upon it the chain tightened, causing the wheel to remain stationary and to slide down the hill within the confines of the skid pan. Once

at the bottom the waggon was backed up and the pan removed to return to its place hanging under the waggon. One soon learnt to lift it by the chain after grabbing the iron work which had heated tremendously in its sliding journey down the hill.

Just before the crest of Dankton was reached there was a gap in its west bank. This gap allowed access to the Coach Road that led to the Abbots. I was never to see it used for that purpose, but Dad reckons he has seen traps and other horse drawn vehicles enter the Abbots along this roadway. I call it a Coach Road but it was really no more than a track with the slightly rutted tracks of wheels of many vehicles and the weed free centre that had suffered the passage of thousands of hooves. The Coach Road stood there for many, many years with its small bank on the southern side to allow the coaches to receive a level passage. In the more recent years the unused road was ploughed to become a part of the arable field above it. A fence was erected to separate the land above from that below, a job that the old road had done for years. Even in later years, the fence was taken down and the old Coach Road disappeared completely into the pages of history.

On the crest of the hill was the entrance to an old chalk pit. It must have been started many years before because a Grove of Beech trees were growing in the remnants of the first diggings. They had reached maturity, creating a small wood in doing so. This wood had been enclosed in wire netting and was another chicken enterprise of Mr Wadman and another responsibility of old Mr Lindup. I didn't seem to be very old when I realised that that enterprise had come to a halt, as I penetrated that wood and came into the considerable chalk pit at its rear. Dankton Lane was obviously made up from the contents of this rather large hole and continued to require it to extend its perimeter as periodically it needed further repairs. For many years it stood there with no interest taken in it at all, apart from us kids. One evening during my early teens I was entering its perimeter and heard the deep humming of a man's voice. I had heard the same voice before, but then it was in a shady place in Waddies Brooks during hay making. It was Ben Halls. I looked around within the area of shade created by the trees in the early summer evening and saw him seated with his back resting against one of those mature Beeches. He had his catapult in his hand and was as he hummed firing small pebbles from that instrument up and through the canopy of boughs and leaves above him. He had just fired again as I approached him. "Where's that gone Bert," says I, after what had seemed sufficient time to terminate the pebble's journey. "Taint gone nowhere yet," said Bert with a certain amount of pride, "Taint come down yet". I dallied for a short time with Bert and then set on my way again across the field in the direction of the Abbots, as I did so old Bert set off humming once more.

Bert has always left the mental picture of himself sitting on his bike with his gun strapped to the bar, a box of ferrets on the carrier, his little dog trotting along beside him, and that trusted catapult hanging from his pocket. Bert was probably happier with as little company as possible and I am sure would never fret if he had none at all. It was quite often that after ending his day's work he would remain up among his beloved hills until the late evening. It was said, and believed, that Bert never ever wore a pair of socks. Dad told me that he worked with Bert in the watercress beds when he first started work. When they sat down to their lunch Bert would lay back and raise his legs in the air allowing the water to cascade from within, but never a complaint of cold or wet feet. He had never married and lodged with the Wady family, Mr Wady working on the same farm.

The chalk pit was eventually handed over to the District Council and the dust cart came regularly to spew their contents into the large hole, eventually filling it.

Each time the ground that was once the chalk pit shows up its position and area by the tell tale contrasting colour of its soil is when it is freshly ploughed, but then very soon the green of the crop covers and all trace disappears.

The crest of the hill behind it, the lane drops sharply down again on its northerly journey, eager it seems to reach the shady part at levelling out, where each side of the road about a dozen Elm trees make their home. There is a gap between those on the east side which allows entry into the arable field. It is here too that some years would become the resting place for a couple of corn ricks and consequently the site later of a couple of days threshing. It must have seemed to Bert Hedger like working in his back garden and his caravan could remain in its home station.

The field just down from here in later years would be the grazing for beef cattle when it was put down at times to grass, but at this time sometimes housed the sheep. They would be moved around within the confines of hurdles that would be erected daily by the shepherd to eat the kale or swedes that may well have been grown. The horses would tread this field in all directions, pulling all types of implements. It may be that horses will occupy that field again. It is also possible that sheep may again eat its crops, but it is highly unlikely that one occupant for a couple of years during the war will ever return again and that is the searchlight and its attendant generator.

We would watch it night after night as its great beam of light would cut its way through the inky darkness, piercing the high sky in search of the throbbing occupants that inhabited it. Sometimes the light would reflect from a plane that it caught in its beam and then very quickly its brothers and sisters in the area would join it and enable the night fighters or the Ack Ack guns to attack it. I don't recall ever seeing one shot down that had got caught in its beaming tentacles, but I expect a few did.

The searchlight was definitely the Twentieth Century, whereas the collection of farm buildings below were those of the Nineteenth, or even the Eighteenth Century. They had probably been built not so long after "The Enclosure Act" that had taken all the common land and as the Act states enclosed it into small parcels. These small parcels had soon been collected into larger areas and hedges planted to contain them. Now I suppose a different type of farming could be employed, but whereas previously the land had been the right of all, it now became the property of a far fewer number. This also brought about for the first time the two types of country people, the Farmer and the Farm Worker. The type of farming was to change drastically now. Whereas before, after the harvest, the whole village could let their animals graze the common land, now the grazing was under control and other crops were able to be grown in the enclosed fields. The majority of the animals were killed off at the end of the summer previously because there had been no feed for them during the winter months. Now the feed could be grown and stored and cattle kept all the year round. This then obviously was the circumstance into which these old farms were born.

This farm yard in Dankton was very much like so many of the same age, and it seems to me about the same size and probably had about the same acreage attached to them. The whole was enclosed in a flint wall that sometimes was just a barrier, but at others was the back of one or other of the buildings. Dankton was almost square at fifty paces each side. It was situated at the very lowest part of the lane, certainly not by accident. As the gate was entered, that lay back a few yards from the remainder of the wall, it would be seen that a pond was formed on the left hand side by the waters that ran from the hills. This pond would be the home of a few ducks that farmed its bottom as they turned their backsides to the sky while prodding for this dinner. It was, too, the liquid that would quench the thirst of the cattle that were encased on the opposite side with the low open fronted shelter behind them, the rear wall of which was the southern extend of the yard. On the opposite side was another customer for the water, and that was the farm horse, although there were at least two of them. Probably they had replaced the oxen that had been employed before them. The northern extent of that farm yard was then the rear of the stable. The eastern wall and that which restricted the depth of the farm yard was the barn. All these buildings were of flint with slate roofs, all materials that could be gained without too distant forays. The barn, by far the biggest of the buildings, had two large doors, one in its front and the other in its rear, immediately opposite. This was to allow the waggon that were drawn by the horses to enter and leave the barn. Its walls were broken by eyelets that acted as vents allowing the air to enter and circulate the interior. It was in these barns that the corn harvest in its straw form would be placed in those early days and those vents would allow the air to finish the job that the sun and wind had almost concluded. The area between the doors had in those first days been the station where the flails were put to work to beat the corn from the straw's ears and then thrown in the air to allow the obvious wind through the open doors to blow from the tossed collection the chaff. Soon it would be the station where the threshing machine would him and gulp its day away in the more modern method.

The years passed until the area of corn that was grown was far too much to be contained within the barn. It was now essential that other forms of storage should be developed and so ricks would be made in close association to the farm buildings. So it was that the next piece of land

along Dankton Lane became the rick yard for many years. Here one would see the thatchers at their work when the harvest was over and the ricks had settled. The threshers would deprive the stalks of their corn on some cold winter day and the remaining straw would be fed to the cattle and horses, or used as bedding.

After passing the farm yard Dankton would bend slightly on its northern journey and the large Elms that abounded here would create a tunnel. Under the summer shade or the autumn rains, or even the cold hard winds of winter, this tunnel would shelter the carters and the cowmen who made their way to and from the two cottages that stood just fifty yards up the road. The cottages stood at a junction of lanes. Dankton carried on to the north but a new one branched off to proceed at an angle to join the lane that ran parallel. This branch had no name and was obviously a lot younger than Dankton. The cottages stood above the junction and about fifteen to twenty yards back from it.

It must have coincided with the new innovation with farm workers who would live in tied cottages that these were built. Wages on the farms have never been good and the tied cottage was offered to workers as an incentive along with free firing to encourage them to work the long hours required. Many, many families must have made their home in these cottages, many people no doubt born in them, and many more dying there too.

The occupants had seen many wars, the Crimea, the Boer and the First and Second World Wars, quite a few had gone to fight in those wars, no doubt, and I know at least one who did not return. They had seen many Sovereigns too, Victoria, Edward VII, George V, Edward VIII, George VI and Elizabeth II. Life in those cottages changed very little from the first occupants to the last. They all spent the dark evenings in the pale light of the oil lamp and drank water from the well, although the later occupants had piped water. They had large vegetable gardens, free milk, chickens in the garden for new laid eggs, rabbits would oftentimes supply the meat, and swedes would supplement the meals. There always seemed to be a dog situated near the back door on a chain. The dog, like the occupier, had to have a task as well, whether it was that of a sheep dog, or cattle dog, or maybe a good ratter or a good rabbit, or merely a guard dog for the home. There never was a lot of money, but quite often a lot of children, and so life was hard for all of them. Whether it was for shopping, school or a day's outing, it was a good walk, for apart from a bicycle in the later days, walking was the mode of travel.

As the years have passed a lot of the hedges that made up the small fields have disappeared creating the larger fields once more. The rick yard had no purpose in life with the coming of the combine harvester, and old Jack Chatfield used it as an allotment until the journey became more of a chore than a pleasure, the farm buildings became cheaper to destroy than to repair and the lower portion of Dankton remembers the old farm only by a pile of rubble. The cottages too became the victims of the demolition crew. The land was flattened and put to the plough. Now that corner holds no evidence at all of those cottages, with corn growing green over the area of the garden, kitchen and front room as well. When those that remember them have gone also it will be like they had never existed and all those lives that took place within their walls had never really been lived at all.

Leaving the cottages behind, the lane set off briskly uphill to the open country. The gradient here not only went with the lane but also crossed it to allow for an easier passage for the carts and waggons. It had at a much earlier time been levelled, resulting now in the fields on the left dropping away for the hedgerow, whilst those on the right were high above the lane. The surface of the lane was prone at this spot, where the gradient caused the rainwater to scurry off down to the pond in the farm below, to be scored with gullies. Above the hills could not be seen because of the high hedges each side that were held together by, once again, the big Elms. There were a cluster of these near the top of the lane where a gate allowed entry to the fields on the left and the lane bore to the right to reach its end. The end came quite suddenly as the hedges and trees ceased to the right and the great expanse of Steepdown came in view. The hedge continued on the left and as it did so thickened. The track kept it company still gradually rising. A line of pylons, as if not too sure which way to go, followed above the lane for the rest of its journey. It would be true to say that as it ran by that thick hedge and later on its own the lane had changed from the chalk and flint surface into that of an earth track. It was to conclude at a Tee track about a mile up the hill after the pylons met it.

On the right side, it broke free from its hedges where the steep sides of Steepdown seem to go on forever. They were clothed in the yellow of the Gorse flower, which contrasted to the greens of its spines, and among the grasses, bushes and short trees, shades of green too numerous to number could be seen. The small trees that could be seen here and there above the shrub of its companions testified to the strong winds of winter and were bent in submission to their power. Initially though on entry to this area was a protected space of soft, close shorn turf. This was the area that Mrs Lloyd would take us on our picnics. The turfs of the hills were soft and closely shorn due to the constant grazing of the sheep because then and long before this was sheep country. The blackberry bushes were kept at bay too then by the constant pruning of their growing tips by the abundance of rabbits that lived within their shelter. There were an abundance of different wild flowers and grasses. The coarser wide leaved plants were not allowed to develop and smother the smaller delicate ones. The small blackberry bushes would allow the grasses to grow through them, creating for the rabbits "squats" where they would sit still in the heat of the summer day. The birds would next in the bushes and amongst the tufts, their songs filling the air. One would jump at times as the startled hare would set off at fantastic speed almost it seemed from under your feet. Above, the steep bank rose, it seemed to those small bodies of ours, almost reaching the sky until the ridge of Steepdown was gained. Even then the ridge continued to rise until at last the concrete plinth of the trig point was reached and one stood at the highest point in Sompting.

From this great position one could in some way get the feeling of freedom that must be natural to a bird. There was nothing more above you but the clouds and in each direction all around below was yours to be seen. Looking south the houses of Sompting with the sea as a back cloth. West across the short valley was the hill of Lambleys and way to its north the age old fort of Cissbury. East across the rolling grassland to the Adur Valle and up to Mill Hill of Shoreham. North to the ridge above Steyning, and in between an area of land that someone must have thought would be a good landing area for paratroopers during the war because just down from the summit in that direction was dug a gun position that commanded a great view. Also could be seen the gaping hole of Beeding cement works, but somehow it didn't deter the view as much as one would imagine.

So a walk up Dankton Lane would not be complete without climbing the bank of Steepdown. One could well return home with a hand that held a bunch of flowers and grasses, a basket that contained blackberries for jam, a bag that held mushrooms for breakfast or a rabbit that would see us through another meal. If one of these things were in one's possession one was sure to have a massive appetite, a feeling of well being and a heart full of joy for being alive.

Chapter XXVI

LOOSE LANE

Opposite the farmhouse of Yew Tree was, and still is today, Loose Lane. This was the first lane to the south of West Street and was to run down as far as the railway.

It started by running down beside Front Meadow, whose boundary was marked by the fence that shared this task with the Hawthorns and brambles. The boundary ceased in the southerly direction when it turned at right angles at the junction with Escatt Philips' arable land to continue to run across its bottom and just out into Blacksmith meadow.

On the opposite side of the lane at its beginning was a shortish flint wall that stopped the gardens of a row of cottages from tumbling on to its surface. These cottages were Orchard Cottages and in which lived a mixture of tenants from the farms of both Escatt Philips and Wadmans. They were twelve in number, possessing long gardens that stretched down to the lane. These were the vegetable gardens and as such appeared to me to be what we always thought to be properly the back gardens. However, it would have been impossible to have placed them there because the cottages were built in one long terrace and the rear of them maintained an area so small that only the outside loo and a small shed could be contained within. A red brick path ran the whole length of the rear and access along was available to all tenants and delivery persons, although this path was between each back door and its outhouses.

My brother Brian was one day to be an occupant of one of these with his young bride, Pat. One was also the first home of my youngest brother Colin and his wife, Stella. At the rear of their house was the outside brick oven that was available to all the cottages, but that was some years after the period about which I write. I can't recall all the occupants of them, but a lot of them come to mind when considering those old days.

The Shergolds lived in the first, I think, and he was a cowman of Escatt's. It was for years where the key to the Reading Room could be obtained from the lady of this house. I am not so sure that old Ben Hall didn't lodge there for some time in those early days. Wherever it was that he lodged, and it was one of those cottages, it had a tin shed in the garden. This is recalled by hearing Dad say that the youngsters would wait until Bert went within the shed and then would bombard the tin roof with a constant barrage of stones causing old Bert to escape the terrible din within, casting a tirade of abuse at his tormentors. The Browns were another family that lived there, Zoe, Sid and Reg along with their mother and father, my aunt and uncle, Annie and Mark. They were in fact my great aunt and uncle because Aunt Annie was in fact the sister of my Grandfather. I well remember hearing the story of Mark's death bed. He was a labourer on the farm of Escatt's but had been a labourer on farms all his life. One task he had obviously oftentimes done in the past was that of copse cutting. Those days were when it was common to grow Hazel as a crop. These would be of an acre, or of many acres, and were created by the growing of Hazel which had had the growing point removed and in so doing causing the root to throw up several more shoots. They would grow in these gatherings, known as copses, for four or five years unmolested and then would be cleared to ground level. The fallen Hazel would be used for many different tasks dependant on its size and quality. The largest, should they have been left to grow to that size, would be used for rustic poles in gardens and such. Those too thick for the main purpose could be used for tomato stakes and similar supporting roles. The main crop would be created into sheep hurdles, or "Wattles" as they are sometimes called, as of olden times when used in the construction of older buildings for plastering. They would have to be split for hurdle making, as indeed they would for the other main task of creating spars which were used to help hold the twine o the ricks when thatched. The remainder would be tied into bundles and cut to an even length. In this fashion they would be used either for firing, drainage, road making or to create the bottom layer of the ricks. These bundles were oft referred to as faggots.

The story I heard then the many times was when Mark called his eldest son Sid to his bedside and informed him that he had received orders to make a hundred faggots. He had in his mind, through the delirium of his illness, gone back in time and there was nothing for Sid to do but to accompany him along that realistic road of yesteryear. Mark's hands twisted away, as indeed they would have done in this task as each bundle would be tied with pliable young saplings, and as he did so the sweat stood out on his brow. Sid played Mark's sorry game. It was, so I overheard,

pitiful to see the poor chap working so very hard at this imaginary task. Each bundle was counted by Mark as it was completed until at last he reached the total of one hundred and then, and only then, Mark lay back to rest saying to Sid, "That the last boy", and passed from this earth in his sweat sodden clothes. Sid who was then a carpenter with Wellers was to become, after his Army service, the local undertaker. One funeral he never did attend was that of his fellow carpenter and younger brother, Reg, who died during the war many miles away from Sompting. He was buried in the soil of Italy having met his end as an Infanteer [infantryman] in that lengthy and bloody battle for the Monastery of Mount Casino.

After Mr Styles of Millfield, who too at one time lived in these cottages, retired from ill health, his task with the shackler at Escatt's was taken by Mr Simms, who was also the spare milker. He lived in one of these cottages along with two sons, Ted and Dick. I remember him and his boys by what I thought was strict discipline. He had, this Mr Simms, a very strong whistle. Coming from his cottage he would place two fingers from each hand in his mouth and proceed to create a whistle that I feel could be heard even in the far reaches of Sompting. When that whistle was heard the boys would drop whatever they were doing and would be off home like a shot.

Another of those occupants of that time were the Etheringtons. Mr Etherington was the cowman at Yew Tree and his son Ray was one of the boys that I got to know very well. Can't help recalling the day when he came to school bragging about the hole he had in the rear of his trouser where he reckoned one of the cows had butted him.

My good friend at a later time was Jack Chatfield. He was the only boy of the family that shared one of the houses with three sisters, Kath, Alice and Freda. Mr Chatfield was the head carter at Escatt's. His brother was under carter and young Jack was to grow up to drive the third pair of horses that worked the arable land of Escatt's farms. The last in the row of cottages was the home of Jack's grandfather, Mr Scrace. He was the big man employed as the head carter at Wadmans. It was he one morning during the war who entered his garden at the first signs of daylight to inspect the vast bomb crater whose creation had spoilt his night's sleep, to comment, "Well never mind, I was going to dig those taters this weekend anyway". Even that old bomb couldn't get rid of those old cottages, they had stood the test of time and were going to continue to do so. The last of those I remember in that long row was Fred Sayer, who was a relatively young man then and did a relatively young job, because he drove the tractor on Escatt's farms, a Fordson Major.

The row of cottages were built no doubt at about the same time as the little school next door, but long before the recreation ground that lay next down the lane to the school, and to where those children of Orchard had little journey to make. When it was exactly is difficult to remember but at some time in my early years a row of Council houses appeared at the bottom of the recreation ground and was called Peveril Drive. Their back gardens reached back to the arable land of Escatt's, which continued almost without a break to the railway and ran each side of the lane.

There were banks each side of the lane that could probably go back to the days of the Enclosure Act, when ditches were required to be dug as boundaries of each field and their spoil piled within its confines. These piles were called the hedges initially and not the bushes that were oftimes planted in the bank. Loose Lane had no bushes planted, at least not at the top end. I was as a child to think the name of Loose Lane was to be derived from the loose surface of the lane that was merely flint, but that was not so. It was because there were no fences or bushes to run along its sides that the old word loose was applied to it.

Each side of the lane was really good farming land and obviously had been farmed for many years. It must have seen many changes in the farming world. About the time that farms as we know them became established, mechanisation was coming to agriculture. There was the threshing machine that brought the farming communities strife as well as progress and many of the early machines were burnt in the demonstrations that were abroad at the time. There was the reaper that allowed the mowers to be adapted to cutting corn, only to ejecting the straws when sufficient had been cut to conclude a bundle, and therefore make a sheaf. This machine was rapidly followed by the self tying binder which was the scene when I was introduced to it. The tilling of the soil was also about the 1860s being introduced to mechanisation and steam traction engines came to agriculture. They were, however, much too heavy to travel the fields but were

very successful at working in pairs, winching not just ploughs but other implements to and fro the fields. No doubt Loose Lane had its surface pressed many times, not only by the weight of Harry Peacock's threshing engine, but by the heavy broad wheels of the ploughing traction engines too.

From about 1860 for a good thirty years farming had a very popular period and I have heard it said at that time about one in six of the working population was employed in agriculture of one type or another. However, with the discovery of Gold in Australia and America, the bubble was about to burst. Soon the opening of the great prairies of America and Canada created shiploads of wheat arriving on to the market of our country, so that in a short number of years the price of grain was halved. Not so long after, when farmers had turned to sheep and cattle, the ports saw the arrival of refrigerates ships and another tumble was taken. It took the First and Second Wars to give a much wanted boost to agriculture and I, for one, am very pleased that was so.

When I was first to know Loose Lane and the farmlands it contained I thought they were very modern. The farm of Escatt's had three pair of horses, a shackler and a Fordson Major tractor.

All the farm crops were seen growing at one time or another down those fields of Escatt's. I saw it only once down Loose Lane and nowhere else, that crop of Linseed that appeared in my memory to have so many different colours to it during the different stages of its growing life. It was a pleasing sight to me to see the three pair of horses working the same piece of land, ploughing and sowing the winter corn. Two pairs were ploughing and the third was pressing. This sowing of the seed on new ploughed soil meant that the seed was likely to fall into air pockets under the soil caused by the ploughs. To overcome this a press, which was two heavy metal rings, would be pulled up the field, the rings pressing the soil where the two furrows met, thus removing the air pockets. The press was a heavy implement to pull and beside the two heavy rings had a narrower one on the land. Above the heavy rings was a seed box, from which the seed would dribble into the crease left by the press. At the end of the day a harrow would be drawn over the day's work to cover the seed, or sometimes a small one would be attached to the press.

Halfway down the lane the previously bare banks were decorated with half a dozen Elms each side. This made a nice bit of cover from the sun or wind and was many times used to allow the horses their lunch, while the pocket knives carved away at hunks of bread and cheese that was always the favourite of the carters. It was, too, the place where it was not uncommon to see a rick or two and sometime a stack of hay.

Hay was oftimes grown as a crop. Probably to help in a system of rotation as much as anything else. It was quite often clover hay and was much sought after. The seed would be sown on the previous crop of corn when it was quite young and short. A Shandy Barrow would be used for the purpose. A Shandy Barrow had a framework very much like any wheelbarrow, but here the wheel was an extra large one. Seated crossways on the framework would be a triangular shaped box some four or five paces long. It would have a lid and at the rear were adjustable holes, while through its centre a long spindle ran that was turned by a worm gearing which was fixed to a cog on the side of the big wheel. On the spindle were brushes that rotated with the spindle. The seed was tipped into the box, the handles lifted and the barrow pushed, the spindle revolved and in so doing the brushes pushed seed out of the holes. Sticks were placed across the field so that a line could be aimed for. As each stick was reached it was placed away the same distance as the barrow was wide to allow all ground to be covered on the return journey. It was the next stage in the progress of this task that I witnessed Escatt carrying out on the land beside Loose Lane. It was that which I had heard called the fiddle. Instead of the cumbersome barrow, a small sack hung from the shoulder allowing the seed to fall from it at a controlled rate on to a disc. The disc revolved by means of what looks like a bow from a violin. It was no more than a stick from which a piece of string-like substance was attached at one end. The other end of the spindle was attached to the disc. As Escatt walked he pushed and pulled the stick as though it was a violin, causing the disc on which the seed was falling to revolve and in so doing spread the seed over a predetermined area of land.

The lane continued and once more was bare of trees on both sides, eventually running straight into a walled yard. This walled yard was a part of the buildings of Loose Barn, and in all probability was as far as the lane had run many years before. The yard was bordered on the north,

east and south by the flint walls, but the western end was that of the building, Loose Barn. It was built in the same manner as all the rest with the two doors, one on each side, and the vents to allow for the circulation of air. This barn and yard no doubt were at one time of key importance in this area, but at my time had become quite insignificant. The lane had taken the major role and skirted the barn on its western side. The fields dropped back to allow this to happen and on that side changing their role from arable to that of grass. Opposite the door to the barn was a gate to the meadow that probably in times past had allowed the crops from that field to be hauled straight inside it. The contents at this time were always guaranteed to include a pair of barn owls that nested there every year. It was a lonely place in my time and little industry took place within its walls. Dad was working within its confines one day when a very heavy thunderstorm took place and he, although living through many such storms, found that old barn to create a frightening spot to endure the storm's heavy clamouring.

The lane still bends around that area, but the old barn is only a pile of rubble, the flints that once proudly stood as its walls now awaiting their original role as a covering for the earth that once was the floor. The fields on the western side of the lane changing status, becoming meadow land, some high and dry, but as the land dipped away the remainder was relegated to brookland. No more than about twenty more yards was left of the lane before it widened slightly arriving at a dead end, leaving one with the choice of three gates. One on the left into the bottom of Blacksmith's brooks, and on up over the railway crossing belonging to the third set of gates. The second over a culvert and into the brookland of Escatt's. The third into the bottom end of the meadow, whose other gate is the same as that that stood opposite the barn.

Today a couple of young great nephews of Escatt's work these fields with big and complicated machines to plough and till the soil. They cut and bale the hay into great big rolls, to cut and thresh the corn in one operation, and then to spread the manure from the farm without ever having to soil their boots. All these roles so much more efficient than those of days gone by. However, I wonder if there is as much satisfaction, achievement and pride as there was in those days of long ago.

The ditches of today may well be the same that were dug at the time of enclosures. Then a hedge could not readily be made but a ditch could. The ditch would be the boundary and in the spoil of the ditch, which was laid within the area to be enclosed, was planted the quick thorn. The hedge and ditch then became companions and even today competitions are held of those who have the skills of old, the hedge-and-ditchers.

Down by the barn the hedges still stand on the banks next to the ditches, as indeed they did way back in 1860. Today they are cut by a large machine attached to a tractor. For many, many years they were made cattle-proof with the choppers, slashers and swaphooks of generations, who severing three-quarters the way through the lower trunk of those short Hawthorns would bend them to forty-five degrees, stake and trim them, and looking back with a sense of pride would see not just a cattle-proof hedge but a day's work that was attractive as well as useful. Now it doesn't matter what the pile of bales look like, then the ricks had to look good, it was a matter of pride and nowhere did they look better than Loose Lane.

Nobody walks down Loose Lane anymore because now it is blocked off, and even if they did there is very little to see as there was in the days when half the occupants of Orchard Cottages derived a living from its soil.

Chapter XXVII

THE SCHOOL

Alongside the wall that concluded the stretch of Orchard Cottages stood the village school. The school was built in 1872/73, about the same time as the majority of buildings in that part of the village. The main school was but two classrooms and on the end of these was built as the same unit the schoolhouse. A further classroom was built on to the back within ten years of the original building. Two further classrooms were added to the front in 1928, but these were of wood and extended into the playground in an easterly direction. In between the two new ones was a cloakroom, as indeed there was behind the old part. The new part was that which served the young below seven and the old part was retained for those from seven to eleven. The whole school used the only toilets, which were at the back of the school. The urinal in the boys' side was open to the sky and all the closets contained buckets which could be removed through small doors at the back which opened onto the allotments adjacent to Street Farm. The playground between the lane and the buildings was, apart from the gate, surrounded by another of those high flint walls. To the north was the gardens of the cottages and to the south the recreation ground. The playground had a surface of tarmac and sloped slightly to the south. The protrusion of the new classrooms caused the playground to be shaped as a small "h". Separating the playground from the garden of the master's house was a long high Hawthorn hedge. From the hedge, sloping inward to the tarmac for three or four yards, were the pupils' gardens, each enclosed by their boundaries of the large flints. Below them, of which there numbered about nine with a space for the tenth occupied by a Sycamore tree, was a gully that collected and carried the rainwater easterly out of the school yard. It travelled firstly under a small culvert that ran in front of the master's garage and secondly under the wall and so into the remains of a pond in Loose Lane.

The school is the product of The Church of England and as such was visited quite regularly each week by the vicar and was made available each Sunday for Sunday School. It comprised at my time of five classrooms and was under the control of the Headmaster, Mr Archard.

Mr Archard lived in the house that was part of the old building. He was a tallish man with a full head of hair and at that time I suppose could well have been in his mid-forties. He wore spectacles that rested on his nose, a nose that protected the moustache beneath it. He wore quite severe suits, always with a waistcoat, and possessed the unfailing ability to stand in front of the class and spit all over the front row. Looking back at him he was a very fair man, but at the same time very firm. He used his canes quite regularly but I never suspect without provocation. Sharing his house was his homely lady wife, his son, who was equally as tall as his father and possessed one of those studious faces and carried the name of John. In complete contrast the daughter, Audrey, was like her mother, then a slightly lumpy teenager with a glowing complexion. We saw little of this son and daughter because although the house was but five or six yards from the playground he managed to keep their private life private.

When I first arrived at school pupils carried on their schooling there until they reached school leaving age. However, during my first year the school at Irene Avenue in Lancing opened as a Secondary Modern and we were to transfer there when we reached the age of eleven, allow Sompting to revert to Infants and Juniors.

Miss Philamore arrived at that school during my early schooling but was not my teacher. Apart from Miss Grimsdale, who was going to teach youngsters of Sompting for the next forty years, I don't recall their names. I do recall, though, that my first classroom was that of the second of the new classrooms. We learnt how to mark out our letters in a sand tray. This was just a shallow tray with sufficient sand in it to trail your finger through creating the letter required. Teacher coming along would check it, and tap your tray, leaving a clear covering of sand. Somebody always seemed to drop one and so the floor always had a light coating of those particles that would, if you weren't careful, allow you to slip. It was simple, but an effective way to learn with little or not outlay on materials, as generation after generation created the same letters in the same sand, within the same box. I think that that is where the little village school gained over the newer well planned modern school, that sense of security, of belonging, of continuing. Perhaps it was because a lot of us would progress from schooling to the land as those

before us had done, treading and working the same fields in the same way. The next step in the progress of learning would be the slate and chalk, and on to the pencil and paper. At last we arrived at what we had been striving for, the pen and ink. How we often regretted our arrival. The nib, with its constant requirement to be dipped in the inkwell, would be in two parts. One part would continue to write and the other would pause, hooked in the paper, extra pressure would be applied and, whoops: ink would spray all over the paper. Fingers would be permanently stained where the pens were held and work books would possess more fingerprints than a Scotland Yard dossier. Blots would abound on pages that had taken hours of patient work, resulting in punishments that would find us sitting looking out of the window at your fellows playing as that nib traced, "I, I, I, must, must, must, not, not, not" until the full commitment of the punishment was reached. All these progressions took one from the lowest class to the taking of the Scholarships, when sickness parted me from that exam and my path between those plough handles was guaranteed.

The playground of a child's first school is a daunting place when first one treads within its confines. This was the case at Sompting. The playground seemed filled to bursting and one had to be careful not to get knocked down as half the occupants seemed to be tearing about at one pastime or another. Very soon though one was a part of all the activity and pleased to be with those that one hadn't seen since the previous day, because the location of their homes were far apart, even in a village. There would always be a ball and young boisterous boys chasing it with little or no care for those that stood within its rolling path. Just a short time before their mothers had proudly seen them off to school. Then their faces would be clean, their collars and tie straight, their socks pulled up and neatly folded down below the knee, their shoes or light black boots shiny with the morning's brushing. Now, within a short spell of time, their faces were flushed, tie askew, socks around their ankles and those shoes or boots scuffed, giving one the idea that nobody gave a hoot about their turn out. They might well be playing a more sedate game should it be time when the convent Horse Chestnuts had been bountiful with their harvest. Then as they played their "conkers" the broken nuts would skid across the tarmac and the delighted cry follow, "Mine's a twenty-sixer", only to be followed by accusations that they had been in the oven or soaked in vinegar. Perhaps, though, it was the time of the allies and the route to school had whetted the appetite for more victories on arrival.

The girls had in the meantime tried their best to avoid the more boisterous boys, as they in turn wound their skipping ropes while onlookers marvelled at their ability to do the bumps. From others would come the utterings of some peculiar rhyme as the tennis ball would be bounced between their legs from all angles, protected from the hem of their skirts by the elastic of their knickers legs into which they had been tucked. Some boys standing and watching, wondering why all girls wore those black knickers. Should there be room perhaps hop scotch would be in progress. Maybe though it was winter and the water in the gully has frozen over and the brave ones were sliding after their run half the length of the playground. Sometimes the game the boys were playing went sadly wrong and a fight started, collecting a crowd quicker than a discarded jam jar attracted the wasps. Very soon the victor would be proclaimed by the tears of the loser, or more than likely they both would be marched away by Mr Archard whose big hands held them both by the scruff of the neck. All too soon the bell would be rung and that crescendo of voices that had accompanied all the previous activities instantly vanished. Another day of inky fingers, one hundred lines, and yet another bit of knowledge gained, had started. All the balls were not taken in the school because the loft that stood above the eastern classroom had a vent at the end and at least two balls a week disappeared within the dark interior, along with its share of oranges and apples.

I was never to have any memories of classes in that first room and after the initial sand box and slates the second filled me not with memories. The back classroom I remember from the mental arithmetic tests that seemed to take place for years. I didn't particularly like that classroom because the windows were so high that all that could be seen through them was the tops of the apple trees in the back garden of the school house. This room was also the scene of a punishment that I disliked most. We had this early morning been put through the morning habit of answering our names to the call from the morning register when teacher was required by Mr Archard. Before leaving she nominated Stephen Kennard to stand in the front and report those who talked in her absence. I talked and Stephen quite correctly called my name. I got up, walked to the front and

promptly punched Stephen on the nose, causing it to bleed. I should have been sent to have the cane, and wished I had, but no, I had to stand in the corner facing the wall for all of an hour, listening and imagining the belittling I was receiving from the other pupils. The worse punishment by far was the shame I felt after, because at that time Stephen was no match for me and was probably the most likable boy in the whole school. Later in life he was to have the happiest of marriages. They were so devoted to one another that when tragedy struck and one died, the other could not face the world alone and chose to join his partner.

The classroom that shared its back wall with the master's house held memories only of the days of Sunday School.

It seems that I spent most of my time in that main classroom. It was a large room compared with the others and I suppose there must have been twenty or more of us sitting on seats before those desks with the lids that could be lifted to reveal the box-like interior that was to hold our books. There were four or five rows of desks latterly that three or four deep. Along the front of the classroom was firstly the lectern then the table at which the master sat while the exercises he set us were copied into our notebooks. The last object along the front was the piano. The door at the back between the table and the piano led to the cloakroom then on out to the playground at the back end and the toilets. Another door opposite led to one of the new classrooms. Another door in line with the lectern but to its left gave access to the other classroom, but not before it had passed the upright stove.

The upright stove creates the memory of the smell of that classroom. At that time we could have a bottle of milk each day which measured a third of a pint and would cost one halfpenny. A further choice was offered of hot or cold. In winter most requested the hot milk and so they were stood on that stove. Some days the milk would expand within the bottle, pushing up the cardboard cap and spilling on the stove. The thought of that milk burning on that stove has the capacity to make me feel sick even today. Fire brings another memory of that classroom, because one day we had been warned that a desk inspection would take place. Frank Smith, who was my close pal at that time, collected all the odd bits and pieces of not only writing paper but blotting paper as well, and created a lump in the corner of his desk and set fire to it. Closing the lid there was only limited air for it to burn and consequently when the lids were raised a little later the smoke bellowed forth. The fire created little heat but the same could not be said for the cane that beat his trousers a short time later.

One of the first memories I have of that room is not from the inside but the out. It was when Dusty Miller, who was an old boy of the school, returned to the place of his education on the trade's bike which was the vehicle that shared the rigours of his egg round with him. This day it was not nostalgia that brought him back but devilment, as he rode up beside the open window of that main classroom and threw two stink bombs in. The smell from these things was really vile and the room had to be quickly evacuated. This happened on at least two further occasions but I little remember what action was taken against him. He made his escape very quickly the day that I saw him, but some few years ahead he was not so lucky and became an early fatal casualty of the war.

Whether that area in front of those desks ever witnessed an event that should have been entered in the Guinness Book of Records I am not sure. I have mentioned before the distinctly different areas that we youngsters came from and how we became quite possessive of our territories. This gang war came to a head one morning outside the farmyard of Wadman. How the meeting came to take place just there is shielded by the mists of time, as indeed is the reason, but a massive stone fight took place. There was plenty of ammunition in the area as has been stated, and with that at hand and so many combatants it was surprising that only one real casualty was effected. Jack Groves lost a couple of teeth and a very bad split lip. The area in front of those desks saw as a result of the enquiry into that war a record number of thirty three line up in different details to receive on each hand the strokes of Mr Archard's cane.

Some people it seemed used to ask for the cane. One such lad, who because of his massive smile, which seemed to stretch his lips from one ear to the other, and known as Joe E Brown, a comedian of that time, was one of those. He went on the way to school into the allotments where the frogs lived beside the smithy and gathered a number of them. Arriving at school a little early he crept into class and slipped one of these frogs into a number of selected

girls' desks. Out at play we had about this time changed from our regular winter clothes, that included those heavy flannel shorts that had that winter as they rubbed up and down on those wet and windswept legs of ours caused us the pain of chapped legs, into our khaki shorts. These khaki shorts along with the plimsolls or sandals gave one a wonderful sense of freedom, but at the same time only half the protection from the sting of that cane. Seated in the class after our regimental entry from the playground we were bid to open our desks and retrieve one of our books. The lids rose in unison and almost immediately a number of girls' shrieks rose also. Joey's lips split his face in two as pandemonium broke out for a minute until the frogs were dispatched. Question time started almost immediately and in no time at all Joe E Brown stood out the front. He was accused, found guilty and his punishment ordered with the words, "Bend over the table". Joey bent over and Mr Archard went for his cane. Joey looked up seeing twenty odd smiling faces with a look of expectancy in their eyes. His desire to be brave deserted him as Mr Archard returned, bending the cane in his hands. Joey left the table and dashed behind the piano. During the next minute or so we were subjected to as good a farce as we were ever to see, as Joey circled the table, lectern and piano, pursued relentlessly by Mr Archard until at last he was caught and physically dealt with. He went back to his place sobbing, but during that escapade Joey became a hero.

My brother Dennis had not been at school long. Each afternoon he had to wait for me to conclude my schooling so that I could see him safely home, as was the duty of an elder brother. During that last period of the day I was called from class to go to the master's house. There I found my brother. His fingers had been trapped in one of the doors and squashed badly. The bone of each finger could be seen where the flesh had been squeezed away. I consoled him as best I could and Mrs Archard gave him biscuits and lemonade, but never offered me any. A little later Mr Archard got his car out. It was a Morris with a dicky seat in the back which was undone and my brother sat in. I had never had a ride in a car and although poor old Den was in pain I was still envious of him as he disappeared on his way to hospital in the dickey seat of that old Morris.

We were, when the weather permitted at the right time of the year, taken on a nature ramble to get to know, enjoy and appreciate the countryside. We picked wild flowers and grasses and pressed them in our books, just as my old Gran has so many years before. We were encouraged to maintain our little gardens by the playground by planting and sowing. Jam jars were filled with damp sawdust with blotting paper keeping it from the glass. Between the blotting paper and the glass beans and peas were placed and from them we discovered the wonder of life. Firstly the shooting forth of the root in search of food, and then the growing point with its leaves developing, awaiting the kiss of light, but that was about the extent of our learning about the mysteries of life. Babies still arrived in that little black bag of the midwife's.

That large classroom seems to be the base from where what learning I received was initiated. That large lectern will never go away from my memory. I was standing by its side reading from a book when it came to light that I could not say the word vinegar. It is a simple word, yet try as I might as I read a story entitled "The Old Woman and the Vinegar Bottle" it would continue to come out as vingar. I just could not get that "E" to establish itself between the "N" and the "G". I obviously managed that act at some time, but not before I had been chastised sufficiently in front of that class for the memory to install itself all these years.

There were the joys of Christmas and the excitement of the coming party. Our industry as we strove with our strips of coloured paper to create chains of coloured rings that hung and dipped over the desks and high above our heads, making sure to be kept clear of the gas lamps that were our illumination at that time. I think at the party we all contributed to the food by bringing pits and pieces from home. They must have been limited because we never seemed to have enough there, but somehow Mum wouldn't let us down. The piano that I had heard only rendering our morning Hymns, our Carols and our singing lessons now kept us circulating to the game of musical chairs. Postman's Knock was to follow and kisses exchanged in that darkened cloakroom as each of us got called out, only to return with crimson faces. It was all great fun and it was great to see Mr and Mrs Archard enjoy it, it seemed, as much as us children.

Our playing field which stood next to the school was the recreation ground. It had not long been given to the village and obviously had been a meadow of Street Farm. It was separated from the farm land by a five strand fence on the western side, the school wall and a fence on the northern side. A paved footpath was to run the whole length of the eastern side where it was shaded most of the way by the Elm trees that made up the boundary on that side, aided by a thick

hedge. The hedge was broken at one spot near its bottom by a five-barred gate that allowed access to and from Loose Lane that ran beside it. The row of Council houses that were still in their infant years at the southern end were fronted by a concrete road that was separated from the recreation ground by an iron railing fence. Already in its young life some of the railings had been bent to allow the young bodies of those that lived there to squeeze through.

The ground was big enough to contain two full football pitches and a cricket wicket which used the area between the two big limes. At the northern end it boasted a wooden pavilion with its two changing rooms, one for the home side and the other for the visitors. It had a kind of balcony where on those sunny days the teams of cricketers could sit and watch the skills or antics of their fellows. On wet days in winter it would be crammed with the followers of football. At the back of the pavilion was a tin lean-to that served as the men's toilet. There was no ladies'. Presumably no one thought the ladies would ever have a use for the recreation ground and, come to think of it, after leaving school I don't think they ever did.

There was a few of them would support the football. They were either mothers, sisters or wives of those that played. It was good football in those days I recall, with plenty of physical contact. Today the goalkeeper cannot be touched but then one had to be prepared for some pretty rough treatment. The crowd, and there was quite often fifty to a hundred watching, would keep the excitement going with shouts of "Keep it on the Island", each time it was kicked into touch, today that seems to be a tactic in the modern game. There were constant shouts of "carve them up", and the whole thing became even more physical. At the end, with very few exceptions, there were handshakes and smiles all around and the topic for the week's conversation had been completed.

Cricket was far less vocal but nevertheless just as entertaining as some of the old timers took part. Half of them had great fun and the other half were very serious about it. The cricket square was their pride. They seemed to be forever rolling it. The roller was a large hollow but heavy one that was hand pulled and had sufficient room on each handle for about four of them in line. It was quite a heavy implement and when it was not in use was parked half way along beside the school wall. The grass of the recreation ground was not cut as often as it should have been and when it was the mower could not get close to the wall and fence to cut all the grass. Consequently, along all wall and fences the grass grew tall and in dry weather became like tinder. It was then, one hot summer's dinnertime, that Frank Smith and I got into the roller and from some source had obtained matches. We had a nice little fire going when the bell went. We really should have been in the playground and hounded away to stand in our place on parade. It was probably about an hour later that we were sent for. It appears our little fire, that had probably been scuffed out of the roller by our feet during our mad dash to parade, had caught the grasses by the wall alight. The fire crept along the wall, leaving it and continuing still along the tall grass between the recreation ground and the allotments, until someone had passed along the path and saw the pavilion about to go up. They put it out and reported it, hence the calling of Frank and I. After the caning we two received the old pavilion was not the only one that had scorched parts.

The allotments behind the pavilion were also on their western side behind the toilets of the school and from this site one could see the small green doors that were evidence of the buckets on the other side. The toilets were both boys and girls. The barrier between the two was a high brick wall. That high brick wall was another of those initiations which young boys set themselves. To pass one had to be able to urinate over the top. It seemed impossible in those early school days but when one got bigger it was not uncommon to see three or four boys leaning back at an angle of forty five degrees and allowing their body liquid to cascade over the top, now and again being rewarded with a surprised cry from the other side when their efforts had been successful. Those calls were not half as surprised as those heard the day two of the boys proceeded out into the allotments. They had gone there and waited patiently outside the three little green doors that served the girls' toilets, awaiting the occupancy of one. When it was heard that an entry had been made one of the boys opened wide the little green door while the other, who had armed himself with a bunch of stinging nettles, thrust his hand forward and up. Action over, a very hasty retreat was made. I don't recall the culprits of that prank ever named, as indeed neither was the victim, however it was sad to see one of the lady teachers making her way about the school that day in some discomfort.

The school and the recreation ground combined one day to create what was and probably still is one of my happiest days. At the time of this occurrence we had Infants and Juniors, or did we call them Juniors and Seniors? The details are not clear of that aspect. Whatever the case, the lower of the two at that time did not have football afternoons, while the others did. I was of the party that did not have football. The school was to play an important football match against another school and the bigger boys had requested that I should be selected because I was reckoned to be quite good. After a lot of consideration Mr Archard agreed and I was dispatched home to get my football boots, a new pair that my parents had somehow managed to obtain for me. I ran every step of the way home. I had done this before just after starting school when nature desired I pay attention to the callings of my body and could think of no other goal than Gran's toilet. Down West Street I had galloped, around The Ball tree into Busticle, on up the start of Rectory Road, across Jimmy Richardson's allotments, up Gran's path, I could see it, I reached it, I opened it, I found it was just that too much too late. Not today that disappointment. Home I arrived, too excited to tell Mother, gathering my boots I ran all the way back. There has never ever been any other footballer, whether it was for his country or in the World Cup, who could have been more proud than I as I trod the turf that afternoon wearing proudly the yellow VEE of Sompting School on my shirt. I was to play in later years on pitches with internationals and professionals, admittedly doing their National Service, but they didn't compare with the big boys that day. The strange thing is I can't remember if we won or lost.

The recreation ground was where in 1935 we celebrated the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of King George the Fifth and Queen Mary. We, the children, had a tea laid out and the whole village took part in a sports day. There were no shorts and running shoes, just stockinged feet. My Uncle John, who was no more than fifteen, ran in the mile and I do believe won it. I recall the prize table filled it seemed with little brown envelopes which contained half-a-crown or two shillings and even down to sixpence for the various winners. I was to wonder quite often in the years to come if those money prizes made those contestants professionals. We all got our souvenir mugs to take away. I wonder how many of those, if any, survive today?

Each year when I was really small we had an outing supplied by the Free Forresters to Hassocks and we all appeared to have a lovely time. It was rare indeed in those days to venture any farther afield than Lancing or Worthing, and so it would not need too much imagination to understand the excitement of our outing to Aldershot. Aldershot was then in reality, rather than just name, the home of the British Army. Each year they would present themselves to the public with a searchlight Tattoo. It was so vast that nearly all the Army took part in one role or another. We were to see the daylight rehearsal of this great event that took place under the dazzling searchlights for our elders.

In some form or other we got to Lancing station and on the train to Aldershot, where buses took us to Rushmoor arena. It was here that we saw lines and lines of buses, and lines and lines of children with labels around their necks or pinned to coats in an effort for them not to get lost. Who was to know that in just a few short years the same type scenes would be seen in London, from where a lot of these children had come, but then it would be in the evacuation of that City. However, now it was for pleasure. The great arena seemed with those young eyes of ours to be absolutely large, but in later years the size was a little disappointing. Two sides and the end were filled with rows and rows of seats and at the other end was built the wall of a mock castle. We had all been directed to our places when a large black car stopped at the stairs opposite our position. There the stairs were covered with red carpet. From the car stepped two young girls about our own age, it was the then Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. We stood across from each other as the thousands of voices rang out the anthem, "God Save The King". It was strange now to look back at that day and realise that in the time to come that biggest girl would be our Queen, and I would proudly be present in Buckingham Palace as she pinned a medal for bravery on my soldier son.

This afternoon though we would share the pleasure of marching bands, the demonstrations of the soldiers at physical training, the musical rides of the cavalry on their horses, the displays of drill of the Infanteers and concluding with a massive attack on the castle, with the arena resounding to the explosions of the guns, the cries of the soldiers in attack as they became visible through the drifting clouds of smoke. At the conclusion of the show the young hands clapped until they were sore and a memory was tucked away, never to be forgotten. Eventually

we arrived home only too pleased to get to bed and awake refreshed the next morning to relive again one of the most exciting days of our young life.

Time rolled on, the war came and never again was the Tattoo to be staged in that massive way. We moved on to the senior school, the old school was to change into a Community Centre, the recreation ground was to become Tristram Close, and Front Meadow revert once more to the field for football. All this has happened but not, thank goodness, before those memories could be tucked away, to be brought out and aired on many future occasions.

Chapter XXVIII
CHURCH LANE

Church Lane started at The Marquis, as in their day did the Fox Hounds and the Beagles. Both would meet here, at different times of course, and whereas the followers of the hounds were on horse back, so the followers of the Beatles were on foot. One sought the fox while the other sought the hare. I always thought as a young boy that the hounds were for the rich and the Beagles for the poor and perhaps I was not far wrong with that.

The old Marquis was indeed an old inn and as such gave rest to many travellers. It had been built in the days when travelling was done on horse back and had against the side of Church Lane stables for at least a half dozen horses. Along its front were a number of rings where other horses and those of the waggoners could be tied while their masters quenched their thirst. There was of course a trough where the horses would firstly quench theirs.

Opposite The Marquis at the very bottom of the lane was the stump of another old Elm that had many ears before shaded the commencement of Church Lane, but long before my time lightning had cut it down so that now it reached no higher than fifteen feet. It was small but it was strong. There was one day, so I was told, when it had to show that strength. A steam engine had somehow got out of control while descending that hill and the only way it could stop was to ram that tree. I don't know if that story is true but I could see no marks of the affair on that old stump. Grandfather once ran into it I do know. He had taken Rodney in the waggon up to Charlie Phillips' to get a load of straw and as usual Rodney was trotting away. This day though whether it was some straws trailing over his rump or he was feeling harder of the mouth, meaning he was harder to control, I know not, but it caused a collision with that tree.

On the right hand side of the lane as one proceeds north the flint wall fights bravely to keep the soil of the park from spilling into it. Although the wall is about four feet high on the lane side it is hardly more than two feet the other side. It sometimes crumbled when the cows get too close and has to be rebuilt.

On the left hand side there is no farm land at all but cottages that lay well back from the road, firstly two substantial looking ones and then about four I think it was. These were so old that they have long since been replaced. A "Secluded Residence" is one of the meanings of the name "The Hermitage", and that certainly fits the bill of the next house that carries that name. It is a very substantial house, standing quite close to the road and overlooks the green pasture of the park.

It was at the time I write the home of old Mr Wadman, an uncle of the farmer of Yew Tree. He had but one eye, the other he had lost in a shooting accident years before. The story I heard was that it happened with a gun that he had bought his son for his twenty-first birthday. That was of course many years ago now. Mr Wadman was retired at the time that I knew him. He had in his active life been the manager of Pullen Bury's until he handed over the reins to Mr Prail. The years had bent his back and he travelled around quite slowly, forever it seemed viewing the ground. The youngsters who worked at Pullen Bury's in those long off days, when they saw him coming, would lay pennies on the ground and get quite a laugh as they saw him stop and retrieve them. It must now be all of fifty years when even in the advanced period of his life he was game enough to pack up and start anew in South Africa. The world around it has changed greatly in the passing years but "The Hermitage" looks hardly a day older.

Just above it was the entrance to the nurseries of the Johnsons. Here stood two more abodes standing back from the entrance and at right angles to the road. Within the confines of these nurseries were a labyrinth of walls. Each little patch appeared to be encased by its own set of high flint structures. Through each gap in the wall one would proceed, to be surprised by greenhouses, fruit trees or just another crop of lettuce or chrysanthemums. My mate Norman Farrow would not, like me, be lost amongst these walls because this is where he worked until called upon to carry out his service in the Navy. I was later to join the Army but was always rather envious of one journey that Norman made. His first ship was to be joined in Vancouver. He sailed the Atlantic and carried out that enviable journey of three days crossing Canada by train.

The orchards of those nurseries stretched up that lane until stopped by the joint efforts of the hedge of Bennetts Place and the hedge to the garden of Sompting Peveril.

Sompting Peveril is a square, strong looking house, painted white and showing the lines of extensions that have taken place over the years. It stands behind a high Laurel hedge which leans over toward you above the concave flint wall that appears to help support its bottom. It is broken only by the wrought iron gate sitting grandly between the flints. Next to the house is the small courtyard that contains the stable, above which is a small loft where not only the requirements of the carriage horse could be found but that also of the hunter. The coach house stands beside it, allowing long ago the groom to be in close attendance to his responsibilities. There is ample evidence in the flint walls of many different additions of pebbles in the walls that enclose it. The cement cap to the walls keeping the weather at bay and the rusting pump allow one to conjure up the scene that must have happened daily in this little arena.

Was it called Sompting Peveril all those years ago? I ponder, for I can just remember that house being the home of the vicar. I assume moving to this smaller one from the big house in West Street when that seemed too big for its task. I remember also the village politics when it was decided that this one was too big and draughty for the new vicar and a part of the park just above was chosen to build a new vicarage. Now in very recent years that too has become too big and a smaller one has been built lower down in the village.

In the high flint wall of Sompting Peveril just above the wrought iron gate is a recess. This recess contains a seat. The hill past this point begins to get steeper than that which has had to have been travelled to reach this point, and although the church is no more than fifty yards ahead it is to the elderly a very welcome resting place. To sit on this seat must make each that occupies it wonder how many have sat there before, and what different lives have been lived from those that first sat upon its wooden surface.

Bennetts nursery hedge that stopped the upward climb of the previous nursery has at this point reached beyond the grand house to border the lane. In it is the gate that is used to reach its packing shed. The northern hedge is soon reached no more than a dozen or more yards above it. This hedge, along with another just above it, combine to squeeze a track between them bearing the name of Love Lane that runs away to the west to meet the lane that marks the farthest extent of Sompting, Lamleys, at whose bottom that horrible accident took place.

Opposite here then is the new vicarage as I like to call it. It takes up the northwest corner of the park, leaving just enough room for the five bar gate and the small pedestrian beside it that carries the wire of plough shares. To the north of this point is the grounds of Sompting Abbots but at that time little can be seen because of the abundance of trees that grew there.

The top hedge of the track to Lamleys is the bottom of the spare ground below the church yard and which gives access to its lower end. It was at this lower end that the first graves one came to were those of some young German Airmen who had been shot down in the area. They lay peacefully there until well after the war when their remains were retrieved and sent home to their own soil.

We were not expected to enter the church yard at this point, but to enter through the lych-gate above that held a tablet on which the names of the young men who did not return from that first war were inscribed and later, unfortunately, others whom I knew and who failed to return from the second. Many thousands have passed through this access over the thousand years that this has been a church. The lych-gate though has stood only about seventy years.

The church is reported to have origins from 960AD. Much has been written about its history and it seems that almost every century some extra building has been demolished or added.

It was certainly recorded in the Domesday book of 1086, which is 900 years before I tap these words. It states also that Sompting had one Mill, eight salt houses and five slaves. It seemed to have about seventeen hides and fifty-three people are mentioned.

Cokeham has a mention, with three and a half hides and nine people. Dankton too, with five hides and eight people.

The hides mentioned are difficult it states to calculate because in those days an area of land was not measured merely by its area but by its production capability. A hide being the area

of land that a family would need to survive on, but it was expected of southern England that a hide was roughly one hundred and twenty acres.

Lancing surprisingly is registered with sixteen and a quarter hides and thirty people mentioned.

One can see from those recorded facts and the present size of the village that it was not surprising the church would increase also as each century passed.

It is difficult to imagine Sompting in the days before enclosure when every family in the village had strips of land on which to grow their crops and after harvest the freedom to allow their beasts to roam where they wish within its boundaries. The late Seventeen hundreds and early Eighteen hundreds saw it change into the fields and farms that still engage its beauty. Alas, with it in some ways evolved the workers and the bosses. In recent centuries the land of Sompting was owned by the Crofts family, becoming by marriage the Tristram family. They all I assume controlled its acres from the house that stood before the Abbotts.

In recent years the church yard had many funerals, but in the days when I was young there were not many at all. There was then no job for a full time man in that capacity of grave digger in the village and so old Bill Scrace did it after hours. It was quite easy for him during the light evenings of summer but in the winter with the dark evenings that was completely another matter. I like the story of Bill Scrace which tells of him one dark winter day stopping to do part of his job on the way home to tea. He came back after tea with his trusted hurricane lamp that was to light his way to conclude the job. Before he came in view one of a gang of youngsters jumped down the part dug grave and partly covered himself with an old sheet. When Bill drew near he jumped out waving his arms and creating an assortment of ghostly noises, but far from being frightened old Bill picked up his pickaxe and chased them all round the church yard.

I was for a time a choir boy in the old church but did not remain very long, not being strong enough to devote the time required to that occupation. We would be required to attend church twice on Sunday as well as having two practice nights in the week. I had left home one evening for one such practice. Having passed along Bulpit Lane and negotiated the stile at Dankton, crossed the footpath above the Hawthorn hedge of Malt House Meadow, I had passed through the kissing gate into the park and was treading the path through the grass. It was mid-summer and the thunder clouds had gathered, the rooks were squabbling as usual above in the high branches of the old Elms that separated the park from the Abbotts. The first drops of rain fell on my face and the swaying branches appeared to bid me run. Run I did, along the patch through the pedestrian gate with every confidence that the plough shares would close it behind me, and up the lane to the lych-gate. Running up the path I almost ran into the arms of a stranger who also had made for the church to avoid the rains that now fell.

This man was I expect in his late fifties and as he opened the church door and looked around inside he said, "Come on son, give the old organ some air". I reached the old handle and worked the bellows and soon the gauge showed sufficient air for the organ's needs. He sat at the keyboard playing the popular tunes of the day while I pumped air into her. I suppose it was only minutes that he played there but it took me years to shed my mind of the guilty feeling that those tunes gave me. I thought, and probably still do, that it was improper to treat the old organ that way.

Just past the church was the entrance to Church Farm. Is there a church in England that hasn't got its farm? The wall curved round to guide one into its road where on the left was the pond and on the right the farmhouse. This was the upper farm of Escatt Phillips. The house had at some time been more than one abode but at this time and ever since has been one big farmhouse. Escatt had no children of his own and so had no need to consider using it other than for his own purposes. Behind the house was a large vegetable garden and a long greenhouse that enabled the house to be more than self-sufficient in the way of its production.

The pond that lay opposite the house had had a concrete floor made for it and gained its supply from the rains of Church Lane above. It was a common sight to see the three pair of horses, their carters sitting sideways on the near side one, plod up the hill from a day of work in the fertile fields below. The carters would slip from their backs and unhooking the bridle reins from the hames allow them to paddle in the shallows as they bent their heads to consume what seemed gallons of water. A horse needs to drink before its feed because of the digestion system it

has which has to deal with the oats and hay, their main diet, supplemented at times with linseed cake and a rack of trefoleum.

The stables to which they retired after leaving the pond to the mercy of the ducks that shared it with them was on the northern side of the farm buildings, that again were set in a square. There was room in these stables not just for the horses that were kept now, but obviously of more teams in times before these as well as the horses for the traps and Governess carts. The western side housed the barn that was identical to the others in the district and smelling the last time I entered that sweet smell of hay. The southern side was the hovel, giving shelter to the fattening cattle that made it their home. A wall cut short the yard and here as the hovel carried on it changed its role to that of a cart shed. Extra cover was given to the cattle where other open-fronted roofed buildings down the middle of the yard gave their cover, while opposite the stables was cart of implement parking. At the eastern end of the stables was what had been cover for the traps and family carts, while up above a loft for the feed stuffs. There was a chimney protruding out of the roof beyond the loft where years ago the tack room would be found.

Back on the lane again and heading north it was bordered each side by the usual high flint wall, until all of a sudden one came abreast the entrance to the Abbots on the right hand side, its lodge standing guard at the beginning of the drive. This lodge had been the place where Norman and I would spend hours reading the comics of those from across the Atlantic. This was when the Canadians took over the Abbots during the war, the guard room. We would stay until the early hours of the morning reading away and then run scaringly home beneath the ghostly branches of the trees who had been our friends in daylight.

The house that we could see from the bottom of the drive was the Abbots and was built by P C Hardwick in 1856. It replaced a house that stood just to the east of this one. The Abbots was a private residence until 1926 when it became a private school. It had been really private in those pre-war days and we, the locals, would have to creep through the trees to see them play that game of rugby that was foreign to us, but I do believe we played them soccer a couple of times. Now in 1940 it was a barracks and its playing fields the home of tanks.

Having passed the entrance the lane soon reached a grove of trees and on doing so turned sharply right and headed easterly for a couple of hundred yards, skirting the northern edge of the Abbots grounds. It was along this part of the lane that Norman and I walked one evening when the Abbots was between Army units and as we walked children's voices floated up to us from below and Norman suggested we go down. I declined to go at first saying that, "It was asking for trouble to go down". Norman left and went down through the trees and after no more than twenty yards I turned and followed him. We got down to the buildings where some youngsters, far younger than us, were playing with an old motorcycle that the previous unit had left. We had a little game and then stones were thrown at windows. After two such stones we left. It must have been no more than seven days when a policeman called at the door to say that my name as well as Norman's had been given as persons who had caused damage at the Abbots. We were duly charged and attended Court.

Norman was then a member of the Sea Cadets and his Captain appeared to give him his support. His employer also sent his solicitor. It was then decided by the Magistrate that as he was so well supported his case would be heard separately. I was left with all the younger ones. I was duly found guilty and fined. Norman, not guilty. From that day no-one cannot tell me that things cannot be bought. If one has the financial backing you are halfway there.

Opposite the Abbots at that point is an arable field sloping up toward the big wood known as the Mountain. I am always pleased to see any field in Sompting and one day during the war, I can't remember if it was Arnham or the crossing of the Rhine, an airborne force flew over. The sky filled with planes carrying the paratroopers and wooden gliders full of other troops. One of the gliders' tow ropes had parted and it came down in this field and so I am sure that there are others who at least once were pleased to see that field.

This was one of the fields that Jack Chatfield had and would plough many times with his horse, probably in the company of his brother. He had ploughed so many acres that setting the plough was a simple and easy task. He could set it so that he could wander off as the horses plodded across the field, the plough following on its own behind. I have heard it said of some ploughmen that with two teams they would set them off from different ends of the field remaining

there themselves to turn each team as it arrived. They would not do it if Escatt was around, but reckon they had a go down the lower lands sometime.

It would be up here that we would be allowed to follow the binder watching for that tell tale sign of the presence of a rabbit by the tremble of the corn as they moved within it. Each armed with a stick we would give chase as they broke cover where they would either be caught by us or the dogs, or perhaps escape to the cover of the wood only to live and escape the stoat, the ferret, the gun and, with luck, the harvest next year. The binder would require three horses to pull it. Two teams were used, the fourth horse used to rest each of the others in turn.

I sat one day in a shed and listened to the story of an old man and his first acquaintance with Church Lane. It was Jack Fuller and was about his family's move from Horsham to allow his father to take over as manager of Lychpole Farm. Father with all the belongings tucked away in a Pickfords van was riding this pulled by a pair of cart horses. Mother with I think it was four boys came by train, Jack was her eldest.

They alighted from the train at Lancing station and were lucky to find a taxi. I say lucky because this was about 1916 or 17. Their luck ran out when they got to about the church when the boys, mother and suitcase found the old taxi jibbing at the hill and were once more to alight. The taxi paid, he turned and disappeared from whence he came, leaving mother and her young to travel on foot. On arriving at the spot on the lane adjacent to that where years later the glider was to land they met about four boys, one of them was Dad. They informed Mrs Fuller in answer to her question that Lychpole was miles over the hill and she trugged on her way.

As she arrived at the bend in the road she would have had to bear left to the crest of the hill and because of the trees still not see her destination, but to the right Steepdown and Lancing Hill. To see these she would look over the small field of Escatts at the back of the Abbots.

One of the boys in that group may well have been Horry Stovell. It was he that told me of a day just about three years later when he was with a horse in the shafts of the flat roller working in that field. He had failed to attach a belly girth to the roller, not seeing the need. When he finished he drove the horse and roller down a short bank to the road, which caused the roller to run forward with only the brechin to control it, this caused the shafts to fly high around the horse's head. The horse took fright and completely out of Horry's control galloped off with the roller behind toward the farm yard. It created a terrible din and Horry ran on behind only to see the horse and roller disappear around the bend. As he ran his mind filled with pictures of the calamity he would find and how he would account for his sacking to his old mother. It was his lucky day, because arriving at the farm the house was empty and there outside the stable door stood the horse breathing heavily but well, with the roller intact behind it.

On another occasion a carter was proceeding along this bit of road in the direction of the farm with two horses in trace on a roller. They were young horses and at the time they travelled this bit of road someone felled a tree in Abbots' ground. It made a terrible crashing noise that was too much for the horses and they bolted. As they galloped down the hill the leading horse swerved at the last minute as he recognised the entrance to the farm and entered the driveway, the rear horse attempted to do likewise but the weight of the roller pushing from behind caused it to swerve into the wall. At the very last moment to avoid smashing into the wall it leapt to avoid it and finished up hanging above the water still harnessed to the shafts, the leading horse having broken away. The only way to extract that poor beast was it seems to saw through the shafts, which is what they did and the poor animal fell into the pond.

Just as the road was about to veer northward there was on the left an entrance to a field. It was a small three cornered field running immediately north with a bank of about four feet high at its side in which four or five Elm trees held on grimly with their roots, separating as they did so this small field from the rest. At the bottom of this bank was a path that led up to the Mountain.

Many times I had the great joy to walk up that path. When I was young this was indeed my favourite walk. At the end of the bank and rising with the path one would enter the wood, made up nearly entirely of Beech. A path would skirt the inside edge of the wood about ten yard within, but the one I preferred and used would meander through the middle heading at an angle to the north west corner and crest of the hill because the path was rising all its length. In those summer evenings here and there shafts of light would penetrate the canopy above and trap the day's dust, allowing it to seemingly spiral up to the sky. Then all of a sudden you were out of the

trees and standing on the top of the steep bank that we called "Hank-a-Pank". The change from the interior of the wood to the outside was so sudden that it took seconds to get acquainted with the new light. This was my very favourite spot and the scene below me filled my heart with thanks just for being alive. I felt like praying, for this was my Cathedral. The bank was steep before my feet and when covered with snow was one of our favourite sledging sites. The scene was enclosed with Tenants Hill on the left and Steepdown on the right. Laying before me looking almost like Tony Lindup's lead pieces were the buildings of Coombe Barn to the fore, Titch Hill Farm to the right, Beggars Bush straight ahead and the grey of Lychpole in the distance. Linking these were the hedges, fields, tracks and footpaths that were all mine at those moments.

I loved it and yet one night it frightened me so badly. I most times walked this way with Norman but occasionally on my own, such as this night. This night I had passed this way earlier and had gone much farther than the daylight time would allow. My young body was fit in those days and did my bidding without question. I was returning back the way I had travelled out. Along the top of Hank-a-Pank from Lambleys the light was fading fast. I entered the Mountain and stepped into the blackness. I was immediately scared but told myself there was nothing to be frightened of in my old Mountain, as long as I remained on the path, where the constant tread of feet had cleared it of the thick carpet of leaves that coated the remainder. I trod on, gaining in confidence with each step, and looking back could see that it was just as dark now behind as it was in front, I had to keep going. All of a sudden the hairs on the back of my neck shot up to attention far quicker and much more rigid than I was to do to the RSM in a couple of years, as the instant rustle of leaves commenced in front of my feet and shot off to the left. I had obviously startled a hare or some such fast moving animal. I stopped and composed myself and then set off again. I was doing quite well when again I was frightened by the rustle of leaves and was near panic when I realised it was I that was making it, I had left the path. GOD, I thought, I would be in here for hours if not all night. I dropped to my knees patting the ground in ever increasing circles and bumping into trees until at last I found the clearness under my hand. I stood up and carried on, then the relief, yes, I could see the edge, it was getting lighter, oh yes, definitely lighter. My steps were easier now when just a minute ago they had been heavy. I was getting cocky. I had walked the dark Mountain alone, she had done me no harm, huh! I knew all along she wouldn't.

Mrs Fuller and her boys started descending the hill that skirted the eastern side of the Mountain and found themselves looking up the steep leaf-covered bank of the Beech wood. For the first time now on her right she was passing the land of her husband's new employer because we had entered the beginning of Wadmans. This lane now ran parallel with Dankton and between the two with a field each side was a wide narrow wood of about ten yards' width, habited by Elms its own length and accompanied by a bounteous undergrowth. Young Jack Chatfield, who started ploughing Escatt's with his father and the horses, was to plough this field many, many times using a tractor and for the next forty years ploughed continually, progressing from one furrow to five or six, and at speeds tenfold those of his simple beginnings. I don't think another will ever plough as many acres in Sompting.

The boys and Mrs Fuller were no doubt tiring as they left the Mountain behind and now had a pasture high above them. This field was another of those that never as far as I know saw the plough. It was normally kept as a natural hay field and could always, that is until the modern methods were introduced years ago, provide almost every type of wild grass, including my favourite that we named "toddy". At the bottom of the meadow by the road was a chalk pit. It had been used to make and maintain that lane commencing in the days when the parish was responsible for their own roads. Those days have long gone and nature has reclaimed her right to that hole, growing from its base and sides the trees from which to hang its clinging robes.

By now the family were indeed getting footsore and would have well wished that the cottages they now came to were theirs. They weren't, they were the cottages of Titch Hill Farm. This was indeed a small farm, with a small barn, a cart shed and small yard before it. For many years it grew into sad decay until the present occupants made a large farmhouse of the two cottages, repaired and added to the outbuildings and made a wall and Beech hedge that is present here today. It is here also that a short lane crosses the field to join Church Lane to that of Dankton.

We had during those war years been informed that if German paratroopers were to land the church bells would ring and this would call into action the Army and the Home Guard. There

was no need for the church bells because the only paratrooper to land was the solitary one that baled out of his plane and landed here at Titch Hill Farm, or at least in the field of it. There were too no soldiers to capture him, but the forks of a prong held by a farm worker.

The land now had left the tenancy of Escatt and was in the tenancy of his brother Charles.

The journey for the boys and their mother had been downhill for some way but now the legs would begin to ache as the road they trod began to rise again and little could be seen behind the banks and hedges until they arrived about half way up the rising road, where on the right was a gap that allowed access to the fields. Here under some big old Elms was often the home of a couple of ricks. The land here that was soon to be under the command of their father was later on during my time to have the heavy work done by a tractor. Wadmans had a Fordson Standard tractor. It was a machine like many more of its kind that was beginning to take over from the horses and no doubt where the gradients were quite steep would have been welcomed by the horses should they be able to speak. At this time they had steel wheels with protrusions of metal triangles bolted to them for traction and so were still confined to arable work. They pulled at that time a two or three furrow plough. Mr Wadman's tractor was driven by his nephew, a large man who we called "Hooty". I have no idea why he was called such a name. He was a very big man and unfortunately another of those that lost a leg in the big war. However, the Fordson Standard tractor had a seat identical to those that were fitted to all agricultural implements, making the tractor just as easy and comfortable to stand on as sit, and so he could manage quite capably. Later "Hooty" was to be one of the managers of the Agricultural Committee that took over odd and unattended land and changed it into food producing acres.

The call for food was such that bonuses were paid to farmers for the acreage of potatoes that were planted. It was still at this time long before the mechanical planter, well, on that farm anyway, and so a box was fitted on the plough and a person would ride as the land was ploughed and drop the potatoes in their place between the second and third furrow.

This same gap in the hedge here was also the spot for two days a year where the threshing engine would come along with the paraphernalia of the tackle and under the watchful eye of the pirate Bert Hedger would carry out its tasks.

The Fuller family needed a bit of a morale booster at this time and just a little further up the hill and the crest was reached and for the first time they could see their destination. Lychpole Farm, a cluster of dark grey buildings, could clearly be seen. The feet trod a little lighter now and they soon reached Beggars Bush. Beggars Bush was the cottages that settled on the lower bank of the sharp corner that was now arrived at. The road, or as it would have been at that time track, bore round to the right on its way to Steyning. Then it was impassable to all but the sturdy farm waggon and where today it turns sharp left again the terrain at that point above was deeply rutted with the rushing of water, worn by the many rains that it had witnessed. The track wandered up the hill wherever it was possible to travel. This track was used mostly by the sheep and cattle that seemed to hold title to the lands above at this time. We knew of it because it was great blackberrying country when we were small.

Where this track had turned to the right it also turned to the left, down beside the two cottages, one of which housed the Huggetts.

I thoroughly enjoyed the company of old Mr Huggett. He was the shepherd during his stay in that house and like the generation that he was a member of he seemed not only content in his job but grateful for it. It wasn't to these people a job, it was a way of life and in a lot of cases they weren't the employees, there were the masters. The only difference was they did the work and the master got the money. The strange thing is they didn't envy him, but would have gained great pride in his returns.

The job of the shepherd was a busy one in those days. People seemed to picture the shepherd sitting on the soft Downs eyeing his sheep and now and again that could have been a true picture. More is the truth that he would spend hours of any day pitching his folds in the rape, or turnips, swedes and such. Carrying those hurdles as well as supervising the topping, dipping, shearing, tailing, lambing, cutting and the day to day pairing of the hooves. My two brothers Colin and Brian had three or four seasons having a go at the shearing and any of them might give a hand at lambing, but "Shep's" young son was later on hand to follow his father's footsteps. I had little to do with sheep, always thinking of them as greasy animals. I never saw the tailing of them,

where the tails were removed, and the removed pieces supposedly a delicacy. The castrating of the young lambs I was always told, and I don't know if old Shep did, was done with the teeth after a nick with a knife being made. I have heard it said that it was often asked when hiring a new shepherd if he had a good set of teeth. Nowadays I think I am right in saying it is accomplished by a band around the purse and a band around the tail. I have seen in the shepherds' caravan of those days, when during lambing he would spend many nights there, and it was a very practical place, far removed from some of the romantic pictures I have read about it.

The boys having passed this spot would no doubt be in a hurry to at last reach home almost unseeing the hovel and yard that stood on the corner as they turned northerly on the last half mile to home.

I was never told if someone had lit a fire for Mrs Fuller's arrival, but I do hope they did. What courageous women the likes of Mrs Fuller must have been, to traipse with her young brood to farms so far from civilisation, and as Mrs Fuller obviously did, bring up such a happy family.

Lychpole Farm in those far off days must have been one of the bigger of the farms. The big farmhouse stands with its front to the south catching every bit of the summer sun, the kitchens running back in the rear, behind which the stable and the cart sheds stand. These of course were for the domestic horses. The farm horses would be housed in the stables on the western side of the yard, with the cart sheds opposite. Standing to the north and sheltering the yard from the northern wind is the great barn. Outside the confines of the yard stands the granary with its steps leading up to the store above another which was once a stable or a cattle shed. On the western side is the farm meadow that was probably the domain of the cart horses in the long gone days. Now it was filled with a collection of large chicken houses. Behind these the banks rose up sharply to other fields and small trees fought bravely to stem the weather from "Will's Mother's".

It was here then that Jack started out in his working life and that his young brother Ron started out in life, for this was his birth place. This was also the place that caused my father punishment.

He and his friends were still up at the Abbots when Pickfords arrived at The Marquis. The team of horses were indeed tired after their trek from Horsham and not sorry to see another team waiting to be hitched on the front of them and help the heavy drag to Lychpole. The boys, including Dad, gaily joined on behind in that journey over the hill where the horses and waggoner would rest until the morning, before their return journey.

The light had long since fled the sky when the boys returned and anxious parents awaited them. However, even later in my day who could resist following a waggon with two pairs of horses on.

Jack was to travel that journey over the hill many, many times in his occupation. He would be required, he said, to help with the milking. Then loading the churns on the trap he would set off to The Marquis. As The Marquis was next to the shop of Atterburys he would oftentimes be loaded with requests to get certain kitchen supplies for one, or the other, and half ounces of various baccies for the carters, cowman and labourers who worked the fields of Lychpole. There were days he said when they would chase him all over the place when as it happened, as it did now and again, he forgot their baccy.

The track travelled up through and above Lychpole, coming at last to the wooden bungalow of Mr Pullen Bury. It was indeed a lonely spot he had chosen to take his poor demented sister and here it was, very true to say, that she could call to the clouds and the sky above to her heart's content. He was, I am sure, a brave and generous man to allow her to live her last years as she did, in the freedom of the hills.

All around them up here, far away from the civilisation of that day, there was and is to be seen on Park Brow, Stump Bottom and on to Black Patch signs of a previous civilisation that goes back to the year of 1200 BC.

At one end of Church Lane then we have traces of life as it was lived one thousand years ago, and at the other life a thousand or more years before that. Whatever will Lychpole be like a thousand years from now?

Chapter XXIX
LAMBLEYS LANE

Lambleys Lane is the westerly lane of Sompting and in being so also became its westerly boundary. It is another like Church and Dankton that runs north and south and doing so carried its own farm by its banks. This arable land here rising up with the lane was that of Upton Farm. It was farmed by Escatt's brother Charlie.

The tragic accident had marked the start of this lane when the horses had been leaving the grasslands at its lowest acres. Grass was not to be seen again until it had climbed its heights.

It began its journey northward very gradually indeed, at what at that time was the flint lane flanked by Hawthorn hedges at the start of its journey. Not long had been travelled before the hedge on the left was replaced by the usual flint wall. This wall kept the cottages of the workers along with their gardens separated from its surface. The rise now started as the lane passed the cottages and soon came abreast of the farm buildings on Lambleys Lane. The barn situated at the back of the walled yard had at some time been adapted to accept a loft and a loading bay had been erected on the northern side to ease the effort needed in conveying the corn sacks to it. It really was needed because the sacks of those days were indeed large and when filled extremely heavy. Sacks of wheat weighed at two and a quarter hundred weight. It was then a welcome aid to be able to wheel these sacks on a sack cart straight off the waggon on to the loading bay, rather than as was usual carry them on the back up the concrete or wooden steps.

Opposite this farmyard was an arable field that reached out to the orchards to the east, of the Johnsons nurseries. Above this field was a footpath to the church. This footpath had been widened at this time to allow carts and wagons across to Church Lane. At this time Charlie also farmed Titch Hill Farm and by crossing here a considerable distance could be cut from the journey that had previously been through the village.

At the beginning of this track was a set of steps with a tubular pipe hand rail running along their sides that guided one to the house that hid among the trees at this spot. This house was that of Hill Croft. It was nearly hidden all the time by the big trees that stood around it. I saw it the other day. Those trees have nearly all died with the coming of the Dutch Elm Disease. There is but one Elm there now and that is dead, but it stands there with its large boughs devoid of any small branches and showing no life at all. The large boughs reaching up, attempting to grab a bit of sky in desperation but it is clear their fight is lost. Beside these trees and running along as a companion to the path is the high bank that separates the lower fields from those of the higher reaches.

The lane rambles a bit as it passes the house and one can imagine the horses or perhaps it was even the oxen that struggled with its load for the easiest path up the hill at this point. It rambles back again to the east as it reaches a gap in the hedge at that side that gives entry to the field at that point.

This point I remember well. I had come here with my Grandfather. We had the van with the high sides, Daisy in the shafts and Rodney in his usual role of trace. We were to load and convey back to St Johns two ton of mangold. To load two ton on this van meant that we had to fill the bed and then pack the others on top as though it was hay on a stack to achieve an apex. Grandfather had gone to the other side of the van to talk to Charlie as I pitched the last mangolds to the top. The last I threw up was a big golden one. It reached the top of the load but not content with that had to continue its journey and roll down the other side. Nothing was going to make it remain on the van and it rolled off. With all the South Downs to fall on it had to choose Charlie's foot. I went rushing round. I suppose I wanted to stop it but I had little hope of that. I apologised profusely as Charlie jumped around holding his foot. I remember saying, "Sorry". Charlie replied, "Sorry, sorry, there is no such bloody word as sorry. Footballers kick each other and say sorry, and they are no more bloody sorry than you are." We were both glad to get away, Grandad and I. Me out of earshot of any more reprimands that may come my way and Grandad to have a good chuckle over poor old Charlie.

As one cleared the back of Hill Croft there was a grand view of the church to behold away to the right with the smaller buildings of the Church Farm blending in with it. Then one's

attention was brought back to the road and the quite stiff climb that it now set one too. A rest was well earned here as indeed must have taken place many times with the horses, when again the scotch would come into use. The rest would allow one to turn and look south over the lowlands below and far out to the blue sea beyond.

The hardest part of the climb would be complete as one came abreast of the chalk pit, whose previous contents no doubt had been the surface that we had just trod. The hauling of chalk from this big hole was not very often at this time and nature was fighting hard to gain it back. The Elders and nettles fought hard to cover its floor but were beaten here and there by the lumps of various farm discards in the way of loads of old straw and cavings. It was in this chalk pit that Dad admits, along with other boys, of pushing over its edge a roller and going on to say that any implement with wheels left at the top of the hills would soon fit itself at the bottom.

A nice walk to Lambleys was carried out by many people of Broadwater on a Sunday afternoon and the path that came out here on the opposite side to the chalk pit showed up white and clear as it cut the field opposite with its direct line. Today, with the coming of more mechanical farm machines, it has been guided around the edge of the field and enters the lane opposite poor old Charlie's favourite spot.

The hedge on the left is low from now on as again the lane winds its way to the top. On the right the hedge is high as if it is trying to hide from view the field beyond. Soon though one arrives at the five bar gate that leads to the triangle of grass and we have arrived at the top of Lambleys.

On the right here is the barn of the buildings, with the yard. Over quite recent times the buildings have been adapted for other uses than those which I saw when I used to come here. There was always to be found a haystack on the grass at this point. One lovely summer night I slept in one of those stacks and awoke to the loveliest of dawns.

Here too was the parting of the ways. To the left was a drift road where sheep were driven in the many years before my introduction to it. It had cattle proof hedges each side and the track was wide. It led on over the grazing hills for the sheep, skirting the old flint mines of Cissbury Ring and down into Canada Bottom to join the road that would lead them to the Findon sheep fair.

The other track to the right took one about twenty yards to the other five bar gate over which one could lean to admire the view. As you looked around it would soon be recognised that this was the other end of Hank-a-Pank and the old Mountain was off to the right. The field above it and beside the Mountain was the Nore. Beside it over this side running beside a thick wild hedge was a footpath that would turn first left, then right, tumbling down the hill to meet the path from which Norman and I ran.

The track from the gate ran off down to Coombe Barn and on to Beggars Bush and Lychpole, while a footpath branched off to run along the bottom of Lychpole Hill where hordes of rabbits would run at your very first sight. It was a great view from here, looking up beyond Steepdown to the buildings perched on the far hill above Windingbottom.

To travel back along the footpath to the crest of the hill that was at the end of the footpath along the hedge by the Nore one would get a great view of the church. Looking down at it it was plain to see in days gone by how life revolved around it. It was easy to see that it was the hub of life. Spokes in the shape of footpaths protruded out of it in all directions to the outlying village, hamlet and farms. South, Church Lane to the village, southeast, across the Park and Blacksmith to Lower Cokeham, east, across the park to Bulpit Lane and Upper Cokeham, northeast, up and along Church Lane to Dankton and Titch Hill, north, up to the Nore and on to Lychpole and Beggars Bush, and west, along to Upton Farm. These outlying places were the felloes of the wheel and the teachings of the church the tyre with which to hold them together and in return, of course, they would pay their tithes to create the life blood of the church.

To come back to Lambleys and perch oneself on the first gate at the entry to Lambleys one could look west and see the clump of trees on Highdown Hill. That would be in the far distance. Looking across the foreground to the middle distance, sight and thought would alight on the acres of Pullen Bury's Lyons Farm. The land would be the east and west banks of a valley that travelled north between the hills of Tenants and Lambleys.

I would think of Tom Groves and the time when ploughing here he tore up a wasps nest. The occupants of that nest were indeed angry and Tom and his horses were stung many times by them in their displeasure. Tom had to go to hospital and his horses were caught by other works in their mad dash from the scene. A smile would spread my lips as my sight settled on the farm cottages halfway up that valley. They had been at one time the home of my Uncle Jack. He was a younger brother of my Grandfather Lindfield and was one of the real old country rascals. Whenever I looked into his eyes they seemed to dance with merriment. When he was talking seriously you would be awaiting some wild or comical comment and seldom would you be disappointed.

Uncle Jack married Aunt Pops. I never knew her by any other name. When they walked along the road together they looked so strange, Uncle Jack with a stride longer than normal and Aunt Pops with one about half the normal length. She would almost have to run to keep up with him. In later life she was confined to a wheelchair. One story I heard of them concerned a visit they had made while she was in her chair to the White Horse at Steyning. Uncle Jack pushed the chair out after he had had his full share and proceeded down to the Three Tuns. There was quite a slope down the road at this point and although in his late seventies he stood on the axle of the chair. Poor old Aunt Pops was screaming as they gathered speed down the slope and uncle got apprehended by the police for being drunk in charge of a wheelchair.

There seems no end to the tales about him. He had a son, Jack. Unfortunately when just a toddler he fell down a deep hole with a concrete bottom and landed on his head. His body grew to a man of intense strength but sadly his mind could not nor ever did keep up with it. I remember playing with him when I was about ten and he very nearly killed me in play, he was a strong boy and had to be put away where he is today as far as I know. Anyway, he lived at home at the time that they lived here and as he could not attend school would follow his father with his horses around the land. Came the day Jack wished to travel away from the farm for the day and didn't want the youngster with him. "Here boy," says he, "Take these pennies and get yourself some Boo Boos". Off went young Jack to the local shop to spend the pennies and during his absence Jack and horses departed. The day passes and Jack is seated at the table at tea that evening thinking it strange that young Jack had not mentioned his absence. At last he said to the youngster, "Did you get your Boo Boos, John?" "Yes," he said, "And I know why you gave me them, but wait till you go up the garden you'll find all your marrows pulled up".

He seemed to always be on the move. Always well turned out was Uncle Jack. His full head of white hair with a heavy white moustache contrasted to the black suits he wore, the waistcoat brandishing the ever present watch chain. A collar and tie were always there, as was his cap and light boots.

He could turn his hand to most things on a farm, either as a carter, cowman or as a labourer. He was a proud man. Once he was ploughing on some farm in the Steyning area when the Guvnor approached and commented that he wasn't turning the rubbish in as well as was expected. "Well damn me", says Jack, "You talk as though you done a bit of this". "I have", he says. "Well, now's your chance to do a bit more", and off he went, never to return to that field, the horses still attached to the plough. He would travel around in his pony and trap.

I asked him once if he still worked for two old ladies who were sisters and had a little place, where Jack looked after the pony, milked a couple of house cows and generally kept the place up together. He told me he worked there no more, having tidied the place up by scything all the rubbish down and, leaving it a few days, he lumped it and set fire to it. He was called away for a while and when he got back the farm was alight. He had a couple of weeks in hospital once, having been gored by a bull. He had reared this bull from a day old but after two years of handling him every day he turned on him. The moral is don't ever trust a bull, boar or a stallion and other male species I shall come to.

Uncle Jack has long gone now, as indeed has Charlie. Charlie struggled on this hill farm of his and like all farmers the early thirties was a hard time for them. I don't think Charlie ever got over them. Things got gradually worse on the farm while I was away, the tines of the harrows were eventually too short to move the seed bed, the carters were forced for the benefit of their horses to pay to have them shoed out of their own pocket and at long last poor old Charlie went bankrupt.

As I have said, I had departed the village when I heard and I was sorry, really sorry, and not like he thought I was when the mangold dropped on his foot.

Chapter XXX
THE BY-PASS

The by-pass came to the village just a couple of years before the war. It changed the village completely. The three lanes that travelled north from West Street, and had before the by-pass been the way for horse and carts, cattle and sheep, had been cut in half. There was no way that life in them was ever to be the same. West Street now became once again the quiet backwater of a road. No longer were the parents afraid of Goodwood week. Bulpit Lane almost disappeared. After a few years as a footpath it reverted back to nature. The church was divorced from the village. The Marquis, once the stopping point for travellers, was now unseen below the streams of traffic. The hounds no more gathered at her yard. The park that had not for many, many years, perhaps never, seen the plough lost its turf through its centre section and it seems now will forever be covered in concrete.

War came before the whole length of it was complete and for many years it was only a dual carriageway as far as the old Church Lane, for the remainder it was a single length of concrete. At Church Lane a wooden bollard stood with its black and white boards directing traffic to the right. The single road cut the orchards of Johnsons in half and they were soon sold, to stand neglected even until today, some fifty years later.

Also cut in half was the footpath which ran from West Street, with firstly its high flint walls and later its high hedges to enclose it as it led those who used it to the allotments high above. Norman and I remember it well. We were walking this long by-pass one night after an evening in Worthing when on reaching Church Lane some deep groaning noises appeared to be coming from the area of the church. We discussed whether or not we should go and see what caused such a noise but the conversation was quite short and our pace a lot quicker as we carried on home. A few nights later we again were walking that route and had arrived at the point where the footpath was broken by the by-pass to find the noises were coming from the part nearest the village. This was another proposition entirely and we decided to investigate. I allowed Norman to precede me down the dark path, which had a gravel base. As he continued farther into the dark depths of that path I started marking time, allowing my feet to stamp harder in an attempt I hoped to make him feel I was just behind. He was about twenty yards in front of me when I screamed out loud, turned about and ran as fast as I could, and by golly I could run in those days, but within a few yards Norman passed me at twice the speed of sound. We had quite a few words as you can guess. The funny thing I find about this incident is that the roles change when the other one tells the story.

Grandad had been right of course, with the coming of the war the military traffic used the by-pass to good effect. The double carriageway would have made a good landing site for planes and gliders and so poles holding thick wires aloft were erected to discourage them.

During the making of the concrete road miniature type railways were used to convey the concrete in its tipping trucks along the rails. With three gangs of boys to keep at bay the old Night Watchman had his work cut out as first one gang and then another would use them for a ride.

The drains that were to carry away the rainwater were another form of adventure where within we would crawl from one inspection way to another along its length. The inspection ways were about eight to ten feet deep, each with steps built into the sides. I was to spend a whole day climbing up and down these one day when the Canadians, on a previous night, had in act of devilment lifted each lid and dropped it down the shaft. At that time I was about fifteen and drove a horse and cart on contract to the Council, where in the company of the old boys I worked with was sent to replace them.

Whilst at the old fair field in Steyning one day I was walking the path across its grass when I stopped to watch a man with a metal detector at work. I asked if he had much luck and found that he had good finds now and again. His most bountiful find in quantity he reckoned was a field in Sompting. Without any more information, and this was about 1980, I told him that I could tell which field it was and went on to name the field next to The Marquis of Granby, the Park.

The find he had was mostly pennies and a lot of them were of the year 1936. Before that year each county regularly held at different venues each year their Country Agricultural Show. It

was either 1935 or 1936 that three counties amalgamated. Their first show was held at the Park. I know that I felt quite insulted at the time that we must pay to visit our own park. Not all paid mind you, because it was only a Hessian fence that was pegged all around and I don't suppose it was too difficult to pass the security men. The show lasted three days and took a few days to set up and take down and so there was a period of interest ranging near enough a fortnight. Nowadays the same show has incorporated others and has a static location at Ardingly.

The shows in themselves have changed little over the years, they still have a couple of rings in which various judging and competition takes place. The cattle, sheep and pigs are there in about the same quantity, but the big horses have reduced drastically in numbers. The side shows have bigger and bigger machines but there doesn't seem to be so many. The old machines seemed to have a different noise level and were not unlike those heard in the brooks of Waddies during haymaking. In the mornings before the show would open we would be allowed in with buckets and baths to take away the milk that would otherwise be thrown away.

After it had gone it took weeks to get back to normality, but soon the old park was green again. Then along came the by-pass and her big days were gone forever. With herself cut into two she would never again entertain so many on such a grand scale again.

Eventually the rest of the journey of the by-pass became concreted and for years now she has been a dual carriageway. Now in the nineteen eighties it is considered that she is not capable of the modern traffic flow and so the hills above here are considered for a modern motorway.

Chapter XXXI
STEEPDOWN ROAD

Steepdown is the big long hill that starts its climb to 489 feet from the end of Busticle Lane, finishing as a neighbour to Lychpole Farm, and in fact overlooking it from the east.

It is quite strange really in the manner that they have named it because its neighbour Halewick Lane shares the first part of the road with it and yet it is Steepdown Road that leads to Halewick Farm. The road passes the farm and enters a large housing estate called Hillbarn and yet it is Halewick lane that leads to the real Hill Barn. The estate to us locals has always been called "Mickey Mouse Town".

I was fortunate to know the area when it was all fields above the farm buildings. It was the original home of the Sompting Dairy before it amalgamated with the Highfield Dairy, which soon after was taken under the wing of the Oaklands Dairy, and eventually became, as half the world, a member of the Unilever Group.

Anyway, in those early days the track led up from the end of Busticle to the farm only and there came to rest. It passed as it did so the meadows of Wadmans on the left.

The house was the first part of the farm to be reached and stood back from the track slightly with its short flint wall to protect it from the animals as they entered the yard. To enter the yard there was a steep drop down for about fifteen yards proceeding through the farm gate into the yard. Opposite the house at the top of the drop was the dairy, but apart from the house cows there were no milkers there. The milk for the dairy was brought from some other source. It was bottled here and loaded on to the float which delivered in the local area. I had the privilege to ride that float on several occasions.

The farmer was Mr Sparks and at that time had a relation that owned a nursery in Lower Cokeham, this being really Upper Cokeham.

Apart from haymaking I was to know very little of the farming activities of this farm because at this time it was in the throes of change. I knew the building on the right of the yard quite well, this was the stable. In here I was to know Farmer, Captain, Violet and Turp. Farmer was the horse that at that time was driven by my Father. He was a gelding that had been bred and broken on the farm. He was black in colour and when he was groomed had one of those deep sheens that can be obtained best with black horses. At one time he had a brother there named Captain who was black also, but of a slighter build than Farmer, they both originate from the Shire breed. There was a mare in the stable too, her name was Violet, she was driven by Bert Riddles. He, like my father, had a great love of horses and would keep old Violet in top condition until she retired many years later. Carters in the days long ago would control their horses by the whip rather than reins and at that time there was very few of them left, but one such person whom Dad and Bert must have learnt so much from was Bill Caddy. Turp was the horse that he drove and whereas Bert's Violet was like the others from the Shire breed, Turp was of the Belgium breed. They could be distinguished not only by their strong neck and light mottled colour, but also from their hooves. Although they were shod it was, I have read, possible to work them on arable work without shoeing. A horse is shod of course to stop his hoof from breaking up.

The big barn split the farmyard in half with a gate at its south side that allowed access through into the hovel area at the back. It was used for cattle fattening during its farming years and there was a doorway that gave way to the rick yard that stood outside in days gone by. By the time I got to know it there were no fattening cattle to fill that hovel and only Bert and Violet remained from the farm era. However, probably still out of tradition, the hayrick stood on the site of the old rick yard and was gained through that gate in the flint wall. Tony Lindup and I were quite often in the farm with Bert, and also there in those days were the hens and the old cockerel. The old cockerel seemed to regard that rear yard as his own domain. I could go through the yard and so could Bert, but as soon as Tony set foot in there that cockerel would come flying across the yard half flying, half running, and screeching away as it headed for Tony who would run between the gate and the door as fast as he could.

That yard held memories for Dad too. He had worked there along with Daniel Brockhurst in those early days. The barn had been a busy place too and at this time of the year when it was

approaching Christmas the turkeys were being prepared. They were not the white ones of today, but those of the black and grey feathers with their red combs and small face, within which those weak eyes were set. To ensure they were fattened for Christmas they used to be crammed. Cramming is a task where the food is placed in a container to which is fitted a long pipe. By the turning of a handle the food could be forced along the pipe. The poor old turkey of that day had the pipe inserted down its throat and the food forced down until the crop was full, and as soon as that was digested some four hours later, another feed would be forced down.

Many things on the farm appear and perhaps even are rather cruel; many such as the cramming of turkeys have had a stop put to them. There are others which for the sake of safety or quality have to continue. The castrating of some of the animals is one, this act was carried out in that big yard to poor old Farmer. He was led into a circle of rope and once in that rope it was tightened, throwing him to the ground. A full sack of peas was thrown on his head and Father laid on it. A horse cannot rise until it has lifted its head. While prone its legs were pulled apart and the vet carried out the operation, concluding in the way of all these horse operations by cauterising the wound with a hot iron, causing a stench that makes one reach. After this operation the horse is not distracted by any of the mares that may be in season. Similar actions in cottage change bulls into bullocks.

The milk pony made its home at the other end of the stable, while the chaff cutter took up residence in the middle, just beside the half doors that led to the home meadow which gave freedom to the horses in the summer. It also acted as a training ground for the riding horse that made its home in the new stables of wooden construction behind the house and opposite the main stable.

There was a track across the rising ground opposite that led over to Halewick Lane, while up above Steepdown began to rise on its long journey to the summit. This area of land was soon sold for building. Hill Barn Estate it was to be called, once started it was a hive of activity. Dad left the farm before its beginnings and was a ground foreman in its construction. Once the bungalows started to be finished they reckoned that one was concluded every day. There was no leisurely building here as had been seen when the individual houses of some quality had been built. These were often called Jerry built and the whole area seemed to be a mass of workers running around, looking somewhat like a Walt Disney film, hence the nickname "Mickey Mouse Town". All the roads were made of chalk base with a thick coating of flints on top. Drainage from each house was by means of a cesspit because at that time the village boasted no main drainage. There was a road running east to west at both top and bottom and five roads north to south linking these. When war started it was said that "one bomb and the lot would fall down". However, they received two bombs, one in Valley Road at the bottom which killed one person, and another no more than thirty yards from where I live now causing only structural damage. The remainder stood firm. Probably the workmanship of these bungalows, for that is what they all are, was suspect because they hid the finished wall with pebble dash. This covering is that of crushed flints that are thrown on a mortared wall and it's true to say if there are any blemishes in the finished product it well and truly covers them.

I felt sorry for some of the people who came to Mickey Mouse Town on a nice summer day and fell in love with the bungalows, from where one could look over the village to the distant sea. These same people a few years later, when they were older and had no car, were virtually prisoners during the winter months.

Nowadays those little bungalows look better and stronger than they ever did and buses make several visits a day. There are no builders rushing all over the place, there has long since been main drainage and the roads have a macadam surface. I have a son and daughter-in-law who own one. The farm is changing too, the barn is becoming a couple of houses and the stables three bungalows.

I don't care what they do to them, it will always to me be Halewick Farm and the estate of neat little bungalows above "Mickey Mouse Town".

Chapter XXXII
HALEWICK LANE

Halewick Lane as we said shared the beginnings of the road with that of Steepdown. Who was it I wonder who had the foresight to see that that spot was in the years to come going to be the central point of a large area of residential housing? Whoever it was suggested that a row of four shops would do well at this point. Then in the early thirties and now some fifty years later that foresight is there to see, flourishing more now than ever before.

The first of these four was "The Don". It was and still is a tobacco and confectionists. The first occupier was that of Mr Reeve. He was a young man with a lively personality and a bounding enthusiasm. Using these two assets to their maximum he created the very busy clientele that use it today. I remember him from that most peculiar greeting that he used on me whenever I entered his shop, by asking, "What do you think of the political situation in China?" I didn't know then, and I don't think I do even now. It gave him a smile to pose and now in me a reminder of Mr Reeve.

Next was and still is "The Hillbarn Stores". I have forgotten the name of the first occupier of this shop, but not the shop because I was an employee of there many sunrises ago. I had a trades bicycle and in the frame at the front sat the boxes containing the orders of groceries. I didn't think that that employment would last long because on loading my first order in that frame I tried, as I had seen others do, to stand the cycle upright by resting one pedal against the kerb. The cycle rested quite well for me in that manner but as soon as I put the box in the frame over it went, with sugar mixing with the tea as it spread over the pavement, held in place by the contents of the broken jam jar. Somehow or other I was forgiven this early mistake, as long as I did not repeat it. I never did repeat that trick but was forever grateful to Mrs Tugnett. She one day received in her absence a half dozen broken eggs which I placed on her table, but she never ever complained to my boss. So a customer never complained to my boss, and so I suppose it was only right that I wouldn't disclose to the customers the horrid little task that he set me one day. It was the custom at that time in a grocers to sell many commodities loose. These would include tea, sugar, split peas, rice and other dried goods that could be weighed out and placed in their homemade bags. At that time also the butter would be cut and special patters used to make it into the half or pound shapes that had been requested, the cheese would be a barrel shaped lump that would be cut with a wire almost precisely to the size that was wanted. The deft hands at work with the bacon slicer was a spectacle that held my attention many times, as one hand would take the cut rashers from that circular knife while the other hand was carrying out a completely opposite function by revolving the circular handle. All these things are in the past and let's hope the one he set me too is also. Where he got the contents from I am not sure, but on this day I was given a square shaped large biscuit tin which also had contained another of those commodities that were sold loose, but this one at this time contained loose rise. It had somehow or other been contaminated with mouse droppings and I was to tip quantities on to the lid removing the droppings while dispatching the remaining rice into a new container. I always loved rice pudding and still do, but nowadays as I eat it I peruse it with a beady eye.

The third shop along has worn several different coats in its lifetime and until very recent times has not been too successful.

The last of the four was the fish and chip shop and was run by Lil. She was a good sort and I was to spend many happy hours in there. My Aunt Vera helped out and with my mate Norman we would peel the spuds and chop them up in the old chipper, ever frightened that we would lose our fingers in the process. I well remember there being no refrigerators then and the ice man would call regularly to top up the ice box in the rear, where the fish was kept. Nowadays the shop at Number three is the fish shop and this one is a plumbers and central heating office, a business originally created by Gerald Tugnett. He had done well from tipping me out of that pedal car and cheeking that red haired baker.

The shops finished at the same point that the lanes went their separate ways. All this land had been the arable and meadows of Halewick Farm. Farming had been going through a very bad patch in the early thirties and very much as today, in the late eighties, they were looking for other sources of income from the land. This land then that rose up sharply from Halewick Farm to meet

the lane of Halewick in the next two hundred yards was made up largely of flints. The building peak came at the same time as the farm slump and so the flints were to become the crop. The meadows on both sides along the early part of this lane were to be transformed a couple of times in my lifetime.

The area between the two lanes was the first to be dug for flints. At first the hunger for flints could be appeased by the manual digging. The roads of Wembley and Annweir of Lancing were some of the first to receive the chalk and flints of these hills; the chalk for the base and the flints for the surface. Round about this time the fad seemed to come about to clad the walls of the bungalows with mortar and then smother them with flint chippings.

Modernisation came to the flint pit. A very large machine was bought and established just below where The Joyful Whippet stands today. A large mechanical digger replaced the pickaxe and shovel, and wheelbarrows were replaced by rails, a diesel rail vehicle and a set of tipping trucks. Now the rails would be busy as more and more spoil was brought to the big machine to be washed, separated and crushed to acquire the correct marketing size. The machine held a belly full of the materials and carts and lorries would merely have to enter beneath it, the driver operate a lever and the chippings or sand-like materials would spew into the waiting vehicle.

Like most progressive machines they have little thought for the pollution that they leave, and so it was with this machine. To enable it to carry out the functions that it was designed to do it needed constant flowing water. Unfortunately when its task was complete the water was now a diluted mud and ran away quite profusely into the meadow opposite of Mr Wadman, who was not over pleased with the situation. A compromise was found that resulted in Mr Sparks buying the lower portion of that meadow. The flints were removed to a depth of six or seven feet and now the mud and slime could make its home in what was to become a yellow lake of something closely related to quicksand. Some of the boys once sailed on it in an old tin bath and when seen out in the middle the parents arrived in a right old tiz waz, I can tell you.

So the pit rapidly made its way north. There seemed not enough hours in the day to rip the guts out that pleasant rolling hill. Trouble came when arriving up as far as the now Meadowview Road, too much chalk was found in the spoil which made it useless for the purpose in hand. At first they dug another channel in line with but back from Halewick Lane, but that did not keep up with demand. That channel incidentally was filled with great tree roots when the pit was finally filled years later and then covered with spoil. Many more years after, the building of the bungalows that stand there today was completed. Below them nature took its course and the tree stumps rotted away, leaving what must have been a void. The bungalows, heavy on the soil above, tried to sink with them but the strong dividing wall held firm and let the ends only drop away. They will sink no more but the gap between the wall and the eave is plain to see for all who wish to gaze.

The channel did not produce the flints that were required and so the opposite side of the road was dug out to appease the demand, eventually leaving Mr Lee's house high and dry as though it stood on an island. Towards the end of the digging some of the yellow liquid was directed over that side too, but they were in small pools in comparison to the lake on Waddies field.

Came the war and the life of the flint pit was over. The great crushing machine was sold, dismantled and taken away to spoil the landscape in some other district no doubt. The pit was gradually filled and eventually bungalows appeared on the lower levels against Steepdown Road, and the diggings around the hill of Mr Lee's became Abbots View.

When the Lees had had their house built they had imposed a clause that nothing should be built to the fore that would inhibit their view of the Mountain. After quite a few years the pub called The Joyful Whippet was built opposite and only just avoided doing just that. However, in the process it lost to them the site of the majestic covering of trees around the Abbots.

The yellow lake that had made its home opposite here was now deprived of its life blood and began to dry up, but the process was very gradual. The field was once more to be incorporated with that above, that is until the day that it was introduced to the modern agricultural mechanisation. The oxen, the horses and the steam ploughs had up to this time been the means of

cultivating this land. The tractor was on its way, but before it arrived a machine that seemed halfway between the two made its presence known in the area. It was the Gyrotiller.

The Gyrotiller was a large machine with a big powerful diesel engine and probably on the land was the first vehicle to use power driven means of cultivation. It ran on tracks and was large and heavy. Attached to its rear and driven from the engine was a large circle of iron with large tines attached to it which could be lowered into the earth. The power of the engine would rotate this attachment and the cultivation would be carried out. It must have been an expensive machine to use and to help absorb those heavy costs it ran at night as well, guided by the strong lights it contained. Dad went and rode it at night on at least one occasion.

It must have been a Friday when it was introduced to the fields of Waddies that were accepting back the field of yellow. The water supply had ceased long ago and the lake was ribbed with deep cracks where the earth had contracted with the process of drying out.

Before the operators of the big machine set off for their weekend they parked the big old Gyrotiller on the cracked soil and covered her. Over the weekend, that must have been no more than the Saturday afternoon and the Sunday, it stood there unattended.

Came Monday morning it was discovered that that yellow lake had gained a hunger over her quiet years and had started to devour that big machine. The tracks of that machine had sunk into the yellow earth and were at least eighteen inches below the surface. Eagerly they started the big brute's engines, gear engaged, the clutch released, but having tasted power there was no way at that stage that that yellow field was going to give up her hold easily. Perhaps it was the memories of her liquid days when not just us boys but adults too had fed her with bedsteads, tubs, old iron bars and even old prams. She had devoured all of those, sucking them down below her frightening surface. Now once again she tasted power, and iron.

During the day they dug before her tracks, but as they dug the dry yellow became spongy and then distinctly sticky, and her grip became more determined.

That big machine knew she was beaten. In her fear she cried for help. The only ones that heard her it seemed were the steam engines that she had tried to replace. Her fear turned to hope as she saw three of them drive up what is now Steepdown Road. One was the engine of Harry Peacock, the other two of Paine Mainwarings, and one of those may well have been the engine that earlier in life I had been handed up to my Grandfather on. They stationed themselves on the hard standing, scotched their wheels and trailed their long winch wires to the big machine. The afternoon shadows were lengthening when the quite substantial crowd that had gathered were bid to stand back. The smoke and steam belched forth from those steam engines as the clutches were released and the strong wire was slowly but certainly rolled around their drums and the big machine slowly but surely left the clutches of that yellow field.

Many moons changed from quarter, half and full before the yellow field was interrupted again. In the prevailing years she allowed us to hold our bonfires, flower shows and fairs on her surface. The cows grazed her grasses that nature bestowed on her with the aid of the wind and the birds.

Old age must have mellowed her because one year the fence that had separated her from the remainder was dismantled and the ploughs of Jack Chatfield incorporated her with the field that once she had been a part of some forty years earlier. Now it is only when it is first ploughed that the old yellow field reveals itself to those who know of its past.

On the other side of Mr Lee's house was a small parcel of ground confined within an area of Hawthorn and Elder hedges. Father had worked in this piece of ground that in the future was destined to be Halewick Close. At that time it was a market garden owned by the Bashfords but later when I got to know it it had become an area of waste ground. Nature had grabbed it and allowed a mass of blackberries to live there almost unmolested, apart from the smoke that came from the bonfires that oftimes burnt here, the pile of ashes marking their passing, and the eager fingers of us as we picked the harvest of blackberries. The Elders that parted it from the house of Mr Lee provided baskets of their fruit which went toward the annual winemaking ritual.

The far hedge of this piece of land separated it from the farmland of Halewick and across the lane at this point was a five-barred gate. I had struggled through that gateway when I was a paper boy, pulling my bike through the deep ruts as I went on my way to deliver to the only two

bungalows that stood against that lane. Now one would be passed by a number of cars. Then I distinctly remember the late winter afternoons and the lonely call of a couple of owls that lived in that area.

There were a couple of trees that come to mind at that point, both Elms. The one on the left was stunted, it had at some time previous been a casualty of a storm and been broken off some twenty feet high. The top had long since been carried away leaving what was left to become hollow in the top portion, creating for us kids a natural fort. We, each and every one of us, had at sometime stood sentry in this tower during our games as we kept vigil to await the enemy in one guise or another. The big tree that stood almost opposite, surrounded by the sting nettles that grew in profusion gaining their nutrients from the remnants of the ricks of hay and straw that had stood there for many years, we had for some reason been forbidden to climb. Disregarding that fact we, that is at least two of us, Derek Foster and I, were climbing amongst its strong branches. A call was received, "Here he comes". Who "He" was is forgotten, but in our desperate efforts to get down that tree from our high position, Derek slipped and made the bottom far quicker than he would have liked, severely hurting his arm.

Meadowview Road and that of the beginning of Hillrise Avenue soon protruded up into this area of land in the shape of a tee. The end of the top of the tee came about opposite the bungalow that stands here. Mr Bish lived here in those days and was followed later by one of the district's doctors. Mr Tinkler, having said goodbye to his horses, spent his years of retirement still puffing his pipe in that bungalow, and at that time it was surrounded with the big old Elms that Sompting was covered with. When the Elms disappeared was about the time that Ron Fuller, who had been born in that house at Lychpole, came to reside here.

The old lane of my time proceeded northerly flanked by the high Hawthorn hedges with a bank on one side and the meadow of the Sheepfield on the other. There was another bungalow about two thirds of the way up it where lived the family of the Irelands. These two bungalows, that of the one by Meadowview Road and this one, were to be the only buildings for a very long time up this lane, and they were both my customers in those days of my paper round.

I can just remember haytime in the old Sheepfield, and of accompanying Dad there. The Sheepfield though was better known to us youngsters as the place we would go for a real game of football and cricket, far removed from the confines of the green.

Sitting in the Sheepfield one could look up at the Clump, then not hidden by the Hawthorns that now adorn its west bank, and see the path that bordered it on that side. I loved the Clump and I loved music. The two combined one day to create for me the simplest yet pleasant memory. Three or four of us had been playing and were cooling off as we sat idly looking up at the Clump high above. Whether we saw her or heard her first is uncertain after all these Happy New Years, but a woman walked that path playing an accordion. I don't know if it affected the others as it affected me, but as she grew nearer and the music grew louder I was completely taken over by it. She eventually arrived at our spot and I asked if she would sit and play to us. She agreed and for about the next half hour she sat and played. Who she was and what she played we never knew, but when I hear the accordion today I am reminded of that happy day and that generous lady.

The western side of Hillrise Avenue was the first to have bungalows built upon it. The other side was left, but the Sheepfield was really lost forever. However, even then the skylarks remained in what was left to fly up and hover high above as they sang us their song as we traipsed the long, climbing, twisting path to the middle of the Clump. There was on that side of Hillrise Avenue two depressions in the hill side. These gave us great fun as we proceeded through these on the bikes that we acquired and had races on. These races had a limited life because the time soon dawned when bungalows took over that side of the avenue too.

Eventually, of course, the Council houses were to adorn the sides of Halewick Lane, but not until the top end on the left had played its part in the war by becoming allotments. Then the war over, the hedges were swept away and the houses replaced them.

The top end of the Sheepfield was the last to be clothed in houses and one could for many years proceed to the right under some old Elm trees up a path here as one proceeded on their way to the Clump. The path ran from the road past the Dutch Barn and the deep chalk pit, passing as it did a rather large rabbit burrow.

The chalk pit is still there to see today but has for many years housed a collection of sheds for Linfields Nursery, whereas the Dutch Barn has long since departed this world. A Dutch Barn was a collection of tall iron girders about thirty feet high on top of which a crescent-shaped galvanised iron roof was set. There were no sides to this building, whose purpose was to house hay and stray.

Many happy hours were spent up there, climbing like some native those iron girders in much the same way that they climbed those coconut trees. Then, much to the annoyance of the farmer, sliding down the slippery surface of the hay, spoiling the weather-proof sides in the process.

The hay would be stacked into these barns as they would any hay stack, but like the stack it had to be cut out. It would be cut into trusses about two feet by three feet and weighing fifty six pounds. The knife that was used would be a broad blade of about ten inches at the top, and about two feet in length. After about a third of its length it would start to taper to a point, the edge being sharpened to a fine cutting blade. The back would be strengthened, above which the bar would be crimped toward the operator who would wield it from a pair of wooden handles crossing at the top.

When just enough was required to feed the animals it was cut and carried away as required, but when it was to be sold a hard day's work faced those who had to use that cutting tool. The cuts would soon create the shape of the stack into a series of stairways. A spike would be pushed through each cut and the hand pushed into the hay to grab the bottom with one hand, while the other held the spike at the top. It would be carried down to the press in that manner and it was surprising how close to the fifty six pounds of weight that a skilled man could assess. The press would compress it and weigh it and before releasing it the operator would pass around a couple of strings and tie it. When released a truss had been born, sixty of which would make a waggon load.

Northerly of the Dutch Barn was to be found the general farm buildings of the area; the barn, the hovel and the yard. Bullocks would be housed in the yard here, but is until the hovel was changed into some stables for the horses of the market garden that eventually came here. Old Jack Chatfield was coaxed away from the farm to manage a lovely pair of Suffolk Punches that made this their home. Later, after the horses had departed, it was changed into a set of offices.

The Sussex Barn that stood northerly to the hovel was also to go through some very dramatic changes. Up to the coming of the war it lived a life pretty much as any other barn was to do, housing the sheaves of harvest until the flails or threshing machine deprived the straws of their corn. The war saw it become the Headquarters of the Home Guard. Here the Home Guard would meet and have a pint, because they had their own bar here. I was in there one night when two Canadian Soldiers entered. One was a smartly dressed young man, as soldiers are expected to be, the other in singlet and trousers with no hat, neither were there any laces in his boots. They came from the private houses of Hoe Court that had become their wartime billet. One was the guard and the other the prisoner. They had arrived here and enjoyed a couple of pints before returning to their respective roles. After the war the poor old barn was blacked out and grew mushrooms until it became redundant in that role also, and now waits in "Limbo" to see what the future holds for it.

The Dutch Barn also was boarded up and grew mushrooms until it was brushed aside to build sheds of a more economical use. When they both changed their role they saw the passing of the sheep dip that had had its home on the west side of those buildings for many years. The hills above as well as the Sheepfield were given over to sheep when I knew it. They are an animal that is prone to many parasites that help to create sheep scab, among other things. To protect the sheep from such things the dip is necessary. It is no more than a narrow bath that has a flush wall at its beginning and ramped exit with an area at the end of the run to allow the sheep to shake and dry themselves. The sheep to have gained any good from this treated dip must be submerged and have to be forcibly pushed under on their journey along. The whole process is a wet one for the sheep and workers alike.

Up above this area, with the exception of some fences and water troughs, a green shed in the valley and a concrete lined hole on the high bank were the hills. It was on this high Downs that the gorse and blackberry bushes abounded and where the rabbits and hares made their home. The little green shed in the valley housed the pump over the borehole which drew up the water to

feed the concrete reservoir on the bank. From this high point the water troughs could be fed by the gravity flow through the pipes that had been laid.

Besides that reservoir was a large rabbit burrow and here it was that I was introduced to ferreting.

Rabbits before the war were to some a nuisance, to others a feed, to some small farmers a means of paying the rent and to others a means of sport. To many it became a two fold thing, that of sport and income. Dad and Bert Riddles came in the last category.

Ferrets can be used in several methods. There is the system where a long net is established around the burrow and the fleeing rabbit runs into it. One which uses the small net to cover each hole so that the rabbit is caught on leaving the burrow. The dog or gun can be practiced where no nets are used and the rabbit given a bit of a chance against either the two.

I am not sure which method was used the late evening that I was present. I know I was barely more than five years old and concluded that the Downs in the dark that was lit only by the hurricane lamp was a cold and dismal place.

From this point the gentle sloping Downs on the east and west ran northwards, their banks steepening as they drew together to make a valley. The valley narrowed until it was no more than a gully and then it rose to disappear into the crest of Steepdown. Dad had harvested corn here but I knew it only as sheep country. In this valley Dad and Bert got lost in a thick fog and some twenty years later Tony Lindup and I did also. No one will ever get lost in it today because it became a refuse tip and many years of rubbish have changed its shape completely.

The drift road that carried on from Halewick to marry up with another that comes from Lancing is still there, but the lower reaches that once ran through the grassy bottom of the valley looks far different now. After the ending of the flint pits Mr Sparks turned his attention to glasshouses and about half a dozen were built here. The enterprise was soon to be seen as a growing one and not many years passed before it was bought by Linfields. More glasshouses were built producing tomatoes, cucumbers, carnations and chrysanthemums.

Mushrooms were a crop that was tried and it was so successful and there was such a ready market for them that the glasshouses were covered and other Nissan Type huts were erected, barns were converted and the whole lower valley, where people had once roamed the early morning picking wild ones, was now a large mushroom farm and the cultivated type was produced.

Progress with its never ending changes are about to change the area again. The mushroom huts have all collapsed, the refuse tip is full to over spilling, and the Roman Road that crosses this hill at the top looks set to see another view to add to those it has seen since its beginning.

Chapter XXXIII
UPPER BRIGHTON ROAD

The beginning of Upper Brighton Road is readily marked by the garage known today as Hillbarn Garage, but which started out in life with the name of the man that commissioned it, Mr Rich.

This was the first job that my father had on the building after leaving the farm and he probably would not have moved but his horse was sold. The garage was set in the hill. There were no machines then to do the digging and all of it, including moving the spoil, was carried out with a pick, shovel and a wheelbarrow.

I got to know that garage pretty well because as well as his normal job Father was still able to work his large garden. It was my duty each Sunday morning to go up to the garage and climb those iron stairs at the back with a basket full of fresh vegetables.

I don't have too strong a recollection of the market garden that bordered this road and from where we once at Christmas acquired those beetroot. It seemed it was not long before the bungalows were built on the south side to match those that already stood on the north. However, they stood back from the road and a wide verge and bank stood there. It seems looking back that the large road that runs there today was envisaged all those years ago. Gran and Grandad Stoner moved into one of those bungalows almost on the crest of the hill and I was to spend many nights there over the years.

At the crest of the hill Hillrise was to run off to the north, skirting the top of the flint pit before obtaining houses at its side.

On the corner of the junction of this road was another bungalow that stood on its own in the grounds of a market garden. It was the home of Mr Wheatley and the grounds around from which he gained a living were later to be filled by Nelson Close.

On the south side of the road a couple of Closes filled the old market gardens before arriving at the road that ran down to Cokeham. This long road shaped like a dog's leg was Berriedale Drive. Beyond here on that side of the road apart from a pair of bungalows the land lay vacant for many years before the present school was built.

On the northern side of the road the next bungalow to be noticed was one that held the name of "Californian Bungalow". A wooden one, long and low and supporting a southern verandah. This was the home of Mr Baker who came back home from Canada where he had spent a few years handling a team of some sixteen horses on the Canadian prairies.

I would always associate it with a bungalow on the opposite side that would be reached just before arriving at Berriedale, it was the home of another Chatfield family. In the company of Tony Lindup I would take their dog for a walk. He would have a terrier and I a large Old English Sheepdog. One day wrapping the lead around my hand whilst running down from the Clump I fell over, but it didn't hinder that old dog, he dragged me all the way to the bottom. I arrived back with him with no more than a scrazed arm to receive my regular penny. Then armed with that penny we would cross over to the Californian Bungalow where in the garden stood a wooden shed. Crossing the grass to the windowsill we would reach up and grab the hand bell that rested there. After a short ring Katie, the daughter of the house, would come out wearing her pinafore. Pinned to this pinafore would be a piece of string, on the end of which was a key. With the key she would unlock the door and we would all troop inside. We found ourselves in a little sweet shop. She would lift a part of the counter and step the other side. We would choose our sweets, mine was always coconut squares, and then off we would go. Katie would follow, locking up as she went and then indoors to await the next calling of the bell.

The road arrived at Boundstone Lane, which as the name suggests is the eastern boundary of Sompting and the stone that for many years marked it is preserved in the school.

The present by-pass proceeds straight on at this point ploughing through what was a nursery, market garden and a set of allotments. The road of long ago would twist here and proceed along what is today Manor Road. My paper round headquarters was to be found here in the first of the buildings that are arrived at. Opposite was a nursery. It was another of those where

Dad had worked and belonged to the Grovers. Fircroft Estate was to be built on the land to the north of this road. Soon one would come to a little Lodge that served the substantial house that lay back beyond another of those high flint walls, a part of which was the front of the cart shed and the stable for the animals. I gained a couple of shillings from the owner here once when I helped in the search for her pet monkey that had run off. The money was well earned because we spent at least a couple of hours in the orchards and local lanes, but I don't think the animal was ever found.

From round about this point a footpath would start opposite that would lead in almost direct line through fields and hedges and across roads and lanes to The Ball Tree.

Just along from the big house, a house of the Grovers was to be found up high on the bank well clear of the road with a greenhouse by its side. Opposite here little bungalows of different shapes and sizes were built and the only gap they left at this point was a small lane that led to the Women's Institute Hall. I like many others carried out part of my senior schooling in that hall. We had welcomed during the war the evacuees from London into our midst. Although they had left the routine of their life behind they still had to carry on with their schooling. We had just about enough facilities in the area for our own needs and certainly not enough to contain our welcome visitors. So it was agreed that one day we would have mornings in the school and afternoons in one hall or another whilst our guests would reverse the timings.

Along the road a little further on the top side was The Red House. It always looked a sinister house to me, tall and forbidding with its stark red brick walls. Perhaps it wasn't, but I was never to know very much about it and in my time even its one time walled garden that was opposite contained a bungalow. Next to it was another little house that had one side facing the road and the other facing the narrow lane that ran north and south. This is West Lane and what is left of it at this point lays almost lost and forgotten under the boughs and leaves of the trees that seclude it. Looking at it today it is a job to imagine it as the main link with the road at the bottom called Crabtree, but its life was full and important when the whole area was farm land.

On the other side of the lane and again facing the two roads is North Lancing Church. It dates back to about 1200 but to me one of its best years was 1926 when my parents chose a late summer day to get married within it. My Mother had little distance to travel to her wedding because at that time she lived at home with her family in Church Farm Cottages that stood within the confines of the farmyard opposite. Today a couple of thatched cottages stand on that site and there is little doubt that they are finer than the cottage they replaced. Above them stood the stables of my Grandfather Stoner where were housed his brown and his white horse. I squabbled one day while there with my Uncle for a place by the keyhole to see one of them get shot in the yard. I am grateful I lost.

Mum and Dad moved off as soon as they were married to live in the one room where I was to be born at Millfield, but events brought them back here and my brother Dennis was born in that old cottage. I remember going to that cottage at one time when Gran had a permanent board up at the door. It was not to keep in children, but a leveret. Grandad had found this young hare upon the hills and had brought it home where apparently it survived quite well. It is the only time I have ever heard of such a pet. Behind the stables at the top were the meadows which could be gained by the big gate at the end of the stables, next door to the large farmhouse that still stands its ground.

On the other side next to the church is a lovely little cottage laying back and down from the road, with its neat gardens around three sides and its lattice windows giving it that grand olde worlde look. It must be quite old because Dad lodged there over sixty years ago and indeed it was within those walls that he celebrated his twenty-first birthday.

It was long before this time but whilst on this farm that Grandfather was introduced to the tractor. I don't know what happened to it, but hanging in his old living room was a picture of him with my Aunt Vera sitting on that vintage machine, sometime I think in the nineteen twenties. Old pictures are great to look at and I saw one the other day of Mr Foster, who lived next door to me at Millfield. I had only known him when the guns of the first war had crippled his body, this one showed him as a young man before that time with a group of workers on the market gardens of Gooderams. It was taken in the yard next to that little cottage, with the orchards behind them. The stable building and cart shed with the loft above still survive from the original collection.

The road that travels this journey meanders along and one can again almost imagine those early vehicles picking the easiest route and dodging any obstacles. Whoever lived in the cottage on the corner must have seen many, many vehicles pass that way. It is the most published of all Lancing postcards and stands next to our friendly rivals, those of North Lancing School. Like ours at Sompting this one has nothing to offer the modern child and lives out its days in many other guises.

Mill Road reaches up to the hill at this point, but we bear right and continue with the old road. Above it on the northern bank is the old forge that has had many different employments in its day, and in the past fifty years they have all been different from that for which it was designed. In its grounds also was the old tithe barn where the payment of one tenth of their crops and cattle would be paid to the Rector by those that worked the surrounding acres in those years so long ago. On the south side had stood the corner house, replaced by the present public house that has been revamped at last three times since its inauguration, where on those summer evenings the children would have a glass of lemonade and a packet of crisps in the special room at the back. It didn't happen many times for us, but when it did Mum thought it was Christmas all over again.

On down the hill now to the petrol pumps and the little back and white wooden tea rooms, where at last we had come to the end of Upper Brighton Road and could now rest in this abode called Stormy Petrol. This was the establishment that gave the first employment to my stepmother. It was also the place that entertained for a short period the first Post Office in North Lancing.

Opposite here was the entrance to the grand Lancing Manor, and to me the manor field. My Mother worked in the big house here when she first met Father. The Lord of the Manor no longer lived there then, it was the overspill accommodation for the boarders of Lancing College.

On the playing field here we, that is Sompting School, took on our old rivals of North Lancing at cricket. I remember being wicket keeper and catching one batsman out even although I fumbled it and picked the dropped ball from out of my pads. No wonder I was only standing in for young Geoff Gatland, our regular keeper.

A lot of the old things have gone and a lot of new have appeared, but once you have left the by-pass behind it is surprising that overall it doesn't look so different from when my Mother crossed that road in her bridal gown.

Chapter XXXIV
BOUNDSTONE LANE

Like my Father that many years before, I found it difficult not to follow a horse and cart whenever one came along. It was not surprising then that Tony Lindup and I, when standing at the junction by Riches' Garage, followed the horse and van of Isteds. It was a white horse, not a cart horse but a van horse, that could be said to have been half way between the cart horse and the hunter. The van that it pulled was the delivery van of Isteds, the Corn and Seed Merchants. It had a hard over it and the driver sat at the front under the protruding roof. We followed it as far as Boundstone Lane.

Boundstone Lane was in three parts and in fact still is in that formation today. The top end travels up from the Upper Brighton Road northerly, soon losing itself in the hills. The middle portion links the top road with that of Crabtree to the south, now having the large school on one side and the bungalows on the other. The time I recall now it was shrouded in the large boughs of big Elms and sheltered by the dense hedges of Hawthorn that kept us from the orchards that abounded on the other side. About fifty yards down was the fallen trunk of an Elm that almost hindered the progress of carts down the road. About another fifty and a market garden was found to be almost hidden from sight by the trees and bushes. Across it ran the footpath on its way to The Ball Tree and within its confines was a black painted stable. It was here that Dad kept his horse in those days of being his own master. There was little else to disturb its banks on its southerly trek. The third part carried on from the junction with Crabtree until its southerly end was abruptly arrived at by the intrusion of a house that stood at the entrance to Lancing Recreation Ground.

Tony and I stopped at the top junction and watched the van disappear as it no doubt went to replenish the food stocks of the pigs that lived just up the lane.

As we stood there a voice roared and what seemed like a hunk of bread flew between us. We looked around and coming up from what was obviously his resting place behind that fallen tree was a bearded old man. It was he that was roaring at us and he filled us with fear. During that period this road along the top of the village was a regular route for tramps making their way from one workhouse to another. There was very little pity shared on them in those days and whether they deserved better I don't know. This one, unlike those, spent long periods living rough in the area of that lane. His name was "Juicy", or at least that is what everyone called him. This day he seemed to be keen to catch us although to this day I don't know for what reason. We didn't wait to find out and looking round could see that he gave chase. We ran down among the buildings, for Berriedale Drive was being erected at that time. I was to live in one of those bungalows for a couple of years in later life and would not be at all surprised if it was not in the half dug cesspit of that bungalow that we hid. He never caught us, but of course it made me very wary of tramps in the future and it was probably that incident that caused me caution when I first met old Alf Knight later in my days "Over the Line".

I was in the future to drive my horse up that same hill that we saw the one disappear that day. At the top behind another of those thick Hawthorn hedges was a chalk pit. It had been dug many years before and in fact Dad and Bert had spent many evenings falling the chalk in preparation for the carting in the morning. I went there for a far different reason, well I was hardly sixteen at the time and my old horse was at least five years older than me. We would pick a lunch time to arrive here and make for a half grown Ash tree that had sprung up from the pit's bottom. Here I would attach the lead rein of the old horse and fit her nosebag, then having swallowed my lunch with the help of an old dog I would laze away an hour. Of the many times I went here no one ever found me, although they were looking for me on a couple of occasions when I was enjoying its comfort.

The old lane was of a flint surface until the Council made it up to allow the rubbish lorries to arrive where I had lain and fill it up. Now there is no trace of that chalk pit, but many others have lain quite close because where the thick hedge had hidden me is now a cemetery.

Just a little higher up the lane was a small gate that allowed people to walk through on their way to the beauty of the Clump. To its right was the entrance to another chalk pit where a

friend of Dad's named Staker would be hauling chalk when Dad and Bert were hauling from the other.

Later some man had the initiative to have topsoil tipped on its floor and greenhouses built to create a small but effective nursery, even with its own little packing shed. It was in later years to be bought by Jack Fuller and it was in that packing shed that I sat and listened to the story of he, his Mother and brothers' walk to the farm at Lychpole.

The path skirted that chalk pit and a steep climb was ahead to any that wished to travel on. Tony Lindup and I went with my Mother one day on a trip to the Clump. Mum had my young sister in the pram and was fully engaged pushing it up that grassy path as Tony and I ran ahead. We went on through a gate and came across a large old Billy Goat tethered out. We flicked a couple of stones at it and it got quite annoyed, and standing on its rear legs lunged at us, but it was held by a rope thong. We teased it more and it lunged even more. Mum was about half way up the path when on one lunge the rope broke and he came running after us. We were through the gate shouting at Mum. She turned and ran down the hill. The gate deterred him a moment, then he had it open. We passed Mum as she was flying down the hill pushing the pram in front of her, although perhaps it would be better to say grimly hanging on to it. We were through the bottom gate and held it as Mum came through and then away. He got through that one too and it was obvious Mum was soon to have a bump up the back. It was lucky that just below they had started building Fircroft and the builders turned the water hose on that furious goat.

It roamed the village for the next few hours until Bert Riddles held it by the horns as others re-tethered it. Mum, God bless her, was many times to giggle over her race with the goat. I don't think she was too proud of my actions that day and I don't blame her.

Just about where that top gate was was the southerly extent of the bushes then and none of the present bushes below hindered the view, the sheep saw to that. We were about twelve or thirteen, Norman and I. We would sit at that spot in the very late summer evening, when double summer time would make the evenings beautiful even after ten o'clock. Before us we had a clear view of the coast from Brighton around and past Littlehampton.

The siren would go, warning of the coming advance of the enemy planes. Sitting there we would see the searchlights pierce the sky, the guns flash or the fighters dash in and out of the columns of light. We were sitting it seems completely safe and felt detached from all the goings on that we watched below. It was like sitting in the one and nines in the cinema, the screen the coastline that lay below. Then it would be all was over and it was quiet again, the searchlights switched off and now it did look dark.

The paths and the clump of trees which we insisted calling the Clump are in fact Lancing Hill, and those paths were made by the kids and sheep finding the most natural way through. Today they are cut formally and somehow, perhaps because I knew it the other way, it loses some of its fascination. Around the area today we find signs reading "Beware of Adders". We knew they were there those many years ago and the hole on the eastern side of the wood heavily filled with growing trees was to us Snake Valley. Jack Miles has led us many times with our long sticks containing the short fork at the end with which to pin the snakes behind the head. I was never really happy with those expeditions.

The little wood of larger trees at the top gave us at one time or another all plenty of fun and in the war gave cover to many of the soldiers that either camped, patrolled or trained within the cover of its mantle. The same stick of bombs that killed in "Mickey Mouse Town" kept one for that wood and even today, over forty years on, the nearest trees retain their scars. Up above the wood is the conclusion of the Clump as one arrives at the drift road, where cattle and sheep would pass on to Steyning for the weekly market, or Findon for the annual fair. They may well have travelled a long way before they arrived at this spot and would be thirsty. There were no streams, no piped water up here in the days that they travelled their miles. A Dew Pond was erected here to catch and trap the rains. It is a large hole with high banks very prominent even today, its sides lined with layers of straw and clay to prevent the trapped water from seeping away. I have in my lifetime seen it many times full of picnickers and little fires, but never apart from that within the kettles, water. There is little doubt though that in times long ago many thousands of animals have slaked their thirst at this pond.

When Father worked on the farm of Halewick they would plough a furrow around the boundary of the Clump. They would also drive cows and sheep up Halewick Lane to join this drift road. Cattle and sheep would travel this road after crossing the bridge at Shoreham and as it proceeded on its way it would sometimes receive others from Coombs, Hoe Court, Mill Road, Boundstone Lane, Halewick Lane, Dankton Lane, Church Lane, Lambleys Lane and even from Charmandean Lane, because they all concluded on arriving at this road.

These old Drift Roads over the hill were steeped in history. On leaving the Clump a spot was soon reached where in the field on the left under the surface could be found the remnants of a Roman Villa that would at one time equal the one at Bignor. The story of it that I heard is it was once open to be viewed and many people travelled to see it. However, before the First World War the visitors would not keep to the paths provided and in anger the farmer covered it. There is from this point that which we called a Roman Road which travels to the west, unfortunately over the years it has almost been ploughed up and only a footpath remains of its whereabouts, but above what is now a tip the sunken remains, admittedly rutted by tractors, is there to be seen. It can be followed over the hill to the top of Dankton but from there the path of it is lost to me. It probably travelled on for many miles in a westerly direction.

As the Drift Road carries on it comes to a point where a footpath branches off to make its way to the top of Steepdown, while the road having accepted the top of Halewick carries on. In the forties about thirty yards farther on from this point was a bomb crater where another of the stick that started in Mickey Mouse Town landed. Norman and I visited this site three nights running armed with picks and shovels. We like all youngsters during the war were keen on collecting souvenirs. Among these was shrapnel from the bombs. We had been told that the nose of the bomb remained in the crater and for those three nights we slaved away within that large hole. Needless to say we found nothing.

From here on the road was cut into the hill so that a bank rose up on the left and the steep hill fell quickly away to the right giving magnificent views of the valley away to the east. In the bottom, way below, was an old barn and from it on some days, mainly Sundays, would come a glider. An old car would be used to pull it along enabling it to get airborne. On one occasion I remember many of us on that rope running with it in a wild effort to replace that car, but I can't remember if we were successful.

This steep bank was a great spot for us to go sledging, but you had to be more than a bit brave to venture down for the first time. Here could also be seen that lovely sight of a hare running uphill using those long legs that they possessed to lose easily any dog that may be in pursuit.

It was too a great place for rabbits. Gran and Grandad, along with their two boys, would go over to their Gran's this way. They lived in a house that had once been a public house in Charlton Street of Steyning and about the only way to get there was to walk this old Drift Road. Grandad, not a man to waste any opportunity, would set snares on the way over and collect them in the late evening on the way back with, he hoped, a rabbit or two.

This old drift road on a lovely summer afternoon was a busy road and even then it was seldom empty, today it is still busy on such a day. Man over the years since the drift road was made has done much to change the scenery, away to the east can be seen the gaping hole of the cement works, and in the early part to the west the refuse tip, and yet somehow they don't spoil its beauty. However, now some forty odd years later than these memories they plan a motorway and perhaps as you read this it is there already, and if it is I hope that you too are still able to see around it the beauty that I am grateful to have savoured.

Chapter XXXV
COKEHAM ROAD

Lower Cokeham is the area that lays to the south east of The Ball Tree Inn. It is the area of land that no doubt many, many years ago was that owned by Cokeham Manor, or at least the resident. Like most other places of its nature the years have seen it suffer many changes and the old Manor house, as though it could not stand the sight of any more, has disappeared many years ago.

Lower Cokeham started at The Ball Tree by sweeping up a curling hill, not long but nevertheless difficult for the traffic that would negotiate it in my childhood.

On the right hand side it had not changed in appearance for many years when it was familiar to me. Before one had gone many yards a gate was apparent which led one to a little yard that stood before the barn and stable of Bashfords. Although on the side of the rising hill the yard was level causing the wall by the road to be considerably higher nearer the barn than it was by the gate, it was no doubt used for a purpose other than that which I saw it practice.

Behind it was a small market garden and nursery of the Bashfords and the produce gained from this soil was sold in that barn. Rounds were created and three times a week other produce, bought and grown, would accompany the van on its round. Firstly it was done by Tom but later by his two sons, George and Vic. It did a good job in those days and the ground that that old barn occupied still does good work because a doctors' surgery and a home for those not as fortunate as us stand there.

Halfway up the hill on that side the boys before my time had to watch their Pees and Ques otherwise the policeman would get them. This was called the Policeman's House. I never knew a policeman live here but I did know that it was the home of Bill Wady, the carter of Yew Tree. Charlie, Celia, his children, his wife and lodger at the time, Ben Halls, shared it with him. It stood up commanding a view of the slight valley behind, bringing them on par with the smithy on the rise opposite. The garden to this cottage ran beside the road but what plants or layout it contained was never shown to any passer by who had to content themselves with a view of the high flint wall. At the end of the wall almost at the top of the hill a high hedge started whose task it was to hide a bungalow that stood back at the end of a long path. Next to this hedge began a parade of shops filling the remainder of that area to Cokeham Lane which ran to the south.

The other side of the road I fail to remember before the bungalows that now stand high above the road. After an initial piece of open ground they, about four in number, filled the space before the commencement of Berriedale Drive running north.

This hill sweeping round as it does will always bring one memory in particular to me. After receiving a dressing down by Charlie Philips for what he thought my ignorant use of the word "Sorry", we, Grandfather, the horses and I, would arrive at The Ball Tree and halt about twenty yards from the beginning of this hill. I had filled out a bit by this time and Grandfather had got a bit older. Having unreined the bridle chain from the harness which was there to control the movement of the horse's head, the horses in my company would rest as Grandfather made his way to the top of the hill. The horses seemed to know what was in front of them for they approached this hill before with two ton of mangold on the van. They threw their heads about and flicked their tails as they gently trotted on the spot, as would a high jumper before his run. Holding the long reins of Rodney in the left and grabbing loosely the slack bridle rein of Daisy in the right hand I would gently command "Come on the, both together". Leaning into their collars we would be off, flicking the reins and coaxing more speed they would get to trotting speed and then to half gallop as we started to ascend the hill. Great care had to be taken here that the horses as they stepped toward you on that curving hill did not tread on you or you slip, because there would be no escape (from) those rolling wheels. Once on that journey there was no stopping. They would work together well and as the brow was reached the speed had reduced to a crawl with each of them scrabbling for footholds on that tarmac surface and urgent commands of effort left my lips. Then the level was reached, they could stop, and I could and would thank them for their effort by patting their necks as their bodies heaved away, dragging in air to replace that used in the effort,

and as for me, there was time to allow the excitement that that short pull had induced, to evaporate.

Berriedale Drive was the road that I found myself in the day war was declared. It didn't mean much to me at the time but I was nevertheless slightly disturbed when after the siren had gone a woman came rushing out of her house and asked if I had my gas mask on me. They had of course been issued prior to the outbreak of war. I had not and pedalled home to find Eadie next door in a fine old tiz waz because she couldn't fit hers correctly. The other main memory I have of that road was late one evening, having walked a young lady home we were standing talking at her gate, which was about half way up the first part of the road. As we stood there talking we were attracted by the drunken gait of a Canadian soldier who was walking, or at least trying to walk, up the other side of the road. When he got abreast he shouted over, "Have you got a light there?" "Sorry" I replied, and he turned and went off the way he had come. After no more than a few yards he turned and crossed the road to our side and this time in an angry voice again asked for a light. My young girl friend ran indoors and returned with a box of matches. He took a packet of cigarettes from his pocket. Taking one out for himself he offered us one each, handing me the remainder. They were Sweet Caperal, a very good Canadian cigarette. After lighting his he toppled backwards and in an attempt to remain on his feet carried out a little backward run of about six paces, eventually falling over. I helped him up and said, "I think you should be going home now". He put up his fists and replied, "You had better be going home yourself". The young girl ran indoors and I took his advice very literally running off up the road, leaving him to stagger off in his own world of unpleasantness.

Berriedale was to devour the footpath that ran to The Ball Tree from North Lancing but created along the middle part of its dogs leg a twitten that is there today to allow one through to its sister building development of Abbey Road.

Opposite the entrance to Berriedale was the parade of shops. It one had an hour or two to spare one could go for a haircut in a room at the back of the second shop. The old boy that carried on his business here had boasted once of a hairdressers in Mayfair. He had semi-retired here and still liked the calling of his trade. However, he was quite old at this time and worked very slowly and deliberately. I knew him by no other title than his nickname of "Swiftly". My brother-in-law, Ted, would always love to recall the day that he sat in his chair just after the war when we had a power cut. "Swiftly", with no electricity, carried on with hand tools and Ted sat holding a candle.

The next to last shop along was that which had adapted its garage for the charging of our accumulators for the wireless and as such was a popular shop. The last in line was Slimming the Butcher. Frank was a couple of years older than I and I was at one time very jealous of him because he dated our land girl Rosie.

Cokeham Lane that was much older than this road now ran south. Opposite this turning was the new Congregational Church, something we had not had before in the village. Almost opposite was a waste piece of ground that was to give us a Catholic Church, and the only one of that denomination that I ever visited. I went to see the wedding of my Aunt Vera to my Uncle John. The church lived many years there but was eventually demolished to make way for the flats that stand there today.

Bungalows replaced the Hawthorn hedges along the sides of that road for its entire length. It was broken twice, once on the northern side to allow entry and exit to Abbey Road because it was circular and nestled in the area created by the dog leg of Berriedale. Apart from being part of my paper round and at an earlier time a collection point for that of pig swill because the Burgess family had moved here to a bungalow, Abbey had little connections with me.

The road opposite was the entrance to Abbey Nurseries of Mr Sparkes. The housing estate had been the market garden to it in days gone by. Now the road ran down to the glasshouses and the big boiler house that stood at their side. There was always a boiler man on in the evening and it was not unusual for him to have visitors. For some reason or other a Police Inspector passed along Cokeham Road one evening on the upper deck of a bus. Looking down the nursery road he saw a cycle leaning against the wall with the tell tale cape of a policeman hanging over the handlebar. He alighted at the next stop and walked almost silently through the nursery to the door of the stokehole, stopped and listened. "Stick", "I'll buy one", were some of the comments he heard, and then entered the boiler house to see his policeman sitting around a box

with three other men, their money spread over the box as they played Pontoon. That poor policeman lost his cushy beat and could be found pacing the beat of Montague Road in Worthing, no doubt where the Inspector could keep his eye on him.

Just along the road a few yards on the top side was a garden where I spent a few hours and earned a few pennies. It was the garden of our history teacher, Mr Rogers. The last house along was that of the Draycotts. The garden here is remembered for the shape of its front fence which cut diagonally across the corner of the road. Our teacher at Lancing at that time as very strict and we thought mean, one called Mrs Parrot. She had passed this way walking home from school and some boys had followed her. They took refuge behind this fence and kept popping up and calling "Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly". They had popped down again in their refuge giggling away when Mrs Parrot walked back around the corner. They didn't giggle in the front of the class the next morning I assure you.

Cokeham Road now made a Tee junction with that of the middle portion of Boundstone Lane. Right facing the end of the road on the other side of Boundstone was a shop, small in size, but it seems with ample white painted wood that went to make up its doors, windows and pillars. It was called the Little Shop and like so many of its kind in those days sold almost anything that anyone had asked for at one time or other.

Cokeham Road had seen some changes although it only became fully populated in the early thirties. Each day the baker, the milkman, the butcher and twice a day the postman would tread its surface. Now the baker is not to be seen with two wicker baskets with which to tempt you, one of bread, the other of cakes. The milkman calls each day except Sunday as he used to and the bottle is very similar except the cardboard cap is replaced with a foil one, and sadly there is talk of doing away with his deliveries. The postman visits but once a day instead of twice.

Vehicles have changed too since my Uncle Fred, who lived in the bungalow next to the Catholic Church, travelled the roads of Sussex in a Steam Foden.

Chapter XXXVI
COKEHAM LANE

Cokeham Lane, which ran south from Cokeham Road, was one that I got to know very well because it was the way to work for me when I was at St John's Farm.

It was little removed from that which is there today although a few of the gaps have been filled with bungalows and the nurseries have gone. On the right hand side the nursery ground at the rear sloped down to meet that of the allotments and Mr Ashby's.

The first of the nurseries had a gate that stood opposite from a reasonably large detached house of the Sparkes family. The owner of this nursery was he that lived in the bungalow next to the policeman's house on the hill.

A garden surrounded in conifers was the neighbour of that nursery and the owner of that house sold up many years ago and headed off to New Zealand. It is surprising looking back just how many people from a small village like ours emigrated. Their neighbours were a couple of brothers that worked the small but efficient nursery.

Opposite here was a footpath that led one through nurseries and houses to the North Road of Lancing. Firstly one would travel through the grounds of Abbey nurseries, the same that had been an evening venue for the local policeman. Not only would glasshouse border the path as one proceeded along it, but also fields of chrysanthemums, a very popular crop in the area. It was here among these flowers that gangs of women would work at the time of disbudding. Disbudding being the act of disposing of the buds other than the main one that would produce the flower. They would oftimes take the children too small for school with them and as many as a dozen would sometimes play in the area. The path would leave Sparkes and cross Boundstone Lane, continuing on through the bungalows that had arisen here until once more they would be bordered with glasshouses until reaching Wembley Avenue. Wembley had been one of the early building sprees in the area as was its neighbour Annweir, which the path would skirt at its southern end passing as it did on its right Thompsons Nursery from where Mr Foster would obtain the disfigured tomatoes that he supplied us with. Another footpath would cross here that at this point years before had picked up the old West Lane where the wagons travelled to Church Farm at North Lancing. One would travel this path as it does today, skirting Culver Nurseries. The road here carries that name today and then out at North Road.

On down Cokeham Lane past this footpath a house jutted out surrounded by its flint wall; it was The Hollies. Each side of this would be market garden ground of the Abbey Nursery. On the right hand side of the road at this point was a black painted gate. Once again we had come across another of those pieces of ground worked by Pullen-Burry's. Here beside the gate on its northern side was a black painted stable which housed the horse driven by old Mr Searle who then lived in the cottage on the other side of the gate. This was one of Cherry Tree Cottages where after Mr Searle move out Mr Pullen-Burry returned from his outpost of Lychpole having outlived his sister. There was another cottage next door that made up this pair and had a well outside its door.

At the bottom of their garden a little bungalow had for so many years stood. It was small but very quaint. Father knew it as the Engine House.

One cannot move on from this spot without relating a tale I heard about the two acres of Pullen-Burry that shared the ground with that black stable. Mr Searle was to sow it with onions and as the drill would contain sufficient seed to sow the whole field without refill it was loaded at Rectory Farm. A lever on the drill, which incidentally Mr Searle was not too well acquainted with, was intended to put the seed sowing into operation and out. The story goes that he put it in gear and sowed onions all the way from Rectory Farm to this bit of ground and at the ends as he was turning and all the way back, but never sowed a seed in the field. I find it difficult to believe, but there I merely relate the story.

On the other side of the road from where the quaint little bungalow stood is a bungalow built in a different manner from all the rest in the area, giving the opinion that it was built with large asbestos sheeting. However, it is not the bungalow that I look on nostalgically but the garden, because when I first knew it it was sunken and the owner at the time gave me a shilling for

every cart load of dirt and rotted leaves that I tipped there. I helped fill that garden and made a few shillings in the progress of doing so, as well as saving me long journeys to Beach Green on Lancing sea front.

The lane turns sharply just past this spot but not before it passes the big house of the Bushby's who worked several acres of market garden farther down the lane. Within the wall of this house was a Post Office letterbox. The stable and cart shed were very small in comparison to the house and it was in that stable that Ted Steer would proudly maintain the horse of Bushby's. Facing the lane as it carried out its almost ninety degree turn were the doors of our potato shed, whose east wall was the border of a chicken run of Mr Weller.

Opposite this spot was a row of four cottages that no doubt at one time had been solely for the workers of one or another of the farms in that locality but now housed people from various professions, one of those being Sid Brown. A large house next door had a high Laurel hedge fringing the flint wall that stood against the road. However, it could not hide from view the high twin gabled house with the parapet between on which stood the lovely moulded face of a young lady with the brim of her hat above the glimpse of hair and the ribbon tied beneath her chin. I was sorry to see that go and wonder what happened to that lovely face when the house was demolished in 1964. Surely they didn't break it up?

The lane wandered on, winding as it did so in the manner of all those old lanes. The hedge on the south side holding back the nursery of Russells with their abundance of glasshouses. Here, long after I had seen them hanging in Fred's greenhouses, I was to see my favourite cucumbers growing again. Russells always seemed to be a very tidy nursery as indeed was their house which still stands as a nice property a little farther along the road. Its neighbours on the opposite side of the road were far removed from those that stand there today. In the days I recall it was the position of the Cokeham Manor and its attendant farm. Running from the house with the head was the old familiar flint wall, but this one was almost green as the ivy did its best to coat it all the way to the large gate. Looking through the gate it was obvious that the farm had given way to the nursery, as fields which were once of wheat, mangolds or clover had made way for lettuce, beans or chrysanthemums. The eastern wall of this field was the back flint wall of the hovel. Passing along its southern wall, which was also the border of the road, a large opening would soon be found and the yard would be open for all to see. The hovel was now a cart shed and that of a storage area.

Opposite, gateways were visible in the higher flint walls and through them into the flagstone courtyards of the Old Manor. Dudley Davies was oftentimes to be seen here because that was the home of his Grandmother.

Many years have passed since the scene I have described could be seen and the old lane has hardly changed at all, but the lands around her have found themselves covered with new housing. I would walk the cows down this road daily and it was here that Raymond would exercise the bull. Neither of us would be bothered apart from the odd cycle, but today it is a modern road and cars pass all the time.

Some old farm buildings were knocked down here at about the time that Raymond and I used it and Grafton Road was placed the northern side of a high hedge. On the other side of the road the bungalows stood on the high grass bank that the cows enjoyed walking on their daily journey, but where as I would journey with them to over the line today half way along the length of the bungalows I turn into the entrance to the Croshaw Recreation Ground given to the village of Lancing by one Mr Croshaw I suspect.

The entrance stood back some fifteen yards from the lane with a wooden fence on the north side and a lodge house on the south.

The Lodge House that has these many years been demolished had had a life far removed from that of a home. It had been a barn and Father, when he worked at Halewick Farm, had taken seed corn there to be winnowed. This action was to pass seed corn through a machine, whereby the turning of a handle wind could be created that would blow from the seed any chaff that may be present, as well as other unwanted light bits and pieces.

At the time when it was a barn other buildings were present by its side that were the cart sheds and stables belonging to the big farmhouse at the rear, that was the home of the old Bushby family.

The buildings at one time had been part of the farm that Mr Lee worked and the path across the present recreation ground was merely a track that allowed access to and from the station and Cokeham Lane.

I always thought this quite an attractive recreation ground. It was as I have said bordered on the north by a high hedge, but the remainder enclosed by a low flint wall to the south and east and a high one to the west. The high one to the west kept the gardens of the big house from view and the balls from the recreation ground within their boundaries. The smaller one separated the grasses of the Rec from the crops of Bushby's market garden to the south and the service road of Leconfield Road to the east. A tarmacadam path ran across the Rec separating one quarter of it to the north and three quarters to the south. Beside the path and around the perimeter of the southern portion were young Elm trees in the prime of their life standing young and healthy to about twenty feet in height. They gave the Rec a very elegant appearance and changed that path dramatically from the cart track that it was when Mr Lee's carts used it as an easy way to the station. The path let the recreation ground and joined Sompting Road at the junction with the lower part of Boundstone Lane.

The point where the path left the Rec was marked by an old street lamp. It was a gas one at the time that comes to mind, as I write, and had to be lit and extinguished by hand. I say by hand. It was really by a large pole that had a crook at the end that would link with either of the two chains, one that would light it while the other would extinguish.

This recreation ground was the home of Lancing Athletic Football Club. They shared the ugly shed at the eastern end of the ground with the Lancing Cricket Club and called, I suspect with tongue in cheek, their pavilion.

I watched many games of football on that pitch. They wore, I think I am right in saying, blue and white strips. Of course the shorts came down to the knees and the socks up to them, with the shin guards kept in place with their ties. I would go to watch Bert Riddles play and can still conjure up the picture of him one day sliding the crossed ball into the net through a goalmouth full of mud. The other that I can't forget is that of Elvin Price. He was one of the very first good dribblers of a ball that I saw. He was oftimes I recall labelled as selfish but while he conjured with the ball at least two other members of his team could find open spaces to receive his pass but, mind you, he had to take some stick if he lost it.

I too was to play on that pitch in Lancing colours, but that was in junior football not long after leaving school. I had inadvertently told someone that I had been picking "taters" one day and well remember that whenever I was able to make a run with the ball they would all chorus "TATERS". Unlike today's footballs those leather ones could weigh a tone on a wet day, and heading a high ball had to be technically correct or you could suffer concussion.

The recreation ground is still there but many years ago Lancing Football Club, like those healthy young Elm trees, left the Croshaw Rec behind. The latter because of the dreaded Dutch Elm Disease and Lancing Athletic to occupy their own ground in Culver Road. I don't follow football so much these days and would prefer to remember the times that I watched and played in those far off cowboy days.

Chapter XXXVII
SOMPTING ROAD

Although Sompting Road is well within the boundaries of Lancing it was well used by us at St Johns Farm. It was the manner in which we would get to the station where some of our crops would be delivered and from where some of our requirements would be gathered.

Having travelled along the part of Cokeham Lane as far as Grafton Drive we would turn on to it as it skirted the recreation ground and join the beginning of Sompting road. The gas light and the house that halted Boundstone Lane started us along that road.

No sooner one had started to travel this road Leconfield Road branched off to the south. The houses on the west side of this road reached back to meet the recreation ground and would have done so had it not been the service road. A few of us boys would quite regularly on Saturday mornings make our way home from Lancing by taking a short cut up that road to the low wall and then climb over to the rec. The man who lived in the last house either disliked this action of ours or disliked children, the latter being my guess, and would always chase us. One Saturday morning, proudly wearing a new pair of grey shorts, I along with the other regulars went our normal way with what appeared no chase by this man. However, it was not to be, for after allowing us to pass further than normal he appeared to chase with more industry than ever before. I must have been one of the first to reach and mount that wall, only to disgustingly find that I was sitting astride a freshly tarred wall completely ruining my new trousers.

The road has changed hardly at all along the next twenty yards and Myrtle Road still leads off to the south. This was a road where the houses were said to have been built to house the workers of the Railway Works. Myrtle Crescent was there also at its bottom branching off to the west. The lands at the back of the scattered houses and bungalows on the northern side have been swallowed up as the years have seen other houses and bungalows appear. The same has happened to the south and far below the road named Tower which had the large water tower that served the works to take its name from. It grew in stages with houses on one side only for a while, then on the other. The requirements of prefabricated houses enforced its length and finally the departure of Towns market garden saw it join forces with the houses of my beloved old Chalky Ham. Long, long before these houses appeared these lower parts beyond Sompting Road had been allotments and farther along brick fields.

Some of the brick fields on that side of the road can be noticed today in places where the bungalows are lower than the present road. The products from those fields went to help build the houses of Wembley that shoots off to the north, and of her sister street Annweir that stands as a smaller sister by her side. At the back of Annweir was the path that led to West Lane and the church and on that first bend of Sompting road is a footpath that is there today but long ago made its way beside nurseries.

The road carried out a double bend here and the short southerly trek was filled with a big house which was a children's heart home. Another big house of Dr Thompson stood as a substantial comrade around the corner. This second house was another of the doctors that served the villages around. The road that carried that house was now back in an easterly direction running almost parallel with the railway but closing fast as it proceeded. On that ever narrowing side was firstly a yard where stacks of coal would be stored, then a house followed by another of those small shops. A garden in the shape of a triangle kept it from the offices of the coal merchant, Lisher. The rest of that side of the road held no more than twenty yards from the rails of Southern Railway.

A covered cart shed would house the coal wagons which were hauled by the horses that resided in the stables here. Bert Riddle had come here and drove one horse and waggon for many years having had to say goodbye to Violet. When that horse could pull no more coal wagons he drove for many more years the lorry that replaced it. Now like most of us I suspect in his retirement years after all those years of carrying coal he too sits by a gas fire. The other horse, that had the look of a Clydesdale, was driven by Jack Stanley, who was the father of Mrs Staker and the lodger of my Gran and Grandad Stoner for as long as they lived in Upper Brighton Road. We would now be approaching the station and the rest of the journey on that side would be given

over to the sidings where the trucks of domestic coal would be delivered. The big door would be lowered on the truck allowing the contents to spill at will. These would be shovelled up into a large galvanised scale until the weight would counterbalance the large weights of One Hundred Weight on the other end, then the scale would be tipped allowing the contents to slide into the black sacks. This procedure would continue with the man and shovel standing firstly on the ground and reaching into the truck until two men would work as a pair, one would be required to get up into the truck. A small break would take place each day as empty trucks were removed only to be replaced by full ones. Should there be insufficient for their needs sacks could be gained from the stocks up the road. I loved passing this area on a wet day in particular, when the wet sacks smelt so good to me that I would proceed back and fro at least a couple of times to enjoy the aroma.

The station was now reached and the back of the Brighton line waiting room was all that could be seen. Then the alleyway to the ticket office where I was standing one night, it must have been a Friday, when the Portsmouth train arrived. I became aware that more than one pair of feet were running down the platform when Nobby Stiles, attired in his Navy uniform, came flying out obviously not having a ticket. Behind him came the ticket collector, red in the face and puffed, but with enough breath left to call out, "All right mate, I'll get you on Sunday". Of course he never would, anymore than he did all the others that fled over the coal yard.

The signal box stood on the corner on this side in those days and the signalman would spend a lot of his shift rotating that big wheel which opened and shut the gate. Behind it and reaching up and over was the footbridge that had been erected early in the thirties. What a thrill as a young boy to stand up there as the big old steamers came flying underneath, allowing one to disappear momentarily in the cloud of steam and smoke that it left in its wake. We would appear again, but a lot of Sompting Road will be seen no more.

Chapter XXXVIII
MY FURTHER EDUCATION

As I mentioned earlier that when I started school all children spent their entire school life in the same school. We, that is the generation of my time, were to depart at the age of eleven to the new Secondary Modern School built at Irene Avenue, Lancing. Until reaching the age of fourteen I was with my fellows to make that daily journey along Busticle Lane up Ball Tree Hill, along Cokeham Road to the Little Shop and then a short double bend into Crabtree Lane. Halfway along Crabtree we turn left into Irene Avenue, until we arrived at the railings of the school. At the junction of this road with Crabtree the corner was filled with a substantial house. It was the home of the Duncalfs. It was a house where I would oftentimes see my Gran because here she would be employed two mornings a week as a domestic. I remember it because we had no daily papers at home and Gran was allowed to carry away past copies of the Daily Express and the Daily Mirror. On such days as she worked I would visit Gran's to keep up to date from the first paper Rupert the Bear, and from the second Belenda Lee and Garth. This was the present, gone were the flints of the village, this school was of brick and the playground bordered by railings at the front and high wire fences at the back. The playing fields were to the north bordered on the far side by the old lane, that had at this time been relegated to a footpath, of West Lane. The bottom of the playing fields had humps, like those of a camel, close to the school and were our Air Raid Shelters.

Once we had been called into school at Sompting we would sit within four walls all day, either sweating or freezing depending on what desk one had managed to acquire. The heating was that of the open fire or those large cylindrical tortoise stoves that were abroad at that time. Here in Irene there was completely a new concept on the health of children. All heating was now central heating. A large hall was built centrally and dominated the whole school, calling one to morning assembly, physical training and music. A stage at one end on which the Headmaster stood each morning ensured that his beady eye could peruse you at all times. The little gardens of Sompting had no place in this new school, but a long stretch of ground stretching sixty or seventy yards was to be the library of practical horticultural knowledge.

The classrooms were built around the hall in a large rectangular formation with open sided corridors running around the entire inner perimeter. We had at this school to pass from one classroom to another to gain the passage of information on many different subjects and the design of this corridor was to ensure that we gained fresh air at regular intervals during the day.

There were at this school so many more facilities than there had been at Sompting. One thing we never escaped by moving here was the cane. We had been subject to an audience at Sompting and could in some way by the attitude in which we received it in front of our fellows gain some status. Now a caning was a private affair where one would be sent to the Headmaster's office and stand for what at times seemed hours outside the door in that draughty corridor, creating in oneself mental pictures of the scene that would soon confront us.

I don't think that I was anywhere near as happy at school here as I was in that little school I had left. This one was new, had no character, there was not that sense of belonging, the feeling that you were sitting in seats that had carried backsides for about a hundred years, those old men you passed on the way to or from this building had gone through exactly the same as you.

Irene Avenue offered a greater field of subjects than had been available to us before. There was woodwork, but I was useless at that and spent more periods attempting to get the wood level than I ever did creating something of use, and even then when I took it out for inspection to Mr Tedbury he would, after sending me back to my place, throw it at me. Mr Roberts was a humorist thank goodness. He was the science master, but even his humour was a bit macabre at times when if we misbehaved he would call us out to meet Uncle Bob. Uncle Bob was a short piece of rubber pipe whose rightful home was on the Bunsen Burner. It helped in the creation of heat in its rightful place and when Mr Roberts used it on your backside it created heat there too, I assure you.

History was the subject of Mr Rogers. This was the man that I did some gardening jobs for. He would in class rapidly lose his temper and his face would reach a deep crimson colour.

Calls to the front of his class would entitle you to heavy smacks behind the knees. He called Mel Daddow out one day and just as he was to hit him behind the knees Mel, using his fantastic gymnastic ability, raised his legs up by prising his arms on a desk and Mr Rogers hit the desk instead.

Mrs Parrot was I expect a really good teacher but I had not been in her class more than a couple of weeks when she came silently up behind me and as far as I was concerned smacked me around the ear just as though it had come out of the blue. That seemed forever to be the end of any learning for me under her command.

By far the worst of the punishments was that of Mr Tedbury. Not only would he throw the wood at you whilst in his woodwork class, but would gain a portion of your cheek between his thumb and forefinger, pulling you to him he would suddenly release his hold and follow your reflex with the flat of his hand. That really did hurt.

It seems that all I remember of that school are the punishments, but that is not so. There were the music lessons of Mr Davis, where we would sing to the accompaniment of his violin. The art classes of Miss Grimsdale, who had moved here from Sompting, the geography of Mrs Parrot, the arithmetic of Mr Rogers, and also his passage of knowledge relating to the written word, and last but not least the football of Mr Jones.

Mr Jones I would like to call my friend. I was quite good at football and received every encouragement from him. I went back to the school of Boundstone where he was teaching some thirty years later and he treated me like a long lost friend. I spent the whole afternoon with him looking over the school, of which he was now Deputy Head.

When at school there are some boys who will never in your mind grow up. One such boy from those days for me is Fred Elliot. He was a big boy for his age and it would be true to say that Fred was never going to be a great scholar. He was, though, always in trouble. One day at the back of the class he was messing about with something out of sight of the teacher, who called out, "Elliot, whatever you are playing about with, bring out here". Fred got up and took a packet of cigarettes out to him and then after sitting down he arose again and made his way to the front saying, "Here, you might as well have something to light them with" and placed a box of matches beside them. On another occasion he was fighting about with Frank Smith, who was forever egging him on. This time the teacher called, "If you want a fight Elliot come out here". Fred stood up, took off his jacket and rolled up his sleeves and stepped out the front, only to be sent to the Headmaster of course. Mr Parfitt, poor soul, had charge of Fred when we were playing, or at least trying to play, hockey one day. Fred had just about broke a couple of legs of those who got near him when he had that hockey stick when the others, me included, went on strike in fear of our lives. Fred got sent off and to report to the Headmaster. I can still in my mind's eye see Fred standing on the edge of the pitch shouting out, "Parfitt, you can stuff your hockey and the Headmaster, I'm off home", and home he went. I suppose there were others that acted up but Fred was so much to the fore that the antics of the others were over shadowed by him.

In those early years at that school we spent it seems a lot of our time down those dark and damp air raid shelters. We were supposed to have carried on with our lessons down there but that was near impossible.

I drove my horse and cart up that road many times. One time up the end of it, for it was a cul-de-sac for many years, I decided to have my dinner break. Facing Blossom to the wind I sat in the cart and had my sandwiches. Probably I had had a late night the day before and decided to have forty winks and lay down, covered with my old coat. I awoke to the swaying of the cart. Blossom, obviously fed up waiting for me to wake up, had set off on her own, the nosebag still around her head and we had passed the school before I surfaced.

I don't know if I learnt a lot at that school or not. It seems with the distance of time between then and now that most of what I had learnt was firmly placed between my ears at Sompting School, but no doubt I did increase that knowledge amongst the fresh air of that new school.

I had at one school or the other learnt respect, and when passing the Headmaster in my horse and cart I would always bid him "Good Morning, Mr Russell", wondering what he would say if he knew that Dave, bent on playing truant once again, was laying at my feet.

Chapter XXXIX
STAKER'S YARD

It must have been something like 1941 or 1942 that Reg Staker placed temptation before me. I had always wanted a horse of my own to manage and work but it was obvious at Mr Lees that Grandad would work for many years yet. There were very few places about where one could be employed in such a manner. Staker enquired of my wage that day and promptly offered me ten shillings a week more to come and drive his horse. I was rather wary of Staker because he had a lot earlier come up to me when I was "over the line" pressing Half a Crown in my hand with the comment, "Before you drive your cows home put mine in the fenced pasture". He slipped away then before I could refuse and hand his money back. I then felt, being in the possession of his Half a Crown, obligated and duly complied with his request. It was not to be the last time that I would do something underhand at the bequest of Staker. Father warned me not to work there but the thought of my own horse was a temptation that I could not, nor did not, refuse.

Reg Staker called everybody "Moosh" and in return was known by that name himself. He had as a young man of about nineteen been left a little business by an uncle. At the start he had three horse and carts and employed my Father and Jack Wheatley. Dad and him went about as mates in those early days and Dad relates the day they went to an airfield at South Farm Road in Worthing, Dad taking a five shilling flight in what he called an aeroplane done up with wire. Moosh was taking the mickey as they set off, but would not himself fly.

In those early days Moosh did a lot of work for the Worthing Borough Council. There would be sometimes when the seaweed menace was heavy as many as fifty horse and carts on the beach with about a hundred men loading them, as they hauled the stuff out to sea as far as the horses could go to tip it and allow the outgoing tide to carry it away. Cricket fields would be rolled, the horses having to wear large leather shoes over their hooves to stop them marking the turf. Mowers would be pulled around some of the grass areas and the grass mowings would always be needed to be cleared from the parks and gardens. One day while the horse stood between the pillars of the gate of Beach House Park it was rubbing its head against the pillar when the bridle it was wearing broke. The slipping harness frightened the horse and it galloped off leaving Dad deserted at the rear. He jumped on the running board of a lorry with the shovel in his hand and gave chase. Drawing close he was attempting to stop its mad gallop with the shovel beside it, but to no avail. Somewhere round a bout the Ham some daring young chap leapt out and encircled the horse's neck with his arms, forcing it to stop.

The business of Moosh prospered. He had at the height of his success two lorries, about a dozen horse and carts and a gang of workers with whom he carried out road making under sub-contract. Adding to this he acquired the rent of the railway farm and had the pasture available to extend his love, that of dealing. He bought many horses and cattle that would be destined for the knacker. Dad has walked to Shoreham with a line of four or five. His stables had started at the Farmers Public House, but again he either bought or rented a house and yard with stables in North Road, Lancing. He had no office and most of his dealing took place in some public house or other, mainly the Crabtree.

Dad had joined him at the beginning of his venture and I was to join at near enough the end, in fact I think I was his last employee.

When I joined Moosh he was down to just one lorry, three horses, the yard and the rent of the railway farm. The bread and butter of his life seemed at that time to be a contract for three or four days a week with the Roads Department of the West Sussex County Council. It was for one horse and cart and a man. Bill Messor, a large young man who was the son of the big special constable of Lancing, had filled that role. Now he was eighteen and was called to do his war service. I was to take his place and of course Moosh would make a little extra through paying a boy and getting a man's pay from the Council.

I got to work that first Monday morning and proceeded to the stable, the time about half past six. The house in which Moosh lived stood beside the edge of North Road just up from but on the opposite side to the Alms houses. The yard ran back to the edge of Monks Recreation ground in the rear and the back of the British Legion block on the south.

There was a twitten beside the yard that ran down to a little cottage that stood within the area of the yard. Between the twitten and the exit of the yard was a building that had been adapted as a stable which had at one time housed the fire appliance of Lancing, in the times, I think, when it was horse drawn. On the right at the back of the house was the outside privy, with the cart sheds that now stood as cover for the one lorry and one cart. This was made of galvanised iron and rustled and creaked as the boughs of the large apple trees next door dragged their boughs along it as they danced with the wind. At the bottom of the yard were the wooden stables that had bays for eight horses. They were in two blocks of four. The southern block at this time were obsolete, housing hay, straw and the chaff cutter, while only three stood in the northern section. The odd bay held the immediate requirements of hay and straw. A two stall stable stood at the road end of the old cottage and although not in use now was the original stable, and once probably held the horses ready for the old fire appliance.

The stable I entered that morning was the first that had been mine and however rough it might be I felt privileged to be there. I was to wonder very soon if I had done the right thing, not just about the employer but whether I had the knowledge and ability to do justice to the inmates of that stable. Until very recently they had been used as a pair and an individual. The pair mainly visiting the local nurseries and market gardens ploughing the small amount of acreage that each held, and at other times emptying rail trucks of their coal and manure as and when it arrived. The odd horse had for many years held the Council job. Damsel, the tallest of the three brown horses, had partnered Blossom, while Jane, the thickset one, had done nearly all the cart work. By the time I arrived the Council job had been delegated to Blossom and I was to be her partner.

I threw open that door the first morning and was greeted with the blowing nostrils out of hope for breakfast rather than any recognition. This low, gentle noise was accompanied with jingling chains as the hoard of rats who shared this accommodation scampered away for a day out of sight. Harry Riddles had looked after the pair of horses and later Arthur Atrill. I wonder if all those rats had lived there then.

I fed the three horses and was busily currying Blossom when a great big mongrel of a dog dashed in and jumped up at me. It would do so I found each day until I bid it good morning. It was the dog of Bill Messor, answering to the name of George, and although bill had gone to the Army there was no way that George was not going to be a part of the gang he got to love. So there we were for the next year, the three horses, Blossom, Damsel, Jane, the rats, George and I.

It didn't seem that I had been there long when Moosh complained that I was using too many oats in the feeding of the horses and as they had to be bought in I should be less generous. I told him that it was not the horses that ate it all but the rats. Unbeknown to me he purchased a trap and set it beneath a slight coating of oats in the bin. This morning I had filled the sieve with chaff and using the old saucepan had ladled the oats from the bin, I threw it back after use and it struck the hidden trap, "striking" it. That night before I went home I reset it.

I entered the stable the next morning to the knowing blows of the nostrils from my three charges and as it was dark lit the lamp. It was too early for George. Mrs Messor let him out just after seven. I lifted the lid of the old bin as usual and very quickly dropped it again because there within was a rat caught only by its rear leg and reaching up at my hand; it gave me a real old fright. I started grooming, having mucked out and pitched the clean fodder forward, and was getting some dirty old looks from those big eyes of Blossom and co, almost as if to say, "Come on nipper, where's the breakfast?" They would each of them call me "nipper" because each of them was older than me.

Then through the door came bounding George. I bid him good morning and called him to the oat bin. As I lifted the lid he firstly heard rather than saw that rat and very soon had it in his mouth. He seemed proud of his catch and I was indeed pleased, then with the rat in his mouth he ran out of the stable. I was pleased to see the back of that rat for I had disliked them intensely after Dad's escapade. The trouble was that the rat was still attached to the trap and Moosh was not going to be too pleased to lose the trap so soon. I followed George and called him to drop, but he was not going to take any notice of me and ran out of the yard, making his way down North Road. The street was getting alive with the morning workers as George trotted down, the rat and trap hanging from his jaws, I trotting along behind in what seemed a vain attempt to retrieve the trap. By the time we arrived at the railway gates they were closed and George had to stop. I bravely

released the trap from the rat's let while George growled most ferociously at me, forbidding me to take the rat. Those that waited at the gate gave us both room and complained that I had left the rat with George. I told them that if they wanted it, take it, but no one tried to deprive George of this prize.

Quite relieved at gaining back the trap as well as getting rid of the rat I hurried back to the yard. As I passed the closed door of Snelling the butcher I had to smile as my eyes alighted on the deep cut in the door. It normally stood open in the daytime and not long before George had dashed in and grabbed a string of sausages, making a rapid retreat. Just as his tail passed that door the cleaver landed in it, forever it seems leaving that scar. Almost immediately the butcher stood in that doorway shouting, "I'll kill that bloody dog yet". Soon I was back in the stable and at last the horses got their breakfast.

When oats were brought up to the stable there were often far more than could be tipped into the bin, resulting in several sacks being put in the dry upstairs room of the old cottage. I went up there to get a sack one day. They were large Westlake sacks containing one and a half hundred weight, although the one I chose was less because the rats had ravaged the top and large holes were to be seen in the material. I was I suppose now barely sixteen and struggled with this sack as, bit by bit, I raised it up the wall until it rested on the windowsill. I got it nicely settled on my back when a rat came from within it and using my head as a stepping stone jumped down the stairs. I dropped the sack and found myself in a right old tither for a few moments.

We brought some young pigs up to the yard one day and with nowhere to put them boarded them up in this bedroom. We fed them each day and the original temporary period that they had supposed to have stayed there stretched until they were quite a large size. It was a small cottage and the stairs that served its first floor were steep and narrow. Carrying young pigs up was one thing, but to get grown ones down was a completely different matter as we pulled and pushed them until they eventually fell down rather than walk.

The old horses in the stable put up with me quite well really and seemed to excuse my lack of knowledge, but like most of us I learnt a lot as we went along. I had not been aware of greasy legs before. When a hairy legged horse of the Shire breed gets to be quite mature some form of grease is exhausted from the legs. This grease attracts the bluebottles and before you know what is happening maggots are squirming away in the poor old horses' legs. Moosh showed me what to do and I kept old Blossom free from such things in the future.

It was unlike George to run out of the yard before Blossom and I were ready and sometimes I wish that he did. Moosh didn't like early mornings too much, preferring I am sure the dark of night, and if he didn't hear the hooves or the iron rims of the cart he surely would hear the frantic barking of George that accompanied my each morning departure.

Blossom had been very gentle with me and only on one morning did she ever hurt me and even that was my own fault really. Horses, like us, have their good days and their bad. This morning I guess was one of her bad, although I had noticed nothing untoward as I fed and groomed her. I would be the first to admit though that I was not brimming with enthusiasm as I prepared to harness her for the day ahead. I slipped the leather halter from her head, which with the aid of a rope running through a stout iron ring and a wooden block that was fixed to the other end, held her secured in her pen. I carried her collar around to her head but as I attempted to lift it over her head in the manner I had done on so many other mornings she turned her head away. I followed her round and might well have uttered an angry command because the collar was heavy in that offered stance. Still she turned her head away until I was standing in front of her body. She then rapidly forced her head to the front. The side of her head, which feels like brick, smashed me in the face and I was flung into the corner half unconscious. I lay there extremely dazed for what must have been a couple of minutes. I carried no bruises, but all that day we were at loggerheads.

It is difficult today to imagine that exit from the yard. Standing opposite that spot today one is looking at a parade of shops. The rear wall still maintains Monks Recreation ground and the south side is still that of the British Legion. Where the stables stood are the store houses for the shops and so I hope those hordes of rats departed long ago. Blossom long since made that last trip to the Knackers yard and George had gone where all the old mongrels go, leaving me to haunt those roads and lanes that we three paraded during that young year of mine.

Chapter XXXX
THE JOURNEYS OF WE THREE

We, Blossom, George and I, were to travel together all the roads of Lancing and Sompting. The boundaries were the two bridges over the river, the bottom of Western Road, that now houses the boating lake, with two other extremes being Lambleys Lane in Sompting and the top of Mill Road in Lancing.

I would sit proudly upon on the cart with my feet on one shaft or the other while Blossom plodded along in the slow gait that she had acquired. Quite often it seemed as we made our way up First Avenue in Lancing I would pass the window cleaner at work and he would call out, "Look out, look out, cor blimey I never though the other foot was coming down in time", meaning he thought she would fall over while balancing on that one leg. I was quite hurt at first with his mickey taking but after a while looked forward to it. Meanwhile, as I sat there and Blossom plodded on, George would walk under the cart between the wheels and just behind the rising hooves of Blossom. The nosebag of the old girl would be strapped to the shaft and the bucket for her water hanging on the axle, often I'm sure niggling George as he took up his position. My dinner bag would be inside that bucket. One day, to my annoyance, I had put it in there while water was still within and on stopping for lunch I found the bread from my sandwiches plastered around the bottle that held my cold tea.

Meal times were spent by us in all parts of the district, wherever water could be gained for Blossom and George and shelter for myself. I looked forward to meal times but there, what young boy doesn't. For me though it wasn't I ate so much as the feeling again of being one in the long line of some continuing thing, and in being so I guess gaining a sense of security from it. I would love to see Blossom throwing her nosebag in the air and imagine those pliable lips of hers picking out the best bits, the oats first, as indeed I had a habit doing with my meals, picking the best bits then filling with the remainder later. George meanwhile would take up a position about three feet from me, sitting on his haunch, and whine away until I threw to him broken off pieces of my sandwiches, which I oftimes though were insufficient to repair my own hunger. The most annoying thing of all about him was that having received a bit he had swallowed it and was back to whining before I had chance to have another bite myself. Those meal breaks could be anything from twenty minutes when the weather was unpleasant, and it was better to be back at work than to sit and suffer the winds or the cold, to other days when the sun shone and the comfort and seclusion of the old chalk pit allowed one to relax fully. On those latter days we would all enjoy it, me laying back looking up at the clear blue sky, old George flat out under the shade of the thick Hawthorn hedge and Blossom resting one hind leg as automatically her tail brushed away the flies of summer.

Each morning then, having left the yard to the solo efforts of old George who seemed to be shouting to Moosh, "The boy is late again", we made our way to our morning depot and our other workmates.

Our depot was on the eastern side of the Farmers Hotel. The war had arrived to not only put a stop to the building of houses in our area, but also to the building of a bridge over the railway to link South Street with Grinstead Lane. The thousands of tons of spoil that has gone to make the ramps had been created and the approaches of concrete laid. A Chestnut fence had been placed across the road making the area beyond ideal for our yard. The yard contained a large box with the letters W.S.C.C. broadly painted on it. Within this box could be found all our tools. Besides the box in their different stacks or piles were posts, tarmac of one grade or another, sand, hardcore and, in fact, any commodity that had or could be of use in the role that we found ourselves.

My two companions were to give me about fifty years in age. Firstly Arthur Sharp. Arthur had been the cowman of Monks Farm and had worked at that occupation when Grandfather Stoner had worked at Church Farm. Both of these farms were in fact farmed by the same man, Billy Philips. He was a brother to both Escatt and Charlie of Sompting. Although I am told Arthur was a good cowman, progress came and swept both the farms away and with them of course the employment of those grand old men. Arthur never mentioned to me much of his days on the farm and seemed quite content with his lot in his twilight years. Bob Weller, a brother to

old George of St Johns Farm, was the other I worked with. He was, as so many brothers are, so different from his brother. Not only in his build which was slight, in comparison to the sturdy frame of his brother, and his outlook on life was probably governed by his married status as opposed to the bachelor existence of his brother. My old Gran reckoned she was once courted by old George in her young days.

The jobs that beset me then at this depot were to keep clear the tipping sites of the sweepers of the district, who had their wheelbarrows, to assist Arthur and Bob in the patching of holes in the road and making up of any bad spots, the emptying of the district's drains, and one or two days a week to follow them both as they swept the gutters of the main road. When we were on the sweeping jobs they would always have a good start on me and would leave in the wake of their brooms lumps of dust that I would shovel on to the cart.

Nearly all of my loads would be tipped down at Beach Green on the Lower Brighton Road. The tip would be entered through a gate that was either at or very near the spot that is now the entrance to the car park. The area of the car park today was about half that size when I started. The remainder of Beach Green was at least eight to ten feet lower.

I was approaching that gate one day when it was one of those miserable days, the wind was blowing and the light misty rain came at you in waves. I was seated on the near side of the cart and was stepping over to put out my hand as Blossom clopped on. The shafts were wet and I slipped off them and fell between the horse and the cart. I was clinging desperately to the harness as my legs dangled against Blossom's, calling madly, "WHOA WHOA". She could, and many younger horses would, have kicked me to pieces in that position, but the old girl again showed pity on the "Young Fool" and stopped allowing me to recover my posture. I felt a right fool, but not as bad as the first time that I ventured to that spot.

I had led Blossom with a full loaded cart up to the edge of the tip in the manner I had been taught, by getting one wheel as close to the tipping site as possible. Now all the effort that was needed was to screw one wheel around, which took half the effort of backing the whole load. It must have been the right approach because when I did it that way a lot later I saw an old gentleman watching. After, as I got back to the gate, he called me and to him I went. "That my boy", he said "Was as pretty as I've seen that done in many a day. I had a business in London before I retired that comprised a half dozen horse and carts. If you see me here on Monday with a Post Office Savings Book in your possession with money in it, I will reward you." I never did but have wondered ever since what reward he was considering.

However, this first time the approach was as good. I left the head of Blossom and went to the rear, removing the tailboard. At the front I removed the tipping pin and pushed up the cart and up she went, spewing her contents down the bank. Back to the head of Blossom where grabbing the rein I requested, "Giddap" and walked on with her. I looked around expecting to see the empty tipped cart dragging after us as I had so many times on the farm. My heart sank, there behind us was merely the make up of the shafts and axles and laying flat on the earth about a couple of yards behind was the body of the cart. I was so disappointed, my first trip to the tip and I had broken the cart. God knows what Moosh would say.

I unhooked Blossom from the shafts and dejectedly led her back to the road. A policeman came along on his bike. "What's the matter boy?" he cried. "I've broken the cart on my first trip" I replied. "No", he said, she has only come off hooks".

I then found out that a cart was built in two distinct parts. The first the shafts, axle and wheels, the second the body. At the rear of the axle on the end of the shafts were two built in iron rods, and at the crosspiece behind the horse a rod with holes in its length. The body of the cart was built to hold a cubic yard. In its centre underneath were fixed two hooks. These hooks fitted in the iron rods on the end of the shafts and were the means of tipping. The iron rod at the front went through a hole in the front crosspiece of the body. A pin was put through the hole in the rod to keep the cart down and, when it was to be tipped, placed in the top hole to stop it from going beyond its desired angle and remain attached to the shafts. The carts on the farm were similar but bolts and nuts had been permanently placed in the top of the rod and so I had never had to use the pin in the top hole.

Anyway, the policeman came back to the cart with me and we lifted it upright and I placed Blossom in the shafts. Whilst the policeman held up the cart I backed old Blossom back

and the hooks were again seated over the irons and all was well. I was so very pleased and relieved, and indeed more than grateful to that man who had chosen the police force to help people, including the boy who came off the hooks.

I wonder what he would have done the day not so much later when I was heading for the bridge at Shoreham. The road even then was a dual carriageway along by the Broadway, very much the same as it is today. I had got a fair way along there standing up in the cart with the reins in my hand. I heard a rattle in the distance, as indeed did Blossom, her ears shot up as we both strained our eyes to the bend. In the next instant a convoy of tanks came rattling along at a fair old lick. Blossom, age forgotten, started jumping about and without check the tanks came abreast of us. The roaring of the engines and the rattle of the tracks on the concrete surface were indeed deafening and Blossom could stand no more. She was off. Tanks forgotten she was soon galloping away, the cart in the road then up on the pavement, people rushing up paths to avoid our mad careering along the road. I was trying to hold on to the reins but the mad dash she made was rocking the cart so much that I could not produce any pressure on her. We were still on the dual carriageway when we passed the last tank and they sped off out of our way and gradually out of earshot. Blossom, her years telling, was soon able to come under my control again but by now her coat was covered in sweat. I walked her on until we were clear of the road and rested her, covering her wet body as best I could with my coat.

We were to go through that again. We had passed the Farmers and were approaching the railway when the beasts rolled over the rails on their way down South Street. This time they gave me consideration and stopped. I geed Blossom on as they stood purring beside the road and frightened of any repetition of the previous event I wrapped the reins around my hands and inserted pressure. I was too rough on poor old Blossom's mouth and she stopped and backed up, fearful I expect of the hurt I was inadvertently causing her. I relaxed my hold and eagerly urged her forward. She stood there crossways in front of the tank, actually quaking. I thought of getting down and holding her head but was frightened that she would bolt while I was doing so. If she bolted here in the middle of the village someone was bound to get hurt. There were many people watching and I saw Harry Riddles, who had a Suffolk Punch in the stable opposite the Farmers, which is now the site of the service station, leave his stable and run to my aid. No better man could have come because he knew Blossom intimately and under his strong careful hands led her away to the safety of the Goods Yard. What old George was doing during these troubles I am not sure.

In the role of patching the road we were at one time called to repair a hole that had appeared in the road at the entrance to Lancing Park along the bottom road. As we dug it appeared that a cavern was opening up before us and eventually I was to tip over ten loads of hard core into her. It was apparent that the dragging of the sea had undermined her to that extent.

Many times we swept South Street, which was in those days the main part of the shopping area of Lancing. In more recent years North Road has taken over that role and the shops of South Street have become secondary. Then it was, I feel, busier than it is today, but apart from one or two places where new buildings have appeared the last forty odd years have not disturbed her as much as other parts of the village. The pub, the parade of shops, the homes an Alma Street are about the same. The little garden that is tucked in among the buildings looks I feel hopelessly out of place, but I suspect it's a refuge for one or two. The large shop that appears on the left was once the busy and popular Co-op stores. It was a fascinating place for me. Mother was a member of the Co-op and her number remains with me of 13011. The dividend that she earned all year was indeed a blessing at Christmas. However, the main memory of that store is the manner in which your money was taken. You would be served at the counter where a ticket would be made out to the amount required. Passing over your money, both the money and the ticket would be placed into a wooden bowl. This bowl would be screwed together to another part that was above the server's head. A string with a wooden handle would be pulled and I would look in wonder as that bowl whizzed across the store sliding on a wire. It would be received at the cashiers' kiosk where the change or receipt would be returned in the same fashion.

The shops and houses around here have changed little but new roads and new houses on the sides of the old road abound at its flanks.

We would pass a point where the road would twist around the first of its double bends. On the left was the bank which stood next to the barber shop of the Searle brothers. I have always wanted to have one of those shaves that they carried out daily within those premises, but to this day have never been shaved with a cut throat razor. When the old fire station at Moosh's yard became inadequate the fire engine moved to its permanent home next in line and a neighbour of the Parish Hall. It stayed here for many years until a great deal later when it moved to the site that is still its home today.

Opposite here was the shop that gave for many years employment to my Aunt Kit. It was a shop that was tiled wherever tiles could be placed and among them were tiles depicting the globe of the world. That was not at all surprising because it was in fact the Worlds Stores. One of many such shops that filled our towns and villages at that time.

Mrs Hazelgrove would be seen at the end of her deliveries with her trolley of empties in a shop here too, for this was the home of the Lancing Dairy.

The Parish Hall, the Remembrance Cross and St Michael's Church seemed as they stood in line here trying to strain their necks to see down the road that appeared just around the second bend. This road that ran between the parade of shops on the right and the big house on the left of Mr Mason, who was someone big I was told in the Cherry Blossom Boot Polish firm, was Penhill Road.

Penhill Road was probably the first road that I got to know really well. It was built to link the main street of Lancing with the bottom coast road. It saw me every Saturday during the years of 1935 and 1936. About a third of the way down was the only cinema of that day, the Odeon, and Saturday was flicks morning. What happened to it I don't know but I had at one time a photo that along with a crowd of other kids contained me at the opening of the Mickey Mouse Club. We each had a card which would be stamped on each attendance with a stamp of Mickey Mouse's head. The other memory that sticks so lovingly of that time is the manner that I would spend my sixpence. It was intended as a penny bus fare there, a penny bus fare back, three pence entry and a penny to spend. We would walk or run down and after the show go into the fish and chip shop that is still there in that business today and buy twopennorth of chips. They must not be eaten right away because another run would bring us to a bakers near the station for the purchase of two half penny rolls. Then and only then could the best meal of the week take place. Time passed on and soon those Saturday mornings held one job or another for me to spend my time doing and others had grown to cheer the cowboys and then run the gauntlet between the chips and the bread. Later still I would go to Penhill and halfway down to the Odeon, that had by this time changed its name to the Regal, was a narrow track leading down beside the houses to the blacksmith.

Today this is a yard for the local hardware firm, then it was the industrious workplace of the smith. The smith was Mr Howard who had learnt his trade at Wellers. It was here that Daisy, Rodney, Blossom, Damsel, Jane and about, I would reckon, another hundred horses came for their new shoes.

They would be tethered in the far bay as the smith pumped the forge, or got us to do. He had little trouble to get us to co-operate as he heated the metal before taking it to the anvil where he played the tune he had played a thousand times before with the hammer, the shoe and the anvil. Talking to the horse with a voice that held the authority of so many of these actions he would raise their hooves to the position above his knee, or place it on a tripod where it would rest. Then picking up the shoe to which he had attached a spike he would place it on the hoof and almost immediately disappear in a cloud of smoke as the hot shoe burnt a seating in the hoof. What a strange, fascinating smell that shoeing would create. The shoe, once he had ascertained was a good fit, would be cooled. It would sizzle away in the cold water bath, charging the air now with clouds of steam. Then nailing it on the protruding pieces would be clipped off and the hoof paired, then rasped, to allow the horse to stand proud and true with its new shoe on.

Down South Street still picking up the lumps left by Arthur and Bob I would travel. The four old cottages that stood back on the left had probably looked out on the road when it was only a Lane. Just past them was Bernie Hodsons' shop. Here at one time they killed their own meat. It was from this shop that Gran received the calendar which held the picture of that little girl. Opposite was a shop that had been the workplace of Mr James, a once upon a time neighbour to Gran at Millfield.

The church was passed and one branched left for only our yard was straight ahead and at that time at the height of the ramp was another of those anti-aircraft "Bofors". One late morning the echelon unit had delivered a new barrel that was still contained in its box. It was heavy and the boys called me over requesting we put it on the cart and allow Blossom to haul it up the ramp. Come to think of it, was Blossom the only horse to haul artillery into action in the Second World War?

Soon there were shops on both sides of us as we saw the railway gates and headed toward them, just before the entrance to the Goods Yard were two railway houses allocated to two of the men who manned the station. They were then quite old houses and the occupants had probably got used to making their own entertainment, but now should they require it a trip to the pictures was merely a requirement to cross the road, because the Luxor stood just there.

On another day we three were passing the Luxor going south. George was probably in one of his bad moods as he strutted between the wheels and behind the hooves of Blossom. It took little things to upset him and one thing that was big; motorcycles. We had at that time a white haired man with a whiter moustache dressed in blue battledress and bearing the attitude of a retired Major, which he may well have been. This day he chose to ride his bicycle which was aided by a little engine, Pop, Pop, Pop it went as it passed us. It was like rag to a bull to George, he was out from that cart, a few yards down the road, a mouthful of blue battledress, and the Major and his bike parted company. "Is that your bloody dog?" he cried, getting thank goodness to his feet. "Not mine", I replied in complete honesty. Someone was readily available to state the owner was Mr Messor. "I am", he said haughtily, "Off to report this to the police", and picking up his bike headed off in the direction of the police station. On arrival at the police station he reported the incident to the special constable on duty, and PC Messor listened with a sympathetic ear.

We three arrived at the railway gates from the southern direction one lunchtime, just as the signalman was revolving his big wheel and the gates were closing as would be expected. The hooter of the works went, I think, but anyway it was half past twelve and time for their lunch break. At lunch time it must have been several hundred that went to lunch and the majority of them would be on bicycle. They would flood out of the works just as though a plug had been pulled, and very much like liquid they settled around the gate. George must have known something was afoot because he had temporarily disappeared. At the time when the maximum number crowded around us Blossom decided that all morning we had been on the go and she hadn't had time to empty herself. She chose that time, much to my embarrassment, to spread her legs and show those around her what Niagara Falls looked like close up. This forceful flow of liquid hit the tarmac and flew in directions, claiming many casualties among her captive audience. Many times after I timed it to repeat that incident, but to no avail.

Over the crossings and into North Road swept the brooms and we followed. Big Penstone House on the left where old Alf Knight the tramp was given work as a gardener was the home of Sir Harry Ricardo who had the works by the river, and where one day long in the future I too would work for a couple of years. Just up the road from here was the bakers where those large slab cakes were baked and then sold wholesale. The road to the British Legion was also the road to Culvers Nursery, hence the road holding that name today, although now it leads to a row of bungalows and the home for many years now of Lancing Football Club.

On the other side of North Road stands the Alms houses just as they have done since about 1890 when they were bequeathed in memory of the Penfold family. In one of these at around the time I picked up the sweepings were two brothers. Like some brothers they could not get on and were so bitter to each other. The story goes that one was an early riser and the other preferred to await the airing of the streets first. The first to rise would light the fire and make himself a cup of tea having boiled the kettle. He would then draw the fire, ensuring that his brother when he rose would have to light it again.

The road a little farther along would sweep round in a sharp bend. Along here many moons ago the cows would wander to the fields that once were found here before the houses. They would come from the Farm on that bend known as Monks Farm where Arthur had worked for many years. The gate of five bars would stand against the road, beside the farmhouse that stands there still. The yard reaching back, bordered on the south by the barn, with the sheds backing on

to Monks Recreation ground which were once the home meadow of that farm. It had been given as a Rec to the village not long before the war. Parting it from Crabtree Lane was a long low wall that held tall railings. Come the war the land again reverted to agriculture and sugar beet was grown on its ploughed turf while the railings were cut away to make the guns and bombs of warfare. It was common still at that time for cattle to be driven along the quieter roads with a man leading the way who would ensure garden gates were shut before the enquiring cattle could enter. However, the road to the station became too busy for such journeys and Grandfather Stoner, while working these farms as the carter and one time early tractor driver, had conveyed cattle to the station in a cattle cart. This, unlike other carts, had a cranked axle between the wheels which allowed for a deep body from which the cattle could find no escape.

Grinstead Lane, with its high hedges, would from here carry the same road to the east, meeting what is now the A27 at the Stormy Petrol, passing its petrol pumps equipped with the rotary handles, and carry on to Shoreham.

We lived along here for a while when Billy Philips, angry that Mum, Dad and I had shared the cottage at Church Farm and had asked Grandad to move on. He then worked for a short time for Moosh and lived in Dovedale Cottages. It was while here that my parents were allocated a Council house at Millfield, and from here it was that we set out, Dad, Farmer and I, with our worldly possessions on that cart.

Just along from here was the cross tracks. North to Hoe Court, another of the places mentioned in the Domesday Book, and south to Old Salts Farm. There was at that entrance to Old Salts Lane a pond that lay beneath a really big old Willow which half lay over it, as though offering its mass of branches protection from the wind and shade from the sun. We came to this spot several times my Grandfather and I, turning up to Hoe Court Farm with the trace horses and waggon for loads of straw. At this spot during the war we had arrived having passed some young RAF men running some distance down the road, when a straggler came along. "Come on boy" called Grandad, more in pity than sarcasm. The man looked up "I'm thirty nine", he said, "They are eighteen" and carried on his agonising run. Then I thought him lazy but when I was thirty nine and had been a soldier for many years I too would run and I too knew then exactly what he meant.

Another hundred yards saw us at the Withy Patch. Today it is a caravan site. Then it was quiet, being the edge of the brooklands, the Withy trees from where it got its name marking their northern boundary. It was here that Mother and Father did their courting and it doesn't need my fingers and toes to tell me that it was here that I was conceived.

Back to the Stormy Petrol, returning up to the Corner House as the public house which stood at the bottom of Mill Road was then called. This was another of the journeys that we used to travel. This hill was a steep climb for Blossom and when the cart was full I would unload two thirds of it at the bottom and take three separate journeys to get to the top, as I did with a load of sand.

This bottom part of the road was steeped in history, being oh so many years ago the main road. The horses of the coaches changing here and the house there carried the name of the posting house. No doubt the stables stood among the buildings of the forge and the tithe barn standing opposite. Then with the new horses no more than twenty yards would see them turn right and travel the length of the little Street. Here the tiny cottages gave some idea of the difference in those days from the big houses of the gentry and those of the working classes. No doubt at all that most of these little places had housed the employees of the Manor as it was soon passed when the road turned right to run past its front as it once again joined the now A27.

We would journey to the top of Mill Road. Many others journeyed this way before. The great gaping hole of the chalk pit stood as testimony to that. It had once been public allowing parishioners the right to its contents. It had long since now been unworked and nature has done marvels to cling it back to its breast. Today the hillocks covered in grass, the Hawthorns and Blackberries, create a pleasant place for walks, picnics, fruit picking and for generations the thrill for children to slide or climb is forgotten walls.

As the name of the hill suggests there had been before the chalk pit a mill here. Waggon would bring their corn and carry away their flour and meal. Women cottagers would bring their gleanings. The gathered heads of wheat from the fields, which there were allowed to collect when

the final shock had been gathered signifying the harvest was over. These would be milled for a few pence and winter supplies would be available for course cooking.

A cottage stood above the pit and had housed the shepherd who tended the sheep here. He could rise each morning looking from his window to see the majestic lines of Lancing College. Later it was a very pleasant and efficient riding stable but late years have seen it slip in sad decay. There is a small wood at this point and on up the hill can be seen the trees of the Clump. Grandfather Stoner was the last one to plough the land between, and that was in the First World War. The harvest they gained from its soil hardly equalled the seed that was sown and so these many years it has been gladly an open space.

The rains that fell on these hills trickled, gathered, flowed and rushed as they got lower down the hill and in the process carried a lot of silt with it. At the top of Mill Hill was a silt trap and our job was to empty it. The cart we used was like a big tank cut in half and turned on its back with big balloon tyred wheels on the axle. Clearing this hole was by a bucket which was hauled up each time I filled it, because being young I was down the hole. The two elders filled my cart. They were far more experienced than I and far more knowledgeable than I, but they well and truly overfilled the cart. I started to lead Blossom down the hill, but putting her hooves together she couldn't hold back the cart and just slid. I managed to run one of the wheels against the high bank this road contained and helped push back on the shafts. I was so relieved when we eventually reached the bottom.

The jobs we did then around the roads of our district are today either done by expensive vehicles or not done at all. In the days of Arthur and Bob the gutters were cleaned, the verges trimmed, the hedges cut, and although we were slow, we kept the rubbish cleared.

Life is full of friends and I count mine those long departed workers Arthur and Bob and my dear old travelling companions Blossom and George.

Chapter XXXXI
THE INFLUENCE OF THE RAILWAY

When standing at the top of the Nore up Lambleys Lane it was easy to see the influence that the church had on the village in days gone by, and how the economy of life had surrounded it.

In the early thirties the same statements could well have been true of the railway. As one looked around Lancing in its heyday it was plain to see that it had completely changed the way of life to a group of little villages.

To the east of Lancing was, and it seems always had been, the natural barrier of the River Adur. Originally it was crossed we are told by a causeway of faggots that were replaced or supplemented by ferry.

In 1781 a collection of financiers created a tontine to build a bridge. A tontine is a financial scheme whereby each subscriber receives an annuity which on demise of each contributor the remainder increase their share.

The approaches to the bridge were laid of stone and a twenty six pier and trestle bridge was created, some say on a foundation of faggots. The annuities were paid to the tontine from the tolls that had to be paid and if on the site of the original crossing everyone that wished to cross the river had to pay. In later years Grandfather Lindfield paid his penny each day and old George who lived in the cottage the other side crossed it each day, but I doubt if he ever paid a penny.

In 1833 a suspension bridge was erected to the south and again required a toll to be paid, but in this case it was owned by the Duke of Norfolk. Horses and carts, vans and coaches used it, allowing them the use of the coast road. My Father used it as a young boy with his horse and van on their nightly journey to Brighton Market. On one such journey he relates the frost was so severe and the roads so slippery that their journey had to be broken at the bridge, the horses unhooked from the van and tethered while he and others on the same journey attempted to get some sleep beneath the body of the vans.

Access across that bridge was quite narrow, being planned only for the passage of horse and slow moving transport. By the year of 1923 it had become inadequate to deal with the transport of that modern day and was replaced with a girder bridge.

The old suspension bridge allowed the railway which had arrived as far as Shoreham to be gained quite easily and not only passengers but hauliers used it to great advantage.

The opening of the girder bridge in 1923 was a great step forward in vehicle access to the railway and was a great occasion to my Grandfather too. He was at that time engaged on the steam traction engines and was engaged on a test run over the bridge, so I am told, by travelling with his steam vehicle of some five tons pulling trucks that when loaded would have been of six or seven tons each. The opening also meant that the paying of tolls to cross the river had come to an end, at least on that site. However, those crossing to the north were still paying to cross the old toll bridge which carried on collecting tolls into the 1950s. The ceasing of the tolls over the girder bridge was a loss of revenue to the Duke of Norfolk and so compensation had to be paid to his estate.

The Brighton and South Coast Railway Act of 1844 saw the old trestle bridge pass into the hands of the railway and the next year, 1845, the railway arrived in Worthing and in the process the station of Lancing was born. The commuter to London could now and probably did in some cases reside in Lancing. It appeared that the railway prospered in this village and extensions were made to the station in 1893.

Railways had become big business by the turn of the century and the large railway works at Brighton found itself unable to expand to meet the demand of the extra capacity. Lancing was thought to be an ideal place for an overspill works and about one hundred acres were purchased in 1902. As the progress to prepare these works went ahead the first signs of real growth to the village appeared to create houses for the future workforce. The works opened in 1912, about the same time that Myrtle Road was ready for occupation.

1923 saw a re-grouping of the railway and Lancing works were promoted to receive the renovation of coaches and production of new bogeys. Although houses began to appear with rapid

regularity in the village to accept the anticipated movement of workers from Brighton they did not move in the numbers that had been anticipated. A train ran daily from Brighton directly into the works; the Lancing Belle was born. It was a train that would carry the workers to and from work, free.

The early thirties saw the works at their height, employing about fifteen hundred works and passing about two thousand two hundred carriages through their lines each year. A lot of the workers were now local and the crossing gates with wicket pedestrian ones by their side were classed as dangerous and a nuisance for pedestrians and the footbridge was built.

Shoreham Civil Airport was born in 1933 and coincided with the electrification of the line as far as Lancing. Five years later it had arrived as far as Ham Bridge. It must have been quite soon after it was laid that Fairy went down to the rail gates one morning and found a neat pile of women's clothes and soon saw the naked body on the line, probably the first of the few that since that time have sought that last act in life.

The war saw the roofs of the big sheds painted in camouflage paint. One shed was painted I remember in the manner of a field that was half ploughed. I remember that because I used to think it would soon be obvious that it was not a ploughed field, or that the horses were very slow. The only soil I ever saw over that works was that blown up by the bomb I witnessed while in Chalky Ham.

War work was placed in the works and they did various parts of the Airbornes gliders that travelled to Arnham and eventually over the Rhine. The war finished and no more than twenty years had passed before the end of the works was seen also. 1964 saw the last run of the Lancing Belle and the last coach left on the 11th March 1965. Lancing still held a place in the South's history of railways because 1971 saw the station being the only one in the South whose signs were still the green of the Southern Railway, while all others were black and white of BR.

I watched a lot of the change go on but was in those days far more interested in the goods yard than any other part. The goods yard was it seems the place where one would meet many other workers. We from the farm would call there with our two carts to collect coal for the nursery. One cart would be like that I drove for Moosh which contained a yard box that would have extension pieces for the sides, front and back to allow loads that had not achieved the weight in the body to be loaded higher. These carts would have narrow wheels as these would propel easier on the surfaced roads. The other would be the farm cart with the same size body, but this would have extensions over the wheels to allow loads of lighter material like hay and straw to be widened so allowing the capacity to be heightened. These carts would have broad wheels to stop them sinking in the soil of the fields over which they had been designed to travel. Our two carts were used for both the road and the farm work.

The coal we came to collect was in ten ton trucks and was made up in the main with great large lumps as much as a man could lift at times. These lumps would be laid around the edge of the cart and the smaller coals fill the middle. While we loaded ours others would be at work loading for other nurseries. The nurseries also had a great demand for horse manure that would arrive in similar trucks but had fermented whilst on the journey and I have unloaded some where the heat has been such that it would be difficult to remain in one position for long. The two Riddles, Bert and Harry, along with Jack Stanley, would oftimes be seen departing with high steaming loads of this product.

All our wheeled vehicles would at some time call at the goods yard. The van with the high sides and the sprung axles would come laden with the twelve pound punnets of tomatoes to collect together on roofed rail vans with thousands of others and head for our capital city. The area was renowned for this crop and although not quite true they were called the Premium Worthing Tomato. The same van at a different season would be laden with the wooden boxes where within would be the magnificent bloom of the chrysanthemum. When these crops were not at their height of production the railway lorry would call and delivery them to the large parcel shed that served as the yard's office too.

Our farm waggon, with the harvest ladders up and covered with sacking whilst the sides were lashed up with boarding or racking, would travel here to collect the trucks of "Shoddy" that had travelled down from the North. It was the fine sweepings of the wool mills and could well compare in annoyance to the barley awls of threshing. It was hard work in the goods yard but I

enjoyed the visits I made, even when I had to wait while the shunting was going on, marvelling at the ease the chap with his pole on the end of which was his hook could lift those massive chain links that held the coaches together, as they were separated and placed on different rails for unloading, loading or original destination.

The coming of the large juggernauts and the competition from the Lowlands put an end to the enjoyable tasks set us by the goods yard and today I sometimes visit it, but now it is too a small market.

The large works are now an industrial estate, the waggons and carts have rusted and rotted, the greenhouses whose crops supplied the yard have been swept away. The only thing that remains of those days is the little café that was an old carriage at the entrance to the yard and I heard the other day that although it hasn't moved for years it is soon to make a move that may well be its first and its last.

Chapter XXXXII
STAKER'S OTHER INTERESTS

Moosh then had other interests than those that occupied me with the Council contract and I was at times to take part in them.

As a contractor he would oftentimes take on the task to empty rail trucks either of their coal or manure for the local nurseries. I was engaged one day in unloading a truck of manure. The contents of the truck were indeed hot, caused by the fermentation of its three day journey, and I was dancing about as I unloaded it. Piling the cart high along the side extensions I set off with my steaming load along Freshbrook Road to a nursery situated at its bottom, in an area called Salt Lake. It was obvious that years ago salt on a large scale was obtained from this area.

The name of the owner of this nursery to which I carried my load does not easily come to mind but the layout of the nursery does. On entering the gate a cinder road ran down for a considerable way between the glasshouses leaving no more than enough room to avail the cart of its passage. The road ended with another glasshouse crossing what could otherwise have been further stretches of the road, but glasshouses stood there. I was amazed at the small clearing that seemed to be half filled with a large coal lump. Not only I but Blossom also was a little nervous of the small area in which we had to manoeuvre. I directed Blossom round and had only about a couple of feet in which to reverse the cart. Backing Blossom I gave her the command "Whoa". She frightened at the coal so close to her fore and carried on backing after my command. I was repeating my command with a frantic pulling of her bridle rein but back she continued, stopping only with the sound of smashing glass. We had penetrated his glasshouse. I didn't think he would let me return with the other loads but he did and even gave me a tip when I had finished. The jobs of that nature were pleasing and with the limited amount of a railway truck to deliver there was no hassle.

When delivering manure from the yard to Culver Nurseries around the corner I was told he wanted twelve load, but to make sure I tipped them all together in one lump and take him ten only. This was nothing new I found out. Dad when he worked here was bid to go to the beach and get a yard of sand as one had contracted to do but he was bid to bring back one and a quarter. Permission was given to take the sand but the beach stone was to be left untouched. All went well until it was found out that they were loading with beach stone and covering with sand.

I was to go out with Moosh in the lorry. If we went to get manure I would be expected to nearly load the five yards while he was scrounging around to see what was available. On his return about half an hour later as I grabbed a rest he would say, "Come on boy, we'll be here all night". Running empty along the open country road one late summer evening I was admiring the fields of stooked corn sheaves and amazed when he pulled up against the fence and bid me get over and start loading. We loaded the body of that lorry tightly with corn sheaves before we moved off.

Bamboo canes were difficult to come by during the war and so Hazel sticks were used in their place and we went off to Clapham Woods to collect a load. However, before we could load, clothes props that he saw cut and trimmed obviously awaiting collecting by someone were soon laid along the floor before we loaded the stakes.

We visited Lychpole Farm with horse manure, which seemed to me like taking coals to Newcastle, but on arrival found that chicken houses had been given over to the raising of mushrooms. We unloaded our manure but could not leave until the barn had been searched for any booty that it may hold, and sure enough we departed with several bags of peas.

Other journeys were made for loads that would be undesirable to most. Amongst the other things that Moosh was could be added that of a pig farmer. We travelled to what had been pre war the lovely racing stables of Michelgrove, situated in the hills above Patching. There were no horses there when we arrived but the place was full to overflowing with Canadian soldiers and we went to collect the swill from the cookhouse.

The swill was obtained from the remains of the plates of soldiers and the remnants of the vegetables during their preparation. One time there must have been at least ten bins of herring that had not even been prepared. Another, about ten rice puddings were taken straight from the oven

and nine of those went into the bins, the tenth we set about in no uncertain terms. Rationing was on then, but in no way did it seem to apply to that Army camp at Michelgrove.

Other trips would be made to the slaughter house at Brougham Road where all the offal that could not be used for other purposes was taken by us.

The dealer side of Moosh combined with his efforts as a farmer to congregate in that farm of about thirty five acres that was my neighbour during my days of "over the line". I thought at first that it had been bought separately from that of the Railway Works. It is now obvious to me that having purchased a hundred acres on which to build a works of about sixty six acres the remainder was in fact this farm.

The farm's western boundary was the rear fence of the houses on the eastern side of Western Road. Entry was made in Western Road at a spot opposite what is today the entrance to Brooklands. That entrance is still today devoid of any bungalows. The track ran up a steep bank to enter the gate here. On entry it was seen that one would be in a large dry meadow that probably took up over one third of the whole farm. The track made its way diagonally across it to pass a haystack and continue through a wire gate. No more than ten yards within it there was a track which ran along side the high wooden fence of the works. To the right the land was arable and separated from the large meadow by a Hawthorn hedge ably assisted in places by a wire fence. It was shaped triangularly, widening to about fifty yards at the bottom where it reached to the houses of Lancing Park. The track on the left edged along the fence with an acre or more on the high ground beside it and then a bank to the left dropped to another couple of acres. Still falling away to the west the remainder of the farm was brookland, ranging from wet to almost under water most of the time. The wettest part was under the viaduct that towered above the lower portions, conveying water from the Tower of Tower Road. Tucked in the corner, unseen until the steep bank was reached, was the considerable farm buildings.

The farm at this time carried the name of New Barn, but it had been many years indeed when it was a new barn. It was quite a large site as farms in the area went of that type. It, like the others, was centralised by the large barn built very much to the same size as all the others. The hovel area that accompanied most of these farms was to be found on one side only. This one had hovel type buildings that had been constructed at the same time equally on both sides. Before the coming of the railway in any form this had indeed been a large farm, probably encompassing a lot of the land of St Johns as well as reaching to the sea and incorporating Waddies Brooks.

Now it was just as I have said of thirty five acres, the buildings showing years of neglect and decay. When Dad first arrived it was farmed by a Mr Cass. Anyway the format of it seemed to fit the task that Moosh set it to and no doubt the rent was not high.

In the yard there were two large coppers that were filled with the various swill which we collected and cooked to serve to the hundred or more pigs that occupied a large area of the barn. The swill that came from the soldiers was an easy matter, requiring only to be cooked and fed. That which came from the slaughter house was another proposition. Most of it had to be cleaned first and it was during that task that I first became aware of the origins of that favoured dish Tripe. When this waste was boiling away the fat exuding from it would run over the brim of the cooker, catching fire as the rivulets crossed the ford. The pigs did indeed do well on these rations.

Cattle would graze the meadows and the brooks. The first part of the hovel had been made into a cowshed with the centre portion being a feed shed that occupied a deep well. In the back hovel were other cattle and out the back a couple of sties became the home for a short while of a couple of breeding sows.

I was never to spend too long down at this farm and I was pleased about that. The first time I was left on my own was after he had sacked the cowman, whom he had caught swigging raw eggs in milk. The eggs from the gang of chicken that wandered the area at will. Although Moosh would cheat wherever he could he disliked intensely to be cheated himself. That almost innocent act of the cowman was enough for Moosh to react by sacking him. That event caused he and I to have the task of milking.

The cows that made up this small herd were only eight of nine in number and the best of those were hardly equal to the worst of St Johns. Nevertheless, Moosh had gone to great lengths to attempt to get the place to a standard that would allow him to sell the milk for human

consumption, by building a new dairy admittedly of wood, but to no avail. There was a battle each time the Sanitary Inspector arrived for inspection and more than once I thought that a fist fight would erupt. In the end he gave up all hope of passing the place and contented himself to continue selling the milk for cake making to the Giraffe Baker in North Road, who baked and sold wholesale, the place even today is still a bakers.

One time when I was left there in that small farm on my own, well, hardly on my own because one always felt a hundred pair of eyes watching you, made up from animals and the population of rats that were indeed numerous. I was chopping wood with an axe. The effort was great and my tongue was between my teeth when the wood, having parted, flew in the air, one bit hitting me under the chin. I bit my tongue badly, the blood flowing madly. I panicked and set off up the track and across that large meadow swallowing, it seemed, pints of blood that I was frightened of losing. I ran into the first bungalow at the now Commerce Way where a little plump woman lived that I at times had helped with the picking of blackberries. She soon had me at my ease, but it surely frightened me.

That little farm was to give me other frights as well. Moosh had a bull that illegally had no ring in its nose and was tethered up on the high bank from a leather thong around its neck. From the grassland around the farm the high hedge above ensured he could not be seen. We were down there one evening when the daylight was rapidly losing its fight with the dark. There was a crash and that bull had broken his tether and crashed through the Hawthorn hedge that adorned the bank. Even faster than he came through that hedge I was in the yard. Moosh shouted, "Get a stick and come on". I suppose I did and somehow we got him in that dark cowshed. Lighting a hurricane lamp Moosh handed it to me, "Give me some light" he said. "Just a minute" says I, scrambling high among the rafters from where I bravely lit the cowshed. I admired Moosh's bravery that night as he entered the building swearing at the old bull as he caught and secured it.

It was not only animals that put the willies up me down there. I had young Dave with me down there on the day that I had Blossom and the cart. We were to load some chicken in crates and some ducks in others to take to Lancing. The Germans came over and dropped a couple of bombs, one dropping in the fenced field of eight and a half acres and the other in the roadway at the top of Western Road. This was no more than a hundred yards from the farm and pool old Blossom must have thought she was in a Roy Rogers film, for although still in the cart she reared up on her hind legs and I had a job to control her. After the terrific explosion whose blast caused the dropping of slates from the roof, Dave came out of the hovel stating, "Blimey, don't it make your knees knock".

I carried a load back to Lancing from the farm one day. It comprised of further chickens and ducks in crates and, believe it or not, a pig in a poke. We had loaded the cart when Moosh decided that I was to take that little pig. There was no crate in which he could be transported and so he was put in this poke, a poke being a very large sack that is used to convey light bulky materials. All the way through the village that poke kept jumping around. I was indeed glad to get to the home yard.

I don't think that Moosh ever heard of a clock. We would start a day when he thought he was ready, and when he had enough that was the end of the day. It would not be surprising therefore that we should find ourselves milking at about eleven o'clock at night down that creepy old farm. By the time we had finished Moosh was walking about the yard with a hurricane lamp, not caring if there was such a thing as blackout. I was very tired. The sirens went and the planes were busy overhead as we started to release the cows. About the same time that we drove them clear of the buildings a plane crashed in Lyndhurst Road lighting the area around with the flames from the fire that it created. The voices of the people at the scene could clearly be heard as we drove the creatures beside the works fence, proceeding along the small plank bridge with the ample mud each side. We were eventually aiming to secure them in the fenced off pasture of Mr Lee. Almost at the end of the high board fence and just arriving at the better solid surface of the grasslands there was a rattling of the boards and from the darkness came the command, "Halt. Who goes there?" In a flash Moosh says, for he must have guessed it was the Railway Works Home Guard, "Mind your own bloody business and let us get on with our work." The command was clearly and plainly made again and this time Moosh reckoned he had better play the game and gave our names and business. They had a job to believe us at that time of night but allowed us to continue without further ado.

When we had at last secured the cows in Mr Lee's pasture Moosh says, "You can go home now". "No bloody fear" says I, thinking of those gurgling brooks in the dark on my own with Home Guard prowling about and planes overhead, "I'm coming with you". This I did and within the next hour I was tucked up in bed with Moosh, and soon with his youngest son as well because his wife had brought him in from another room. I reckon I was one of about one hundred employees of Moosh over the years, but am willing to bet that I was the only one to sleep with him.

There were other late nights to be spent down in that dank, dark place and other journeys to be made from there up to the yard at Lancing.

One special one that comes to mind was on a Sunday. Dad had agreed to come and pull some mangolds for Moosh and that employment meant that he had worked for him on three separate occasions. He pulled the mangolds and I had both Blossom and Damsel hauling them off in trace. We had worked through to the late morning when a thunder storm broke. It rained as though it would never stop and about half past twelve it was decided that that was it for the day. Letting Blossom free in the meadow after she was unharnessed I was to take Damsel and the cart back to the yard as we had a job for her in the morning. I had my old coat on but Moosh bid me put his old Army coat over mine. I did as he bid me and it dragged on the floor of the cart around my ankles. I set off down across the meadow, through the gate, along Western Road to the sea front road and on to the Three Horse Shoes. I was like a drowned rat. It started to rain heavy again, even harder than it was. It was Sunday lunch and South Street appeared empty. I egged Damsel from a walk through a trot to a canter. We rattled away up the street, the iron rimmed wheels creating a fair old row on the tarmac. I felt like an absentee from one of those old cowboy movies where the stage coach thundered up the main street to report the hold up. There was no hold up today, not even at the level crossing as we rattled over to the surprised gaze of the signalman, up North Road and into the yard. Old Damsel's sides were heaving and the steam rose from her but I knew she was as glad to be home as I was. I jumped over the tailboard to the ground below, toppling over with the weight of the sodden coats I was wearing. It was still raining hard and I found myself a prisoner on the ground with that heavy coat and before I could rise I had to crawl out of it. Damsel was soon out of the shafts of the cart and not long after her harness too and I was wiping her down.

The horses and I did not make many journeys together after that one. Whether or not it was working with Dad again I don't know, but I was soon to say goodbye to Moosh and, in some ways, his exciting employment and find myself again in the relative quiet but security of a job with Mr Lee.

Chapter XXXXIII
GOODBYE YOUNG BILL

I had never, apart from that journey to Aldershot and a holiday in Littlehampton, been away from the village overnight, or travelled a long distance. I never ever felt the need to do so or the desire.

During the war I had seen all the members of the gangs gradually depart for their service. I had shared the sorrow of those that fell or were lost. It never occurred to me, especially way back to that day in Berriedale Drive, that I too would be called upon.

I felt rather silly really because it was now 1945 and it was obvious to all that the war in Germany would be over in a matter of weeks. However, no sooner had I celebrated my eighteenth birthday than a letter arrived telling me to report to Colchester.

The day arrived for my departure. I had said goodbye to Gran Lindfield and was on my way back from bidding goodbye to Gran Stoner. Dad was waiting at the bottom of the road to the green. Mother was very upset. Well, it was not just joining the Army, but I was the first of her brood to depart. I expect she could see now that soon, one by one, we would be leaving the nest and all those years of care and worry over each of us could not be just swept away without a tear of regret for our leaving.

I shook hands with Dad and set off to catch the bus at The Ball Tree. Sitting on that top deck I looked around as I passed all those memories, with a seemingly unrequited appetite to retain them and then like the old cows I left behind could bring them up at my pleasure and chew them over and over again. Bashfords, the policeman's house, Berriedale, Abbey, the corner shop, Lancing Recreation ground, my tarred trousers, Wembley, the coal yard, and at last the station.

I went on to the station and there as large as life stood Harry Slaughter and since that time I have tried to think, did he still have that dog end in his mouth and was the smoke still twirling up his nose and fighting with the air he breathed to gain entry to his lungs, but the picture is not that clear. I looked along the track towards Worthing for the train that would come and carry me away. Ham Bridge could clearly be seen and not long after the train had become silhouetted in the brick structure. I looked up to the signal box that stood next to the platform. The bells would ring and the signalman would pass the bell signal on to Shoreham, then with the ever present rag in his hand he rotated the wheel and the gates closed.

Looking back now the train was growing in size as it could be seen to be passing Waddies Brooks, that in a couple of months would again go through the ritual of haymaking. Then it would be passing "over the line", but today there would be no cows there and never again would a young boy stroll with his herd on that green swathe. Now the train was quite close and passing the spot where Rose got caught in the rail. On past the sidings that stood with its coaches looking down at me all that time. Would it be one of those that stood there on one of those wet days looking down at me, or watching me play cowboys through that ford, that would carry me away that day?

It pulled into the station, the doors opened and people got out, before the doors closed I climbed aboard. I stood looking out of the lowered window, half hoping that somehow Harry wouldn't give the driver the all clear. He did and we set off, within a second we were abreast of the gates and the memory of old Blossom and the angry workers at the crossing raised a slight smile in me. We picked up speed along the side of Freshbrook Road and I remembered that fresh faced young lad proudly leading his horse with the loaded cart along its length.

The houses now clear it was possible to look up at the Clump high on the hill and I'm sure I bid her goodbye. All the details of her were fresh in my mind, as indeed was Mum and the goat, Norman and the late summer evenings, the lady and the accordion. Then the rattle of the wheels changed their song, we were on the bridge and the sight of the Clump was gone.

As we rattled on then I knew in my heart that the Sompting and Lancing that I knew had gone, not just for a year, but forever.

The geography of the place was going to change that is sure, and I suppose it had and always will continue to do so. The real change though was not so much in the place but in the eyes that would see her. The war would be over in weeks and so there was no danger of horror

being a reason. It is true that the war in the Far East was still on and perhaps that could in other circumstances have been a factor, but no, it was the act of growing up.

I was going to have to look after myself from here on. If I got into trouble it was I and only I that could rescue me.

I had always somehow wished a life years before this one I lived, and was blessed in many ways by the older people I worked with to see a part of that period through their eyes. Now I was to think that the grass was greener in the fields of my new companions as I shared life for the first time with Taffies, Jocks, Paddies, Scousers, Geordies, Brummies, East Anglians, West Country men and Cockneys.

When I did come back I could not be content with the life I thought so fulfilling before, even if I could find it, but I shall be forever grateful to all those people that shared the years I have recalled with me.

I hope that as you read these memories of mine you may find a moral hidden there and that is that what you may take many years seeking was there in your own back yard all the time.

So off you go now and make your own store of memories and may they be as rewarding to you as these are to me, of "The Last Cowboy in Sussex".