John Stone

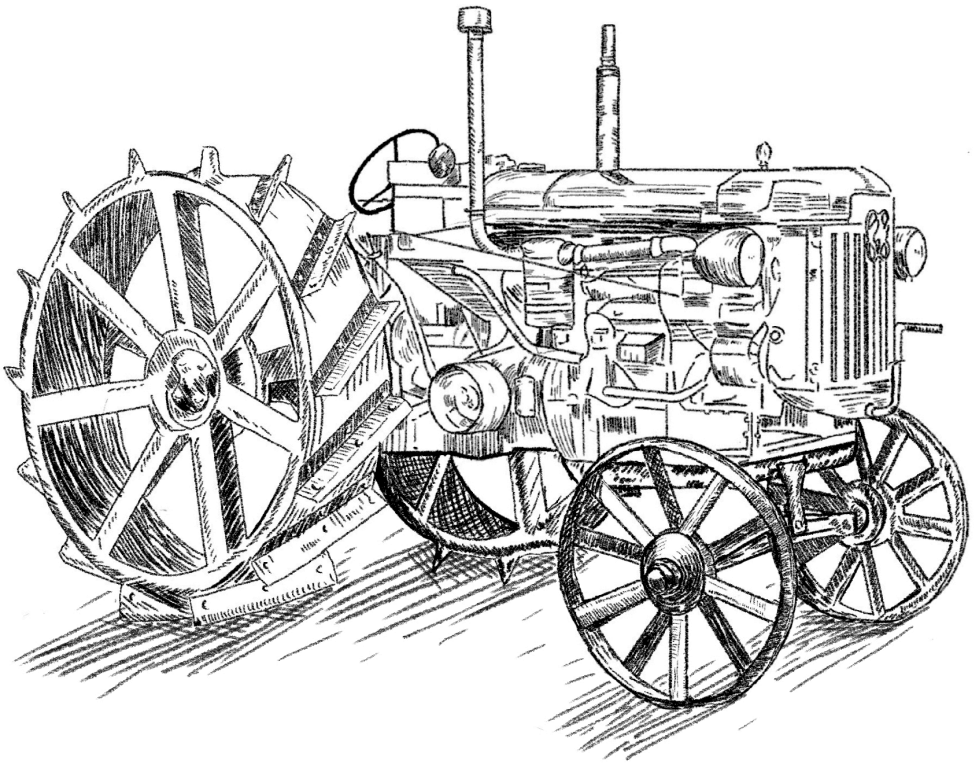
Changing Times



A memoir of a life in farming
from pre-mechanisation to modern day


PB 843
WARNING
DOGS LOOSE!
STAY IN CAR
SOUND HORN
THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN
Cletrac
TANK-TYPE TRACTOR
Sell Those Horses Now!

Changing Times



7/11/22

By John Stone

This book is dedicated
to the loving memory of Eva and Mark
and to my son, William



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Foreword



Take a look at the picture above; it is dated from circa 1930. The Norhead Dairy's head roundsman is holding the horse; my father, John Stone, is the lower left figure and surrounded by his siblings. This transport was the reality of that time.

During one man's lifetime the horse has effectively disappeared and all around us has changed.

The farm was worked by people who laboured in all weathers and were helped by the horse and other animals; for example goats for grazing orchards, dogs controlling pests and livestock.

The tractor (see chapter 9) was in its infancy and some looked like a Leonardo da Vinci mechanical nightmare. Now you see machines such as the Lamborghini and others, that can plough circa sixty acres per day with one man, while the horses in pairs and three or more men could average one acre per day.

Hence, over a few decades, farming has changed forever.

This beautifully constructed biography was written by my father over several years, and polished from hours of work by Lizzy Stroud, my second cousin. Lizzy spent many days over the last two years in interviews and discussions with my father to make sure everything was included. From this we we get a detailed picture of his life, its trials and tribulations, moments of prowess and satisfactory achievements.

The farm, early life and the war were clearly formative for the character of my father.

The farm was a close knit community and despite harsh conditions was driven by kindness and awareness of individual needs within the community.

These values over time have largely disappeared, like the horse, but clearly remain as formative forces in my father's character.

I take this opportunity to thank him for his example.

I also express my thanks to all who have contributed to this work.

William Ivor Stone - November 2022.

Chapter 1

Early Life

This is the story of growing up in the 1930s on a farm on the North Downs in Kent.



My Grandmother at Norheads Nest

I was born at home on the 4th December 1925. My generation of the family consisted of five children, all born within six and a half years. Ruth was the eldest, followed in quick succession by Rod, Marjorie, me and then Rene.

Our journey to Norheads farm began with my paternal grandfather, William Stone. He was born in 1848 and married three times. His first wife was Flora Bullock, 12 years his junior. She died fairly young, leaving six children. He then married Flora's younger sister, Alice, in 1889, but she died two years later, leaving one child.

The Bullock family ran the The Angel pub at Islington and William became the victualler, having come from a family farm in Knowstone, Devon. He later ran the Queens Head in Green Street Green, and took on the tenancy of Norheads Farm in 1896[1].

After his second wife died, William Stone married Juliana, my grandmother. It seems he would have married Juliana earlier, but she had been nursing a sick brother for several years and would not leave Devon until he died. At the time of their marriage he was a licenced victualler living in Chelsham. My father was born in December 1894, and although he was the only surviving child from this last marriage he had seven half brothers and sisters.

[1] For a copy of the original lease, see Appendix 1.

My grandfather died before I knew him. His widow, my grandmother, lived in Norheads Nest, a bungalow on the farm built by my grandfather in the style of European buildings he'd seen in his travels. The design worked well. There was a big room in the middle and bedrooms on either side.

Because she was a widow my grandmother always wore black, with black stockings and boots and an enormous stuffed hat a la Queen Victoria. She was extremely religious and strict; the only thing she read on a Sunday was the Bible. Her stepdaughter Mary looked after her. Aunt Mary was a great knitter who could knit a pair of stockings in a day, using four needles and never looking at the work, even when doing cable stitch.

I'm not sure if Grandmother was eccentric or mean, but when a visitor was coming to stay she would put a candle in the room to air it. Occasionally I stayed there in the weird feather bed and never caught a cold, so it must have been OK.



Grandmother with Dot and Rene

My grandmother died in the cellar while sheltering from bombs during the war. As she died she said "Glorious Heaven". Aunt Mary continued to live at Norheads Nest until she died.

My father fought in the First World War, in the mud of Flanders. He didn't talk of it much, but what he did say was horrific.

He recalled how he daren't take his boots off because of the swelling caused by trench foot. Once removed, the boots would never go back on again. When he was sleeping in the trenches rats would chew his ears to see whether he was alive. If there wasn't movement they would have eaten him. Lice were also a problem and he said the way to kill



My father and his parents

them was to turn your vest inside out and pop them off with a candle. Being on the front line toughened him, and he wasn't frightened of anyone or anything.

Part of his time in France was spent in charge of prisoners of war. These prisoners were short of food and the sentries would hand dogs through the wire for them to eat. In return the inmates would give out models of tanks made from shell cases. My father acquired three of these, but unfortunately on his death my stepmother had them, so now they are gone from the family. After he returned from the war he took over the farm from his father and got married.

One of my father's half brothers, Uncle Fred, lived by the main road in Biggin Hill. He had emigrated to Australia but came back to fight in the first world war. He married Auntie Grace who was a Plymouth Brethren.



Fred and Grace

Grace was very religious and used to lecture all over the country. She did not drive, but knew every bus, and all the timetables, by heart; there were a lot more buses in those days. Being Plymouth Brethren set them apart from the general community. This must have been hard on their only daughter Freddie, who appeared

to be very withdrawn as a child.

The Plymouth Brethren used to come over to Biggin Hill to sing for the air force. You could hear them from a long way away.



My maternal grandmother and father were Laura and Harry Henwood. Grandfather was German, and changed his name from Heinrich Heinwood to Harry Henwood before the First World War. There was no question of him being anti-British, but you couldn't be too careful. There were three children from this marriage: Fred, Doll (Dorothy) and my mother, Elsie Laura.

My grandparents lived in 49 Bromley Road, Catford. When I was small we used to travel up to visit them in an Austin 16 that had been passed down. In the run-up to the war farming was depressed, but started getting better in the late 30s, so my father bought a new Austin 8 in 1938.

When we visited our grandparents I found it hard to sleep because the trams went right through the night. My mother's sister Doll lived in the house with our grandparents. She had consumption[2], and her bed was taken outside so she could get fresh air. The air was cleaner then than it is now, as trams didn't make much pollution.

Once when we were staying in Catford we had a visit from a mad great-aunt. She was convinced that all the electricity we were using was going into the earth, and that one day there would be a huge explosion!

My grandmother's aunt was a Miss Elizabeth Everest, who was Winston Churchill's governess. The family believes he gave her a watercolour, painted when he was about 15. We could never prove

[2] Consumption, now known as tuberculosis or TB, is a bacterial infection spread through inhaling tiny droplets from the coughs or sneezes of an infected person. It mainly affects the lungs, but it can affect any part of the body, including the abdomen, glands, bones and nervous system. A vaccine for school children (the BCG) introduced in 1953, and the development of the antibiotic *streptomycin* in 1948, has meant that TB is now no longer the killer it once was.

this, and later Sir Winston did not recognise it, so unfortunately instead of it being quite valuable it is worth practically nothing.



Doll, Elsie and Fred



Elsie, Fred and Doll

My mother was the youngest of three siblings, all of whom were to die young. She loved dogs, and was a talented musician. However she was always ill, because she had too many children; five and a miscarriage in seven years. During my childhood she was usually in bed, but on odd occasions when she was well enough she would come downstairs and play piano and we would all sing together.

My mother's brother Fred was an architect and quite a reasonable artist. Whenever he came to visit, he would always ask for jam and clotted cream. He was keen on catching butterflies and collecting bird's eggs. He married a lady called Doe (another Dorothy).

Fred used to visit occasionally with his wife and little dog, which was some sort of terrier. He brought his dog one day and as soon as it was let out of the car our dog Taffy, a fearsome black and tan Welsh collie, went for it and dragged it yelping all the way out of the yard. This was the last occasion this dog was brought to the farm and we didn't see so much of Aunt Doe after this as she was, to put it mildly, somewhat upset.



Fred fought in the trenches in the First World War and was saved by his pocket watch, which was struck by a bullet. Unfortunately Fred suffered from gas inhalation in the first world war. He could do plenty of things - he used to design aerodromes and his work took him all over the country - but because of his damaged lungs he was unable to run and was low on energy.

Being saved by his pocket watch wasn't Fred's only brush with death. In the second world war he was in Suffolk driving to visit an aerodrome he had designed when he heard a booming sound. He looked in his rear view mirror. Behind him the road was exploding and a German bomber was closing in on him. He realised that the bomber was targeting the road, so pulled in to the side. A few seconds later there was an almighty explosion as the road ahead of him was blown up, just where he would have been had he not stopped.



A family holiday with parents, grandparents, Doll, Fred and a great aunt and uncle

In 1942 he was persuaded to have an operation to repair his damaged lungs. The surgeon told him “This will make a new man of you.” He died on the operating table, aged 49. He said to my Mother “If I die your children will be well off.” I don’t know what happened, but we never got a penny.

My mother's elder sister Doll, or Dorothy, died in 1936 from consumption. My mother, Elsie, had kidney trouble for years and died in 1939 just after the outbreak of war. It must have been hard on Grandmother to outlive her three children.

Before Doll died we went on a seaside holiday with my grandparents to Brighton. It never rained!



When I was about five or six I had a little patch of garden and I had a primrose plant that had 500 blooms on it. It was unbelievable. So I dug it up and gave it to Doll, because I knew she was poorly. I was eleven when Doll died.

My grandfather died not long after the second world war. They came to stay with us to get away from the London bombing, but in the end we had far more bombs at Biggin Hill than they did! They were lucky as their house remained intact. My grandfather was a builder and had inherited twelve London houses. However these houses were all flattened during the war and no compensation found its way to the family, so that was the end of that.

Chapter 2

The House



Norheads farm was close to Biggin Hill. It had 440 acres, 70 of which were woodland. Some fields were very steep, with heavy clay on the top fields, chalk on the banks and chalky loam on the lower fields. It was a very hard farm to work and exposed to the bitter winds at 700 feet above sea level.

The lease, which ran for 21 years, was very strict in some ways. The sporting rights were retained by the landlord. Tenants were allowed to shoot rabbits and pigeons, rooks and crows, but not any game-birds or hares. Any hay or straw sold off the farm had to be replaced by something of equal manurial value. The percentage of arable land, if increased, had to be reinstated at the end of the tenancy, or a large fine had to be paid.

The house was typically Georgian, built in 1715, with brick on the front, cheaper knapped flint on the back and a tiled roof. Two of the



windows had been bricked in at the side to save paying some window tax, the forerunner of rates. It was very large, with two enormous rooms at the front downstairs and two corresponding bedrooms upstairs, with a very wide oak staircase in between and a very large top landing. One of the bedrooms had a powder room off it where the gentlemen in Georgian times retired to powder their wigs. Between the main bedroom and the room my brother Rod and I used, there was a narrow passage which contained a type of blanket box, with a door into each bedroom. Perhaps the master who occupied the main room could go through to see what was in the maid's room when he wanted a bit on the side. Of course, quite often in years gone by, the master of the house did get extra favours from the servants.

The walls in my bedroom were covered in several layers of wallpaper. To decorate, another layer was added. The old paper was never removed as it held the plaster in place which bulged quite a lot.

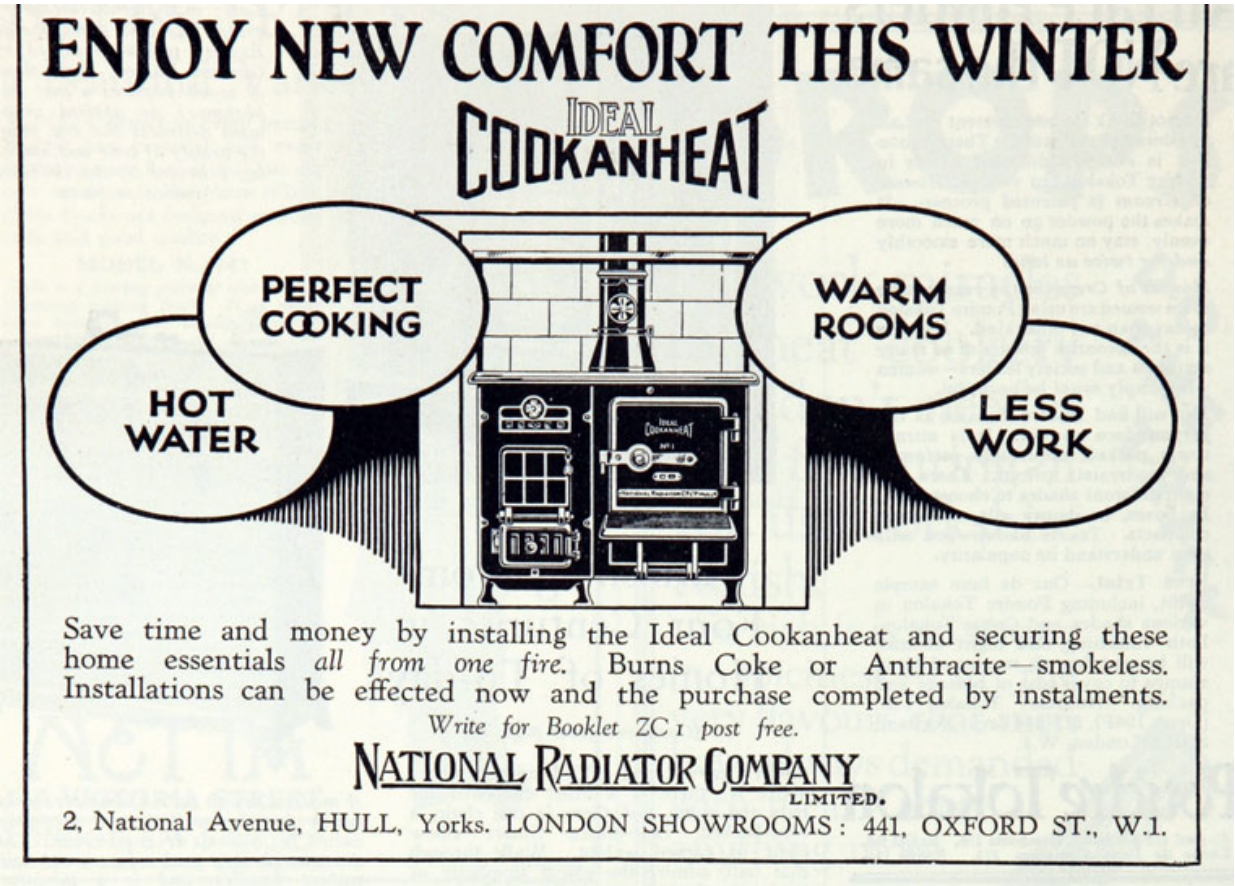


Ruth, Rene and Dot in the garden

There were many built-in cupboards in the house. In the front room, which we called the nursery, there were four large cupboards. We used to hide in them. There were two on each side of the fireplace; the top ones glazed and the bottom ones with solid wood doors.

In the other front room, the dining room, there were very large cupboards down one side, where bottled fruit and jam were stored. On one side there was a tall cupboard, which contained medicines. When I was about three or four I climbed on a stool and opened this cupboard and drank about half a bottle of horse liniment. It didn't seem to have hurt. It seems that animal medicines were fairly crude on the whole - one mixture was supposed to cure almost anything from mastitis to a bellyache! A bit like Lily the Pink's medicinal compound.

There was also a back staircase. At the back of the house there were smaller rooms, originally used by servants. A later addition was a kitchen with a slate roof and a stone floor. There was a dairy with a drain hole in the outer wall so that it could be washed down.



Halfway up the back stairs a bedroom had been made into a bathroom, which would freeze up in the winter.

Usually the only heating in the house came from the open fire in the front room, and a stove in the kitchen called the Ideal Cookanheat[3], which supplied hot water as well as heating and oven. Before this was installed the cooking would have been done in the dining room, where the cooking tools remained long after. The stove was reasonably efficient, although one day it almost burnt the house down. The maid put on paraffin when the stove was already hot, and was badly shaken up with singed eyebrows. This also brought down the register plate above the stove.

The dining room had a very large fireplace with seats inside and cupboards on each side. One of these was used for storing 12-bore cartridges to keep them dry. Sometimes they must have got hot, but they never exploded.

[3] Image from https://www.gracesguide.co.uk

This fireplace was reputed to be the largest in Kent, and was used for smoking bacon. Only one pig was slaughtered at a time, and after being bled and eviscerated, was cut up. Some meat was used fresh, including the offal, and the remainder was salted with the inclusion of molasses. Salt was rubbed in for two weeks, then the pieces, usually both sides, were hung in the big chimney and smoked for another two or three weeks, with oak sawdust put on the fire.

This fire was terrible for filling the room with smoke, which could sometimes be cured by either removing the cushion stuffed in the door, or putting it in, depending on the weather. A hole was left in the door for this purpose.

We used to entertain large numbers of friends and neighbours in the dining room on special occasions, such as parties or after-shoot Boxing Day dinners. On the days when these dinners were held the smoke would sometimes belch out from the fire and fill the room, gathering at its thickest on the ceiling. The diners would sit lower and lower to avoid it.

Before electricity was connected in 1937 oil lamps were used. Our own electric plant consisted of 60 2-amp accumulators connected in series, charged by a generator powered by a petrol engine. As this unit was old, the electric light went off as soon as the motor stopped. It was most uneconomic. In my bedroom the flex to the ceiling light sparked when live. This shows how damp it was, and very cold.

The early radios up to about 1937 or 1938 were run by one dry battery and one small accumulator, which had to be charged regularly. It seemed quite amazing to get a radio which ran off the mains electricity and would keep running without fail, only of course after 1937 in our case.

There were two cellars in the house. One was for coal, and the other used for salting, baking and making cider. These were fairly damp and the coal cellar, by its very nature, was dirty as well.

There were two lavatories outside, one for the workers and one for the family. One of these lavatories had a cracked pan (probably broken by frost). This was never repaired so that in essence there was only one lavatory. The men never used this, and in fact there were no toilet facilities or a proper wash-basin for the staff, which, when you consider we were producing milk, would not be tolerated today.

The attics in the house had an area against the walls where the slope of the roof was boarded in, leaving a space behind in the shape of a triangle, with one or two doors in it. My sister Rene and I used to go into the space looking for starlings' eggs. At one place the only way out was backwards. It seems crazy now to do this because it was dark and cobwebby, horribly dusty, and we could have got stuck.



Chapter 3

The Farm

Behind the house on the north side was the brewhouse, which was largely built of knapped flint. These flints were dug on the farm. In Beech Wood there were some quite deep holes, about 30 feet across, where they were quarried, and it must have been pure flint because there didn't appear to be any heaps of spoil. The flint was sold for road building, and a tithe was paid to the landlord for any flint we sold. The workmen must have been very susceptible to accidents caused by flying pieces of flint, which would cut faces and sometimes damage eyes.

The farm buildings consisted of one large barn with stables for six horses with a loft over for hay, several loose boxes, a cowshed for thirty erected in 1938, a smaller cowshed for ten, and a storeroom come food-mixing building where there was a type of small diesel engine with an exhaust pipe which went straight up through the roof. This had to be started with a blow-lamp, and then would run all day on very little paraffin. Connected to this engine was a belt, which drove a pulley on the shaft near the wood. This in turn was connected by a belt to another shaft, which could drive either a chaff-cutter or a root-cutter, and a small mill and roller for grain. There were no guards anywhere on the belts or shafts, but I don’t remember any accidents caused by this. Later a Dutch barn was built in the stable yard.

There was also a chalk pit on the farm, about 80 feet across and 20 feet deep. It had not been used recently, but in times past it had been used for putting chalk on the heavy clay soils on the more level areas on the top of banks to improve the pH levels. It was also used for making floors for cowsheds.

On the 400 acres there was hardly any arable land; just enough to feed the cows. Because farming was in such a poor state it wasn’t worth growing anything. This all changed at the beginning of the war. We had a visit from the Agricultural War Committee, who said



Hedge laying

we had to have at least 100 acres of cereals, which the land was unsuited for.

The early leases specified that any cultivated land must be returned to grass at the end of term. They recognised that cultivation damaged the soil, and land taken into cultivation without prior permission was subject to a hefty fine. Hedges were laid, which was good for the wildlife. This would take up much of the winter as it all had to be done by hand.

We fed the cows on mangolds and marrow stem kale, which was very juicy; water would run out as you cut it. The kale would last up to Christmas, then the mangolds were used.

We also used to buy the cows cotton-cake, It went on a kibbler, which had two cylinders with spikes on it which would kibble the cakes into small pieces so the cows could eat it.

We had some sort of mill. Later we had a hammer mill, with loose hammers on it, which flung around among the corn and would hammer it into coarse flour. You had to have the tractor flat out to run it. It had a long belt that was joined by belt fasteners. One time a chap was using it when the belt came loose and swung round and knocked him out. He was out flat for about three hours. After that he wouldn't use it any more so I had the job. I must have been considered disposable! I tried to keep out of the way of the belt that was whizzing around.

Although the brewhouse was previously used for beer brewing, in our day it was used for plucking chickens and repairing things like my motorbike.

One day during the war when plucking chickens, we decided to try out one of the incendiary bombs we had found, a number of which had not gone off. It was essential to check these first as some were filled with explosive; they had a red spot on them. Rod and I put one of the non-explosive types on the fire because it was a cold day, and had to leave the room as it got so hot!

Among the farm buildings was a granary built on twelve staddle stones, which were cone-shaped stones with mushroom tops, in theory keeping out the rats. Unfortunately as the steps to the granary were left in place the rats entered by them instead. The walls were double, being weatherboard on the outside and matchboard on the inside. It had pantiles[4] on the roof.

The granary was divided into six bays to keep the different grain separate. Once in the wall cavity, rats were very difficult to remove and, because of the amount of food available, were not keen to enter traps. Some would be killed with sticks and dogs, especially after dark. When it rained the rats would come out onto the roof for water because, although the pantiles didn't let in the rain, there was space sufficient for a rat to get through. My father used to shoot them with a 12 bore using fine shot so as not to damage the tiles. Rod and I tried this, using a stirrup pump to entice the rats out, but my father was not very happy about it.

One day a visiting refrigeration engineer said he had some spare gas, as a new sort was now being used. He suggested trying to gas out the rats. We duly pumped the gas into the cavity but the rats wouldn't come out – they just kept sneezing.

The apple orchard was about a half of an acre, with many different varieties, which gave a supply from early autumn to March or April. They were kept in heaps in the brewhouse loft and although there were rats and mice about, we didn't seem to suffer any ill effects

[4] Tiles of a different shape

from them running about on and near the apples, although it probably was a health risk. Maybe it just gave us some immunity.

The apples were never pruned or sprayed. Pigs were often kept under them; they couldn't do any damage because the trees were old and had thick trunks. There were three fairly high plum trees. One of these was my father's favourite, a Tzar. One of the other trees was dead. My father told one of the workmen to cut the dead tree down, and by mistake he cut down the Tzar. Father was not happy! Sometimes having the men work in the garden didn't seem such a good idea. One day they dug up the rhubarb and threw it into the orchard. We retrieved it, replanted it, and it grew better than ever, as it was planted on an old chicken run.

There were red and black currants, white currants, gooseberries and raspberries. Pears grew but never ripened even when kept indoors for a long time, as the farm was too high above sea level. The currants were covered each summer with lace curtains to prevent the birds eating them.

The birds had nearly all the cherries off the two large trees except when we devised a method of a string of cans containing pebbles linked to the kitchen by a string. Whoever was in the kitchen pulled the string at regular intervals. This was partially successful – but birds get up very early. The only year we had any quantity of cherries was when I was supposedly revising for my school leaving certificate, and sat down in the garden with an air rifle. It was a bit hard on the birds, but in those days they seemed to be more plentiful, and collecting eggs and shooting didn't seem to reduce numbers like the use of sprays and the change in farming methods has done.

We squeezed our apples in a press which was two pieces of lead. It was on a big stand that fed into a galvanised trough, and people would drink the juice as it was being pressed. There must have been a lot of lead. After being pressed the juice was put in barrels and left to turn into cider, which was kept for a few years. We made several barrels each year.

In those days people didn’t realise the problem with lead. Children would lick lead paint off their cots, and become ill. Later in life I had calves in a loose box; they licked some paint off and were climbing up the wall. It was amazing the effect it had on them. We also knew a garage proprietor at Biddenden who kept his cider in a lead tank. He became ill, so went into hospital, but when he came out continued to drink his cider as he thought it would help him to get better. After four times in hospital the doctor said it looked like lead poisoning, but by that time it was too late and he died. He was only about fifty.

My father didn’t sell cider, he just kept it and drank it over the course of the year. He used to drink beer at dinner time and cider in the evening.

There were four cottages on the farm, arranged into pairs. These were poor by today's standards with no bathroom, a lavatory fifty yards down the garden, and narrow staircases. Mains water was laid on and could be heated by a fire beneath the copper in the kitchen. Three of these cottages were occupied by farmworkers, and the fourth by a keeper who looked after the game belonging to the landlord.

The farm workers didn't, as a rule, go out much during the week, but often had a pint or two on a Saturday evening, usually going to the pub on foot or by bicycle. One man had a habit of taking a dose of Epsom salts every Saturday night to clean out the system. Unfortunately one evening he put the salts in his glass, not realising that his wife had already done so. The result was several trips down the garden!

Chapter 4

Biggin Hill



Biggin Hill parish

In the 1920s Biggin Hill was made up of lots of little wooden bungalows, usually with about an acre of land. They'd been built as holiday bungalows for people from London who would come and live in them at weekends. After the second world war this changed, and most became permanent residences. My father had a bungalow with a plot of land down in the Biggin Hill valley that he originally rented out, but because it had been empty for some time he sold it just after the war for £150. We had the job of going down and sweeping it out before it was sold.

There were terrible London fogs before the war when you literally could not see more than a yard or two. I remember one day visiting my maternal grandmother who lived in Catford and we came home at five miles an hour for a long way. This fog was very dangerous

for anyone with a chest complaint, and was caused partly by industry and partly by most people burning coal on their fires.

In 1936 Crystal Palace burnt down. Although we were 17 miles by road from London and deep in the country I could see this quite clearly from my bedroom. When this incredible building was erected there was a lot of criticism regarding whether or not it would hold up because of the new methods of construction, but no one expected it to burn down, being mostly glass, although in fact it was the second time this had happened.

We had a real old-fashioned policeman called Kitney, who knew all the rogues and where to find them. We knew him quite well because he always had to see the sheep being dipped, which was the law at the time. The sheep were dipped by pushing their heads underwater with a forked stick. We used a mixture containing arsenic, which must have been safer than the organophosphorus used today. One day our dog ate a concentrated mixture but didn't suffer any ill effects.

This policeman had a bottle of beer left out for him on the wall of the Black Horse pub. One day someone added pepper to the drink. This resulted in a heated-up copper!

About 1937 the vicar was asked what he thought of Biggin Hill. He said it was 50% crooks and 50% crocks. Several people took offence at this and he had to move to another parish. In fact, what he said was in the main-part true. Many people went to Biggin Hill for their health because it was 700 feet above sea level. Also there were undesirable types that settled there from the East End of London and Croydon.

One of the market gardeners at Biggin Hill was losing runner beans to thieves. He stretched trip wire across the road, attached to a 12-bore containing a blank cartridge. He had just finished fixing this when someone he wanted to see came by on the road. He ran to catch them, tripped over the wire and frightened himself so much that he dismantled the whole thing.

We had to always put one hanger upside down on the gates so they could not be taken and used as firewood. Once when putting on grass seed with a shandy barrow we left a small bucket in the field. When we returned after a dinner break it had disappeared. On another occasion someone took two balls of binder twine when we were away for an hour. If I had to leave the tractor out I always took the tools out of the toolbox and hid them. Of course not all the people living there were bad, just a small percentage. The Biggin Hill valley at that time mostly consisted of small bungalows in 2-acre plots. Now of course it is built on and has become part of outer London.

Some of the farm labourers were not to be trusted. One chap would cycle round the barns and then walk through the cowshed if he was late, making out he had been there earlier. One of the workers was stealing eggs. Father found these in his coat pocket when the coat was hanging in the shed. He broke the eggs while they were still in the pocket. On another occasion he took the eggs and, with a hypodermic needle, extracted some yolk, replaced it with mustard and put it back in the pocket.

One day during break time all the farm workers were having a farting competition in the shed they used for relaxation. One fellow somewhat overdid it and made such a stench we all had to leave.

One of the men from Biggin Hill who worked for us was a trade unionist. He'd always look at his watch at three minutes to the hour and say "I'm off" because the three minutes would give him time to get his bike out to get home. There might have been half a dozen mangolds to stick in the sack, but he'd just leave it for someone else to do. Although this was annoying, my father kept him on because he was so punctual in the mornings!

This worker was a funny chap. He had one of the first televisions, so all the other workers would go over and watch it, and yet he couldn't afford to have water put on in his house. He had a standpipe in the garden.



A typical Biggin Hill house

This same chap had to have a day off because his wife unexpectedly had a baby. They had been married for about twenty years. She was lying on the carpet by the fire eating nuts, as it was Christmas, when she felt a pain in her stomach. Within a short time she'd had a baby. This caused a lot of ribbing from the other men like "Didn't you know what caused it, Tom?”

After working in farming for a while he left us for a different job, where he could do his trade union work.

Some of the farm workers were a bit backwards. The cowmen were skilled, but the others were less so. Half of what they did in the winter was hedge-laying. We had one lad, a very strong lad, who was fourteen. He came from school but he hadn’t learnt to read or write. My father asked “Well what did you do at school?” So he told him he just drew things, and they never bothered him, just left him to it. Later he went into the army, and the sergeant annoyed him, so he hit him. As punishment he got put in the

glasshouse[5], so he got someone to write to my father and said ‘Can you help get me out, because all I did was hit a sergeant.’ My father couldn’t help him! In retrospect being in the glasshouse rather than on the frontline may have been a preferable option.

We had a worker called Upton, who was wiry, strong and incredibly hardworking. He used to do bush cutting and woodland management. He never used a watch. When he was hedge-laying he kept an alarm clock in his bag and when this went off he left work. He was a remarkable man who could outwork anyone at such jobs as cabbage planting. This was done with a dibber, the plants having been raised in a seedbed to about 9 inches or a foot high. One day we were working overtime and it got to about 7 o’clock, and he said “Right, I’ve done 700 plants so I’m off” leaving us to finish the planting. But we couldn’t complain as he had already done far more work than the rest of us!

Upton taught me how to thatch and hedge-lay. When I had chickens I thatched a house for them and it never leaked.

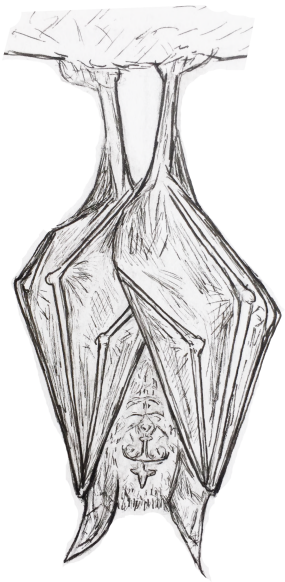
One winter’s evening when Father had gone out and I was at home with Rene, there was a knock on the door. A man and a woman were there. The roads were covered with snow. The couple had gone partly up the lane from the house, got stuck and needed a pull. He left the woman with Rene while I went to get the tractor (the Cletrac) to pull him out. This took some time as the water had been drained from the radiator, not much antifreeze being used in those days. I pulled him out, only half destroying his numberplate. I can't remember what we charged him, but it was probably not enough. The woman smelt of too much make-up and was dressed like a tart. Rene and I split the money. She probably had the worst of the bargain, having to put up with the over-processed female. They must have known the road wouldn't get them anywhere except for some shelter for nookie.

About 1937 the Croydon gliding club asked if they could make use of one of the fields for gliding. They erected a large wooden hut at the bottom of Rough Field, by the beech wood, and kept the glider

[5] Military prison

in there with the wings removed. To launch it, an old Sunbeam car was used. This was jacked up and a pulley replaced one back wheel. This would pull up the glider when the car was put into gear. The cable was attached to the front of the glider by a hook which the pilot could disengage. Although it pulled the glider along it was difficult to get it off the ground. After several days trying (they only came at the weekends) the glider got airborne, but unfortunately it crashed into an oak tree, injuring the pilot. War was declared soon after so these chaps joined the airforce and their equipment was abandoned. They never returned after the war; perhaps they didn't survive it.

Later on during the war, when clocks and watches were difficult to obtain, we had an old alarm clock with a broken balance wheel. I fixed up a pendulum instead and it worked quite well. To give it clearance it was put on an old tin, and the pendulum hung down and cleared the chest of drawers.



There were many bats in our neighbourhood. Once, when motorcycling up Titsey Hill, I felt something touch my shirt. When I got back to the farm I went to wash. I took off my shirt and a bat flew out.

On another occasion we had been away for a few days and an upstairs window must have been left open. We discovered there were five bats flying round the bedroom shared by Rene and Marjorie. We knocked them down with tennis rackets and threw them out of the window. They all recovered okay.

Chapter 5

Brothers and Sisters



Puppies!

I had a very happy childhood, and as one of five siblings there was always someone to play with. The only blot on the landscape was that my mother was ill all the time.

After Rene was born, my mother suffered with her health and was in and out of hospital. I don't ever remember her well. I used to go and sit on her bed and talk to her.

We all had to help at home which, hard though it was at the time, stood us in good stead in later years. We learned to darn clothes and could cook and grow and prepare vegetables.

There were no supermarkets in those days. We had a regular order from Temple's Stores which was delivered, and we collected our own meat from the local butchers. Most vegetables were home grown, and we always had eggs, bacon from our own pigs, and rabbits. We also had the occasional hare which had been shot 'by mistake'.



Ruth and Rod

Ruth, the eldest, was born in December 1920. Ruth was studious. She loved reading and was a talented artist. Because my mother was unwell, Ruth helped nurse her and run the household.



Rod, as the eldest boy, had to help on the farm from a young age. He was very daring, and didn't seem to have much of a care for self-preservation. We had a very steep hill and always went round the side of it, as it was too dangerous to drive down. Rod took the tractor to the top of the hill and sat revving, then span down the slope at speed. He was quite crazy like that.



Rod

During the war there was a big crater on the farm left by a bomb, which was a long deep trench. Rod got a ladder and went down into it. It was a great big hole. He had no idea what was in the bottom of it. It could have been full of gas. He had no fear.

Because my mother's health was gradually getting worse, my elder sister Ruth stayed at home to look after her, giving up her art classes and her ambition to go to art college.

Around about the same time my brother Rod, who was fourteen, came home to help run the farm. Father had had a stroke or heart attack and couldn't drive for about six weeks. He was out hoeing in

the fields with the farm workers when he collapsed. It was lucky he wasn't alone, so they could get the doctor to him. In later life my brother bitterly resented having to leave education early and miss his schooling. Father gradually recovered and was later able to resume farming.



Rene

Marjorie, who was always known as Dot, was the middle child, and as is often the case with middle children, she seemed to be the odd one out. Rene, the youngest, was a proper tomboy. She came bird nesting with me sometimes.

Many things changed in 1939. War was declared in September. Air raids were expected but did not start until the next year.

Because our cowshed had a white asbestos roof we were told to colour it in case it was used as a landmark for bombers looking for the aerodrome, which was only two miles away across the valley. Paint was in short supply, so we used a mixture of potassium permanganate and water. We sprayed it on with a stirrup pump. These pumps were issued to put out fires and were fairly efficient with a stand on the floor and the suction tube in a bucket of water.

At that time I was given a very bright blazer to wear by Ruth's fiancé Jack, because clothes were in short supply. I decided that dunking it in the brown solution of potassium permanganate was an ideal way to dull down the colour. However it ate through the cloth and the coat came out of the bucket in pieces.

Jack was a photographer during the war. He used to take photos of funerals for the families of overseas airmen who couldn't attend them. Another job was to process reconnaissance photos from bomber planes that were involved in airstrikes. When bombs were dropped a photo was automatically taken from a camera attached to the firing device, and the image would show whether the target

had been successfully hit. The only time Jack fired a gun during the war was when he was removing reconnaissance film. The artillery mechanic had said it was safe to remove the film, but had made a mistake and a barrage of shells went flying through the air. Luckily no-one was hurt! Rene used to like taking photos. As it was difficult to get film during the war, she would cadge some from Jack.



Ruth's husband Jack (left) with a friend

My mother died in November 1939. I was walking back from school when Rod met me to tell me the news. Although I knew she was ill, somehow you don't expect people to die, so it was a shock. She was buried on December 4th, my fourteenth birthday. This was unavoidable as Dot's birthday was on the 3rd, and the body could not be left any longer.

After my mother died, Ruth continued to run the house until she married Jack in 1942. Until she left home she had the help of Mrs Kilner and another woman called Mrs Marshall, who had small podgy hands but could catch wasps in flight and kill them in one movement without being stung.



My Grandmother, Tony, Ruth, Carol, Rene and Dot

When Ruth married Jack it was the turn of Dot to take over the running of the house. She had often been left out, being the middle one of five, but now could show what she was made of.

After the war when Jack was demobbed from the 609 Squadron. Ruth moved to Leeds. There were three children from their marriage, two girls, Carol and Mary, and one boy, Tony. Jack lived to the good old age of 90 and died in 2003. Ruth pursued her love of art by taking lessons in the 1960s, and was still painting when she died in 2006, at the age of 86.

Rod emigrated to Canada. He had wanted to do this for some time and eventually went in 1947. He did some tough jobs, including working in a warehouse and oil prospecting, then ran his own holiday chalet business. He finally ended up working for a Christmas tree firm looking after 32,000 acres and shipping over one million trees a year all over Canada and the USA. He died of a heart attack, leaving his second wife Ellen and three daughters.



Dot and Frank's wedding

Dot married Frank in 1945. Frank was an engineer and had come to Biggin Hill after spending much of the war in Africa. While in north Africa he was caught by an explosion and injured. As he lay on the ground a doctor examined him and said he would never see again. Luckily he regained his eyesight, but after that time nothing ever bothered him. If something went wrong he wouldn't worry. When I once asked him why this was, he said "I can see!" This made him easy going and content.

After living in the bungalow for a long time, Dot and Frank also moved to Canada. At this time Dot had a daughter and two more were born in Canada. She was not very happy for a long time because she found Edmonton so cold, with snow for about five months each year, and so was very homesick. She was better after leaving Edmonton for Vancouver Island. She unfortunately was ill for several years and eventually died.

Rene married Blair in 1951 and went to live in Northern Ireland farming and had six children, all doing well.

Chapter 6

School



My mother's primary. She is in the front, second right, with a ribbon in her hair

We went to primary school about 6 miles away at Keston, not the local school which my father did not like. We were not allowed to mix with many locals as they were considered lower class. I started school at five years old, having first gone to a pre-school where we used chalk and wrote on small blackboards, and mostly raced snails.

The school was very friendly, mostly due to a very understanding headmaster. We stayed for school dinners, and after dinner he would bring in his little dog, which would do tricks for biscuits. He also had a daughter about my age, and one day we were caught kissing through the railings which separated their garden from the school. This caused much teasing!

There were two ponds about half a mile from the school, which had been well known in the past as watering places for stagecoaches. In the winter we were allowed to slide on them when they were frozen, but only after the park keeper had tested the thickness of the ice.

The Walls ice cream tricycle, ‘STOP ME AND BUY ONE’ used to park outside the school to tempt the pupils as they emerged. Water ices were 1d, others 2d. These were kept cold by dry ice.

I was caned only twice. The first time was for a stupid mistake. Our teacher, Miss Pavie, was telling us other names which could be used for every-day items. One of these was ‘visage’ for ‘face’. She asked me what was another word for face. I couldn't think what it was, and then the boy next to me nudged me and said ‘fizzog’ which I repeated to the teacher. She thought I was being funny, I suppose, and sent me to the headmaster to be caned. It didn't hurt anyway. The next time was for fighting during dinner break.

We were made to parade in the playground on national days like Trafalgar Day or Empire day and saluted the flag.

One day there was a snake coiled up on the road and one of the boys picked it up and let it go again, frightening the other children. It was probably a harmless grass snake anyway.

The boys’ lavatories were quite crude, mostly consisting of a high concrete wall with a gully under. It was ideal for seeing who could pee the highest, a normal boy’s pastime. It was amazing how high you could get!

We were allowed to play conkers, and I kept them for a whole year so they got really hard. One day I hit my opponent’s conker so hard it went right through the window. Not much was said about it but we were not allowed to play conkers in that area again. One day at home we were playing with conkers which were still in their cases and very prickly. We were having fights with these in the stockyard. One hit Rod on the chin and he had a very sore face for several



Dressed for school

days and several puncture marks.

One day my sister Marjorie boarded the bus at a bus stop further from the school and she had my fare as well as hers. I thought I wouldn't be allowed on without the money so decided to walk home. I was met by my father when I had gone about 5 miles, not bad for an eight-year-old.

On another occasion I was not well and my brother was told to take me home. In those days they were open top buses. We went upstairs and my cap blew off. We stopped the bus and Rod raced back to get it, which was way back round the corner by the time the bus had stopped. After a minute or two the driver said he could not wait any longer. Wholesale panic! I was jumping up and down saying he must wait. In the nick of time Rod came running round the corner and got on, all puffed out.

After leaving Keston school I went to Oxted secondary. This was a state-aided school, so part of the fees were paid by the government. I had previously tried for a scholarship at Bromley but failed the oral examination. It was probably better to go to Oxted as the rest of the family went there, but I found this new school quite a shock as the pupils were called by their surnames, and it seemed very



At secondary school, centre back

unfriendly after Keston. It took me some time to settle in. Most of the teachers seemed reasonable enough, although both Mr Callard (Biology) and Mr Lerrigo (Art) would tap you on the head with keys if you were not good, or sometimes if you were!



Miss Morris, centre

Our French mistress Miss Booth, was quite young and most of the boys were more interested in her bodily attributes than learning French.

Later Miss Morris took over and work progressed much better. Miss Morris was an older woman and very strict, although I got on well with her and learnt a lot. One day she came into our form room when I was fighting another boy with rulers, and all she said was 'Start work!' We were not allowed to run in the corridors, but one day I was running and went round the corner smack into Miss Morris. I didn't get told off for that either. I don't think that I was a favourite or a teacher's pet, but I was really trying to learn and can only think this was appreciated. I got my school leaving certificate, but not matriculation. I had credits in Art and Mathematics, and passes in English, Geography and French.

I felt the school only rewarded pupils in games if they were already good. As I was slightly tubby at that time cross-country running was an effort, and when entered in the inter-house competition I came next to last. Rugby was more enjoyable, especially fetching people down in the muddiest parts of the pitch which were green and stagnant.

When I was at Oxted county school one of my main friends was James Greenlees. James lived on a farm at Westerham. His father came from Scotland and had one of the tidiest farms for miles around. On Saturdays the men turned out with brooms and swept all through. It was mainly a fruit farm, but cows were kept for the

manure which was carefully stacked in neat piles in the field, and turned over twice until it was well rotted. Hurdles were placed underneath so that all the manure had to be moved to expose the hurdle. James helped on the farm but had looked a bit pale for some time before becoming ill. He unfortunately died at 22 years of age. My friend Nigel Dawson started his farming career on this farm and obviously learnt a lot.

I was also friends with Tom Okey, who was later to become my best man, and Edward Boyes, who lived at Moorhouse farm. One day we all went to the river at Tunbridge and hired a boat. When we had rowed for some way, Edward, who was also known as Tubby for obvious reasons, decided to change places. The boat rocked alarmingly. We managed to stop him doing this as we were in danger of capsizing. None of us could swim and the water was quite deep.

I somehow managed to break several windows while growing up. I broke one at Keston school with a conker. The first one at Norheads was when I lost my temper and threw a slipper at my sister Ruth which missed and went through a window. I broke a window by the kitchen when playing football with Charlie Millen, one of the roundsmen, and two at Oxted school. One of these was when we were standing in line waiting to go into our classroom. An older boy called Clutterback came past. He was a bit of a joker and pretended to hit me, whereupon I ducked back and cracked the window. On another occasion Tom Okey who, although he was strong, was not allowed to play games because of his health, swung me round in the playground, and my foot hit the glass.

Another time on the No. 410 bus coming home I tried to close the front window with my foot and it broke. On this occasion there was a prefect on the bus who had to report it to the headmaster, Mr Taff Davies. The prefect said “Stone broke a window, Sir” to which Mr Davies said “Stone? Who threw it?” “No sir, Stone’. For some reason I didn't get into trouble for this. It was put down as an accident and paid for by London transport.

Discipline at the school was fairly strict on the whole. At the end of one term some boys (not me) were seen climbing the rugby posts by the headmaster. For this slight misdemeanour the whole school was kept in for an extra half-day, which I thought was totally unjustified.

Once a year the boys played the girls at hockey. This was an opportunity to see girls at their most vicious, with clouts on shins, and hockey sticks well above shoulder height. The only thing I was ever good at in sports was throwing the cricket ball, having had practice at home with slippers!

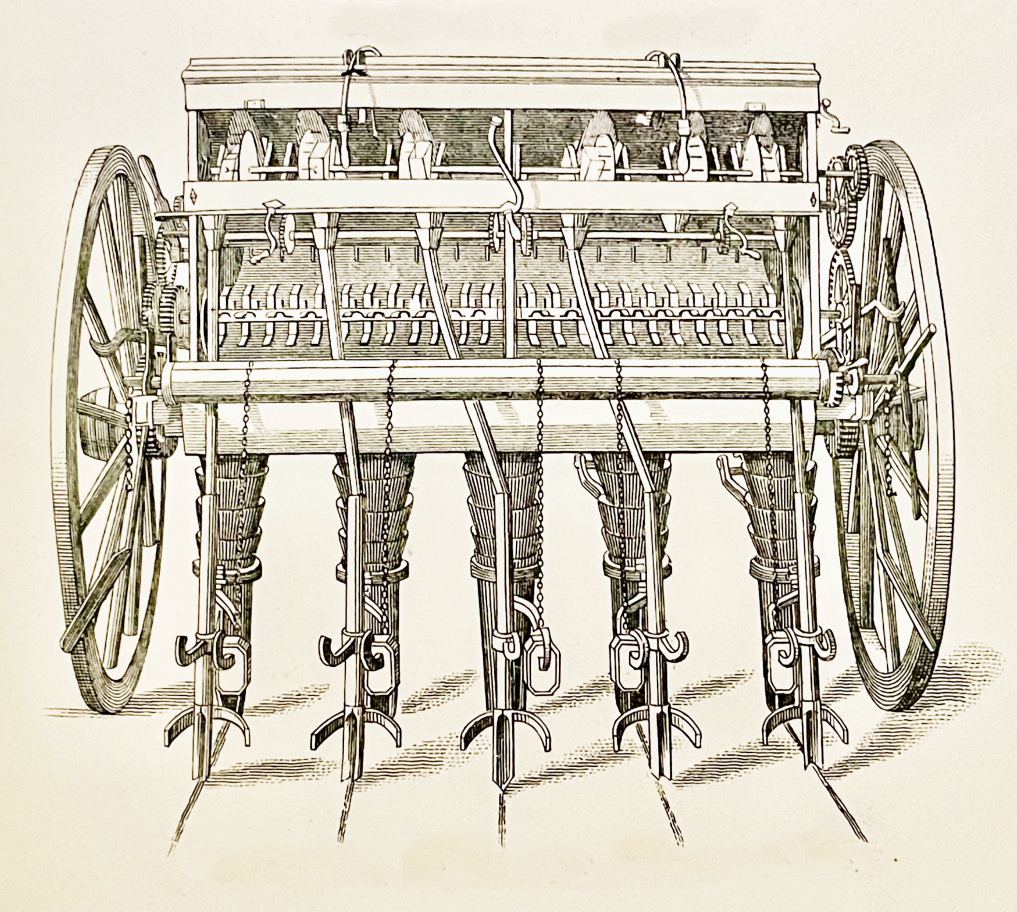
When we had our school photo taken we were told to bring our ties to school. As it was summer time we had been allowed to leave them off. Of course I forgot mine and had to buy another. That seemed a bit hard for about an hour's work, and especially as money was extremely short. The photo is below. As of 2021, only two of the people in the photo are still alive.



Chapter 7

Crop, Stock & Pests

Crops grown on our farm before the war, around 1930-39, were mixed; twelve or fifteen acres of barley for feed, one acre of strawberries, one acre of runner beans, twelve acres of various brassicas and peas and two acres of mangolds[6].



A drill for sowing mangolds

Kale and mangolds were grown for winter feed. The mangolds could weigh up to 28lb. These were pulled and top trimmed with a

[6] Mangolds originally came from Germany and are also known as mangel-wurzels. They are related to sugar-beet, but larger and reddish-yellow in colour. There are several different theories as to where the word Mangold comes from. The National Encyclopaedia of circa 1900 says the reason the word Mangold was originally used is unknown, but it was at length corrupted into *Mangel,* which is the German for scarcity, so that *Mangel wurzel* means *scarcity root.*

tool like a small bagging hook or sickle, and then either clamped in the field and covered with straw, or taken to the farm buildings to be stored and used after Christmas. They were usually chopped for the cows with a spade or put through a root cutter. After Christmas the sugar content had changed and it was better for the cows.

The kale was usually marrow stem. It sometimes had stems three or four inches thick which were juicy inside, hence the name. Kale was used up to Christmas and was cut by hand using a machete or something similar. It was cut every day and put out in the fields when the animals were let out. This was an extremely wet job, as it seemed to be always either raining or freezing. Either way you seemed to get covered in water as the crop was about four feet high.

On Saturdays two loads were cut so as to avoid doing it on Sunday. This took all morning. A horse and cart were used for this until an ex-army lorry was purchased in 1945. This was a three ton Ford V8, run-flat tyres, four-wheel-drive and very thirsty. But fun to drive. This was then used for carting both kale and mangolds, as well as manure (after which it was washed out).

One year when we stored the mangolds indoors, the men decided to turn the clamp over one evening, in their own time, to look for rats. I was about fourteen at this time but was allowed to stay up until 10pm to join in. We caught about forty rats from this clamp. Most were killed by hayforks and some with dogs. This shows how many rats were in the place in spite of having about twelve cats.

Other cabbage crops grown were Savoys, January King cabbages, and Brussels sprouts. All had to be picked in the winter. It was very difficult to pick Brussels with gloves on. The art was to keep picking after the first few minutes when hands appeared frozen, to when they became warm and stayed that way all day. Winters at that time were very cold, especially at 700 feet above sea level.

We kept 30 cows and followers[7], and one bull. Some pigs were kept, two or three piglets to slaughter weight, and about 50 ewes

[7] Young stock

and a ram. Very little artificial manure was used. Clover was grown between cereal crops and ploughed in after one year of cutting for hay, being good green manure.

There were two carters, two cowmen (milking was by hand until 1938) and three farm labourers. Three milk roundsmen helped in the afternoons and evening when required. We had three cart horses and three milk ponies. As the milk rounds normally finished by about 2pm, the ponies could also be used for hoeing between the cabbages and as extra help for haymaking. The roundsmen were also free for extra duties.

The milk-round ponies were mostly fairly good tempered and would move from house-to-house on the word of the roundsman. It was more convenient than getting in and out of the van and starting it up. One of these ponies, a mare which came from Belgium, was very nervous of puddles. It must have been frightened before we got it. Father thought they probably used to hit it on a head with a bottle to train it. One day when she was on the milk-round a car got a puncture and the tyre hissed. She bolted for home spilling crates of milk on every corner. She could also be quite vicious. When in her stall in the stable she would wait until you were alongside and her foot would come out like greased lightning. You also had to watch her teeth when putting her collar on.

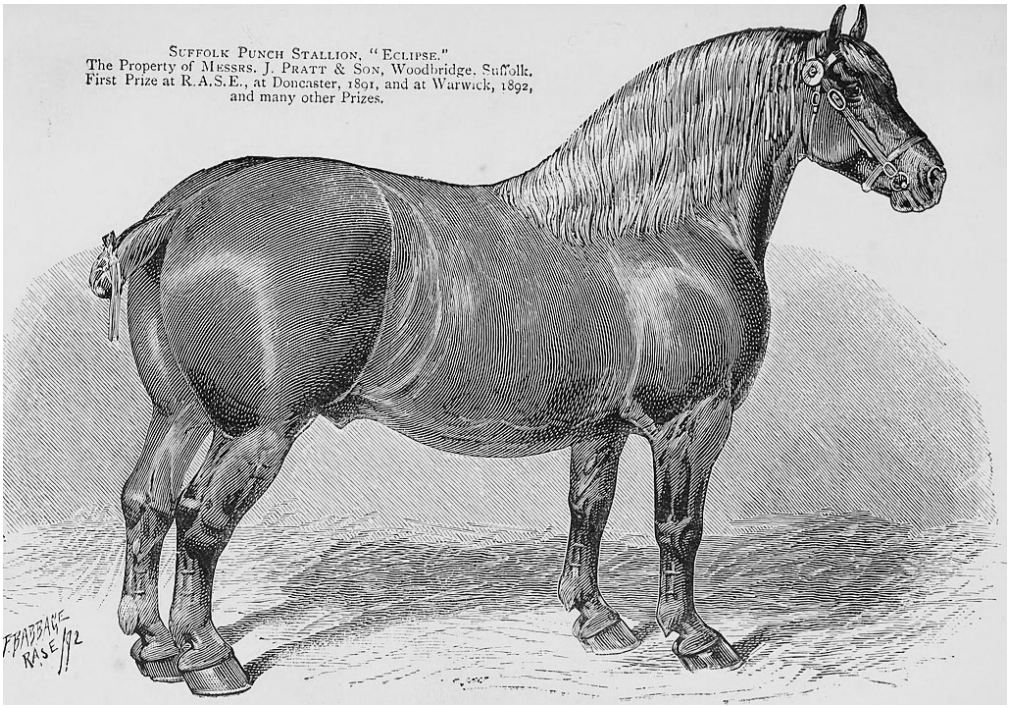
The cart horses were on the whole very placid and well-behaved, and very strong. The Suffolk Punch[8] could lift up a 2 1/4 cwt sack of wheat in his teeth, which I had seen him do when we were drilling. He would do this at the headland where we put the bags at intervals, filling the drill with a bucket or scoop as it got empty. He would only pick up the bag and put it down after turning round to go back across the field, which meant we had to pick it up ourselves and put it back against the hedge.

We used to ride the ponies bareback. One day cousin Frederika was visiting. Rod was sat on a pony, and as a joke Frederika gave the pony a mighty thwack and it shot off. Rod fell off and landed on

[8] Pictured on page 42. Photo credit https://commons.wikimedia.org

his backside, but the shock went up to his brain and he was ill for several days.

Father was very good with horses. He worked with horses in the first world war in France. He used to ride his ponies to gymkhanas, but never won a prize.



Our horses had a strong homing instinct. Father sold a horse once. He sent it off on a lorry to a long way away, but the next morning it was back in the yard. It must have remembered the way!

There was always a bull kept on the farm. Sometimes this could be quite nasty. One evening when I was about five years old the bull, a shorthorn[9], got out by charging down the door. He proceeded to turn over the manure heap and toss the wheelbarrow about. Father went out and couldn't make him move. We watched from the bedroom. The bull sounded quite mad and was roaring.

Men had to be called from the cottages. One was carrying a huge length of iron, which he couldn't possibly have raised quickly enough to protect himself should he be charged by an enraged bull. When told this, he said “They don't like iron”. Eventually the

[9] Pictured on page 43. Photo credit https://commons.wikimedia.org



Shorthorn Bull

bull was cornered by the barn. He turned and knocked the door down and went right through, taking out the other door on the other side. He then lifted up the gate to the field and carried it in his horns and dropped it in the middle of the field.

After some time the men managed to get the bull into the top cowshed and chain him up, without anyone getting hurt. Meanwhile my mother was preparing the bed and ready to call the doctor as she expected someone to get hurt.

In retrospect we had been cruel keeping the bull in a dark shed with no company. Once he was in the top shed he was happy as he had the companionship of cows twice a day after milking, and all night during the winter.

On a neighbouring farm a bull had to be shot after it had killed the farmer. My father said he had had to shoot one some years previously as it had turned so nasty that no-one could go in the field with it.

A bull was always kept up until the time that artificial insemination became widespread. At Norheads my father changed from Shorthorn to Ayrshire to improve the herd. He didn't like Friesians,

although these were becoming more popular. He thought the milk was lower in butterfat, which was true in some cases.

We had one bull which was tethered and had to be moved on a daily basis. The tether was arranged so that the bull couldn't quite reach the pin in the middle, which was put into the ground.

To move the bull to a fresh patch the idea was to approach from the opposite side to him, beyond reach should he turn nasty. The spike was then pulled up and moved away to a new position. It was best to do this fairly smartly so that the arrangement was anchored firmly once more, otherwise the whole caboodle could be dragged around the field. This was a one man operation so was no good calling for help. I was always a bit dubious about this as these animals are very strong and it was usually my job.

On one occasion Rod and I had to put a mask on a bull, which was in a field with some cows. The idea of this mask was that the bull could not see anything if his head was down, therefore not so likely to cause trouble. This time the mask, which was made of thick leather, had come loose. We couldn't catch this animal in the field so tried it with a cabbage, which one of us held through the gate while the other slipped the bull pole-catch onto the nose-ring. We managed this and had to open the gate and get inside the field to fix the mask. We both hung onto the pole and were dragged backwards for some time before managing to stop. When you remember the pole was only attached to the nose ring, it shows how strong these animals are.

Later artificial insemination was used. This had two advantages and some disadvantages. For a start the man who came wasn't usually fierce. Also different bulls of known pedigree were used. The disadvantage was with the heifers, as these had to be fetched in when on heat and sometimes they were missed if they were in an outlying field.

One day the dairy herd at Norheads was just coming in for milking when the cows were spooked by the geese kept in the run by the stables. They all went berserk, running through the collecting yard

and out through the far gate, knocking it down in the rush. Two fell over and had hoof marks on them where the others had continued and run straight over the top. This was a true stampede.

One spring when we let out the young cattle they went mad, running round the field and straight over the fence into the next field. They were about eight months old, half Ayrshire and very skittish. One of the men said they were going lickety-split, very descriptive. We had a terrible job rounding them up. We lassoed one in the pond. One disappeared and could not be found anywhere.

The next day Rod went looking for it and found it on the next farm, about three miles away. Rod went to get it on his motorbike, but had to leave his bike there while he walked the bullock back, then had to walk back again to pick up his motorbike. He was not best pleased!

My grandfather kept sheep and when looking at them early in the morning he always had a glass of milk with a raw egg beaten into it, topped up with a generous tot of whiskey.

We children kept rabbits. Rod went in for Dutch two coloured. These had a straight line across the back, white in front and blue behind. There was one in the litter we looked at which was badly marked and the breeder said I could have it for 4d. I bought this and called it Patch, and it had some good litters, which were sold for meat after fattening.

The first guinea pigs were kept in a run on the lawn. Mother had a Sealyham terrier which broke in and killed them. After that I built a hutch up off the ground, which kept them safe. This Sealyham terrier[10], which was a pedigree, had not been housetrained and was very dirty indoors, having been brought up in kennels. Eventually it was sold and went to America, where it became a show dog, as it was up to show standard.

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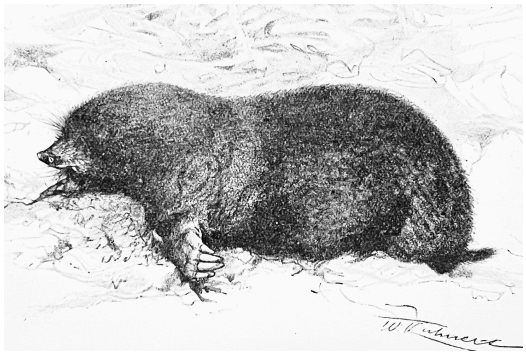
[10] The Sealyham Terrier is a rare Welsh breed of small to medium-sized terrier that originated in Wales as a working dog. It is principally a white-bodied, rough-coated breed, developed in the mid-to-late-19th century by Captain John Edwardes at Sealyham House, Pembrokeshire.



Up until the war I was busy catching moles. Traps were set in the fields adjacent to the lane where I rode to school on my bicycle. Sometimes these were put in a saddle bag and left at school until it was time to come home. One year I caught 80 moles and stretched the skins out to dry. These were pegged out to 8” x 5" and, when dry, were sent to a furrier to be cured and made into coats. The mole was the only animal whose fur stood straight out from the body and was much prized by the makers of expensive coats. The pocket money received came in very useful.

I had a competition with James Greenlees to see who could catch most and he won by six moles. James had always looked rather pale although he could hold his own regarding cycling and work, but he was taken ill at 22 years of age and sadly died.

After the beginning of the war they had a lot of problem with foxes at Biggin Hill. My father used to catch a mole and put poison inside, which the fox would eat whole. This was a very effective, if not exactly humane, method of pest control.

I never saw a fox until during the war. Prior to this we had shooters on the estate who kept the numbers of foxes and badgers down. Badgers were a worse problem than foxes when it came to protecting chickens, as a fox would only go into a run if there was a way in, but badgers would rip boards off the shed to get to the chickens.

As I got older I was expected, when not at school, to help with ferreting, which I hated. Sometimes the ferret would kill in the burrow and not come out, and occasionally they would bite. It was usually either raining or freezing. The men would put a sack across their shoulders and sometimes over their head as well, to keep out the rain. These sacks were closely woven and quite affective for this. On a good day when things were going well the rabbits would

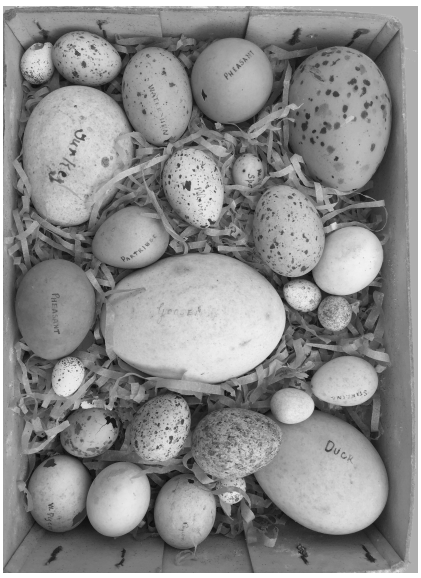
come out into the purse nets placed across the entrances to their burrows. We quickly learnt to wring their necks properly so that they were quickly dispatched.

One method of rat catching I invented, but never had success with, was to put a brick in a large churn with two inches or so of water. The lid was removed and the top of the churn was covered with brown paper. A piece or two of meat or other bait was put on the paper. After two or three days the paper was cut at intervals round the sides so that the weight of a rat would break it. The rat would fall in and sit on the brick and holler, rat fashion. Other rats would be curious and jump in. Although good in theory, this never worked for me.

A method that did work was used in the house. There were rats in the coal cellar with holes partway up the steps where they could get through into the rest of the building, making well used rat-runs. My father put some barn tar on these runs. The rat is a very clean animal, so they licked off the tar on their feet. This was ingested and it killed them. This seems cruel but was probably no worse than other poisons such as warfarin, which thins the blood and causes internal haemorrhaging.

The pests on the farm, besides rabbits and rats, were pigeons, sometimes in large numbers, which did a lot of damage to cabbage crops, and also blackbirds and thrushes, which ate a lot of strawberries. Huge flocks of sparrows would descend on corn crops, especially wheat, and eat and spoil a lot. Father used to use some very fine shot for his 12 bore, number eight, and it was possible with this to shoot into the flock and bring down twenty or thirty birds at one go.

We were allowed to roam all over the farm looking for birds' eggs, and newts in the pond, and there was never any talk of danger, either from falling from a tree or from the poachers. This gave us a great sense of freedom and apart from my mother being continually ill I had a happy childhood.



Both Rene and I, and to a lesser extent Rod, collected birds eggs. I had quite a collection, over 50 different ones, but never had a cuckoo's. We'd take all the eggs of any birds which were a nuisance to crops, such as blackbirds, thrushes and starlings, and of course wood pigeons. Other birds, like tits, robins and wagtails, had only one egg taken out of the nest. The plovers, which were very plentiful, laid eggs on land which was being cultivated. As children we collected eggs from these in front of the machines, and these eggs were very good to eat, being richer than a hen's egg. The small eggs were very difficult to blow. I blew them with a thin straw, and sometimes you could leave them out and the ants would clean them out for you.

Looking back, some of this seems cruel, but of course many things were different then. Today a lot of this would not be acceptable.

There were many rabbits on the farm. When a shoot was held for all the local farmers on Boxing Day over 200 could be shot. Hessian sacking was cut into 3 inch squares which were soaked in creosote and dropped into the holes of rabbit warrens one or two days before Christmas. In those days Christmas and Boxing Days were holidays, but the men were expected to come as beaters for the shoot for a little extra pay. After the shoot there was always a big meal in our dining room.



At Norheads we used to chase rabbits with a 3 ton lorry, which was an ex-army lorry got through Frank after the war. We'd go round at night with someone on top with a bright light, and someone with a gun. We put a bar on top so that we wouldn't fall off. We had complaints from the village. They complained to the police

because we were doing it after half past ten.

Before the war pheasant eggs were collected by the keeper. These were hatched and reared by broody hens in small coops along the rides in the wood. About 1000 were reared each year. The keeper shot anything which could harm the birds, and foxes were very rare as they were shot on sight. These pheasants were naturally quite tame and had to be coaxed into the air by various means, including erecting fences in the wood to make them fly so that they could be shot.

Lots of birds were shot in those days which would not be shot today, and in fact some are now protected. Not only sparrows but also chaffinches, blackbirds, thrushes, greenfinches and jackdaws. Hawks though are still shot by gamekeepers today.

In about 1946 or 47 a Harley Street surgeon, Mr Cooper, used to come shooting at weekends. One afternoon a rider came off his horse at a jump whilst drag hunting. The others left him lying on the ground unconscious. My father and Mr Cooper, the surgeon, came across him lying there. Father rode his horse back to the farm where I was.

The only way we could get this man back was with the three ton ex-army lorry, which was loaded with mangolds. This vehicle was a four-wheel-drive and could go almost anywhere. Just as well as the ground was very soft and the gateways especially muddy. We threw some straw on top of the mangolds and heaved the still unconscious man on the top and drove him back to the farm. Mr Cooper sent for his doctor's kit and gave an injection while waiting for an ambulance. This chap was very lucky because no ambulance could have reached him where he had fallen. He made a full recovery.

Another day a flock of pigeons flew over and Mr Cooper shot down seven. He thought he had had a good day until he realised they were tame pigeons belonging to my brother-in-law Frank Cook. The only time Frank made a profit!



We shot foxes and badgers and had the skins cured. One of these we gave to Marjorie, and Frank still has it after all this time. Once we decided to get the fat off a badger's skin by using a wire wheel driven by an electric drill with a flexible drive. This was not successful. We did it on the kitchen floor, but had to throw the skin out in the end. Two or three years later we were decorating the kitchen and found the ceiling was covered with small pieces of fat.

Before the war people would go to work in London and leave their dogs roaming. The dogs would form packs and attack anything. When I was about eight I got home from school during lambing time and there were sheep and lambs all torn to pieces. From that time on we shot any dogs that came onto the farm, at one time burying six in one hole. After a bit there were no more dogs, as people realised it wasn't a good place to let their dogs roam!



My father in the snow

Father was only 5'6" but would tackle any poachers, big or small, and would confiscate their ferrets and nets. The poachers did take some ferrets back from the cages when we were having a party. These social gatherings were for the neighbouring farmers who would come and have lunch in the dining room, provided they could stand the smoke.

In about 1944 or 45, my father came across three poachers. They said "Now we've got you!" and knocked him down. However he managed to extract the truncheon he always kept in his long trouser pocket. He hit one on the head and kicked another where it hurt. The third one had had enough and ran away, so the dog Taff bit him.

At the end of the week two of these characters came back with a pathetic tale of not being able to work because of the wounds. He gave them back their ferrets, feeling sorry for them. The 1st world war changed my father's life. I think it was why he had no fear of poachers; he used to say "The bigger they are, the harder they fall". In later life I spoke to people who said "We used to poach all over the place, but we never went near Old Stoney's farm." His reputation for being tough was legendary.

Beside the continuous nuisance from poachers, there were trespassers who would often camp by haystacks, where they sometimes smoked. We lost two haystacks due to people smoking, which was heartbreaking after spending so much time constructing them. Once the fire had started there was no way of putting it out. The firemen couldn't do anything, because the water was nowhere near. On one occasion the firemen leant their wooden ladder up against the smouldering stack and it went up in flames.

Rod and I used to go around on a Sunday looking out for trespassers. One Sunday I came across two cars, but there was no sign of the owners - they were around the corner having a picnic. One of these vehicles was a very smart sports car. It still had the keys in the ignition, so I drove it a few hundred yards up the road and left it there.

When I came back I found these two chaps and told them I'd moved their car. The owner was furious - he was obviously very fond of his vehicle. I said "You'll find it further up the road, and I've been good and left you the keys." They didn't come back!

One time Rod came across a bubble car and saw two people making love inside. He rocked the car back and forth. Another

time, when some people had driven into a field shut up for hay, my father locked the gate and made them pay to get out. They were quite disgruntled!

On another occasion we had created a stack of hay and had done so very badly. It had been rained on a lot, so had dipped in the middle. My father came across a couple who had climbed on top and were making love. He told them they had damaged the stack and made them pay.



Once we had Gypsy horses put into the sanfoin (which is similar to lucerne) in a field called twelve-acres, which was in the valley a long way from the house. We brought these into the yard and charged then 10 shillings (50p) each for six horses, to get them released. They weren't particularly happy about this, but as Rod was there we were quite strong handed and although outnumbered, we were paid.

The next year eight horses were put in the same field. We decided that this time the price would go up to twenty-five shillings (£1.25) per animal.

The gypsies kept coming up all day and wouldn't pay. They would then go away for a conference with the others, who waited just down the lane. One of them suggested that he would pay for his horse and take it. Obviously once the gate was open they would all go. We told them that if the horses weren't collected that day they would be fed with hay and locked up, and this would add to the expense. At last, when it was almost dark they paid up, and we didn't see them again.

Chapter 8

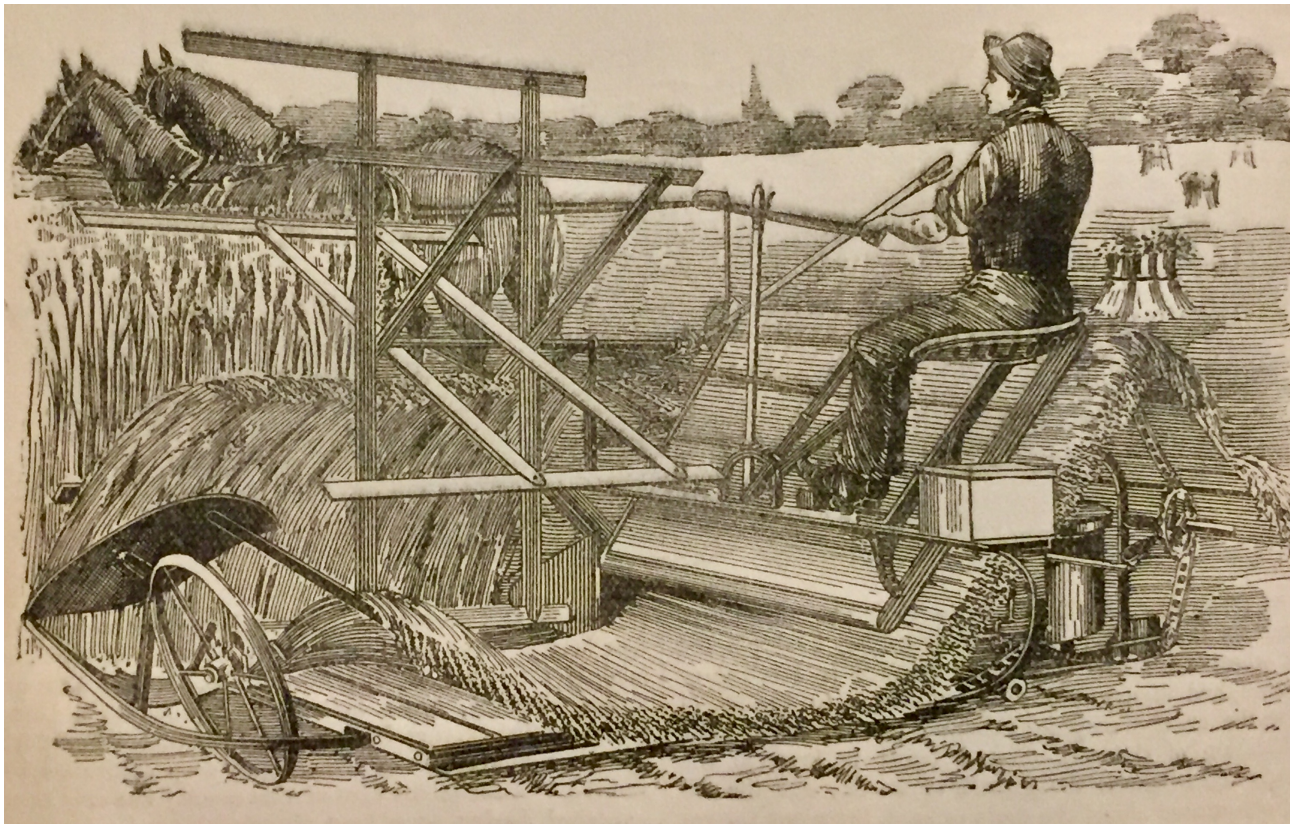
Ploughing

Three cart horses were kept on the farm - a Suffolk Punch, a Shire horse and a Clydesdale. These were on the whole very placid and well-behaved, much better than the milk ponies! The Suffolk Punch was smooth, without long hair around its feet, so it stayed cleaner.

There was a water carrier made out of a large wooden barrel, which must have held well over 100 gallons. This was a weird contraption which had two struts fitted to the shafts, which were crossed over the ground to hold the whole thing on an even keel. It was essential to put the horse in before filling this, as it became totally unbalanced. One day the carter left his carrier by the tank filling with water, thinking he could easily get the horse in before it got too full. However the water pressure must have been good that day as the barrel had a lot of water in it. It suddenly went base over apex and the whole thing disintegrated beyond repair.

The hay was cut with a two-horse mower and it was turned by a horse-drawn turner, of which there were various types. A horse-pulled rake was then used to make the rows. This was hard work. There was a large handle on the rake in front of the operator. This had to be pulled each time the hay was to be left in a row, and it was very heavy as all the tines had to be pulled off the ground together. If it was a good crop this had to be done many times a day, and it could make your arm ache. It was essential to pull the release handle at the right spot to make a row, otherwise it was difficult afterwards, especially if the hay was being swept. The hay was then cocked up by men with small forks. These hay cocks were about 6 feet wide and had to be built properly to run-off rain. They were usually left two or three days if the weather was fine.

There was a lady staying at the farm in the early days when grandfather was farming. She was very dubious about using some words. When one of the men came to the door and asked what to



A two-horse mower

do, she went in to ask and was told that the hay was to be cocked up. She thought this rather vulgar, so she told the man to heap it up. When Grandfather went out after lunch he found huge piles of hay. On asking the reason he was told that the message was to heap it up, so that was what the men did!

Men put the hay into wagons with pitchforks (larger than hayforks with 8 or 9 foot handles and large prongs), or a sweep was used and a stack made in the field. The sweep was a series of long wooden tines set in a frame with a horse on each side for propulsion. This was quite an art to drive. The hay was swept up to the stack where a device called a devil pole was used to get it onto the stack. The horse pulled a cable which raised the grab. When on the stack the man operating it pulled the cord and released the hay.

The stacks were used in the winter. They were very tight as the hay was compressed. It would get very hot as we were making it - we had to be careful it didn't catch fire. It was a thermal thing; the slightest amount of damp would lead to it heating up. My cousin



A devil pole

Peter had a stack that was getting warm. The Okeys, who had something for everything, had a great big thermometer, about six feet long, and stuck it in to see how hot it was. The thermometer had markings: warm, hot, turn. It went right past them all to the end, so we thought it would be best to leave it, as we figured if we turned it, it would catch fire. In the winter the centre was all charred. But the cows loved it! It was lucky it didn't catch fire, as some of them have spontaneously gone up in smoke.

The art was to make the stack the correct size for the hay in the field. The stacks were thatched. They were then cut out with a knife in winter. It was hard work. The man on the stack put a long needle in the hay, cut it with the hay knife, then turned it over and threw it over the edge onto the ground where a second man would tie it up. The needle had a large ring on the end, so it wouldn't get lost in the hay. The hay knife was about three feet long, with a handle. It had to be kept very sharp. Steps were cut up the rick as the hay was removed, so sometimes we would be very high, up to twenty or thirty feet.



The trusses were two foot by three, with the aim to make each truss half a hundredweight. If it was being sold, steelyards[11] were used for weighing.

When I was in my late teens or early twenties, I was working with Tom Tyre, who was a strong trade unionist. Tom was keen to make me give up, as I was the boss's son and he was anti-boss. As soon as I put the needle down it came whistling back up. I was determined not to let him beat me. By the end of the day we had done 55 trusses of hay and carted them into the lorry. It was unprecedented. No-one had ever done so much before. He was trying to wear me out!

The corn was cut with a self-binder pulled by two horses and either put in the big barn to be thrashed later or built into round stacks which were thatched. Sometimes oats were kept whole and the whole sheaf was put through a chaff-cutter or later on, a hammer-mill.

[11] An apparatus for weighing that has a short arm taking the item to be weighed and a long arm along which a weight is moved until it balances.

When binding the grain crops, the string was usually tied more than halfway up the sheath. If too far up it could slip off and the base of the sheath would spread too far. If tied too far down, the top would spread and could not be neatly stooked. This was important as the oats were usually left out for two weeks after cutting. The reason for leaving oats out so long was because they were cut green, as the straw was quite good as cattle feed. When we had a hammer-mill driven off the tractor the whole sheath was put in and milled.

When I was about 15 we were loading corn on a fairly steep field and I turned to go downhill. The tractor gathered speed and I thought perhaps if I pulled the throttle wide open it would hold it back more, forgetting that I had got the clutch depressed. The people in the wagon, including Rod, thought I was trying to go faster and was probably a bit crazy. However no harm was done as the bottom of the field was relatively flat and we came to a standstill, much to the relief of the people on the wagon.



We were obliged to kill rodents by law, as during the wartime food was precious. When making the stacks fine meshing was put around the area to catch rats and mice. It went all the way around everything, including the threshing machine, so that when the rats and mice came out they could be caught. We put buckets half full with water that the mice would jump into and drown. The dogs would kill the rats. I only ever knew one stack where there weren't

any rats, and that had a weasel in it. When the weasel ran out we could see all these rat bones in the stack. The weasel got away!

Men with guns were stationed to kill rabbits as they ran from the diminishing area of corn. Sometimes a long net was used. This was 50 yards long and had a big mesh on one side and a small mesh on the other, so that when a rabbit ran into it, a purse was formed and the rabbit caught. Sometimes forty rabbits could be caught from a ten or twelve acre field. My job from about twelve years old was to look after this net, and I soon learnt to break the rabbits' necks. Pigeons could also be very destructive on green stuff and were shot from hides with decoys to attract them.

I stayed on at school until 1941 when I was 16, and then I worked on the farm, mostly driving the tractor. I worked with Ruth, who did half a day after her stint at the first aid post at Biggin Hill airfield. This way we could get more done and the tractor, although slow, was pretty tough.

Mechanisation was gradually taking place and a horse-driven elevator came next. The horse went round turning a turntable which drove the chain pulling up the slats holding the hay. One day one of the workers put in another length of cast iron rod to raise the elevator. This was a fairly substantial piece of iron, with teeth which fitted into the toothed wheel which was turned by handle to raise the elevator. This particular worker put in another section of rod but didn't wind it up high enough, with the result that the horse turning the turntable caught it and snapped it in half. The whole elevator collapsed. Quite dramatic. Back to the devil pole until another elevator was bought. Later we had an elevator driven by a small petrol engine, which was quite efficient.

There were other changes of course. With the advent of war more crops had to be grown. There was a shortage of birdseed and anyone growing buckwheat could make a good profit, although actually it was not legal. The fines were quite small, and one man at Oxted grew some every year and just paid the fines. We grew some one year and were warned off. It was a tricky crop to grow as it

was very short and difficult to make into a decent sheaf. We carted it from the field and stored it on bare ground to dry out for a week.

We bought a hammer mill which ran off the tractor pulley by means of a balata[12] belt. This had to go round very fast, and the International tractor was too slow. So Rice Bros of Oxted made a wooden piece to increase the size. Later the Fordson did run faster but it still had to be driven flat out. One day the belt came undone and the metal joiner caught the operator under the chin and knocked him out for about three hours. After this it was my job to use this machine. I don't know whether this was because I was more careful or just expendable. The mill made a colossal amount of dust. The ground grain was blown into a cyclone and dust came out of the top, which was not outside, so of course the whole of the room was terribly dusty, especially when whole sheaves were put in.



Eva beside a haystack

[12] A tough, durable, robust belt made from heavyweight cotton fabric impregnated with high quality rubber compound.

Chapter 9

Tractors



On the E27N with nephew Tony in the foreground

Before the war ploughing had to be done with horses. Two horses could, with luck and on the lighter land, plough one acre a day. One type of plough used with horses was a balance plough, one furrow turning one way and one the other. At each headland the horse was turned 180° with a swivel on the plough allowing this. This method saved marking out cants thereby leaving no open furrows as ploughing could start at one end of the field and continue right across with a more even finish. A similar method is used today with turnover ploughs.

One of the large fields which was down to permanent grass had been ploughed in 5 yard cants. I'm not sure of the reason for this but it made waves all across the field. Once during a haymaking

session the tines of the sweep dug into one of the ridges and the sweep lifted in the air together with the front of the tractor.

With the outbreak of the war more corn crops had to be grown, and we were commanded by the government to grow over 100 acres, for which the land was unsuited. Mechanisation was needed, although horses were still used for harrowing and drilling.



A collection of 1930's tractors, with the 10-20 in the foreground

Our first tractor was purchased in 1938. This was an International 10-20, top speed 5mph, so it was a challenge to plough all the land we had been ordered to cultivate. It was on steel wheels with a petrol TV0 engine. Because of the steel wheels it wasn't allowed on the road.

TV0 stands for tractor vaporising oil, which was very similar to paraffin, but with a lower combustion temperature. It was far better

than the Fordson for starting. There were no self-starters, a magneto[13] being used to produce the spark for ignition. This required a smart pull-up on the starting handle. I found the best way was to push the handle around until compression was felt then give a good pull up with it in the 7 o'clock position. Pushing downwards from the 1 o'clock position was likely to result in a broken wrist if the engine backfired.

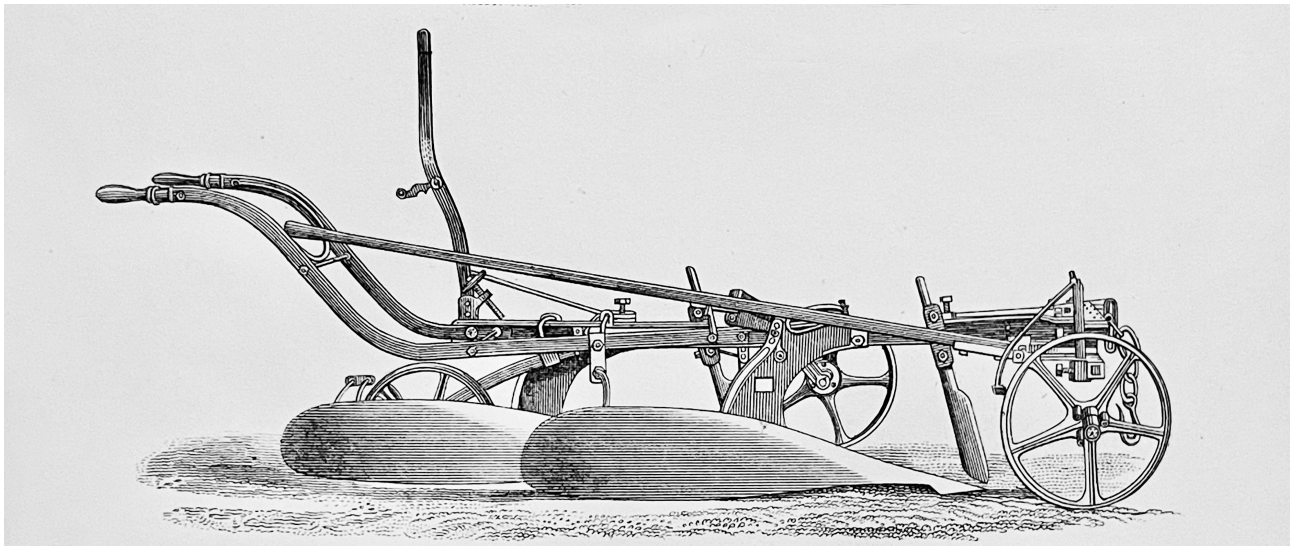
One day the tractor had a fuel blockage and stopped. After cleaning the blockage I tried to restart it and the tractor caught fire. I was a long way from the farm buildings, so I had to put it out somehow. The only result of trying to smother it by hitting it with my coat was that my watch flew out of the pocket. Luckily it was not damaged. Water was often needed during the day and some was carried in a can. However this was not sufficient to extinguish the fire so I drained the radiator into the can and threw it on, managing to put the fire out. Then there was a long walk back to the farm to fetch 5 gallons of water back across the fields. However, no damage was done to the tractor, so only time was wasted.

This tractor could pull a two-furrowed plough and other trailed implements. It had spade lug rear wheels and ploughing rims on the front wheels so that it would turn in mud, otherwise when the ploughing rims got worn it would carry straight on at the headlands, as there was no grip. It could at best plough four acres a day with the two-furrow plough, but only two acres on some of the heavy land.

The only brake was a crude hand-brake which would only hold on flat land, so using the right gear on steep slopes was essential. The engine on the 10-20 ran at 1000 revs per minute, which is considered a tick-over speed nowadays. Perhaps that is why it lasted all through the war with only a new clutch and the occasional decarbonising of the engine and grinding of the valves. It had a very unusual method of oil changing in that every 10 hours half the oil was drained and filled up with new. After 50 hours the

[13] A **magneto** is an electrical generator that uses magnets to produce periodic pulses of alternating current.

whole lot was drained and the filter cleaned. The filter was a brass



A two furrowed plough

affair called a puralator with 3000 holes per square inch.

At that time all implements for tractors were towed. The only exception was the Ferguson, which wasn't generally available and was considered too small by some people. This tractor, which used hydraulics to control the implements mounted on 3-point linkages, was first demonstrated in the Savoy ballroom, driven down the stairs and onto the ballroom by the inventor Harry Ferguson.

The plough on the trailed version was pulled out of the ground by a clever ratchet controlled by a rope. When first using this most operators looked behind, a bit tricky because there was only seven yards of headland in which to turn. After practice you could feel when the plough was coming out of the ground and this made it easier to avoid going into the hedge. To drop the plough the rope was pulled again and this raised the ratchet out of the notch and the plough penetrated the soil once more.

One man who had been used to horses wanted to drive the tractor. The trouble was he used to forget to put his foot on the clutch to stop and shouted out ‘Whoa!’ instead.

One day he was ploughing in a field bordered by a small hedge and slope down to the road. He got near the headland, pulled the rope

to lift the plough and shouted ‘Whoa!’ He then went through the hedge onto the road, along the tarmac with his spade lugs, through the gate and back into the field. Meanwhile the army were having a mortar trial in an adjoining field and had laid a telephone cable along the road. This was cut in half by the ploughing rims on the front wheels of the tractor. A soldier came along, found the break and mended it.

About half an hour later the tractor again went through the hedge and cut the telephone wire. The soldier came back to mend it and approached the tractor and said "Excuse me sir, will you be coming through any more today?" This rather upset poor Sid the tractor driver. After this experience he decided to go back to horses!

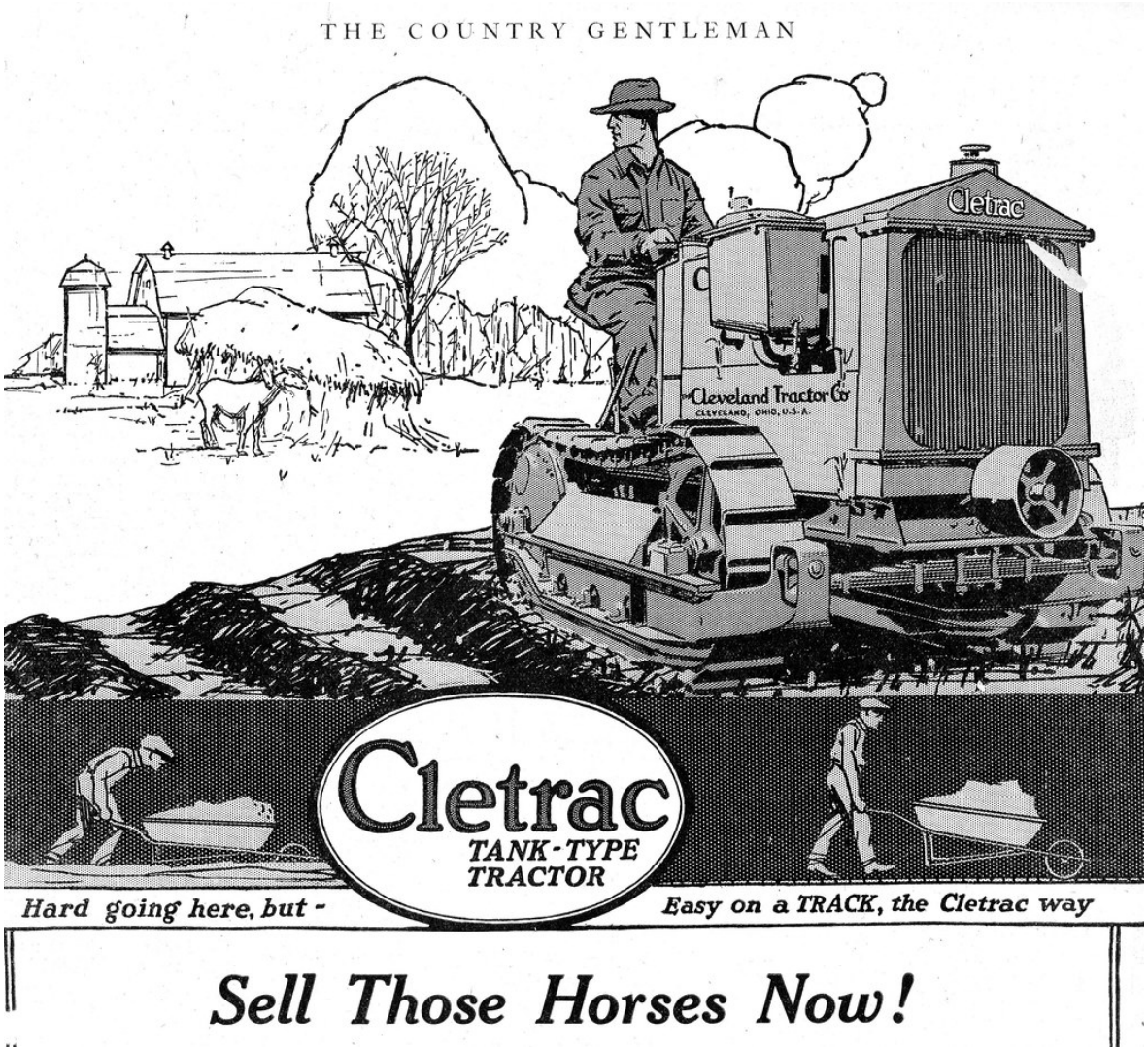
We put in for another tractor but these were almost impossible to get, as they had to be imported from America. We were eventually promised an International Crawler, but unfortunately it got sunk in the Atlantic on the way over. At last we did get another one but this was a Cletrac, quite a small plain tractor with caterpillar tracks and a high revving engine.

Although it was capable of pulling a two-furrow plough, it was barely strong enough and made hard work of it. It had a bit more trouble with frequent clutch changes and the prop shafts would occasionally break. Also sometimes a track would come off after a certain amount of work. This usually seemed to happen in the muddiest part of the field.

Other trailed implements at that time were adaptations of horse-drawn types, such as mowers with reciprocating blades.

In about 1947 the Fordson Major E27N came, to be followed by the new Major, which had electric starting and could be fitted with a diesel engine. Other companies were also changing to self-starting engines, such as the Massey and Ferguson, but we didn't have these at the time.

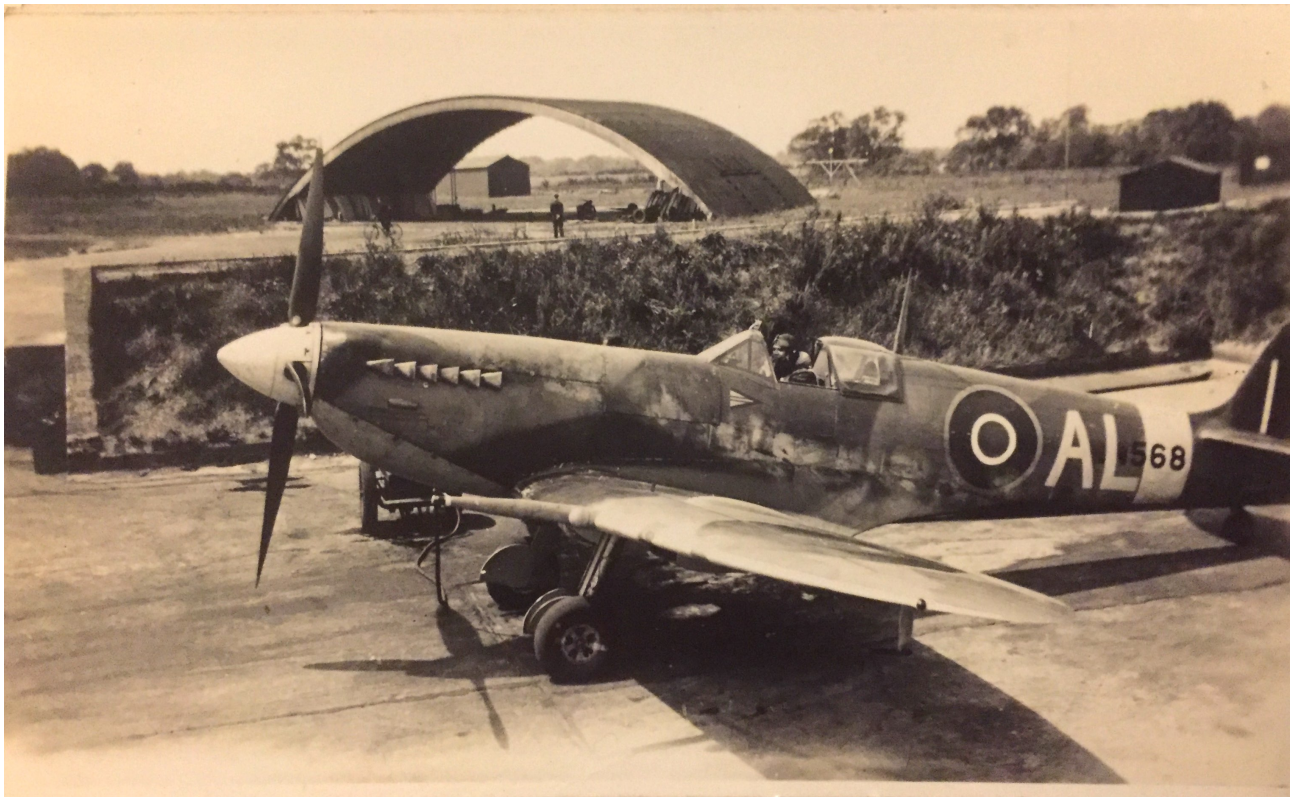
In later years, whilst at Biddenden, we bought The Leyland 344, which was quite an innovation. It was called 344 because it was 34 horsepower and had four cylinders. It had ten forward gears and two reverse, giving a great range of speeds. The Nuffield 460 had a similar arrangement with gears, but was more powerful. Leyland kept altering the way they named their tractors, starting with the size of cylinders multiplied by the number. This was then changed to the number of drive wheels and engine horsepower.



A 1930s advert for a Cletrac tractor. Ours was a smaller version

Chapter 10

The war



There were many dogfights over the farm, with Spitfires and Hurricanes versus the ME109's. Some fields were littered with empty gun cases and clips which were ejected after firing. Altogether 57 bombs and a landmine were dropped on the farm during the war, some of which didn't explode. We just filled the holes in.

Of course, many of the bombs that fell on us were probably intended for the aerodrome, which was only a short way across the valley. It didn't seem scary. I guess we just got used to it. The only time I felt really scared was when I was cultivating and came across a wire sticking out of the ground. This was at the time when there were dire warnings about personnel bombs in various shapes and sizes being dropped in large quantities. Bending down, I could hear the 'bomb' ticking so I got onto the chief warden. He came along and immediately pulled on the wire. I was sure the 'bomb',

was going off and this was going to be my last moment. However, it was not a bomb at all but part of an aircraft aerial. This shows what the imagination can do.



Biggin Hill was quite high, and although we were seventeen miles by road to London it was closer in a straight line, so we could see London burning during the war, and could even see the firemen outside St Pauls.

Some landmines were actually sea mines because, as the Germans were getting short of bombs, they had the brilliant idea of attaching them to parachutes and dropping them from aircrafts. The one which landed on the farm made quite a large crater and did a lot of damage to the buildings. It blew out windows, fetched the plaster down in the attic and moved the barn off its foundations. Yet nobody was hurt. The parachute was almost intact. It was made of some quite thick synthetic material with cords nearly an inch in diameter.

Many panes of glass were blown out of the cowshed. Some new glass was available and it was put in using putty made of fish oil, as linseed oil was in short supply. The glaziers were careless and dropped a quantity of putty, which was picked up by the cats and

eaten and several of them died. At that time there were twelve cats on the farm and we lost about seven.

The Germans had an incendiary bomb based on a 40-gallon barrel which, when dropped from a height, would split and the used engine oil mixture would be set on fire by a detonator. One of these bombs was dropped in a field of oats. It didn't catch fire but spread black oil over a circle of about 50 feet in diameter, and we couldn't use the grain in that area.

The only human casualty of all those bombs was a bomb disposal officer who tried to defuse a 500 pounder in the dark. It had come down earlier that day and, after several attempts, it had been pulled out of its hole by a small truck. The officer said to the sergeant, "this one is tricky, get down into the hole", which he did. The officer then tried to defuse the bomb and it went off. Only about 1lb of his body was found. The sergeant was unscathed. They could have shot at the bomb from a distance as it was nowhere near any houses, and so the officer died needlessly. The Germans were clever as they changed the colours of the wires needed to detonate the bombs, to make it trickier for them to be defused.

A Spitfire and a Hurricane crash-landed on the farm, both shortly after take-off. Both pilots survived. We also had a Messerschmidt 109 nosedive into the woods after the pilot bailed out. The pilot's parachute failed to open, so he landed in a neighbouring farm, but unfortunately died. The tail had been shot off. These planes had a large piece of armour plating behind the pilot, which ours did not. This one made quite a hole. We had the tailwheel for some time but that is long since gone. One of the cottage occupants got the cannon from the 109 and made it into the front for his fire grate, not realising there was a live cannon shell in it. One night he had an extra good fire and the shell exploded, making a hole in the coal scuttle, the wall, and his wife's leg. When I returned to Biggin Hill in 2017 to fly in a Spitfire as a celebration of reaching my 90th year, I was told that there were still pieces of the Messerschmidt surviving in the woods.

All the planes carried spare fuel tanks. The British ones were flat and square, and would explode on landing. The Germans used cone shaped tanks, which would survive the impact. My father found one, which had about five gallons of fuel in it. It must have been very good quality as he put it into his car and it went like the clappers!

We were lucky with the cattle, because often we would move them and then the field they had been in would be bombed the next day. I was friendly with the son of the Greenlees, who farmed just down the road from us. They had several cows killed or injured. They lost seven in one night. They were very unlucky.

Our farm workers didn't go to war. One chap went for a medical. He was ever so narrow. They said to him "You're the straightest man in Biggin Hill". He was the same width round his hips as his stomach and his chest. He was a general farm worker, but Father said he never did a day's work in his life; I can see why, he probably had consumption.

Some funny things happened during the war. One night there was a raid and a man's wig, which he had left on his bed, was blown out through the windows by a bomb. It landed half a mile away. On another occasion a man who lived in the valley was having his hair cut at the barber's when the siren went. The barber downed tools and went to the shelter leaving his customer with only one side of his hair cut.

We had our corn drill damaged by the British army. They were practising with live ammunition, one hiding behind an oak tree and the other shooting at him so he could get used to it. We were drilling corn and went home for our midday meal. On returning we found both the 5-gallon fuel can and the corn drill full of holes. We were lucky to be able to get spares fairly quickly to repair the drill. It was a good thing they didn't aim at the tractor.

Another thing the army did was to practice digging slit trenches on the edges of some of the fields. These were narrow, just wide enough for a man, and about 6 feet long and 3 feet deep. Although

they dug them they didn't fill them in again and the trenches soon became overgrown with weeds. One day Ruth drove the front wheel of the tractor into one and we had a job to get the tractor out again.

My sister Ruth worked the night shift at the Red Cross station at Biggin Hill during the war. She would cycle across the fields to get there. As soon as her shift had finished she would cycle home and work on the farm until the afternoon. We seemed to need less sleep in those days! She could drive the tractor, but needed someone to help her to start it - usually my job.



The St Johns Nursing Division at Biggin Hill. Ruth is on the back row, 4th from right

Rod was an air raid warden during the war. He had been keen to join the forces as an air gunner (life expectancy almost nil) but was turned down because the farm was so short staffed. I started as a messenger with a job carrying messages between the warden posts using my bicycle. At eighteen I also became a warden.

One day Rod was asked to guard an unexploded bomb until the bomb disposal unit could arrive. He suddenly saw the ground moving, and dived down the nearby bank. The bomb went off but he was okay.

One day Rod decided to take a shortcut across the runway. This was strictly prohibited and he realised why when he found a Spitfire taxiing towards him. Although great in the air, the pilot could not see in front of him when on the ground. Rod tried to go to one side, but the engine of the van cut out, and the Spitfire came nearer and nearer. Rod just managed to restart the van in time by swinging the starting handle and escaped.



A Spitfire at Biggin Hill - the pilot couldn't see anything in front of him on the ground

We supplied milk to the Biggin Hill airforce throughout the war. They had about half a churn of milk every day. Sometimes they'd say "Do you want any sausages" and they'd put them in the churn for us to take back. The forces had lots of food, and we also got extra rations for the farm workers, because they needed to be able to work efficiently.

We slept in the cellar during the war and, after months of this, the bedroom seemed like heaven. Rod and I shared a room at the back of the house. Winters were cold and this room was very cold. I used a ceramic gin bottle as a hot water bottle. We were getting to sleep one night when the siren went off. The sound of an air-raid siren is unforgettable. Rod got up to have a look around but I decided to stay in bed. After many days of working hard with disturbed sleep, it seemed the best option. The fact that a bomb could be exploding nearby seemed unimportant. But when Rod

called out "Incendiaries!" I looked out and the whole of the valley was like fairyland. There must have been hundreds of them dropped. We put on our wardens outfits and went to see.

After putting out some minor fires we were going back up our hill when old Mrs Watts came to her gate saying she had a fire. She was as casual as if telling us she had a kitten. We went to look. Sure enough, an incendiary bomb had come through the roof of this rather poorly constructed bungalow, fallen through the floor and was burning underneath. Mr Watts had urine trouble and was fitted with a bag. This was not always used and the floor was soaked in urine. The smell of this burning was unbelievable and I can still remember it. We always carried the stirrup pump so we were able to put out the fire with a few buckets of water. We were met by the fire service, who asked us “All okay boys?” To which we replied “All sorted”. If only they’d come ten minutes earlier they could have put it out themselves and we wouldn’t have had to put up with all that stink! The next morning we found three bombs that had missed the barn and burnt out in the grass behind.

On another occasion we were on patrol during an air raid. The electric wires had been bought down and a van was going along with a bare wire touching the roof. It was still live and sparks were coming off against the road. Someone got out of the van to move the cable and we shouted at him not to touch it. He took no notice, lifted the cable from the ground and, simultaneously, a fuse must have blown and so the cable was left safe. It must have been his lucky day.

In any war there are accidents. Two boys in Biggin Hill valley found a live mortar shell, used by the army on the range, that had been left in a rough field. The boys took it home, threw it into the air and ran round the corner of the house out of range. It didn't go off. They tried again and it still didn't go off. The third time they threw it up and decided to stay. This time it exploded and killed both of them. Their father was drunk and sleeping it off indoors.

I suppose there are many ways of learning about sex, and growing up on the farm in wartime was one of them. Sometimes people

were discovered among the bushes wrapped in a blanket. The American soldiers had a great reputation for this sort of thing. ‘Overpaid, oversexed and over here!’ was a comment directed at them, but it appeared to apply to other servicemen equally, and indeed civilians.

To stop gliders landing, obstacles were put up in the most level fields. At Norheads these consisted of long poles like telegraph poles which were dug into a depth of about 4 feet in a tripod formation. To get these out at the end of the war we devised a method of pitching a chain to a spoke on the rear wheel of the tractor. On moving forward this pulled the post out of the ground. These obstacles in the field made it very difficult for mowing or any other fieldwork.

Another method to stop the gliders landing, which was used on Mr Okey's farm at Titsey, was to put old cars at intervals across the field. These were mostly drive-able and, looking back it seems an awful waste, as cars were very difficult to come by after the war, by which time these were beyond repair. But needs must when the devil drives.

There were two types of air raid shelters for homes: Morrison and Anderson shelters. These were supplied free by the government but had to be erected at the householder’s cost. Anderson shelters were named after Sir John Anderson, who was then Home Secretary. We put up an Anderson shelter, built of heavy corrugated iron, at Norheads Nest where my grandmother and aunt Mary lived. It was partly in the ground and partly above. For two people they were just six feet by six, but longer for extra family members. They were always damp and horrible, as they were half in the ground and very damp and cold, but better than being blasted, and they would

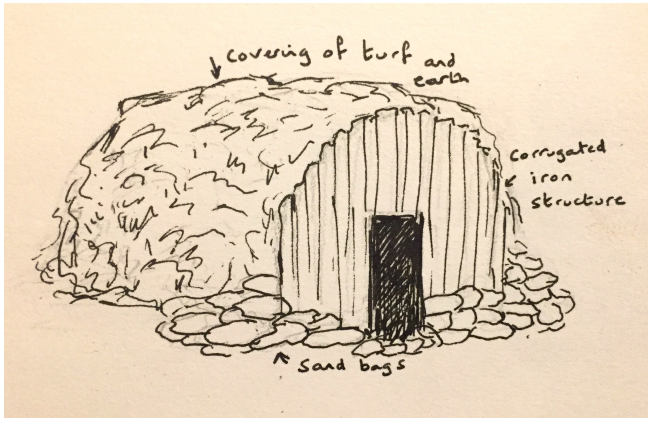
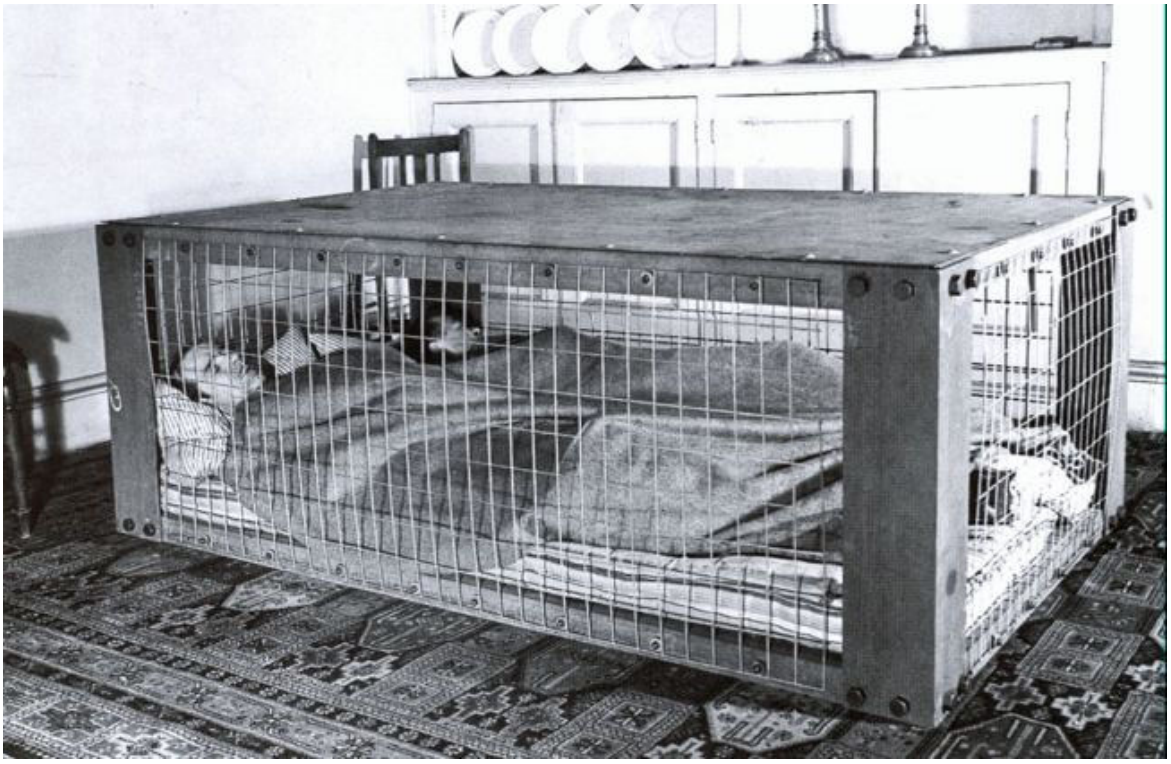


Diagram of an Anderson shelter

stand almost anything other than a direct hit. My grandmother and aunt never used theirs, as far as I can remember, preferring to use our back cellar.



Morrison shelter

The other type of shelter was the Morrison[14], named after Herbert Morrison, who succeeded Anderson as Home Secretary. This consisted of four large pieces of angle iron which supported a heavy steel top and was joined at the bottom with smaller angle iron. It had a square mesh all round with about two-inch holes. My grandparents had one of these at Catford, but I don't know if they ever used it. It must have been very claustrophobic. Morrison shelters were extremely tough and many were used for years after the war for milk stands. We were still using one of the stands for our fuel tank until we moved to Herefordshire in 2002.

When Meteor jet fighters came to Biggin Hill they were extremely noisy. There were complaints that hospital patients in Farnborough were upset by the noise. This was rated a good news story by the BBC who sent down a television crew. The meteors took off and

[14] Photo - Imperial War Museum stock, from Wikipedia

the pilots obviously decided to put on a good show. The squadron flew out over Croydon and came back flat-out at treetop height and dived onto the airfield. Unfortunately this coincided with Eva's return from hospital when William was born. We were taking time off to stroll round behind the farm in the stockyard when the planes came over. They were going so fast that the engines were surrounded by vapour and the noise was terrifying. My father was interviewed by the BBC for inclusion in their program. It so happened that someone important died on the same day and all we saw on the television was his head and hat for about half a minute. Almost fame at last.

Towards the end of the war, doodlebugs (V1s) started coming over. The "V" was short for “Vergeltungswaffen”, which roughly translated into ‘vengeance weapons’.The first one we saw at night looked like a giant rocket and made a noise like an enormous blowlamp, with flames coming out of the back. It was especially frightening as we had known nothing of these weapons, until the following day when they said these flying bombs were coming. It was scary in town as we could hear them cut out and then waited for the bang.

Barrage balloons were put up and two were stationed on the farm. These were supposed to bring these flying bombs down as they flew fairly low. One of ours did bring one down and it crashed on the next farm without hurting anyone. This particular bomb had been fitted with cutters designed to sever the cables that held up the balloon, but in spite of this it still crashed. The balloons were pulled in if an electric storm was imminent as they were filled with hydrogen. The crew were pulling in the one near the cottages when it was struck by lightning and it went off in quite a dramatic fireball. We were in the front room when it happened and saw the flames through the window.

The other type of secret weapon was the V2, a true guided ballistic missile, which rose into the stratosphere before plunging down to the target. The only warning of an approaching V2 was the double boom as it broke the sound barrier shortly before impact, and the explosion on the ground. The anti-aircraft guns seemed quite

ineffectual at the start of the war but improved with time. Probably the biggest improvement was the rocket propelled type which fired a lot at once, giving good coverage. The V2s did a lot of damage, but could have done more. Luckily the airforce discovered where their secret rocket base was at Peenemunda in Norway, and managed to bomb it.

Although there was quite severe rationing both of food and clothing, those working on farms had extra rations, and we could get hold of eggs, rabbits and the occasional pig. Clothes were in short supply; in fact I spent a lot of wartime dressed in ex-army uniform. You only hoped this did not come from soldiers who had been killed. Bread rationing carried on for some years after the war was over. Every so often extra rations would be allocated in the form of tinned salmon. One of the men would not take this as he said it was chopped up snakes.

Our van was serviced at the local garage. There was a very good mechanic working there. Unfortunately, one day the military police arrived and took him away because he was a deserter. A pity for him and also for us.

We had two land girls. One had seen pretty packets of seeds and thought that's what she would do. She lasted half a day. The other one was a Scottish girl called Agnes. She was really good. She was with us for years. We didn't provide accommodation; she lived in the valley somewhere.

We also had German prisoners of war, who came to help with the harvest. Rod went out with them hoeing mangolds and came back absolutely exhausted. They worked so hard! My father said they were the best workers he had had. A neighbouring farm had Italians POWs. They went running through the corn in chase of rabbits and flattened it, which did not go down well.

After the war a lot of army equipment was sold fairly cheaply. The army lorry we had was a three-ton Ford with a V8 engine, not very economical. It had four-wheel-drive and could go almost anywhere and it was fun to drive through mud. It also had run flat tyres so we

never noticed a puncture even if we got one. Built into it was an air pump working off the engine, which could be turned on by a lever.

The other ex-army thing we bought was a four-wheel trailer. This had large tough tyres, but it was badly balanced and would tip over very easily. On one occasion we loaded it with thatching straw, which was in trusses. Overnight it rained. This didn't hurt the straw because it was always wetted before use anyway. However, because the top layer of straw was heavier than the underneath layers, the whole thing became top-heavy. Halfway down to the stacks the trailer tipped over. As someone said, "Arse over tip!"

Another time we loaded this trailer with bean boughs in the wood. When we moved it one wheel became stuck in a rut and over it went. It was very annoying because it had taken some time to load.

Bean boughs were harvested from young hazel trees, which were cut about every seven years when they were eight feet high. They were complete with branches and tied up, either with wire or withies, in bundles of about 20. The withies were made by taking a long hazel stick and heating it in the fire. It could then be twisted at one end and made into a loop. The other end was put through the loop and tucked in. These were very quick to make and the advantage was that only wood was taken into the field and the withies were used as bean sticks. After the boughs were laid out and flattened they were all cut off to the same length with an axe. After the summer the bean boughs were taken up and used under corn stacks or for burning, as they were too brittle to use a second year.

After the war you had to write down what you had driven. So I put down van, car, motorbike, lorry, track laying vehicle. So I got a licence for all those things. The only thing I wasn’t allowed to drive was an invalid carriage!

Chapter 11

Sport and relaxation



When we were young, to a large extent we made our own entertainment. In the winter we played cards, table tennis and darts.

We had a three-quarter size billiard table purchased in 1940, which was extremely heavy, with a slate bed. We kept it down in the cellar when not in use, and had to carry it up when required. There were no legs for it, so it went on top of the dining table and was more or less level. When we got it there was no covering or pockets. Aunt Mary knitted the pockets out of dishcloth cotton, and we covered the slate with a chenille tablecloth, which worked quite well.

When we had parties with other children we played games like Sardines and Blind Man's Bluff. The house was ideal for hide and seek, as there were many hiding places.

Although my father had to juggle managing the farm with raising five children, he always found time to play with us; cricket and ball games outside, and other pastimes. On the beach he would let us bury him in the sand until only the top of his head was showing!



We also used to go to the beach at Winchelsea as a family, and had several happy holidays there. We always stayed in the same bungalow.

My father nearly drowned once while we were on holiday. We had to go over a dyke on a plank, but Rene wouldn’t go, so my father picked her up to take her over. Unfortunately the extra weight broke the plank, sending them tumbling eight feet into the water



Rod, my father and Ruth

below. My father couldn't swim, but luckily he was able to throw Rene up the bank, and haul himself out.

At Winchelsea the sea used to come up to the garden of the bungalow that we rented. We would go out with shrimping nets and catch shrimps to eat.

Rod, Rene and I used catapults that my father made us and we became quite accurate. Apart from using pebbles as ammunition we made lead pellets by pouring molten lead into holes drilled in wood. This meant they were all the same size and therefore more accurate. The catapults were made from hazel where two branches met to form a V. The pouch for the ammunition was made of a tongue from a leather boot cut with the rough side on the outside so as to give a grip for the fingers. There was an electric pole outside our gate with a number 24 on it in aluminium lettering. By careful aiming I managed to knock off part of the number and changed it to number 21.

Another thing Rod and I did was to get hollow keys and stuff these with tips of non-safety (paraffin) matches with a nail pushed into the end and a piece of string acting as a handle. By swinging this and clouting the end on something hard like a wall it was possible to get a good bang, which sometimes split the key.

I was also very keen on shooting, first with an air rifle, and later with a .22 rifle which I still have. There were always a lot of rabbits in Norheads and I spent many hours going round the farm shooting. I was joined by Ivor Smith, who was also rather keen. Ivor had been evacuated to Burwash but had later returned. His parents lived in The Grove, off Pole Steeple in Biggin Hill, and he still lives there.

I once shot a fox with an air rifle, which wasn’t enough to do serious damage. The fox ran away rubbing his side along the ground thinking he’d been stung by something, before disappearing into the woods.

We played the usual things like cricket with friends, and continued this in the young farmers club. Rod and I played for Oxted YFC and used to carry our pads strapped on the sides of our motorbikes. One day on the way back from cricket we were coming round the corner at the bottom of Norheads Hill. I was in front and came across a girl on a bike on the wrong side of the road. I throttled down and managed to miss her. Rod was behind me and wasn't quite so lucky. He came off his bike. The girl also came off but wasn't hurt. Rod was not badly injured but he had to have a few days off work. This meant that the next day I had to go by myself on the milk round, having previously only driven the van about 100 yards. In at the deep end! This is how I taught myself to drive.



A family photo of a balloon seller, circa 1930

Chapter 12

Milk production



A *roundsman with all five of us in the milk cart; Ruth, John, Dot, Rene and Rod*

The cowshed up to 1938 was a long building with a chalk floor. The new cowshed was steel framed with concrete channels for dung and a feeding passage. It held 30 cows and was equipped for machine milking. The floor was very smooth concrete which could be dangerous when wet. Attempts were made to roughen it up with acid, but not very successfully.

In the winter when the cows had been in at night there would be ten large barrow loads of manure to move every morning. This had to be pushed up a plank onto the heap. There were two of us doing the morning milking, and indeed also the afternoon one. One day the fellow who was supposed to be helping didn't turn up so I did it all. I had just finished everything when Austin Kilner, the regular cowman, came down from his cottage to get his milk.

There was also a large barn, stables and other outbuildings, and the dairy where the milk was cooled and loaded onto carts. Before the milk machines were used the milk was quite dirty, the cows

being milked into open buckets with hair and muck falling in. About 1936 there was a scheme to be classified grade A, so we had to practice extra cleanliness. We did this by getting a specially shaped bucket with muslin over the top, which kept out the rubbish, but probably not the germs.

We had three milk horse-drawn carts. In the early days milk was dipped out from a seventeen gallon churn carried on the cart, or was sometimes drawn from a tap at the base of the churn. This was then taken to the house and put in a jug left out for this purpose, usually with a cover over it. When bottles came in it was easier. It was all gold tops: pints or half pints. Later a van was used on the rounds, and to collect milk from Westerham station when we hadn't got enough. (This was called accommodation milk).

We had to set off for the milk round at the crack of dawn. It was more or less over by half past two, because some of the roundsmen would come and help us with the haymaking. I hated the milk round, but had to do it in emergencies. I didn’t mind driving the van.

When we had excess milk someone came to take it away. I will never forget him, because he was so strong. He could comfortably pick up a seventeen gallon churn and put it in his lorry. I don’t know how he could do it.

Any milk not sold was pasteurised and sold cheaper the next day. Pasteurisation was carried out by immersing a ten gallon churn in a large copper of hot water and testing with a thermometer to get the correct temperature. The water in the copper (which was in fact a large tank) was boiling. One day a friend of ours put his foot in by mistake and had to go to hospital. He was badly scalded but recovered well.

In about 1939, at the time of the safety first on the roads campaign, Father had the idea of using the same logo on his bottles. He was told he should patent it, but he didn't bother.

One advert he had was on the safety curtain in front of the stage in the WI hall. This was brought down at least once during performances. It had the words "*You can whip Stone's cream but you cannot beat their milk.*"

On a milk round you could sell anything. As well as milk we used to also sell rabbits, bay leaves, butter, eggs (although not on a Sunday) and clotted cream. Because the hens didn't lay many eggs in the winter, preserved eggs were sold at a lower price. These were surplus eggs that had been pickled in isinglass.

We made our own clotted cream. It had to be cooked at a certain temperature, then left for a day for the crust to form. We then stored it in a safe for a couple of days. We had shorthorn cattle, so our milk had a lot of cream. We bought in butter to sell.

It was my job to take the horses to the forge. Once when I was about fourteen I had to ride a milk pony called Nobby bareback to the forge at Cudham, about five miles away. Nobby didn't like hills, so when we rounded one corner and he saw a hill ahead he took off at a gallop, with me clinging on for dear life!

The blacksmith at the forge decided to retire. It had taken him all his working life to pay for the forge. He died only a year after retirement, because he had nothing to do.

Not much attention at the time was paid to tuberculin testing. When this was carried out later most of the cows failed and had to be replaced. Brucellosis could also be a problem. Although we were okay, one of our neighbours had hardly any live calves for a whole year as it caused them to abort at six months into the pregnancy. This could also be transmitted to humans causing undulant fever.

My wife Eva contracted undulant fever when we were at Edenbridge, in about 1954. This is probably due to milk consumed at an earlier date, as our cows were clear. Guinea Pigs were used at that time to test for brucellosis (although the first guinea pig we used for testing died of something else).

Father was determined to supply milk to his customers whatever the weather. In 1926 there was an extra large amount of snow, up to the level of the telegraph poles where it drifted. He made a sledge from a door which he loaded the milk onto, and delivered it as usual.

In most winters there was snow and special nails were put into the hooves of the milk ponies for extra grip. Sometimes a carthorse was used to help pull the cart. This extra horse pulled up the hills with chains, which were fastened to the front of the cart. During the war the milk rounds were zoned and outlying customers exchanged with other dairies to save fuel.

When there was a flu epidemic about 1936 or 1937 most of the workers were sick and there was no-one to milk the cows. It was still done by hand at that time. Our worker called Upton, who usually cut and laid hedges, volunteered to milk all the cows on his own, provided he could have a bottle of whiskey, which was provided. He kept this handy and sipped some between cows. He milked the entire herd for two days, quite a record as this usually took two men in the afternoon and three in the morning.

When my father decided to finish the milk rounds he offered them to both myself and Rod, but neither of us wanted to take them on. He sold the milk rounds to someone we called Old Beltcher because he used to beltch all the time. He had the cart repainted with the slogan Norheads Diary, which amused us. It was a fortnight before someone pointed out that the spelling was wrong!

Chapter 13

Motorbikes and cars

My first motorbike was a Francis Barnett two-stroke, which didn't like hills and tended to stop halfway up. Rod started with a very old Enfield, which was oiled by hand pump. When starting up, great clouds of smoke would come out because of some of the oil running down into the engine. It was okay once warmed up. His second bike was a Matchless 350cc. This was a good machine, but it had been in a crash and the frame was bent. This meant that to counter the tilt the rider had to sit sideways, which made it unstable in slippery conditions. Going through Catford on the roads which were paved with wooden blocks he came off. Petrol was spilling all over him and he was trapped underneath. I was on the pillion and helped him right the bike and no harm was done. A similar thing happened to Tom Okey, as the wood blocks were extremely slippery when wet, with all the oil spilt on them. Tom tried his back brake and skidded before trying his front brake and coming off smartly.

Our friend Ivor Smith had a bike which he hotted up and increased the top speed to 82 mph; fast for those days. He was very good at scrambling. Ivor used to disconnect his lights when scrambling. One night, driving along the road, the light socket came out by itself and he crashed, skidding along the road on one knee. This wore it away considerably and he had to go to hospital where they scrubbed it to remove the road grit. This is where he met Margaret, an Irish nurse, whom he later married.

My next bike was a Norton 16H, which had been used by a builder who carried slates on the petrol tank, and it was very old and scratched. When repairing this bike I fitted new valves. On starting, it caught fire because the inlet valve stuck and the ignited gases blew back. Rod rushed into the house to get the ancient Minimax fire extinguisher, which actually managed to put out the fire, which was just as well because there was a lot of paint in the building as we were in the process of repairing it. The extinguisher was the

type which contained acid in a glass vial which broke when the end was stamped on the ground. The acid then combined with powder and water to form a powerful jet containing carbon dioxide. The only snag was the effect it had on the aluminium parts of the bike which went terribly spotty.

I sold the old Norton and got a new one. This was 500cc, the same make, but in good condition. I towed another bike up Titsey Hill as it had broken down. The rider wasn't at all grateful as my exhaust was in his face all the time, which I hadn't realised.

The motorcycle club was allowed to hold scrambles on the rough land on the farm, including going through the mud by the ponds and up the hills in the beech wood. This was quite exciting as the gradients were quite steep and extra water was poured on to make the tracks more slippery.



Eva and the Austin 8

I had my motorbike until about 1945 when I bought my first car, a 1932 Austin 7. This was a great little car but not very speedy, which was just as well as the brakes were diabolical. We called this a 'flying Matchbox' because of its shape.

Someone at the young farmers club was asked what she thought of my car and she said "ghastly!" The car had a prop shaft with a Spicer-Hardy disk on one end, which would after time disintegrate and have to be replaced. Quite an easy job. Eva and I went all round Devon in this car on our honeymoon and it never let us down.

I taught Eva to drive in this car. Although people say never teach your girlfriend to drive, we didn't have any trouble and she soon became very competent. After two lessons with a pro to polish up she passed first time. I never had to pass the test because there was such a backlog that anyone who had been driving during the war was automatically given a license, which covered all groups of vehicles. I had driven motorbikes, cars, a lorry, tractors and a tracklayer so my license covered me to drive everything except invalid carriages and motor mowers. Later I changed to an Austin 8.

When my father became ill in 1959 Rod came over for a few weeks to help and my stepmother Grace let him use Dad's car, which was an Austin A40. Dad had bought it new about five years before and it only had 7000 miles on the clock. I wasn't allowed to drive it, so there was clearly some favouritism going on! My van was on its last legs, so when Rod went back I either had to have a new engine or a new van, and so I chose a new van, because at the time we were doing quite well. This meant, of course, that Eva was left without a vehicle all the time I was away, and although she didn't complain it must have been hard.

Grace never did like us, so when saw this new van she said to Mrs Kilner, "Look, he is already spending his father’s money!" In fact, Dad didn't realise that there wasn't much money. He left the first £3000 to Grace, and the rest to his children. After all the debts were settled, she got her money and that was all there was.

Chapter 14

Accidents

Anyone who has worked on a farm all his or her life is lucky not to have had an accident, either minor or serious. I knew one man who was killed by a bull and another killed underneath a trailer when he was taking off an axle and the blocks collapsed. Another was electrocuted by beekeeping equipment. Someone at Leaves Green was killed by trying to get a tractor to grip by putting a plank under the wheel. It did grip but ran him over. When at Norheads we had a lad who had his eye kicked out by a horse when he was bringing it in. And in those days there was very little compensation.

A land girl on a threshing machine lost her leg by putting it in the drum, as it started up without warning. Luckily this did not take place on our farm. She was on the top of the machine and in her hurry to get off she put her foot into the drum, a very rapidly revolving piece of machinery which was below the level of the top of the machine. While feeding the thresher, the operator had to stand in a well, so as not to fall in. I did a lot of feeding and the only danger was the dust and flying things, especially peas or beans as they came out like bullets and could penetrate two or three layers of clothing. We wore goggles made of wire mesh. These were not only strong, they didn't steam up.

I once pulled the rope on top of a trailer of hay and found there was more slack than I thought there would be. I landed on the tractor and had to have stitches in my leg. One of the men on the farm cut himself badly on his knee with a billhook. He was doubly unlucky because, on another day, we were in the field taking a pin out of the steering part of the tractor. This was very tight and I was hitting it with a sledgehammer which glanced off and hit poor Lionel on the nose, which meant he had to have a few days off. Another time I was carrying a sackcloth up a ladder when a rung broke. This could have been serious as this cloth weighed about 3/4cwt. Another time I was chasing a rat by the woods when collecting

threshed wheat, and ran into a barbed wire fence, just missing my eye. I still have the scar today.

One of the hirers of chainsaws showed me his shoe when bringing back the saw. He wasn't wearing safety boots and had cut right through the front of it. He only cut his big toe. Another inch closer and he would have lost all of his toes.

I used to take risks which seem stupid now. When playing in the cold I often put the tractor in the furrow and, if in a big field, got off and walked. Another dangerous action was, when feeding cattle in the winter, to start the tractor at one side of the field and climb on the trailer to throw off the hay, then get on again before reaching the other end. Also at one time I was knotting the bailer twine when the string broke with the PTO still engaged. I realise how silly this was. If the trip mechanism had come on it would have been easy to lose an arm.

Once opening a sack of barley the knife slipped and went straight into my arm, just catching the artery. We bound it up and by the time Eva had driven me to Headcorn surgery I had lost a lot of blood and was quite faint. The doctor stitched it up but not very successfully and it came up like a balloon at every pulse. I had to go to the hospital to have it re-stitched and I had no pulse in that arm for some time because they sewed up the artery.

Another nasty accident was when I dropped the trailer drawbar on my foot. The drawbar had an angle iron underneath it, which slit the bone in the big toe into three pieces. Dr Tower came and we managed to get the wellington off. He looked up at me as he was sitting on the floor seeing to it and said seriously, "You may lose your nail." I was quite happy with this as I had thought I might be losing my foot.

Chapter 15

Married life

I met Eva at the Oxted Young Farmers club. I was Chairman and she was Secretary. A classic case of chairman marrying secretary. When we started going out together she was 17 and I was 21. We got on well and had ideas for better farming. Over the years I realised what a gem I had had the good fortune to marry. She was accomplished in many things. She excelled in everything she tried, from public speaking to cooking.



Eva

We married on Feb 1st 1950. We took our honeymoon in Devon, where it rained every day except for one when it snowed. While there we visited a cousin who was delighted to show us his farm, and took us on a tour, which was memorable as we had absolutely no suitable clothing or gum boots! He was very proud of his engine, but struggled to start it and became so red in the face we feared he'd do himself an injury.

In 1952, twelve years after my mother died, my father married Grace Botley, who was a middle-aged spinster. He had met her at the shop her brother owned in Westram. We used to supply this shop with bunches of snowdrops.



New parents

Grace was not an easy person to get on with, and seemed to resent everything, including my relationship with my father. She resented the fact that any money from the grandparents was to be divided between the grandchildren, and pressurised Grandmother to leave her the contents of her house, which were not rightly hers. It was a pity that many things which belonged to the family went elsewhere.

Our first son William was born in 1953. Grace resented us and made life as difficult for us as she could. She told my father I had been stealing grain for my chickens, and turned the tradesmen that visited the house against us. When I took Eva to hospital to have William she said to Mrs Kilna “There they go. Off again!” Because of this atmosphere we had to find somewhere else to live. We were living in the back of the house, and had to go around three sides of the house to use the shared lavatory, so were unable to avoid Grace.

It was very difficult to find any houses to rent. We found a nine acre farm at Edenbridge that came with a reasonable house, that we rented for £80 a year.

In the last years of Father's life he hadn't been able to run the farm properly. Hedges were grown out and, in some cases, had been neglected for years. We had a meeting with Mr Hitch from the Estate, and Pattello & Vinson on our part. After much deliberation, an agreement was reached to balance the amount owing with the produce (hay and straw) left on the farm. This was probably quite

generous on the Landlord's part as dilapidation could add up to a lot of money.

When Father died an estate manager was appointed by the Landlord to sort out the dilapidations. The landlord bought a bungalow for Grace to live in for the rest of her life. They offered me the farm, but Eva and I were doing quite well on our small farm, so I declined.

When Grace died her brother Reg met me at the bungalow where she lived. He said he realised that some of the things in the house really belonged to the Stone family. Anything I recognised I could have to share with my brother and sisters. The first thing I saw was the table, which used to stand in the hall at Norheads. I said “I recognise that” and he said “Ah, I promised that to my nephew.” Nearly everything had been promised to someone else in the Botley clan. Eva particularly wanted a Wellington chest, which used to be in Grandmother's house. Reg said “There are things in there, have it another day.” I visualised this disappearing so said, “That's all right Reg, we'll empty it now”, which we did and I took it away. He fetched out some silver spoons, which I had never seen before, so I said “I recognised these” and got them. Altogether I did manage to get several things for our family, but wished afterwards that I had kept the key to the back door and gone back to sort out some more. William came down to go to the funeral and afterwards we went to Reg's house. Lo and behold, in pride of place on the sideboard was Grandmother's cut glass biscuit barrel!

After leaving Norheads Farm, Eva and I’s adventures continued at Edenbridge and beyond, and my years at Biggin Hill offered me a good foundation for my future.

Chapter 16

Edenbridge

We left my father's farm in 1954 for our new home at Edenbridge. We took on an overdraft to cover the cost of five cows plus tractor and trailer. The previous tenant had worked for his cousin, Mr Lewis, who had a contracting business. However we didn't want to do this. Mr Lewis was very good to us and lent us his hay turner for no charge.



Mark and William

When we started at Edenbridge and were setting up in poultry, one of the salesmen from Young's of Horley said about us, "What one doesn't think of the other one will!" This shows how we worked together to build up the farm, small though it was.

In 1955 our second son Mark was born, completing our family. Eva was very unwell after the birth, having caught some sort of infection from the hospital.

Broilers were just coming in then, so we decided to ask for a loan to put up a broiler house. I should add that we had got the electricity put it in by the good offices of Mr Dawson, who was the area manager for the electricity board and the father of our friend Nigel. We were told this would take many months. However, with his help, it was installed within weeks. This enabled us to use electricity for rearing poultry.

I asked the manager of the Westminster Bank if we could have a loan of £1500 to erect a purpose-built house for raising broilers. These buildings were made by Wernick Bros and were very well

built with double walls and high-capacity fans in the roof, which were set to the temperature required by a thermostat. The bank manager was very dubious and said he would have to put it to head office. I said to Eva, "Let's visit him.” We sat in his office and I said “My father will take his account away from you if we don't get this loan and he has been with you for fifty years.” Eva added, "And my mother will take her account away.” Her mother was with Lloyds Bank not the Westminster!

Incidentally, my father never knew anything about our visit to the bank. He never at any time discussed either with Rod or myself whether or not he was doing well, or what was the best way of making a profit. I think in his later years he didn't know anyway and was losing money.

The next day we got the go-ahead for a new building, which held three thousand birds to twelve weeks old. This paid for itself within a year. The mains gas boilers were very efficient and the cost of heat for rearing was only halfpenny a bird.

The broiler house cost £1200. It had fans and two systems of lights; red lights and white lights. The red lights made the birds sleepy so you could catch them; the birds would be madly active in white lights, but in red they would just stand in a stupor. The birds were heated by brooders, which were large heat lamps eight feet across suspended from the ceiling, which could be raised upwards as the chicks grew. They were very effective and the birds did well. The suppliers always gave one extra chick per hundred, which was about the number we lost.

We bought the chicks at a day old, and had to pick them up from Edenbridge station, as they came by train. They were always very hungry by the time they arrived! We started with batches of three thousand, then four thousand when we increased the size of the building. We would sell about a thousand as poisson at six weeks old, so there was more room for the remaining birds, and this was a way of increasing profitability. Eventually we had two houses, which we filled alternatively.

The broilers were sold to Greggs, a large stores who had a factory only about five miles away. They sent a large lorry at five in the morning and took them away in crates of live birds. It was quite an operation.

The turnaround between batches was always hard work, as we had to clear the old litter, pressure wash all the equipment, get new litter and start again, all within a week. It required precision - rather like a military exercise, but we managed it, as well as raising two small children.

Obviously it was a risk for the bank to lend us money as we were in a rented farm and the birds could die, so there was no collateral which banks usually require. I have heard the opinion that banks will only lend money if you can prove you don't need it. However, in our case they helped us on our way and we became good friends with the manager. Always a good thing. We were lucky because at that time broilers were a licence to print money, and we did very well from them.

We had laying hens in batteries as well as broilers at that time. We sold the eggs to Stonegate Farm. We weren't allowed to wash the eggs; they took money off if you did, so we had an egg cleaner, which was a cotton wheel with grit on it, that cleaned the eggs. William had to try everything, so he put his finger in to see what it was like. It took the skin off his finger, so it certainly worked!

We killed and plucked enough birds each week to take up to Skilton's in Bromley. The manager, Mr Hollis, was very helpful, and would take 100 -150 birds a week. These were battery hens, which, after having laid for about a year, were still quite tender and sold as boiling fowl. He also had eggs and fat cockerels when available, and at Christmas 500 cockerels and 100 turkeys. He said the turkey cocks were too big, weighing up to 35lbs, so we then went to Beltsville White, which were much smaller. He then said the hen birds were too small, so we gave up turkeys and concentrated on chickens. Anyway turkeys were more difficult to rear and were keen to commit suicide, thereby saving themselves from being killed and plucked.



With chickens we were able to get cockerels to 9lbs after 16 - 18 weeks with a lot less trouble. We couldn't always find enough of our own birds to fill the orders, so bought some in. These had to be top quality.

We started off with a dry plucking machine and sold the feathers. This consisted of a drum with plates which opened and closed to grip the feathers, but did not remove the stumps (half formed feathers), which were present in large numbers on young birds. The dry plucker caused a fire in the middle of one night because the feathers got onto the refrigerator motor. The first we knew was when we heard a crackling noise. Eva got up and looked out of the window. She came back and said quite coolly “I think we have a fire”. The feathers were in the garage joined onto the house, and flames were coming out of the open door and going up the brickwork.

We called the Fire Brigade, then squirted water from the hose onto the building and had the fire out before they arrived. The only reason the fire hadn't taken a more serious hold was because we were rearing chickens in the loft above and had laid flat asbestos sheets on the floor to keep out the draught that came through the floorboards. Although we had put the fire out ourselves, when they arrived the fire brigade were keen to make sure it didn’t start again, so soaked everything in water and hacked into the charred beams. They even filled a refrigerator full of chickens with water. It certainly worked, as the fire didn’t return. We were insured by the NFU at the time and they were very good.

We then changed to a wet plucker, which we bought new complete with a thermostatically controlled dipping tank. It was essential that the birds were dipped at an exact temperature of 127 Fahrenheit. Anything below this and the feathers would not come off; anything

above and the birds would go red. This machine consisted of a revolving drum into which were fixed dozens of rubber tubes. The bird was held against the drum after having been pushed up and down in the hot water for thirty seconds. Although the feathers were unsaleable, the saving in time was enormous. We could easily kill and pluck our quota in an afternoon.

One evening there was a cloudburst. We were upstairs with the children trying to calm them in the storm. I said I'd just go down and make a cup of tea and stepped into the kitchen. I found about 2 inches of water on the floor. Looking out I realised there was an unusual amount of rain which was coming down so fast it was overshooting the gutters. When the rain slowed a bit, and we had had our cup of tea, we went out to see the chickens. Some of these were in arks out in the field. Because it was a sloping field, there was about a foot of water in the arks. We collected any birds still alive and moved them into the new broiler house, which was warm and dry. The birds in the old prefab, which we were using for rearing, were sitting on the feeders. This building had about a foot of water in it too, so these birds were also put into the broiler house. We lost 120 altogether, but it could have been a lot worse.

Our neighbours must have realised what was happening as they came to help. A lot of the cinder road which was above the level of the buildings was washed down, both into the kitchen entrance and also into the open-ended garage where the eggs were stacked, ready to go. These had to be unpacked and washed. After about two days we were back to normal.

One of our neighbours at Edenbridge was very much an old country type. He said one of his cows gave a lot of milk. I asked, "How much?" And he said "she gets that there big old bucket three parts full." A good measurement!

The Old Surrey and Burstow Hunt held their point-to-point races at Edenbridge. Some of this was on our land, and the payment covered nearly half our rent. They prepared the fences for jumping about a week in advance so there was some inconvenience but we could alter the grazing for the cows accordingly. Most of the course

was visible from the bedroom window so we had a good viewpoint without going out. If much damage was done to the grass the hunt repaired it and applied artificial manure to bring it back to life.

The Oxted Agricultural Show was held on fields adjoining us. One August bank holiday it rained buckets before the event. Some vehicles were having trouble getting in even before the show because of the muddy ground. After the show was over many cars and lorries got stuck. I took the tractor and pulled out quite a lot and was paid with cash, beer and flowers.



Chapter 17

Biddenden

After six years at Edenbridge we had built up enough capital to buy our own farm. We purchased 80 acres in Biddenden on heavy clay land. This farm had a modern house, electricity, water and telephone, but no gas or mains drainage.

We invested in a dairy herd for the main enterprise and had built it up to thirty cows when I got appendicitis. Because it had become fibrous the doctor said it was inoperable until it went down, and recommended several weeks of lying still in bed. The man I had helping me with the milking was not doing very well, and some of the cows were hardly being milked at all.

My neighbour came across one day and took four gallons from one cow which had just been through the milking parlour. This was very worrying for both Eva and myself. At that time we had two young children to look after. One night my appendix flared up and I was rushed to hospital, where it was taken out the next day. I could hear the cows when I returned home from my bedroom and they didn't sound very happy. When I had been at home for three days I decided to go out and see the cows. At about 8:30am, after I got the cows in to be milked, my cowman arrived. On being asked when he was supposed to arrive he said, "When I like.” So I said, "You'll go when I like, and that's now!" He said, "What about my holiday?" And I told him to get stuffed!

This left me with the cows to milk. Any lifting was extremely painful. Getting someone else to do it at short notice was difficult, but we did manage to find a young woman who was good with the cows, although she was hopeless with the tractor we used for taking in the hay. It was winter time, and hay and straw had to be taken into the yard where the cows were kept when not being milked. This was about 100ft square, with hay racks running down the centre. It had a fairly crude building built of telegraph poles with a corrugated iron roof that would house up to 80 animals.

We realised that other people probably needed temporary workers, so we started up the Kent Farm Relief service. When it got going we had up to twenty-two men going as far afield as Yorkshire and the Isle of Wight. Some customers were difficult. One wouldn't have the person we sent. When I phoned him up he explained that the person we sent was Irish. When being told that he was Irish himself, he said, "But your man comes from Cork and I'm from Mayo". On another occasion the man we sent, who was first class, was told he couldn't possibly be a pig man as he was too clean! Occasionally I went when our man was delayed and, on one occasion, when the chap we sent broke his ribs after slipping and catching himself on the trailer while loading milk churns. This was very awkward as Eva was left without a vehicle.



We added to this business the sale and hire of Husqvarna chainsaws and we had the sole agency for these in Kent. The difficulty here was that most buyers wanted HP and we weren't big enough to get this from a firm. Doing it ourselves was dodgy as in several cases the purchaser fell ill, or had an accident and ran out of money. Hiring could also be risky. Although we asked for a £15 deposit, when someone put in the wrong fuel or ran off with a saw, this did not cover the cost.

One man who lived in Faversham did not return his saw. I couldn't contact him so decided to pay him a visit. Accompanied by Bill, one of our relief workers, I found his house, but there was no-one in and no light on. We were knocking at the door when a woman, who said she was his ex-wife, approached us and said we would find him in the local pub. The barman said he had been in, but had left. I think he must somehow have had warning that we were after him.

I decided to cruise about for a while to see if he appeared. After about half an hour we were just returning for home when I saw what I thought was his car so gave chase, whereupon he

accelerated. We were going through town doing 60 miles an hour as he headed out on the main road to Ashford with us in hot pursuit. Bill said, "Do we know this is the right car? Perhaps it's someone else". The car went fast round the roundabout and headed back the way we had come. There was a row of parked cars on the left and I was able to box him in. He wound down the window as we were by this time alongside. He said in a surprised voice “Oh, it's Mr Stone!'" I told him to stop messing about and give me back the saw. We followed him to his house. It was evening and dark and there were no lights on. I went in with him. The saw was under the bed. The electricity in the house was turned off. He said he had no money and couldn't pay. At least I had the saw back. About six weeks later an envelope arrived with eighteen pounds from him, so he wasn't all bad, just down on his luck.

One man hired a chainsaw for the weekend to sort out a fallen tree. When I went to collect it he hadn't got on very well. In less than an hour I cut up more wood that he had in the whole two days he’d had the saw. I didn't charge him extra for my time! He asked if I could cut down a large dead tree in his garden. I looked at this, saw that it was very close to electric wires and to the road, so I replied that I was sorry, but I was too busy. (Cowards way out!)

This excuse of being too busy could be useful. One day some of the local farmers were going fishing in Dungeness and asked if I wanted to go. We hired a boat between us. This was big enough for several people and had its own pilot. We anchored about two hundred yards or so offshore, and there was good fishing. Unfortunately I was in the prow, and, owing to the slight swell and the boat going up and down steadily, I was quite seasick. I had never been affected before, even on rough crossings to Belgium. They took me back to shore, along with one of the others. Those left on board had been in the Navy and were unaffected. In fact they were eating sandwiches when I was feeling terrible, which made me feel even worse. They brought some fish to me when they got back, and told me I had left one on the hook. Two weeks later Stan said they were going again and would I like to come? I said, "Sorry, I'm too busy!”

Another time I let someone have a saw and he gave me a false address. He phoned up after three days, which was when it was due to be returned, and asked for an extension. However he didn't bring it back after a week. I thought he looked like a gypsy. I had dealt with gypsies before and found them mostly okay. However, on going to his false address in Tonbridge, there were no clues. But there was a gypsy camp nearby where I went to enquire. The men were absent, so I asked the women if anyone could cut down a tree for me. I made out to be particularly wanting a man with a red mini van, as he was so good. One woman said, "I know who you mean. He's moved to the camp at Chelsham".

I decided to pay a visit although I was told I'd probably get castrated or worse. No-one at the garages close to the site had filled up a red mini van with petrol. By this time it was dark, and time for the men and vans to come in. I made two circuits of the camp in my car but there was no sign of the van. All the inhabitants were in their caravans and never came out. I left and returned home and never recovered the saw. Perhaps it was good luck not to have found the person I was looking for, as a confrontation with ten or twenty gypsies perhaps would not have been too good. After another year I gave up the saw agency and Webbs of Tenterden took it over.

The other enterprise started at Biddendon was the sale of hatching eggs to a local hatchery. This started well but came a cropper when we went on holiday. The person looking after the hens let them run out of water. Instead of 75%, production dropped to 10% and never recovered. After this we concentrated on rearing calves for milking cows and for beef, also at one time rearing some for veal.

At Biddenden, as with all our farms, we had a continual problem with rats and mice. On one occasion the cat chased a mouse into a spin-drier. I thought to encourage it to leave I would turn the drier on briefly. However it didn't come out. The next time we used the drier the clothes were covered in little bits of mouse.

When we kept cows in Biddenden some of the cows were hard to calve. The Friesians usually have a large calf but the pelvic bone only opens to the same size as a Jersey cow, which of course has a much smaller calf and is usually no trouble.

Later I bought a kind of jack to help. This was a T-shaped bar. The end was placed against the back end of the cow and cords tied around the front legs of the calf, a slippery operation, especially as the legs were still inside. These cords were joined to the moving part of the apparatus, then pulled up the notches by a ratchet. This method, although sounding cruel, was in fact easiest on the cow and calf as sustained pressure could be applied.

Usually this operation was performed with the cow in a standing position and the calf landed on on the floor (hopefully on straw) in a mound of blood. It could only be used if the calf was presented in the correct position. Sometimes the calf's head was back and had to be twisted round. Quite a tricky operation, being so slippery. Occasionally the whole calf would be presented backwards. This made it difficult because it was against the way the hairs grew and, in spite of all the slime, did not want to move.

There was a call for lean beef and some of the continental breeds were recommended as crosses to achieve this. One of these was the Chianina, which grew very big.

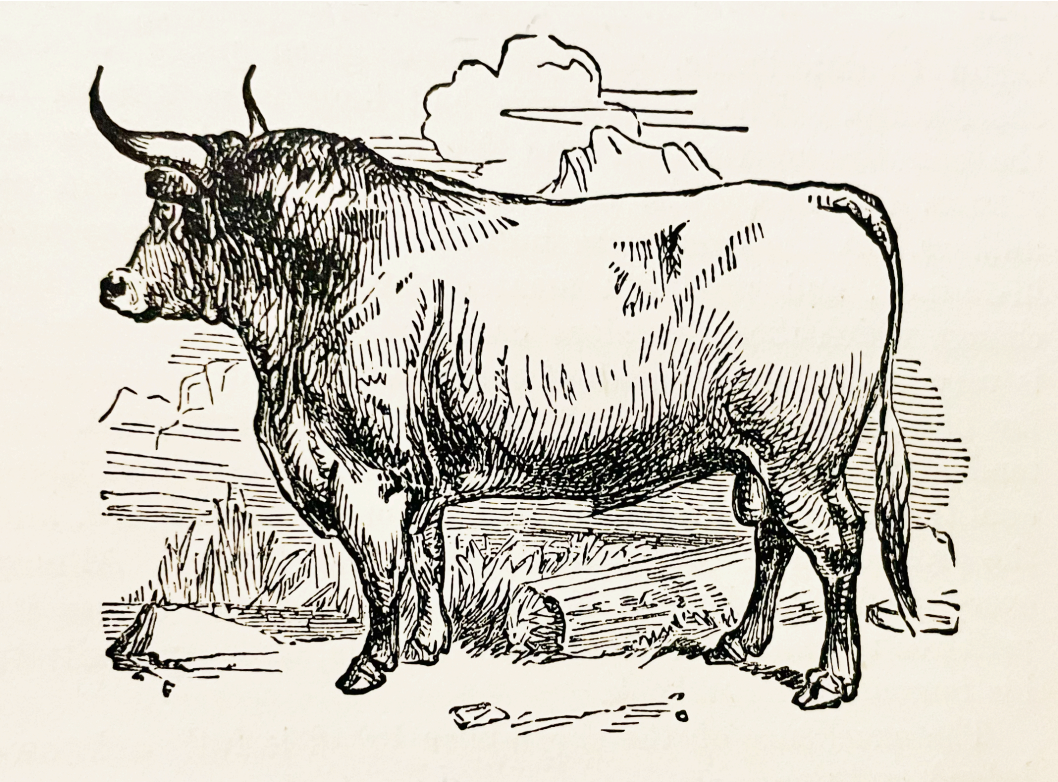
The Chianina was an Italian breed. It was supposed to have small calves which grew very quickly. Unfortunately this was not the case. Of the eight cows inseminated every one was in calf. We had to have one caesarean, which was performed with the cow standing up, and was very successful.

Unfortunately we lost one cow and five calves; we only ended up with three live ones. These were so large that if you held them up by the back legs as high as you could the front legs and head were still on the ground. This breed had been recommended in a farming paper. I felt that this was misinformation and the paper was responsible. I went to the publisher in Surrey and looked through all the back issues but I couldn't find the article.

Sometimes the cows could be vicious kickers. We had a kicker ourselves but she cured herself. One day she gave a nasty kick which missed me and hit part of the tubular frame on the parlour. She held up her foot for a time shaking it. Obviously she couldn't quite make this out, and never kicked again. A good solution.

One day my difficult neighbour phoned me up at 9 o'clock at night and said "All your cows are in my garden and they're making a mess." I went over and there were lots of young cattle, and they were making a mess. They'd chewed up the rose bed. He had an Alsatian dog, and he said watch the dog, it might bite you. So Eva said "Go and sit down!" And the dog went and sat down, so we managed to get the cattle out and back into the field.

The next morning when we looked out there were cattle everywhere. They weren't mine, they were someone else's! We found out who they belonged to, and the rightful owner came over and called them. All his cattle went with him and mine stayed behind. It was amazing they knew where to go!



Chapter 18

Biddenden Community

When we had gone to live in Biddenden there was a very close community. Most people were related, and strangers generally were not welcome until they had lived there about ten or twelve years. This was borne out by the remarks of a lady in the village who complained that some large houses were being built and local people could not afford them. When I said we needed this type of house to balance the council houses she said, "But this will bring in strangers from outside." When I pointed out that we were from outside she said, "But you've been here ten years. You're okay now."

We have always tried to get on with our neighbours, which usually works both ways and is good for peace of mind. At Edenbridge, Mrs Geel was very good and would babysit if we wanted to go out, which we did occasionally to a dance or other event. She never minded how late we were, whereas when we asked Eva's mother and sister Bunty, they would be waiting in the kitchen with their coats on when we got back.

In 1963 tragedy struck. Our youngest son Mark became seriously ill. At first the doctor thought it was kidney trouble, but he suddenly got worse and was taken into hospital where he went downhill rapidly. They were unable to find out what the problem was, but in retrospect I wonder if it was Weil's disease, which is caught from rats, as only a couple of weeks before he had bought a baby rat into the kitchen to play with. Mark died on the 13th February. This turned our lives upside down. Eva and I were devastated and, of course, it had a great effect on our other son William, who was nearly ten at the time.

After Mark died, Eva went into a clinical depression that lasted some time. This was particularly hard for William, who in our grief we struggled to care for as we should. My sister Ruth was a great help. She was very fond of William and he stayed with her in Leeds

after Mark died and during the school holidays, so they became very close.

We had two neighbours who were very kind and helpful to us. Molly Fisher, who lived with a very elegant lady called Vera Woodger, came to our rescue when our car wouldn't start after we came back from Mark's death at Hammersmith hospital. This was about 10pm. We were stuck in Headcorn car-park and didn't know who to call. There were no taxis. We called Molly and she came out and pushed our van with her car and it started. This is a friend indeed.



Farmer's wife in Channel bid

Mrs. Eva Stone

"Hard going"

MRS. Eva Stone, 34-year-old Biddenden farmer's wife, spent most of

Molly could be quite formidable, always wearing breeches and a jacket, but we got on well with her. I cut up all the wood for her fires. The two women kept two dogs, one of which was a boxer which would slobber all over you, the other was a husky or Samoyed, which kept scratching your leg with his foot. The boxer often made the most atrocious smells and had to be put out. There was a large exercise yard outside, like a tennis court with high wires. This was very good for the dogs as they could be left outside for a long time and they could not escape.

Molly was extremely tough. There was a footpath across her land, which she didn't like being used. The local council wouldn't take any steps to keep this path open. One day a person decided to walk this path. On being confronted he sat on the ground and said, "Now move me!" Molly had a hayfork in her hand, which she brought down about 6 inches away from his leg. He exclaimed, "You're nothing but an overgrown Teddy girl!"

But he got up quickly and left.

Eva hadn't passed any A-levels at school, so she did these and went on to get a BA and MA, and gold medals in public speaking. When she was 34 she took part in a cross-channel relay swim. She didn't make it because the weather turned bad, and the sea became very rough. The paper reported that her husband said she was mad, but I don't recall that.

Amy Sinclair and her husband Tom and son Ian were extremely kind to us. Amy helped with the secretarial work when we were running the relief service, which we gave up when Eva started teaching. Ian was in the scouts with William and later came to work for us, becoming very competent before going to work at the Dungeness nuclear power station. Bob and Peter Brown had a drainage and contracting business just across the road from my farm, and they were always very helpful and would help with difficult calvings.

The other good local friend was Harry Elgie who lived at Smarden. Harry was diabetic and didn't look after himself very well. Because he didn't watch his sugar levels Harry could sometimes be almost in a state of collapse. He would come into our kitchen and look very bad until we gave him a biscuit or something sweet to revive him. He had a great sense of humour. He had a good wife called Anna, and two sons and a daughter. He referred to his sons as the old boys and we were surprised to find they were in their late teens.

Harry and Anna lived in a very nice old house in Smarden. One day a Rolls-Royce came by and the car stopped. The people were staring at the house. Anna, who was in the garden, curtsied. Another time they had visitors who stayed very late. Anna decided to go to bed and leave them to Harry. Harry had the same idea and had gone up the other staircase. He met Anna on the top landing, while the guests had been left alone downstairs.

One day Harry had to take a pig to the vet. He put it in a hessian sack. In the waiting room it started to go round and round the floor

inside the sack. He said that all the people waiting with their pet dogs and cats looked on in amazement. I asked him what he said or did and he replied, “Nothing.”

In the winter of 1963 we decided to travel to Russia, to try and recover from the shock of losing Mark. We spent two weeks there; a week in Moscow and a week in Leningrad, in the depths of Russian winter.

Whilst in Russia I had a few interesting experiences of how their political system works. At one point I was taking photographs in a church. Because they were closing down churches at the time, there was an anti-church movement going on. The tour guide snatched my camera, but let it go with the warning not to take any more photographs. On another occasion we were very crossly told to go back to our pre-booked seats in the theatre when we took the opportunity to occupy the empty seats in front of our own. A woman in our group had a Woman’s Own magazine confiscated, because it was Western propaganda.

During our journey between Moscow and Leningrad, a journey of many hours, our compartment was freezing cold as the heating wasn’t working. The temperature outside was -25C. An old lady in our compartment was huddling up with blankets as it was so cold. I found the attendant and told her the heating was off. She said “The heating is on.” I replied “No. The heating is off.” After the next station she came and found us to let us know the heating was now off throughout the train, so we were all equal!

We travelled through lots of forests on the train. Each forest had giant sculptures which were covered with mounds of wood to protect them from the cold. We also saw women sweeping their paths of snow, only to reveal sheets of ice below.

One of the people on our trip had a suitcase full of jeans, which he sold, as they were worth ten times as much in Russia as we could buy them in the UK. I’m not sure how he managed to smuggle them in, but once he had sold them he found he couldn’t spend the money he’d made, as the Beriozka shops where tourists were

allowed to spend money would only take foreign currency. The only place to spend Russian currency was in their local shops, which were very basic and poorly stocked. In the end he bought bottles of wine, which we all helped him drink.

We travelled by Aeroflot, who at the time hadn't got the best safety record, which had earned them the nickname of Aeroflop. On the final day there was a problem with the plane, so we were put up in a hotel where we were fed with eggs that tasted like they'd been boiled for a week. Returning to Heathrow we seemed to linger for longer at a higher altitude than seemed normal. The pilot must have spotted a gap, because he descended at speed. I thought we were going to crash! We were very relieved when we finally came to a halt on solid ground.

For twenty years I milked every Christmas day. On the twenty-first year Ian Sinclair, who was then working for me, offered to do it, and I accepted. It did mean though that I had to socialise with my in-laws instead!

Once the cows escaped into the next door orchard. The NFU paid my neighbour for thirty bushels of apples, which was a rough estimate of the loss. He just stood in the gateway and gave the first figure he thought of. That year there was a glut of apples, so he did quite well being. On another occasion the cows all escaped and went across the main road towards Todmartin. They returned on their own without doing any damage.

When we decided to give up milking I did wonder whether or not we could make a living. Eva was by now earning money outside farming by travelling to Ashford to teach. Eva had started with juniors, but quickly found she preferred further education, and taught English and American Literature to sixth formers. I started bailing straw and making hay for other people who mainly had small acreages of land and no equipment of their own. People said I'd never get my money, but most people were keen to settle as I left the field. I tried to please customers and always turned up when I said I would. Many people were let down by others who would take on too much work and then couldn't handle it.

The snag with haymaking was the dust, effectively counteracted by wearing a Racal helmet. This had a battery pack kept in a pocket in the trousers, which drove a fan at the back of the helmet, and the air passed through filters. It was very effective. I used to get remarks about my helmet like, “Here comes the spaceman!" But better than suffering from too much dust in the lungs.

For some time I did all this work myself, looking after about eighty head of young-stock and making my own hay and silage. Then Brett came to work for me and he was first class. We had a system going for straw where I would bale and he would deliver. The bale sledge was on a tractor with a loader, which packed the bales into a square block, which could be picked up via a grab on the front loader of the tractor. This was very quick and efficient. One man could load the bottom two layers on his own, and then it took two to finish, making on average 200 bales each load. Obviously this needed two tractors and we had a Leyland 344, Nuffield 460 and another Fordson Major. Equipment by this time was getting more efficient and the disk mower could run very fast and a large acreage was cut in one day.

One year we had made all our hay and silage, and it wasn't yet time to start straw. There was a sale of standing grass at Ashford market and one piece of forty acres came up. Without even seeing it, I bid £1000 and got it. Bernard Thomas who owned the land was someone I knew. William knew his children. He came up to me and said, “You've overdone it, there is hardly anything there.” However the weather was kind. We cut and baled the hay in less than a week, and sold it to a dealer for profit. We could have made more by carting it home, but this involved several journeys of 5 or 6 miles each way, part of which was down a very bumpy farm road.

One man owed me some money. As he was always short it was difficult to get payment from him. I sent him a poem requesting settlement, as it seemed this would work better than threats. Within a week a cheque arrived with the full amount accompanied by another poem.

The straw was purchased off the field behind the combine, but in the last years we were in Biddenden it was free, given by a local farmer, John Body. He became a very good friend and lent me his baler for no charge when mine broke down. He also gave us apple juice by the gallon from his juice extracting plant in Smarden, where he was squeezing out 3000 gallons a day, all from local apples. This was sent to Devon where it was processed into Devonshire cider. One year the demand slackened but by this time there were large heaps of apples waiting to be processed. However the juice was needed in February. But this time some of the apples were rotten but they were still squeezed out and the juice sent off. There were no complaints. Unfortunately John died of a heart attack about two years after we left Biddenden.

We had a good relationship with our neighbours at Biddenden until Brian Summers started his car repair business and made a fearful noise with his pneumatic cutter.

One man, who lived at the other end of the farm, had a right to draw water from a large pond in the centre of our top field, using a pipe which ran underground from the pond to his house. The pond was a main attraction for fisherman who came on a regular basis. This man decided that he liked to see water running through the pond in his garden, and his gardener put me wise to this. Our pond, which was nearly half an acre, was going down by several inches a day.

As this particular person was very difficult to get on with, I decided the best thing to do was to block the pipe. I disconnected it and stuffed in rolled up plastic, pushed it well in and screwed the pipe together again. I met this chap in the village and he said his pipe was blocked. Perhaps the fishermen had somehow got plastic into it? He had obviously tried to clear it without success. He asked if he could dig a trench and put in a new pipe. I said I would agree only if he signed an agreement beforehand to say that any damage would be made good. Needless to say I never heard any more about it.

Our ponds sometimes attracted unwanted visitors. One day I came across some while going about my daily work. I was carrying a pitching bar on my shoulder as I was expecting to put some stakes in, and our worker Peter had gone across to open the gate on the other side to let the cows in for a change of pasture. So I said to these people “You can’t fish here”, and one of the men said “huh”, in a challenging way. So I took the pitching bar off my shoulder, which perhaps made him think better of it, so he said “we’ll go.” They started off just as Peter was letting the young cattle out from the other side of the field, and they came over as if the devil was after them. These people ran for their lives, clambered over the gate and shouted “You did that on purpose!” Which we hadn’t. But they never came back!

Gypsies used to come and eat the fish. As soon as they were turned out you knew they would be back. They would just wait. Then one day a gypsy woman came round to the house begging for clothes, so Eva gave her a coat. It was long on Eva and this woman was quite short, so it scraped along the ground, but it was a warm coat. So I said “Tell those people not to come on my land any more.” And they didn’t, because she was the matriarch. So we paid them some kindness and they didn’t bother us any more.

We had a local lad working for us called Joe. Every day he went to the local café for his midday meal. When we were clearing out the silage clamp, which got very smelly around the edges, he didn't bother to wash his hands or his boots before going off. I asked him what they thought in the café when this smelly person walked in. He said the people eating just moved to another table. This lad also used to repair his motorbike in his bedroom. Asked why, he said “Muvver wouldn't let me do it in the living room.”

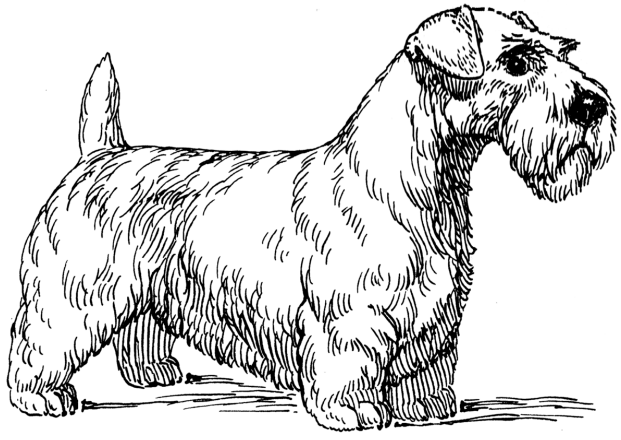
Chapter 19

Dogs

Throughout our lives Eva and I have always had dogs. We had collies to work on the farm.

In about 1965 we looked after a dog for someone whilst they were on holiday. This dog was totally untrained. The owner used to take him to Ashdown Forest and just let him run for half an hour or so until he returned to the car. It was quite a big dog, a cross-breed collie.

The second day we had him he chased sheep and would not come back, and actually got a sheep down. The next day I took him out and fastened a long length of bailer twine to his collar and kept hold of the other end. When he ran off at speed to chase the sheep I called him, then pulled back hard on the string. He went over backwards and I wondered if he had broken his neck. He was okay and the next time I called him he came straight back. This dog was lucky because one night he went into the swimming pool and couldn't get back over the wall. William was in bed and rushed down in his pyjamas to rescue it.



A Sealyham Terrier

For one birthday I bought Eva a Sealyham[15] cross collie. It was stung by a wasp one day, and after that it always went mad about wasps.

We were then given a five month old collie called Nick. He had been reared in a shed with the rest of the litter, and fed mostly on whole rabbits which were thrown in. The rest of the litter had an undershot jaw, what they called in the sheep

[15] Image from Wikipedia, donated by Pearson Scott Foresman



Eva as a child

trade ‘a hog chop’, and were difficult to sell. I don't know if the way he was reared made any difference, but this dog was amazingly fierce. Eva said how bad he was when I wasn't there. He never went for her but was protecting her and the house.

I was about five hundred yards away up the main road helping Miss Bourne when I heard this terrific commotion, with the dog sounding really fierce. I returned to the farm to find a man in a van out by the main road at the end of the drive. He had brought over a bag of turnip seed that I had ordered. This had a hole in it. On being asked why, the man said he went up the drive and as he got out the dog went for him and bit the turnip seed bag by mistake. He hastily got back into the van.

We had fishermen at the farm and this dog would let them park by the drive and walk round the buildings to go to the ponds. Anyone else was prevented in no uncertain terms. The whole of his hackles stood up all over his body, and no way would he back off. We sometimes had gypsies calling on us trying to sell things. One day one came when I was in the drive. Nick was standing beside me. He said "If I were to touch you, that dog would go for me." I said "Why don't you try?" He replied that even for a hundred quid he wouldn’t.

This dog was very clever, but I don't know how he worked out who could come and who couldn't. After we moved to Sedlescombe Nick soon got to know. There was no gate at the end of our drive but he never went on the road. No one, unless known to him, was allowed anywhere near the house. The postman came the first day

and introduced himself. The next day the dog went for him and we had to put a box down by the road.

Once when we went on holiday William looked after the farm for us. The farm was about two miles from the house so he went in my farm pick-up. William put the dog in but then the dog wouldn't let William get in. William had to push him out with a broom and leave him behind. Another time a friend of ours, David Shearer, looked after the farm for us. He took Nick up to the farm but when coming back at dinnertime, the dog wouldn't get in and stood there barking. David left him there and went back to the house. When he returned, about an hour later, he told Nick to get in, which Nick did with no more trouble.

We had a notice which said ‘Dogs loose - stay in car, sound horn’. People still did this long after Nick was dead, and indeed after we got a more docile dog called Ben. It was a great deterrent!



Chapter 20

Friends

Other friends we had in Biddenden came from further afield like Betty and Ted from Maidstone. Betty met Eva in training college and funnily enough they both had the same initials, EMS. Betty and Ted and their friends, Edna and John, used to come down for weekends and leave their caravans on the grass verge of our drive and we had good times together. Also we had friends called George and Hazel Schneider who lived at Tenterden and worked in London. They are unfortunately now divorced but keep in touch.

Our bank manager also became a good friend and we went out with him and his wife many times for dances and meals. He told Eva that we came to a mutual understanding on our first meeting. This was because we were looking to buy a farm at auction and I went to see him, not realising he had just replaced the manager we knew. He asked me how he could help, and I said I wanted to borrow £80,000. He said he wasn't sure about that, and I said to him what a pity it was that as soon as I had an understanding with the manager, he moved on and I had to start again. He then looked at the proposal again and agreed to lend the money. He was counting the days to early retirement, as he did not like the way banks were moving. He was still with us when we moved to Sedlescombe but retired shortly afterwards. He died six months later of a heart attack. So don't retire!

We had several visits from relatives in Canada when we were at Biddenden, the first being Rod, his wife Dot and their family. They hired a Volkswagen minibus. Eva went with Rod to pick it up in Essex. When he came to a roundabout Rod went round the wrong way. All the other drivers just stopped and stared, so there was no accident. Later Frank came over with Marjorie (also known as Dot). He had a mini and seemed to have no trouble with the different road layout.

After I started going out with Eva, and during our married years, we went dancing both at Oxted and later at Maidstone. We got our silver medals for dancing at a club in Maidstone. I made wine and we joined the Maidstone wine club where we had some good evenings with Betty and Ted. Later we went to dances with our bank manager and his wife, and to shows and meals out with George and Hazel.

Meanwhile, I carried on with my shooting. This involved going out at night with an old car and 12 bores. We started this at Norheads using an ex-army three ton lorry, which is a bit over the top, but it did allow for an extra spotlight to be used by someone standing in the back alongside the guns. This person was sometimes Eva.



Later on at Biddenden we used old cars which we either got free or very cheap. One of these was a DAF with a rubber band type automatic gearbox. This had a seized up engine as it had been abandoned at the local garage for a year. We cured this by taking

off the cylinder head and clouting down on the pistons with a mallet and a piece of wood. This worked a treat. I did this with Michael Gardner who lived in the village. He and his wife Pamela were good friends. We enjoyed several nights of rabbit shooting in this car. We removed the windscreen and took it in turns driving, with the other person shooting.

We also had with us John Pike who sat in the back but didn't shoot. John lived towards Headcorn on about eight acres in a house he was doing up. I used to help him on his land, mowing and baling, and also took his girls to school when he was unable to. I rang him up recently and told him I had gone wing walking. He said "You always were a mad bugger."

Ashford market had a produce stall selling apples and other fruit and vegetables. The woman selling didn't like you to handle the fruit and told me off for testing the oranges. I told her they always did it in France. She replied that we are not in France in a rather loud voice. My sister Ruth was with me at the time and walked away (sisterly support).

Another time I was buying sheep sitting on the raised benches in the market. Mary, my niece, was with me. She was particularly good looking. We were talking and laughing together and I could see opposite one of our relief workers looking at us. When I next saw him he said "Who was that with you in the market?" I said that it was my niece, to which he replied in a disbelieving way "Oh, yeah?”

Chapter 21

Sedlescombe



We decided to move from Biddenden after twenty-one years. This was not because there was anything wrong with the farm. We had built a small barn and concreted a vast area all round the other barns. The land produced good crops of grass and wheat. We would buy scruffy looking lambs in Ashford market in the autumn and because our ground was clean from sheep, they did well and fattened in the spring, selling as one year old hoggetts. However when Mark died it was a devastating loss to both of us, and indeed to William. Eva wanted to get out of the house, and in any case found farm work very hard.

We had an offer for the farm which we accepted and we were looking at buying another at High Halden, but nothing suitable had come up. We found the farm in Sedlescombe but it had no house, and we decided it would be difficult to live in the village with a farm

truck. It was only at the last moment that the vendor said they had a cottage for sale as well, so we went for it. It was two miles from the farm but otherwise suitable, but small and in need of repair. We then signed the agreement to sell our farm in Biddenden.

As time was of the essence we asked our solicitor to get a move on and we completed the purchase in ten days. There was no need for a survey, as the house obviously needed considerable repairs. In fact during the twenty years we were there we put in new windows, floors and ceilings, central heating, an extension and a new garage. We also built a timber building fifty feet by twenty feet with rubberoid tiled roof and water laid on. We bought three acres of ground from a neighbouring farmer, Dave West. We planted special trees like an Indian bean and a tulip tree, several plum and apple trees and an asparagus bed. We had planning permission to build another house at Sedlescombe, but in the end never did.

I continued using an old car for shooting after moving to Sedlescombe, and also got permission from Pestalozzi to use the rifle on its one-hundred and seventy five acres.

I went to help a neighbouring farmer. He had ordered a secondhand barn about one-hundred and twenty feet by forty feet. This was on steel stanchions with a plastic corrugated roof. The crew who came to erect this were inexperienced. They started by digging huge holes for the stanchions using my JCB. This would've taken tons of concrete. They then, for some reason, cut off about two feet from each stanchion. Then obviously the stanchions were too short.

To overcome these difficulties brought on only by themselves, forty-gallon barrels filled with concrete were put in so that the tops were at ground level. The stanchions were put on the top but not yet fixed. The whole structure was erected, held together with fairly light purlins and roped at the ends to keep it together. One man decided to slacken the rope at one end to adjust the spacing. Suddenly the whole thing collapsed like a pack of cards, narrowly missing a caravan. Luckily no-one was hurt. The supplier got rid of that crew and brought in more experienced men who welded

plates on the bottom of each stanchion and bolted these into the concrete on the drums. Then it was okay. As this building had been brought all the way from Wales it must have been a money loser.

One neighbour had an open day with various events in aid of charity. One of these events was a terrier race. This neighbour was the local hunt master, so these were terriers used in the hunt for digging out foxes and were keen to fight. For the race a fox's brush was pulled down a track and ended up under a large piece of hessian. The terriers lined up at one end and when the brush started to move they were released. On this occasion there was a hole in the hessian, and when the first terrier got there the fox tail was partly visible through the hole. The terrier grabbed it, to be quickly followed by the others, and a wholesale fight took place. This was more exciting than the race. No dogs were hurt but one of the handlers got bitten by mistake.

We bought an old JCB for ditching when we were in Sedlescombe. This was very useful, also for loading manure from a heap, and cleaning the cattle yard at the end of winter. When the hurricane came in 1987 I also used this to help other people clear fallen trees. Sometimes it would not go into gear because the selector was rather worn. This happened when I was halfway across the main road and I had to stop. It would then not go into gear. The only way to do this was to take off the top cover from the gearbox. The bolts were not tightened down in case this was required. So I was halfway across the road, completely blocking it, and traffic, including a green line bus, had to wait. This machine wasn't actually roadworthy. The brakes were practically useless. When Dave West, our neighbour, borrowed it, he came down a steep slope on his farm and lost control, knocking the end of his van. I kept this JCB until moving to Herefordshire. I sold it on to Dave's son.

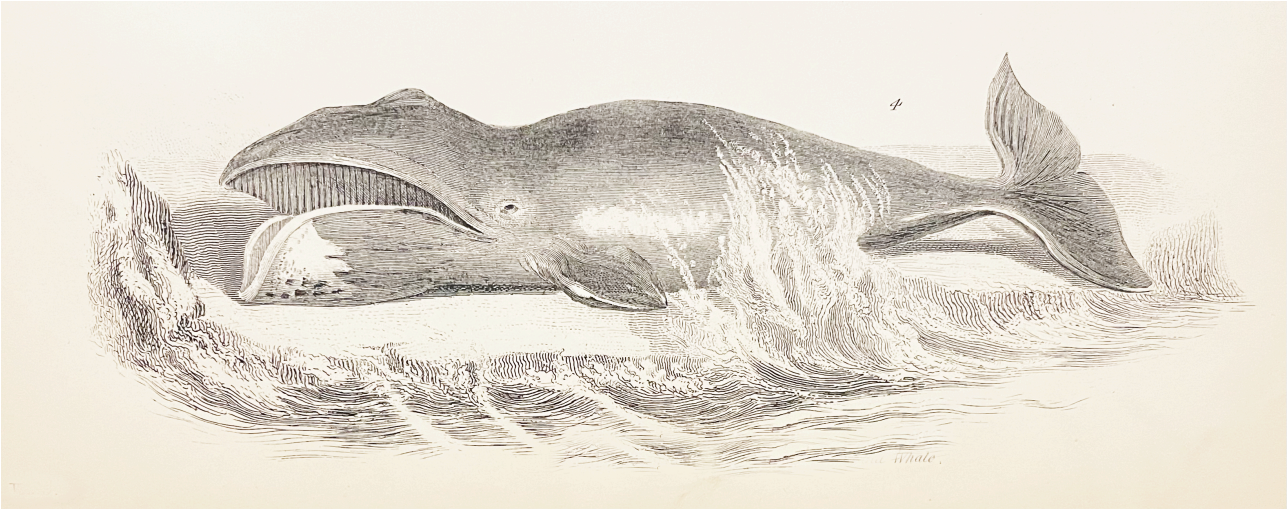
While at Sedlescombe we had visits from our Canadian friends and relatives. Rod and Elen came twice, and Pat and her daughter. When Ken and Cathy and their two daughters came they were okay with the low beams until the last day when they had all

cracked their heads and were found sitting down holding them as some doors were very low.

Another Canadian visitor was Peggy Magnone. This lady had a shop in St John’s, Newfoundland, and spent a lot of time going round antique and junk shops looking for things to take back. She found a lot of different items and had a job to pack them all in her bags. We sent her off with a taxi driver to Heathrow and asked him to take care of her and help her with her luggage, which he did. We always enjoyed visits from both home and overseas.

We first went to Newfoundland in 1990 to see the whales, which are there in July and August. They eat small fish called caplan. These fish come right onto shore to lay their eggs, and it is possible to scoop up bucketfuls of them. They are quite good to eat, being similar to whitebait but slightly larger. Our first trip out to see the whales was on an old fishing boat called the Scademia.

The sea was very rough and the weather extremely cold. In fact I think it was really too rough to go out. We never saw any whales, and couldn't catch any fish. There was a small ceremony on board called a screech-in. For this you had to drink some of the local brandy (which could make you screech!) and kiss a cod. As we couldn't catch any fish we had to kiss the Newfoundland dog instead, and then got a certificate. The next day we went further up the island and went out on the O’Brien boat. We saw plenty of whales which came close and certainly weren't afraid of the boat. The people in Newfoundland are very friendly, and the traffic is slow, and this attracted us to return year after year. We hired a car as traffic was easy.



Chapter 22

Retirement and Pestalozzi Village

In 1990 when I was 64 I decided to sell the farm and retire, as my father had died at that age. I was keen on doing pottery and repairing furniture. However I soon found out that I needed to be out in the open air and decided to get a job. I applied for a job doing market research for a well-known company. This was part time and the idea was to be on call to go in for a day or so a week. Usually questions were asked on one particular product, for instance, "Was it good?" There was one questionnaire on Harvester eating houses and one on sauces, quite a difference.

We had to interview people from different age groups and marital statuses, and also different classes. I went to one very rough area when no one else wanted to go, the sort of place which had upturned cars in the front garden and fierce dogs. I knocked on one door and the woman who answered said “Come in!" when I told her what I wanted and showed my identity card. There were two women in the house and they were busy answering questions when a man entered. "Who is this and what does he want?” He demanded in a most aggressive manner. I told him what I was doing, whereupon he said "You're not wanted here." I replied "That's okay, I'll go." He then said "You may as well stay," turned the television on full and left the room.

It quickly became apparent why other people didn't want to do this area. Mostly people were quite pleasant and no doubt if I wanted to carry on I could have moved up the ladder, but I decided it wasn't for me.

Just then a position became vacant at the Pestalozzi Children's Village only a few hundred yards away from my house. A new director had just been appointed. I went to see him and told him he needed a farm manager who was experienced. At that time the two people running the farm did not seem to do very much. They only kept a few chickens, one or two pigs and about 20 sheep, and

grew a few acres of corn. This new director was supposed to be the answer to all of the problems of this charity, but in fact matters got considerably worse as there was a depression and donations were drying up. Fresh people were brought in at high wages, so the expense sheet gathered pace but the income didn't match it.

When I first went to Pestalozzi[16] I found the sheep dip was very badly designed and it was difficult to get the sheep in. We used to get regular visits from coach loads of WI members. One day one of these women was watching and asked "How do you get the sheep in if they don't want to go?" To which one of the lads replied "We kick him up the arse!" This no doubt gave the visitor an insight into country ways.

One of the younger Thai girls, who had a bad chest, collapsed with the fumes from the dip and had to be carried back to the house. Organophosphates were then being used in the dip and really no one should have been allowed near without proper protective clothing. I installed a better dip with proper race[17] and tipping devices. This was very efficient and the operators did not have to get splashed or be in any danger of falling in. This cost, with the gates, over £2000, but we were given a lot towards this by the Agricultural Mortgage Corporation.

Some of the children had altered their ages to be able to come to England and when asked how old they were they would reply "Do you mean my age here or my age at home?" Some of them were only eight years old, but came over as ten. One day I was having difficulty lambing ewes as my hands were a bit big for the job. One of the girls offered to do it and in fact managed it very well without any qualms. Where they came from they were expected to help from an early age.

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[16] In 1947, the British Pestalozzi Children's Village Association was founded by Dr Henry Alexander, a German Jewish refugee who moved to the UK before the Second World War, and Mrs Mary Buchanan, a British sociologist. The Children's Village at Sedlescombe was established in 1959. The focus was to provide accommodation and education for deprived European and British children. This then broadened out to include children from all over the world. For more information visit https://pestalozzi.org.uk/the-pestalozzi-story/

[17] A footway the sheep walk through from the holding pen.

Each Saturday the children were split into groups. Some went to woodwork, some to metalwork and a group of up to 15 of them to the farm. I tried to make things interesting for them and really enjoyed teaching them. Sometimes we went round the farm identifying trees, and sometimes we learnt different knots, with the co-operation of the local rope-makers Marley Ropes who gave us several pieces of rope and a diagram of knots.

One day I felt especially sorry for these kids, as although they were supposed to work on the farm, they had been at school all week and needed relaxation. So I showed them how to make bows and arrows. This would have been frowned upon by the director, who thought all pupils should work all day Saturday.

We grew about fifteen acres of barley. This was combined by Dave West and sold to SCATS Countrystores for feed. After two years of barley I put linseed in to change the crop. This grain was only grown for the subsidy, as there was very little sale for the seed, and in fact it was given away.

The greenhouses had to be repaired before use. These were then filled with tomato plants, which did very well. Also in the walled garden we put in a large block of autumn raspberries. There were already some blackberries and gooseberries, and about fifteen apple trees and three plum trees.

Pestalozzi Village was a difficult place to organise efficiently as there were so many different things to be taken into account, and finances were always on a knife edge. Often the village was only saved by a large legacy.

The farm couldn't make money because included in the cost was the grass cutting round the houses, fixing things for various events, taking one man’s wages and the cost of machinery and fuel. Whilst I was managing the farm I taught several of the older boys to drive tractors and gave out certificates to successful pupils. After I left and was renting the ground, one boy, who hadn't passed, drove a Massey Ferguson down the steep slope out of gear. It gathered speed and went into a fence, over a small field, through another

fence and hit a concrete block, nearly turning over the tractor. He then hit a parked car and stopped. The owner of the car had waited a year to get it in a particular gold colour. She was in the offices at the time and was rather shocked and upset to be told that it was a bit bent. The Pestalozzi insurance paid out.

One year I dressed up as Father Christmas to take presents round to the children at Pestalozzi. Dick and I decorated the tractor and small trailer, then made a reindeer out of hardboard and painted it. No-one had wanted the job because it was going to be on Christmas Day. As I lived very close I volunteered and enjoyed doing it. My elf was Thupton, who had come from his native Tibet with the Dalai Lama and knew all the children much better than I did.



I managed the farm for several years, but then they decided to rent out the land. By this time the director had gone. There had been rumours that he was behaving inappropriately. Eventually he was found in bed with two African youths of about sixteen or seventeen, who he claimed he was ‘comforting.’ He had come from a job working at a college for boys, and when he left went on

to work in a school in Africa. They lived in Pestalozzi village. When I asked his wife why they didn't live outside in Sedlescombe she said she would never see her husband - at his previous job he had always been with the boys and didn't come home much.

After this a new temporary man was appointed. I bought the sheep, which were on the farm, and also the sheep quota, which you had to have to get the subsidy. Unfortunately, although it was okay for a time, the sheep business went through a bad period and it was impossible to make money. In fact we lost money. We decided to sell up and move nearer to our son William and his wife Amanda. We had to sell our sheep quota and also the sheep. Both of these made a considerable loss.



Family Visitors - Rod, Eva, Jack, Ruth and Ellen

Chapter 23

Hope Under Dinmore



It is easy of course to look back and see all the mistakes you make but we haven't yet found a way of turning the clock back in spite of modern technology. We had great difficulty in finding what we wanted in Shropshire or Herefordshire. We sold our house, all but for the signing, and sold or gave away all the sheep equipment. Then our buyer could not proceed because of his buyer pulling out, so the house we had agreed to buy also fell through.

When we did sell our house later in the year, we realised the one we were going to buy was again for sale. But on another inspection we realised that the owner, who had altered it himself, had made a bad job of some things, so we decided to buy our present house in Hope Under Dinmore, near Leominster, which, although close to

the trains and other houses, is nice with a good garden. Since moving to Hope Under Dinmore I have not done much shooting but still have the permits.

Eva and I both volunteered at the British Heart Foundation shop in Leominster, which was a great way of getting to know people.

We planted more apple and plum trees to augment those already there, and also walnut, quince and catalpa. We put in raspberries, blackberries, loganberries, black and redcurrants and gooseberries. We planted globe and Jerusalem artichokes and asparagus. The adjacent garage is handy for my pottery and woodwork, and is now equipped with an automatic opener for the large door. Since coming here we have fitted secondary glazing, and put in a new bathroom and kitchen, and installed oil fired central heating. We had more or less got the house how we wanted it, when Eva was taken ill.

In 2004 Eva's sister Bunty died after falling and hitting her head after going out in the dark. Because this was unexpected, a post-mortem and coroner’s inquest had to be held. These took five months and upset Eva very much. In December 2004 she collapsed and had to go to hospital for a short stay. She was told it could be a one-off epileptic fit. I think myself it was the stress and anxiety. She was put on tablets and had to give up driving for one year.

Eva had not had very good health for a number of years and was told to keep out of smoke, dust and air-conditioning. We got rid of the wood fire a long time ago. Just before Christmas 2005, on the 21st of December, which was her 76th birthday, she felt unwell. The next day, Wednesday, I took her to the Doctor who gave her antibiotics. On Thursday I called him in, as she was no better. He increased the dose but didn't suggest hospital. In any case she didn't want to go. On Saturday she was getting worse and I managed to get her into hospital, and she was put into a high dependency ward where pneumonia was diagnosed. In spite of everything they could do for her she died on the 13th of January 2006.

The cremation took place the following Saturday on the 21st of January. The cremation was well attended and I wish to thank all the people who came. I had a lot of support from Amanda's relations, and her and William's friends. Also Maisie and her husband from Echo, and Sheila from the British Heart Foundation. Many people took the trouble to come a long distance like Mary and Chris, Tony and Frankie, Val and Derek, Nigel and Diane, and Betty. I knew Ivor couldn't come because he had just had a hip operation, and Chris Hamblin couldn't make it. John Pike's van bit the dust. My neighbours here have been great, especially Heather and David, who have given me a lot of support. William's friends have also been very supportive and asked me out on several occasions. Emma brought round home-made meals as did Vicky. I tried to repay some of this kindness by having tea parties. Ben deserves a special tribute for helping me when most needed, and it's always good to see his wife Vicky and two sons.



Eva died only three months after I went wing walking. I did this as a celebration of my 80th birthday. I had wanted to do this for a very long time. I know Eva was dubious about it, but never tried to stop me. William said I was barking mad, as did Ruth. John Pike said I

always was a mad bugger, remembering the times we went rabbit shooting from an old car at night.

Wing walking is classified as a professional display, and therefore it cannot be sponsored, but William sent round a leaflet to encourage people to give money to the British Heart Foundation, and this raised £385. One of William's friends bet me £100 I wouldn't do it. After the wing walk I said to him "That was very generous" to which he replied "I thought you'd never do it!"

Wing walking was fantastic. The only thing in front of you is a propeller, which you can't see because it's going round so fast. It's almost as though you were going through the air completely on your own doing 130mph. The pilot went round a number of times and also did a climb. We flew low several times over the people watching on the ground so they could take photographs.

On looking through Eva's things after her death I found the receipt for our first night's stay on our honeymoon. This was at the Swan Hotel in Alton, Hampshire. It was £1-15-4d including service charges. I sent a copy to the hotel and asked jokingly if I could come again at the same price. I received a very nice letter back offering me a complimentary night's stay. I did eventually take them up on their offer and they were really kind to me.

We had arguments sometimes but on the whole the marriage was good as we always made up. We always remembered birthdays and anniversaries. On our 50th anniversary I couldn't find what I wanted for a brooch so designed one myself and had it made by a local jeweller. The design had two gold jugs pouring out jewels, signifying that we were two lives joined in one. We always had a cuddle every morning to set us up for the day. After Eva died I felt very lost. Life could never be the same again.

Chapter 24

Further Adventures

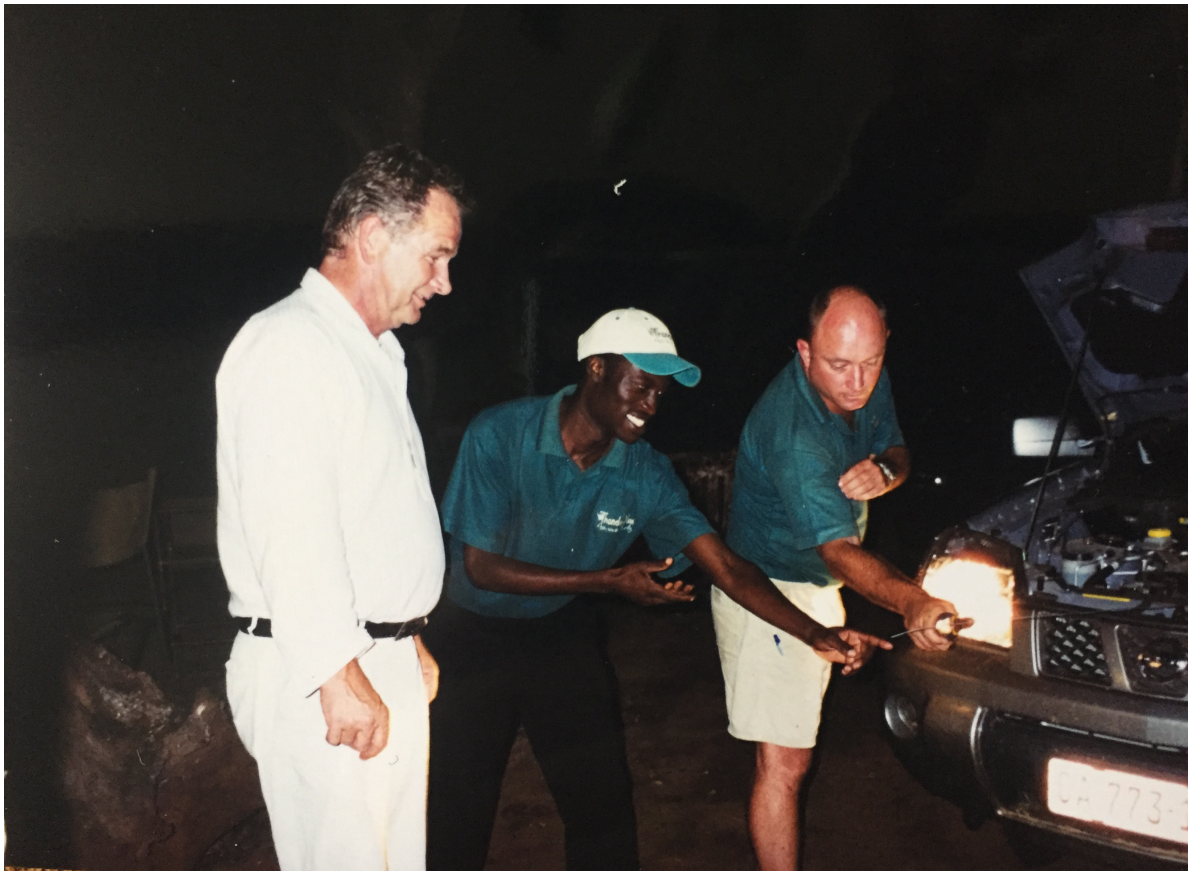
After Eva's death I started going away more as life was a bit lonely. My first trip was to see my sister Ruth in Leeds. I went by train, which is much easier than driving, and no more expensive, although it would have been except for the kindness of my neighbour David who took me to the station and my niece's husband Chris meeting me at the other end.

My next trip was to friends in Kent and Sussex. I stayed with four different people in their homes. I spent two nights with Ann and Nigel, and one night in the Brickwall Hotel in Sedlescombe, where Eva and I had our Golden Wedding party. The people there remembered me and it was still as good as ever.

I took a journey to South Africa to see William, Amanda and Georgia, staying in their house. This was a very interesting trip. There were beautiful flowers and avocados growing in the garden. I found the townships a bit disturbing with so many poor people living in squalor. The same people would come out from their shantytowns on Sundays all smartly dressed for church. It was interesting to be shown around a vineyard owned by Pieter. We saw the grapes being packed by sixty people in his very modern packing house. He was growing high quality grapes for M&S and the vines were trained in arches over the rows. For desert quality they grew in the shade of the leaves. He showed us how a sensor was put in with the grapes, which sounded an alarm if the temperature wasn't right.

We went up Table Mountain by cable car. This was interesting. I was going to abseil down but time ran out, which is a pity because it would've been good.

The last two days William and I went by air to Johannesburg, where we picked up a hire car to use in the game park. First we went to a lodge in a private game park of about ten thousand acres where

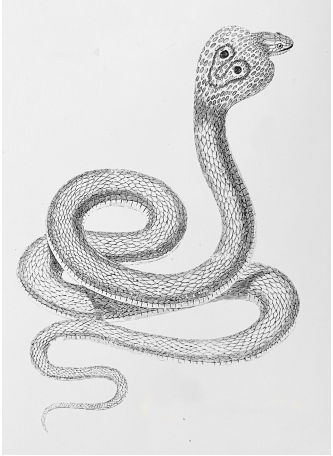


William, Elvis and Mark

black rhino and other endangered species were being bred. The owner of the lodge took us out in his Land Rover. This was fairly old but adequate for the job, with extra high seats built-in. We actually stood up to see better, and this man was good at finding the animals. We stayed for two nights at this lodge. The first full day we went round in the Land Rover for about three hours, starting at 6:30 am. Then, after a substantial breakfast, we made our way to the Kruger National Park, where we stayed for several hours, and then returned to the lodge for our supper.

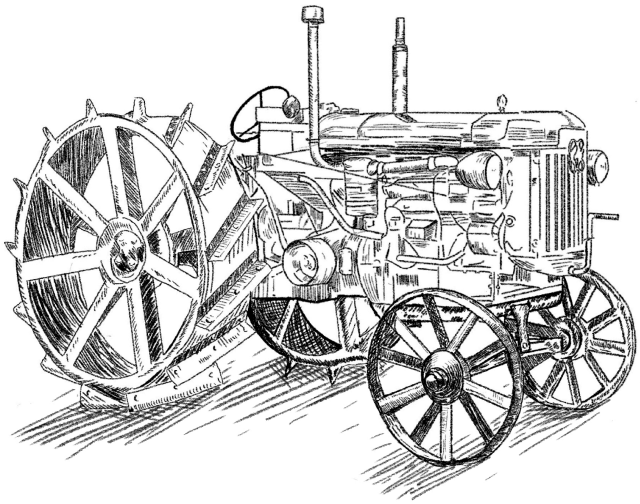
Mark, the man who owned the lodge, had what appeared to me a very unusual method of curing scorpion stings. He said it would also work for poisonous spider bites. His ‘boy’ Elvis got stung on his finger by a scorpion when we were there. The method was to connect a lead from the spark plug HT wire, and start the engine of the car. Mark held the wire with a pair of insulated pliers and touched the spot where the scorpion stung. Naturally the recipient of the spark, which was a 1/2 inch long, jumped back. After poor

Elvis had had the benefit of this three or four times he ran back a pace or two. Mark said "Elvis, if you don't stop still, I'll hit you!" I wasn't sure if this cure worked, or whether Mark was just a sadist as he certainly seem to enjoy it. He had previously given the same treatment to his wife when she had been stung on the foot.



The same boy Elvis had, a few weeks earlier, gone to take a shower and found a cobra in the cubicle. He kicked out at it but hit the wall, which hurt his toe. He thought the pain meant the snake had bitten him, and he went ashen. After a bit of panic it was realised there were no puncture marks and he was okay, not even needing the electric treatment. I feel I couldn't possibly live in a place where you had to shake your shoes before putting them on.

I feel lucky to have had a charmed life, both with my escape from serious accidents and having a good wife. I was terribly fortunate to have found someone who would put up with me for 56 years, and laugh at my stupid jokes. Even after all that time we still loved each other. For me, Eva dying marked the end of an era, and it feels appropriate for my story to end at this point.




RAF 109545
TYPE
1700
ENJOY NEW COMFORT THIS WINTER
with
COOKANHEAT
PERFECT COOKING
WARM ROOMS
HOT WATER
LESS WORK
Main Rd.

Appendix i - Lease - A.C.Norman Esq. J.P. to A.G.Stone Esp. for Norheads Farm, Biggin Hill. Kent. Dated 20th February 1933. Term. 21 years from 29th Sept.1932. Rent. £169.0.0. p.a.[18]

This lease made the 20th day of February 1933 BETWEEN ARCHIBALD CAMERON NORMAN of the Rookery Bromley Common in the county of Kent Esquire (hereinafter called "the Landlord") of the one part and capital ALBERT GIBBONS STONE of Norheads farm in the parish of Cudham in the said County of Kent Farmer (hereinafter called "The tenant") of the other part WITNESSETH that in consideration of the rent hereinafter reserved and the covenants of the part of the Tenant hereinafter contained The Landlord hereby demises unto the tenant ALL THAT messuage or farmhouse Farm buildings stables cart sheds barns and cottages together with the several closest pieces or parcels of land belonging there to known as "Norheads Farm" situate in the Parish of Cudham in the County of Kent and containing together Four hundred and twenty two acres two roods and sixteen perches or thereabouts which said premises are more particularly described in the Schedule here too and I delineated and coloured green in the plan drawn on these presents. Except and reserved as hereinafter mentioned Together with the exclusive right of shooting and sporting over and taking game on the said premises TO HOLD the same unto the tenant from the Twenty ninth day of September One thousand nine hundred and thirty-two for and during the term of twenty-one years thence next ensuing (determinable nevertheless as hereinafter mentioned) YIELDING AND PAYING therefor for the yearly rend of ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY NINE POUNDS (and so in proportion for any fractional part of a year) by equal half yearly payments on the Twenty fifth day of March and the Twenty ninth day of September in every year the first payment to be made on the Twenty fifth day of March One thousand nine hundred and thirty three AND ALSO Yielding and Paying the further yearly rent of FIFTY POUNDS per acre and so in proportion for any less quantity than an acre of meadow or pasture land which shall be broken up or converted into tillage without the consent of the Landlord contrary to the provision and that behalf hereinafter contained such further rent to be payable on the half yearly days aforesaid and the first payment thereof to become payable on the half yearly day for payment of rent next succeeding such breaking up or conversion into tillage and to continue payable throughout the said time.

1. THERE are excepted and reserved out of this demise to the Landlord

(1) All timber and timber like trees tellars pollards and saplings and the tops and boughs of the said trees quarries mines and all gravel stone chalk clay brick earth and sand in and upon the said land and liberty to the Landlord by himself his agents

[18] The lease has been transcribed as presented, thus includes all original punctuation (of which there is very little) and capitalisation.

and servants and others authorised by him to enter into and upon the said land at all reasonable times for the purpose of marking felling cutting digging removing and carrying away any of the things excepted as aforesaid paying reasonable compensation to the tenant for all damage (if any) done thereby.

(2) The use in common with the Tenant and other persons authorised by the Landlord of all roads ways and paths in over and through the said demised premises.

(3) The right of retaking and resuming possession of any part or parts of the said lands hereby demised which the Landlord may from time to time during the set term require for the purpose of selling or letting for building purposes or for the purpose of opening digging or working mines pits and quarries thereon or for converting the said lands to any such uses the landlord making such allowance and giving such notice to the tenant as hereinafter provided.

2. THE Tenant hereby covenants with the landlord to pay the rent hereby reserved at the times and in manner aforesaid and also to observe all the provisions contained in these presents which are or ought to be observed and performed on his part (which provisions are hereinafter referred to as "the Tenant's covenants") And the Landlord hereby covenants with the Tenant to observe and perform all the provisions contained in these presents which are or ought to be observed and performed on the part of the Landlord And also that the Tenant paying the rent hereby reserved and observing and performing the tenant's covenants shall and may quietly hold and enjoy the premises hereby demised without any interruption from or by the Landlord or any person rightfully claiming from or under him.

3. THE Tenant shall pay (in addition to the rent hereby reserved) all rates taxes and assessments whatsoever which shall during the tenancy be payable in respect of the demised premises except the Landlord's property tax and the Tithe Rent Charge.

4. THE Tenant shall not assign or under let the premises hereby demised or any part thereof without the consent in writing of the landlord first obtained.

5. THE Tenant shall not during the said term erect any building or pull down or make any structural alterations in the messuage or Farmhouse Cottages and buildings now erected or in any buildings hereafter to be erected upon the said premises without the consent in writing of the landlord.

6. THE Tenant shall not remove or sell off the said lands any flints without the permission of the Landlord first obtained and for every load of flints removed or sold with such permission he shall pay Sixpence to the Landlord.

7. THE Tenant shall throughout the set term at his own expense (upon being allowed timber in the rough) well and sufficiently repair uphold support paint tile tar thatch pave scour cleanse empty amend and keep in good and tenantable repair and condition the said messuage or farmhouse stables barns cottages cart sheds and buildings and so leave the same at the end of the Tenancy The Tenant shall also from time to time and at the proper seasons well and sufficiently repair support amend empty scour cleanse and keep in good order and repair all walls posts piles rails gates bars stiles hedges ditches fences drains pipes and watercourses now being or which during the set term shall be upon the said premises and so leave the same at the end of the tenancy.

8. THE Tenant shall allow the Landlord his surveyors or agents with or without workmen or others at all seasonable times in the daytime to enter upon the premises hereby demised and every part thereof to examine the condition thereof and of the cultivation of the lands here by demised and of all defects decays and wants of reparation cultivation and amendment then found to give or leave notice upon the said premises for the Tenant to repair or amend the same within three calendar months next after such notice within which time the tenant shall repair and amend the same accordingly.

9. THE Tenant shall not fell lop or top or suffer to be felled lopped or topped any timber or other trees on the said land without the Landlord's consent but shall preserve all such trees from spoil or damage by cattle or otherwise He shall also at his own expense plant fence and protect all fruit trees supplied by the Landlord the Tenant shall not cut any underwood growing on the premises hereby demised of less than ten years' growth or more than twelve years' growth and previously to every cutting he shall give the Landlord fourteen days notice to enable the Landlord or his Agent to mark any young trees or tellers required to be left which the tenant shall nourish and preserve.

10. THE Tenant shall do his best to prevent new footpaths from being made over any of the said land or any waste from being enclosed on the footpath or roads passing through the said lands.

11. THE Tenant shall not mow any meadow or pasture land for hay more than once a year no later than usual and customary in the neighbourhood and shall well dress and manure all such parts of the said meadow or pasture land as shall have been mown two years in succession and shall not break up or convert into tillage any meadow or pasture land without the Landlord's written consent and if he shall do so he shall during the remainder of the tenancy pay the additional yearly rent of Fifty pounds hereinbefore reserved for every acre of land which shall be so broken up or converted into tillage and so in proportion for any less quantity than an acre such additional rent to be payable half yearly on the days

aforesaid and to be recoverable by distress or otherwise The Tenant shall not take two white crops in succession and generally shall manage and cultivate the farm in a good and husbandlike manner and according to the best most approved system of husbandry in the district and so as not to impoverish any part thereof and shall leave the same at the end of the tenancy in good heart and condition.

12. THE Tenant shall consume and spend on the said farm and lands all the hay straw ruins and root and green crops and fodder dung and manure produced and made thereon the dung and manure to be spread over the lands in a husband like manner except that he shall be at liberty to remove hay and straw turnips and green crops if for every ton of hay or straw turnips root and green crops so removed be shall bring and consume on the said farm and lands within three calendar months from the removal thereof at least three tons of good rotten dung or other manure of equal goodness and the Tenant shall whenever required by the Landlord from time to time render to him a true account of all hay straw turnips root and green crops so removed and the manure brought back respectively as aforesaid and he shall in the last year of the tenancy consume upon the said premises all the hay straw turnips root and green crops and leave all the dung produced there for the use of the Landlord or his incoming tenant being paid or allowed for the same at a spending price.

13. THE Tenant shall not during any one of the last five years of the term hereby granted plant more than one fifth part of the arable land with Wheat nor more than one fifth part thereof with barley or oats or other exhausting crop but shall have during each such year at least one fifth part of the arable land in old seeds and at least one fifth part in turnips or green crops and at least one fifth part in clover or sainfoin such seed turnips green crops clover and sainfoin to be respectively eaten off the land.

14. THE Tenant shall stack in the brickyards in the last year of the tenant all the corn grain and hay produced on the said premises the corn and grain to be there thrashed out and all the hay straw chaff stubble and fodder to be there consumed by cattle in a husband like manner and the dung manure compost or soil therein arising to be left on the premises for which purpose the Tenant shall have the use of such of the barns and yards as may be necessary until the first day of May next after the end of the tenancy And in the last year of the tenancy the Landlord or his incoming tenant shall be at liberty to enter upon the lands for a wheat season so soon as the crop for that year is cleared off in order to prepare the same for such season and may also sow seeds among the Lent or Summer corn which the Tenant shall harrow in. And the Tenant shall also leave for the Landlord or his incoming tenant all the hay straw and roots remaining unconsumed being paid or allowed for the same at a spending price.

15. The Landlord shall provide and allow to the Tenant sufficient timber in the rough bricks and tiles for all repairs which shall be required to be done by the Tenant under the covenants on the part of the Tenant hereinbefore obtained unless such repairs shall be rendered necessary by any wilful waste or neglect of the Tenant in which case the Tenant shall provide such timber at his own expense.

16. THE Landlord shall keep the Farmhouse and farm buildings and cottages insured against loss or damage by fire in a sum sufficient to cover the value thereof in the Sun Fire Insurance Office or other office if any selected by the Landlord and all moneys received under such insurance shall be forthwith applied in reinstating the premises in respect of which the same shall have been received.

17. THE Landlord all the incoming Tenant shall take the turnips and fallows at the end of the tenancy and shall pay the tenant for labour and seeds properly performed and expended upon such turnips and fallows.

18. AT the end of the tenancy the Landlord or the incoming Tenant shall allow to the Tenant for the following matters and things:-

(a) For the labour and seed properly performed and expended upon the turnips and fallows to be taken to by the Landlord or the incoming Tenant as before provided.

(b) For the proportionate value of such of the tillages and manurings done during the last two years of the tenancy as shall remain unexpended and for the benefit of the Landlord or the incoming Tenant and

(c) For the unconsumed hay straw and roots at a spending price.

19. IF any rent hereby reserved shall remain unpaid for the space of Twenty one days after the time here by appointed for payment thereof whether the same shall have been lawfully demanded or not or if there shall be any breach of any of the Tenant’s covenants or if the Tenant shall become Bankrupt or compound or make an arrangement with his creditors or do any act whereby this lease or his term and interest in the said premises shall become vested in any other person then and in any of the said cases the Landlord may re-enter into and upon the premises hereby demised or any part thereof in the name of the whole and the same have again repossess and enjoy as in his former estate.

20. AT the end of the tenancy an account shall be taken between the Landlord and Tenant as follows:-

FIRST. A Valuation shall be made of the several matters and things which are hereinbefore agreed to be paid or allowed for by the Landlord or his incoming Tenant and the amount of such valuation shall be debited to the Landlord SECONDLY The valuers shall

determine whether any and (if so) what sum of money ought to be paid or allowed by the Tenant to the Landlord for any breach by the Tenant of the terms and conditions of the Tenancy or in respect of the condition in which he has left the farm and the same together with any arrears of rent or of trades and taxes which may be owing from the Tenant shall be debited to the Tenant THIRDLY The balance which upon such account shall appear due from one party to the other shall be forthwith paid with interest thereon until payment after the rate of Four pounds per cent per annum computed from the end of the tenancy.

21. EVERY Valuation under these presents shall be made by two indifferent persons one to be named by each party interested and in the case of their disagreement then by an umpire to be chosen by the valuers previously to entering upon the consideration of the matters referred to them The Valuers or their umpire shall have power to decide any question which may arise in the course of their valuation and in particular any questions as to what matters or things are proper subjects of valuation or allowance according to the true intent and meaning of these presents. Every reference to Valuers under these presents shall be deemed a reference to arbitration within the provisions and for the purposes of the Arbitration Act 1889.

22. THE Landlord shall be at liberty at any time during the said term to resume possession of any portion of the said premises for the purpose of letting or selling for building purposes or for opening digging and working mines pits or quarries or for converting any portion of the land hereby demised to such uses he first giving to the Tenant three calendar months' notice in writing of such his intention and making and allowing to the tenant a proportionate deduction from the said rent hereby reserved in respect of and giving him a fair compensation for the crops cultivation or manure upon so much and such portion of the land possession of which shall be required and such deduction and compensation in case of dispute shall be settled by a reference to 2 valuers or that umpire in the manner provided by the last proceeding clause.

IF the Tenant shall be desirous of determining this lease at the expiration of the seventh or fourteenth year of the said term and of such desire shall give to the Landlord or leave for the Landlord at his usual and last known place of abode in England twelve calendar months' previous notice in writing then on the expiration of such seven or fourteen years the tenancy hereby created shall determine but subject and without prejudice to the rights and remedies of the Landlord for or in respect of any rent then in arrears or any anteceded breach of any of the Tenant's covenants.

WHERE the context allows the expression "the Landlord" in these presents includes beside the said Archibald Cameron Norman the person or persons for the time being entitled to the reversion of the premises hereby demised expectant on the term hereby granted and the expression "the Tenant" in these presents includes besides the said Albert.G.Stone all persons deriving title under him.

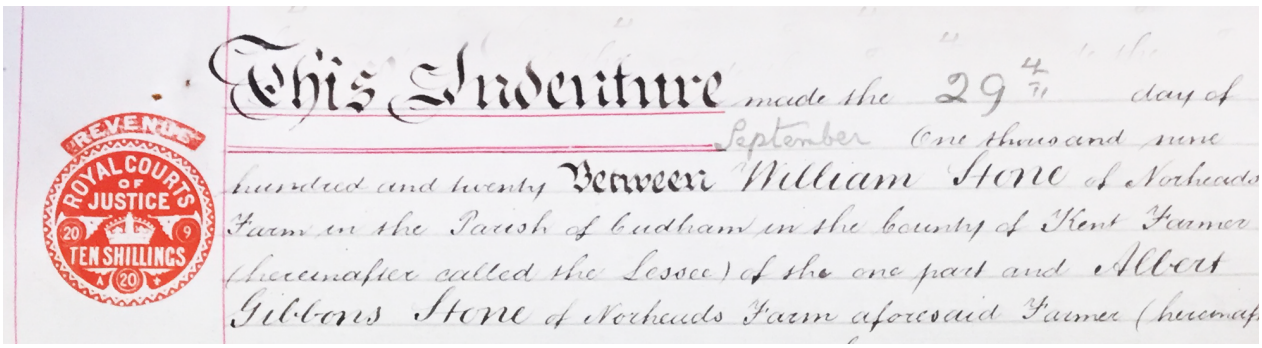
IN WITNESS whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto such their hands and seals the day and year first above written.



The Queens Head, Green Street Green, around the time my Grandfather was there

Appendix ii. The lease of 1896

This lease of 1896 is very similar to that of the 1933 lease. It is the first lease between Archibald Cameron Norman and the Stone family. My grandfather was at the Queens Head, Green Street Green, at that time. There is an additional right of the tenant to shoot game from the 1st of January until the 30th March.



Appendix iii. A Gibbons - His Book, July 1st 1874

A list of Receipts[19]

To draw out a pimple
Work up honey, white of a leek and a bit of flour and put it to the place

To draw out an abscess
Take a turnip and toast it. Put it to the place

A receipt for drenching Calves for the Husk Mr. Blakes
1/2 Pint Oil Amber
1/2 Pint Spirits Turpentine
1 Pint Linseed Oil
1 Once Ginger Powder
Sufficient for sixteen calves. 8 Tablespoonful in each nostril and drench them with the rest of it. Be very gentle about it.

Receipt for Sprains
2d[20] Duldock, 2d Oil of Spikes, 2d Oil of Elder, 2d Swallows, 2d Origanum,
2d Turpentine, 2d Hartshorn, 2d Vinegar

A Receipt for Husk in Calves
Single Handful Wormwood
Di Feather Bow
1 Quart of Hen Dung
1/2 Handful of Rue
Stale wine enough to boil it in, when boiling put in a quart of coals
Boil it together for an hour and half or two hours
Give each calf a 1/2 a pint three mornings following fasting

Receipt for Pain in the Back
1d Juniper Drops, Balsompivey, Sweet Wine
To be taken 7 or 8 drops at a time

A Receipt for Red Water
1lb of Cattle salts
1/4 lb of Mutton Suet or 3 or 4 candles in a Quart or 3 pints of old Hale Beer
1 oz of pepper

For Udder Ill
1lb of Epson Salts
1oz Powdered Vine
1oz Powdered Ginger mixed in 1 Quart of warm gruel

A receipt from Mr. Coleyns Doctor for Stomach Complaint
1oz of Milk of Brimstone

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[19] Receipt was used instead of the word recipe at this time

[20] Not sure what d was short for, but think probably dram

1oz of Carbonate Magnesia
mixed together and taken a tea spoonful mornings two or three times a week

Mr. Carlisles Receipt for Absess
A Teaspoonfull Milk of Brimstone in a Glass of Milk every other morning fasting
Plaster and apply

Receipt for lame sheep
2oz of Salt Petre
2oz Spirits of Turpentine
2oz Yellow Arsenic
2oz Verdigris
2oz Blue Stone
2oz Roach Alum
To be mixed in a quart of cold vinegar
Mr. C Hancocks

A Receipt for Broken Knees or Galls of the Collar & in Horses
1oz of scald milk
1/2 pt Chimney soot
1/2 handfull Ground Ivy
Pegs Black
Boil it until it comes to 1/2 a pint and rub the part well every morning.

For Udder Ill
1oz Epson Salts
1oz Powdered Vine
1 Do Powdered Ginger
Mixed in 1 Quarts of warm Gruel

Mr James Receipt for Red Water
2oz Salt Petre
1 Pint Chimney soot in milk enough to thicken proper to give, and give lard or oil

Mr. Griffin's Receipt for Red Water in Bullocks
1lb Common Salt in 2 Quart spring water with 2 Candles

Receipt For scouring Lambs
Take a handful of Elderbossom Feathervew Lowsear and Rosemary of each sort with one Once of Anniseed
Boil together in one Gallon of Water for a Quarter of an Hour. Then add six ounces of Treacle 4 oz of Tar 2lb of salts stir it till all dissolved, or nearly cold. Let it stand till cold then add 2 Ounces of Turpentine Shake it well before you use it and give each Lamb one Wine Glass full.
The Lambs to be kept without anything to eat the night before and not come to any water the day after, drench them three times, every other morning

Receipt for Husk in Calves
A Teaspoonful of Spirits of Turkey Tar in Each Nostril. For a Lamb a Teaspoonful in each nostril

Drench for a Horse for Gripes of inflammation
1/2 pint Linseed Oil
1 ounce sweet spirits Vine
1 ounce salt Petre
If the horse is not easier to be repeated in half an hour

Receipt for scour in bullocks
One handful of Box. Baked and rubbed to powder boiled in about a Quart of scald milk in the morning fasting

For Phislelow or Poll evil in a Horse
Take some cob and pour Boiling white wine vinegar and make it up to a Poultice and Put it to the place all Hot

To strike a Cow's Udder where it is scruffy
A Pint Vinegar and 2 Eggs beat up together and apply 1/4 Pint Supertime mixed together

Receipt for a Bullock when swollen
1/2 Pint Turpentine in a Pint or Pint and half of warm water
When swelling gone back give Linseed to cleanse the stomach *Mr. Mogridge's*

To give a Cow after Calving when fearing the drop
1lb of Epsom salts Mr Mogridge's

Mr Sommers Receipt for making lime water
1/2lb Lime in three Quarts of water.
Take a wineglass full three times a day in milk

Mr Modridge's Receipt for Cow that gives Bloody Milk.
Quarter Pound Milk of Brimstone in Scald Milk

1888
A receipt for Swollen Bullocks
a wineglass of Turpentine in a 1/2 pint of Linseed Oil

Receipt for Poultice in a Horse
1/2 Pint Vinegar
1/2 Pint Turpentine
Snail Shells
Wash the wound with the vinegar and Turpentine. Wash the shells and powder them and put into the wound.

Mr. Hancocks of Bawstone Receipt for Quarter E Oil
Take a Quart of Urine and boil it with a small handful of Oak Bark from small limbs of Oak until it shrinks half and then strain the bark from the liquid and then add 2oz of Salt Petre and a small handful of table salt this is a dose for a calf one year old, half this dose for 6 months old this must be done about Michaelmas week They must be shut in by night for a week after drinking, also be kept in the night of drinking without meal.

Mrs Chanes Oils
2 Penny'th Oil Origanum

2 Do. Spirits Turpentine
2 Do. Spirits Wine
Mixed with 2 Penny'th Linseed Oil

Oils for Strains or Bruises
1 Quart Vinegar
1/2 Pint Turpentine
2oz Spirits Wine
2oz Camphor
2 Eggs well beaten
Fistful for use

Ointment for an Ulcerated Throat it will give ease quickly
Ingredients
Quarter of mutton suet from the Kidney melled and strained off add three ounces of unwashed butter one ounce and half of Beeswax sliced and melted together add quarter lb of Powdered Flosin mix it well stored over a slow fire until nearly cold then push in jars for use the way to apply it spread it cold and apply in cold on a piece of new cloth three inches wide from ear to ear pressing it to the throat with a piece of flannel

Hot Pickle
To Three quarts of Vinegar put 8 ounces of Ginger half of mace quarter of a hundred of shallots half teaspoon of Cayenne Pepper, one ounce of Mustard seeds boil altogether when cold put in cars what vegetables you like wipe them and push them in your pickle

Receipt for drops or Milk fever
Aromatic Spirits of Ammonia 10oz
Spirits of Nitros 20oz
Mix and give in 2-3oz doses
The first 5 doses every half hour
The last every hour
Each dose in 1/2 pint cold water
Rub in 1 1/4lbs mustard over the loins and give 1 1/2lbs of Epson Salts in 1/2 Gallon of Cold Water as soon as convenient before and after other doses -
This is Mr. Badcock's receipt

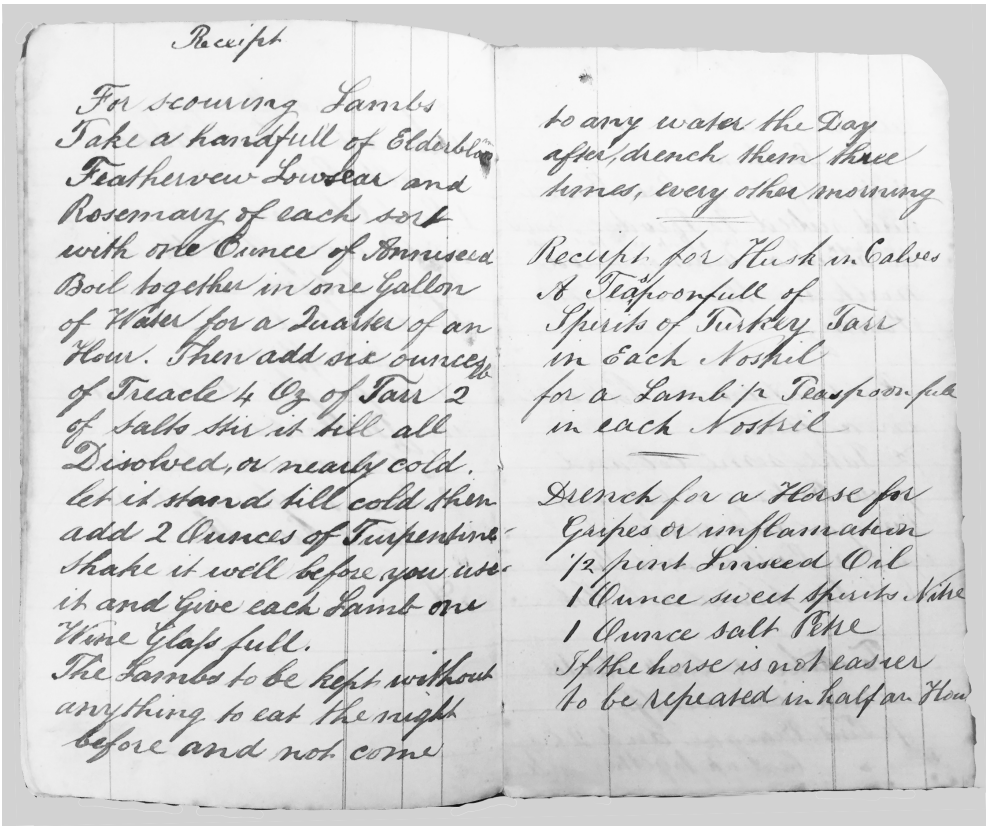
A good disinfectant
Permanganate of Potash

How to solder
3 Pennyworth of Spirits of Salts
Put the salts on the place to be soldering before putting on the solder.
(The following two recipes are written in a different hand)

Rose B receipt for almond paste.
1/2lb ground almonds
1/2 lb icing sugar
The white of an egg
Beat the egg well and gradually mix in the almonds and sugar if not quite egg enough have a little rosewater to flavour
Put this paste on a cake a week old and let it stay for 24 hours before putting icing.

A Receipt for Currant Bread
Two pounds flour
2 teaspoonful salt
1 ounce yeast, German,
3/4lb Currants
Sieve flour and salt
Mix in currants with flour
Mke a hole in centre and crumble yeast into it
Add 1/2 a pint of tepid water - let it stand for 15 minutes then add another 1/2 pint tepid water, and stand for 5 minutes
Stand in a warm place covered with a cloth for thirty minutes then make into loaves and let them stand for seventy
Bake in a moderate oven for about 30 mins

Plants poisonous for cattle
Acacia, Yew, Rhododendrons and Laurel
For yew poisoning administer whiskey and linseed oil in equal parts
To keep it from getting worse give it once a week while having grass and 3 times a fortnight in winter
1oz nitre
2oz sulphur
3oz salts
When very bad or first taken as 4oz Salts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Appendix iv. - poems

The Slugs

The Slugs they climb up every wall
Enter the bedroom they do try
It's enough to make you cry
They slither over window sill
It's enough to make you ill
Wrap them up in paper towel
You can almost hear them howl.
Put them in the toilet pan
Then they will go down the drain
And end up in the dirty water
This surely really oughter
Cook their goose once and for all
And stop them climbing up the wall.

Marmalade 2009

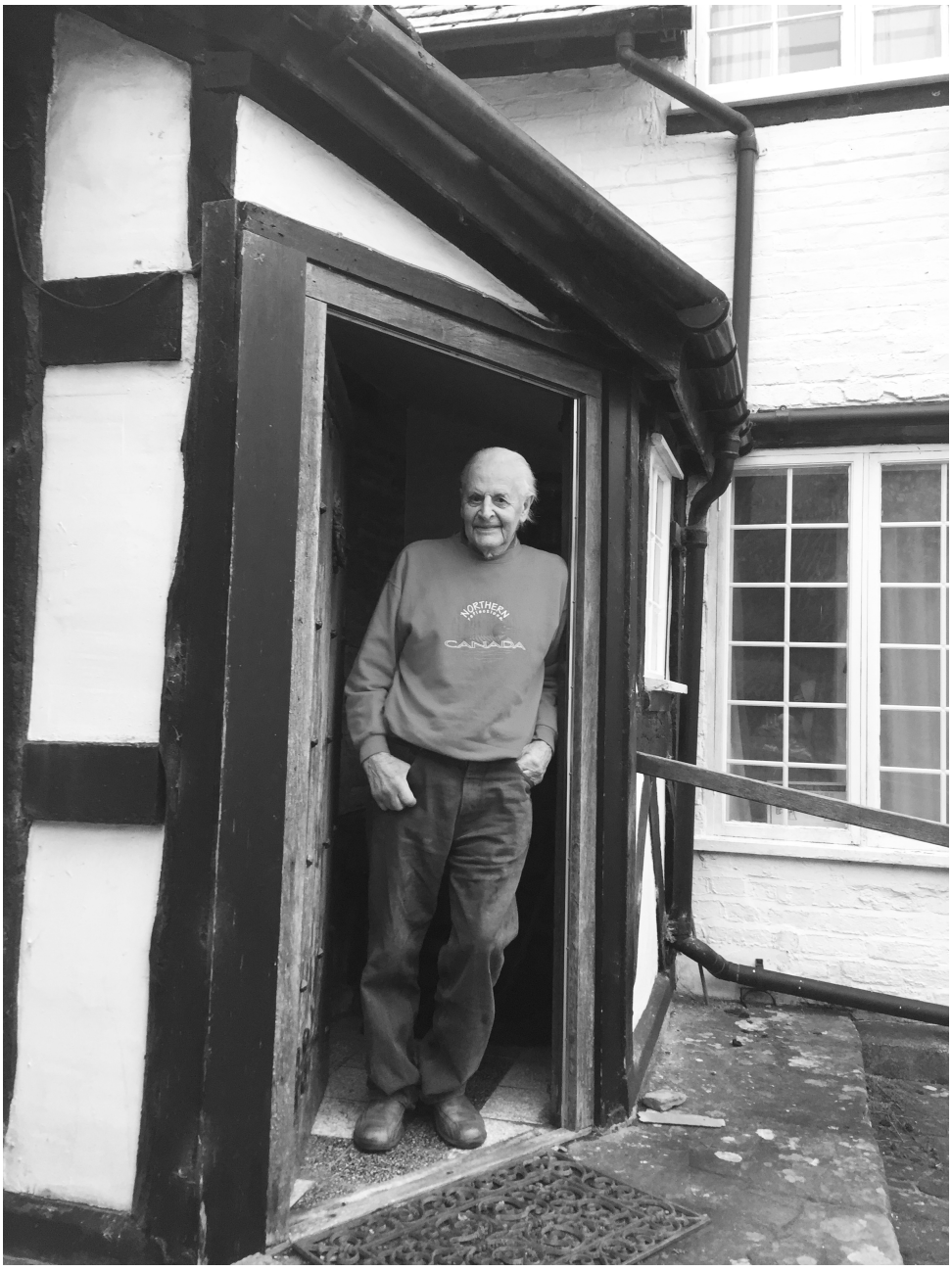
Marmalade time is here again
Get the Sevilles from sunny Spain
Slice them up and fairly fine
Soak in water, but not brine.
Put in saucepan. Bring to boil.
Don't over do it or t'will spoil.
When the peel is soft and wet
Add the sugar, heat 'til set.
Test on saucer, plate or other
Try at intervals to discover
If fit to put in jars all hot
Fit the lids and clean the lot
Of juice which will be very sticky
To get it off is really tricky.
When satisfied that all is clean
Put in store for Halloween.

Those of us who over-eat…

Those of us who over-eat
Will soon be heavy on their feet
And will end up on surgeon's slab
To remove the excess flab.
This will really not be good
So keep away from fatty food
And richer stuff like Christmas pud
By this means fit you'll be
And run a mile when you're ninety.
Perhaps this all seems super cool
Or perhaps it's a lot of bull.

I would like to thank my family and friends for all the love and friendship they have provided over the years.There are too many people to thank in person, but I am sure you know who you are! I would particularly like to thank Patsy, William, Debs, Georgia, Ben, Vicky, Emma, my neice Mary, Cherry, Lizzy and Dave for their support and help with this book. Thanks also to Tom O' Reilly of Golden Hare Press for his help with formatting and publishing this book, and to Chris Jones for providing the photos of Biggin Hill.

Tractor illustration by Georgia Stone, sketches by Lizzy Stroud, Woodcut illustrations from The National Encyclopaedia circa 1900 and wildlife paintings from Wildlife of the World by Frederick Warne and Co, circa 1916. Other photos from the family library, unless otherwise indicated.





“One man who had been used to horses wanted to drive the tractor. The trouble was he used to forget to put his foot on the clutch to stop and shouted out ‘Whoa!’ instead.”

John Stone was born in 1926 at Norhead’s Farm, just across the valley from the RAF airfield at Biggin Hill. This story charts John’s adventures, from tackling poachers and pests, to life during the war in the shadow of the airfield. John recalls the transition from horses to tractors and the massive changes to rural ways wrought by post-war agricultural policies as the government struggled to feed the populace while strict rationing was still in force.

Spanning ten decades, ***Changing Times*** is a humour-filled memoir of a long life lived to the full. It is a tale of triumph over adversity, of adaptability and endurance, of badly-behaved people and animals and ultimately an affectionate tribute to long-lasting love.