

1) I am lucky to have very happy childhood memories, helped by my mother determined this would be, so because of her own sad childhood. She lost her mother following the birth of brother John when only six and her father when she was twelve, and at aged fifteen lost her beloved elder brother Petter on the Somme in World War 1. I completed Petter's history which his young brother John started and which is now in the Imperial War Museum with my World War 2 diaries.

I could think in English when only a few months old. I remember laying on my Mother's lap in the bathroom for toileting, thinking 'I hope my face won't hit that (the bath) I also remember laying on my back in the pram trying to touch the cream canopy fringe with my toes. Thinking 'I wish I could touch that'. I would be about 4 months old. I was born with two growths which stopped me thriving I remained my birth weight, my parents were told that I would die, nothing could be done. But they trailed from Doctor to Doctor until they found Dr Martin who agreed to remove the growths. When I was nursing in Ashford hospital I used to polish the plaque with his name on in theatre and say thankyou for saving my life.

2) My first day at Secondary School was an important time. My mother had discovered that I was being hit and traumatised at the primary school by the Headmistress. The reasons for this punishment were for not forming a good enough teacup from hard solid green plasticine, for knitting too tightly, and mistakes with arithmetic, although I knew all my tables well. I was so upset I was removed immediately. It was dreadful seeing other children hit, one boy was sent flying across the wooden floor, his leg irons clattering. We had to stand with our right hand across our stomach & this hand was hit with such force we fell back hitting our heads on the wall, falling to the ground unable to breathe. Although poor I was sent to the County school aged 8, my little sister joining me later when 6 years old. I remember when I was able to jump over the 'horse in gym after learning to walk again following Diphtheria, the whole class clapped. I received all my 'stripes and became head of my House - Becket. Later I was awarded an Exhibition Scholarship for two years and became the first person in Kent to do a two year prenursing course.

I went on to become a State Registered nurse & State certified midwife. I became a Domiciliary midwife in Middlesex, a Practitioner in my own right teaching pupil midwives, we delivered the postwar 'bulge' a very high birthrate, booking 30 cases a month in our area.

3) The birth of my brother when I was 12 years old was a delight for my sister & I. But I had to suddenly grow up to help my frail mother who had a severe heart condition. I was paid sixpence a week to run the home. Shopping, cooking, cleaning, growing vegetables, mowing the lawn. When I went to school I would drop a bowl with a few households who would put vegetable peelings in for me to collect on the way home. These would have to be boiled for hours to feed our chicken which were cleaned out by me. I would darn & mend every night, boil the nappies after doing my homework, making sure I had brushed my sister's hair...

4) The second World War started when I was fifteen transforming my life with the horror of it all. Ashford was a Garrison town, I went to first aid classes with Dad, a Dental Technician who joined the Civil Defence & was on call after work including every night. He was even called to Canterbury. We experienced the spectacular Battle of Britain, at one point Dad & I had to shelter underneath our bicycles from the falling shrapnel, we were nowhere near shelter. We were forcibly evacuated, my sister went with the school, it was decided that I accompany my mother & baby brother the following day to meet up with her. We caught the train at 9.15 am, a bomb landed on the platform where we had been, 15 minutes after we left. The train had no

corridor, therefore no toilets, mothers were holding their children out of the windows because we only stopped once, arriving at our unknown destination late in the evening. We arrive at Oxford, & were taken by coach to Thame where people came & looked at us to choose who they wanted, we felt like slaves. They wouldn't let one nice lady have us because she lived outside the area. Eventually we were taken to an elderly childless couple, very kind but not used to a child. We did not know where my sister was, we never met up with her, we did not know whether Dad was alive or dead; he like the other men had not been allowed to leave Ashford, they had to defend it. We could not get any money or post. I could not get into any school they were full so I took a job as a ward maid at the evacuated children's department of the Radcliffe Infirmary housed in ancient Rycote Manor - a bus ride & journey through fields to reach. I lived in, sharing a room with the dining room maid. I was hopeless as a ward maid so they trained me to be the other dining room maid. But they allowed me to nurse the children & feed the babies etc.

The night nurse I used to speak to before she went off duty each day turned out to be my life long friend Olive, we next met doing our part one midwifery, & then did our second part midwifery becoming domiciliary midwives, I lived with Olive & her mother for three years.

At the time of the Dunkirk Evacuation, trains laden with casualties passed our home every ten minutes for a week. I was nursing at Ashford hospital, when one day I had just swept the ward & the railway station was bombed and the ward ceiling fell down with the impact, covering every bed in white. Shortly everyone was evacuated and the ward became an operating theatre. The wounded lay on the floor, one was having a leg amputated. I admitted a soldier with a broken jaw to be sent to East Grinstead. I was given two train drivers scalded when their train engine boiler was hit, I had to cut off their clothes, but their skin came off as well, they were sent to the Burns unit at East Grinstead. I was in my parents garden when a flying bomb cut out. Calling to the children to run to the Anderson shelter I threw in my sister, my brother, a playmate & the dog & then jumped in as the bomb exploded. I peeped out the door & could not see our home for thick dust, & Mummy was in there. But she was alright but for two miles around all the glass in the windows was broken & roof tiles damaged. Windows had to be repaired with picture glass because there was a great shortage of stronger window glass.

5.9.45 5) The most important happening in my life was meeting Jack at the "Battle of Britain" dance in the County Hotel. I had nursed both owners and as a thank you all the nurses could go free every week. I was so late home I had to climb through the kitchen window. We married three years later, I was reluctant to give up my salary & having my cooking, cleaning, & laundry, done for me, so I saved up for a Bendix washing machine & vacuum cleaner. My marriage has been wonderful, we have celebrated our Silver, Pearl, Ruby & Golden weddings. We have three wonderful children, and five wonderful grandchildren. When we had our second child, Geoffrey, we bought a Morris Minor & both learnt to drive. I drove a blind piano tuner to his grand piano's in beautiful country manors for a few years, Lord Coggan and his wife would bring us in a tray of tea at their home. When my leg was paralysed we had to have an automatic car, now I use cruise control and powered steering as well. I was also an Adult Literacy Tutor for many years on a one to one basis

3 6 6) Breeding & showing Guinea pigs from the age of 12 with my mother's influence was a successful hobby. This hobby restarted for my sons Geoffrey & Keith. Geoffrey had to wait a year for an Abyssinian tortoiseshell & white guinea pig to be born. As The Shakespeare Stud we won every one of the eight sections in the London Championship Show three years running. We had enquiries from Sweden & America, but they were too expensive to export. We even had a waiting list for pet guinea pigs. During her last illness in my home I gave my mother a baby guinea pig to hold after it was born. The Dr would stroke it when he called. We called it B B for black bottom, she lived to be eleven. I was also a Guinea pig judge & was asked to join the overseas panel of judges, but my family needed me & I had to decline.



7) Receiving my Open University B A Hons degree after 6 years study with Jack, Geoffrey and Keith present was a high light of my life. I chose an Arts degree but concentrated on history because I missed out with the school evacuation.

8) Drawing & painting is a very rewarding part of my life. From a very young age I would cycle with my father & sketch whilst he painted with watercolours. This was & still is my way of recording memories. My little sixpenny camera from Woolworths was useful but not quite as good. I have books of guineapig sketches, also of my poodle. I have many paintings of flowers I have been given from my children and from friends, as well as recording holiday scenes. Many times my paintings have been voted as best at exhibitions.

9) Singing has been a most rewarding part of my life. I was a member of the Ashford Choral Society, and the Stour Music Choir, conductor Mark Deller, at one rehearsal for Stour I sang a duet with Alfred Deller the world famous counter tenor, a great friend who lived down the road from us with his wife Peggy who is still alive. They came to our pearl wedding. My mother was a soloist with a most beautiful voice she sang in the Dome Brighton in 1923, her singing teacher taught her friend Evelyn Laye who wanted Mummy to go to Hollywood with her but she had already met Dad. My mother trained my voice & I sang in Paris with the Paris Conservatoire three years running giving two concerts each time. I sang The Messiah in the Royal Albert Hall with a Thousand voice choir, my whole family had seats near me in the front row, with my German friend. I sang whenever I had the opportunity in Kent & London.

Oct  
1998

10) My Pacemaker has given me better health and made me have a different view on life, to value every minute, to spread happiness and peace of mind. I was so thankful I had never smoked nor abused my health in any way, life is very precious.

#### Lent to Becky

1. Silver thimble my Grandma gave me
2. Tiny first photo album with baby g pigs just before war – school trip on Thames
3. Bears claw set in gold worn on my wedding day & given to me by Grandma on my 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Her brother brought it back from the Pyranees where he was in the Spanish Civil war.
4. Letter written by Uncle John explaining how he finally found his brother Petters name on the Thiepval memorial and the photos.
5. Tiny boat my father had made
- 6.. Small painting of mine
7. Photo of me
8. My SRN badge
9. My Hospital badge- I was a gold medallist
- 10 Poodle model

ANIMATEEN (Pam) 2 WIVES  
OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 1939  
Michael Evacuated with the County School, Maidstone Rd. 16 YEARS OLD  
My mother, 45 year old brother & myself the following morning 9 am  
15 minutes after our train left the platform was bombed  
where we were standing. The train was bombed  
we did not arrive at Thames until after midnight. The train  
kept being derailed because the line was bombed.  
The train had no corridor. It stopped only once at T. and bridge  
I we all queued for the toilet  
Children were being held out of the windows for toiletting  
as we travelled. I was darning my sister's black stockings  
but we never met up. We had no idea where she was.  
My brother & I couldn't get into any school, they were gassed.  
We had no news, letters or money from my father for weeks  
we did not know if he was dead or alive.  
When we arrived at Thames we were escorted to a large  
bare boarded room, my mother was given a chair. We were  
given sandwiches & gruel & tea as we headed & frightened together.  
People walked round pointing to us saying 'I want thee  
one or I want those. We felt like slaves in a market.  
One woman put her arms around us saying she would  
like us, she had a farm outside Oxford & she felt we would  
be very happy there. But she was told her farm was out of  
the area & that she couldn't have us.  
It was sometime before we were told that someone could  
have us, I believe we were the last to be allocated a home  
we felt very unwanted but Mr & Mrs Lewis who owned the corner  
hardware shop in the Buttermarket were very kind.  
We had the servants quarters in their beautiful Georgian  
house. The rooms were panelled & the fireplace  
in the corner of the room. A narrow winding  
persian carpeted staircase led to  
our low ceilinged  
bedrooms

WAR MUSEUM REQUIRE:  
EVACUEES; 01714165310  
LONDON EVACUEES CA  
TO US FIRST. MARY  
DATCHER USED OUR  
SCHOOL AFTERNOON  
WENT MORNINGS -  
Kest  
STRAIGHT DOWN AND  
OUR FRONT LAWS IN  
DAMP CO  
ZIGZAG  
TRENCH  
WITH  
OUR COAT  
IN  
TRENCH



I divided up our rations in a separate kitchen to Mrs Lewis. We shared a daily meal with the elderly couple. Mrs Lewis had the complete gramophone records of Elgar which we were allowed to listen to them. In our room I had my own bedroom adjoining my mother & brother's bedroom through a low doorway. We were allowed to play the wind up Gramophone (Gramophone) there were stars in the night was on one of two records. We were allowed in the large lavalled kitchen garden with oranges fruit took their golden coach for walks & groomed her. My brother & I could not get into any school, they were packed. I took a job as a ward maid in the beautiful mansion. I was quickly made a dening room maid, serving the other dining room maids black dress, lace penicill & learned to serve the sisters & Mrs correctly. Lay the table care for the dening room, polishing the floor with an electric shisher which I kept in my pantry. I was allowed to care for the children & feed the babies & give them Ultra Violet treatment all wearing goggles. The Matron was going to interview me regarding starting my training as a nurse. But at Access to Thame I was walking over a field & catching a Serp. I found my mother & sister left Mrs Lewis & gone to stay with Mrs Quainton & her several children. My mother was very poorly. Eventually contact was made with my father & we received his my request letters telling us about the boarding of Redford. He sent my bike to me so I could cycle to Thame. Peter started school January 1940 I took my mother & brother home. Peter started school January 1940 I took a months notice & cycled to Oxford facing a beautiful sunrise.

NOV 9: 9T B ORTH2ml Blister Using pointed end of syringe Good  
 ANA 1ml r side drew up 4 ml Orthana.  
 1ml l side Compressed bubble to exclude air & slowly filled blister with 2ml O  
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The Nursing Chair as it was called by my Grandma was bought second hand by hand is still possessed by me. I have had it upholstered & the carved back has been restored, the very short legs allowed one to hold & bath a baby securely, a sensible design for a child to sit on & a useful foot rest when the children are grown.

Nowadays babies are changed on a bench or even the floor, of course they cannot fall off a floor but may be they miss warm embracing arms. Also there would not be the warm coal fire & stand a tin bath by. My brother's tin bath is now used for forcing rhubarb. We now have a delicious daily shower but as a child the weekly bath was shared with my sister, I was the one sitting on the plughole, the cold tap pressing into my back & the frightening (as I say) dripping coldly on my head. The water would be black, which was surprising considering we strip washed & the waist daily. The bath was also very difficult to clean in our hard chalybeate water.

Our hair was washed every week in carefully caught rainwater in a bowl in the kitchen sink, the leaves had to be picked out & a squeeze of lemon used as a last rinse producing a healthy sheen. Neither my sister or I had long hair, Dad cut it when necessary, giving us both a fringe & serially alarmingly singeing it with a lighted piece of rolled newspaper. A nightly brush of twenty strokes with our own Pearson Pearson pure bristle hair brush was a mandatory ritual, with the agonising 'curl rags' if we were to look special the next day. These 'curl rags' were about two inches wide & six inches long, the section of chosen hair rolled round & round & tied in a hard knot with to torment our head through the night. During the day we usually had a hair strip for tidiness. But some girls would sport a ribbon or plaits one or two. But never loose hair.

High as my Head Cont'. 26.4.08

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### Hastings Holidays

Our holidays in Hastings with our <sup>beloved</sup> ~~paternal~~ Grandma & Grandad parents of our father were always looked forward to. Put in charge of the friendly Guard with money in sewn up pockets to be met by Grandad, an Auntie or, later, a cousin we were always excited. Our beautiful Rail motor benefited by the rest, there was always a stick of Hastings Rock each & perhaps a beach ball or spade or bucket, ~~usually~~ we always ran to the Pantry on Grandma's invitation to help ourselves to a freshly baked warm current bun in the same tin. all through the years on the left shelf,