

Immediately below are the last few pages of a later version of Heaven Lies About Us. Mum wrote several manuscripts about of this part of her life when the family were living in Cinderford. I don't have all the original manuscripts. These next few pages are from a copy typed on the computer by my niece Rachel. I'm including them here because they recount some of the story of how the Worgan family (minus Het and Lil) came to move to Ruardean. Mum called the final part of her memoirs **Hares on the Mountain** when the family lived in True Blue House, Ruardean. It starts on page 8.

Extract from Heaven Lies About Us – part 2

Dad told me one morning that he had heard from the Pension Authorities that I was in my sixteenth year which was the age when child-support came to an end. [Mum born 1911] All through my secondary school course, I had been a year behind because of my delayed entrance. Dad wrote to the school. Three of the staff made up a deputation and came to the shop. They told Dad I was a very promising pupil. I should be taking the Oxford School Certificate next year. It would seem to be a waste of much study if I did not take the certificate now. I was capable of higher things still.

Dad said he couldn't think of any way out, he was barely able to manage now. When the deputation had gone, I said to Dad, "I've a good mind to write to St. Dunstan's".

Dad said, "I can't see how it will hurt anything".

I wrote there and then, telling them the course I was taking and the subjects in which I expected to pass. I heard by return of post that 'Child Support Grant' was extended until I was eighteen. Financially speaking, we could stagger on as before.

Back to school to fins (finish?) we had another change of staff, and Mr. Saunders had been appointed Head. His special subject was Geography, and he was an excellent teacher and took our form in this subject. He was very ambitious for the prestige of the school. It got elevated to the East Dean Grammar School. We were given a change of uniform, a new motto and a new School Song. I had loved the old one. Why must they change everything?

Our new uniform included a tunic selected from a School Outfitters, very well-tailored, very smart, a round felt hat in navy with a navy red and gold band, a navy blazer piped with red, and an embroidered badge on the breast pocket bearing the new motto, 'Sicut Arbor Lucem Petimus', gold oakleaves and acorn.

All together it was expensive but a good investment. Mam managed to pay it by instalments.

Mr. Saunders voiced his aim to obtain a rate of 100% passes in the School Certificate Examination, and lectured us about it. There seemed to be disagreement among the staff and it might mean some pupils staying on at school longer. Our ranks had already been very much depleted.

As a general rule, if families found the cost of education a burden on their resources, it was the girl who had to leave. And by this time the female element in our form had been reduced to seven. By a strange coincidence three of these were called Gladys. There were more than twenty boys.

Many of our former companions had left for some time. Doris for one who was not academic, had found the work beyond her, and had only been too glad to leave it behind. Much discussion had gone on her family circle, and under the combined efforts of aunts, uncles, and family connections, she had finally been accepted for a superior post and was to go to London as junior assistant to an under-nursemaid in a 'Titled Family'. There would also be the nursemaid, the Nurse, and the Head Nurse.

When Doris had all her outfit purchased and sorted and marked with her name, and laid out all over the sitting room for verification, I was invited up to see it.

Every article of underwear was piled by the dozen, the same with stockings, caps, aprons, indoor uniforms, outdoor uniforms, summer wear, winter wear, special occasions. A very large hamper stood waiting to receive them, the label printed and ready for tying.

It seemed to me that Doris was going to spend a large part of her time washing and changing. When I considered all the other staff employed, for the care of one child, I thought the expected baby could surely get lost in such an abundance of service.

It was Friday evening; I was reading the Mercury to Dad. I went through the usual proceedings and came to the "To Let" column.

TO LET AT RUARDEAN

Large Stone Built House. Large Garden.

Write in first instance to

A.J. Bennett, Esq., West End, Ruardean, Glos.

"Hang on a minute", said Dad, "Let's have a think about this. Let's see, Ruardean eh! Littledean Hill we know, Soudley we know, and Cinderford we know. Ruardean Hill is the highest point of the Forest. There's a village of Ruardean, but I don't think I've ever been there".

"I have though", I suddenly said.

"You have?"

"It was just before Het went to live in Lydney. You know Het and her young men. She had one who used to play in the Drybrook Band. She often got me to go with her to places where she could meet this chap. This occasion was when the Band among others was playing at a Bank Holiday event which they held annually for Cycle Racing. It was held at a place called Walford in a field by a river. It was quite a holiday crowd and a special bus was running from Cinderford. When we tried to get back, the Cinderford bus had gone. We were advised to get on a conveyance that was just leaving for Ruardean which we were told would be the nearest we should get that evening. We drove up a very long hill and were put off at Ruardean. We were then directed on our way up another long, long, hill, over the top and down another, about 3 miles or more. Het started going out with Bob Morse after that. As far as I know that was the one and only time I've been to Ruardean, and then it was dark".

"Well, it won't hurt anything to write a letter", said Dad.

Het and I had boarded a bus in Cinderford. Dad had corresponded with Mr. Bennett of Ruardean, and we were envoys to view the property and bring back a report. It was strange little bus minus upholstery and with no pretensions of comfort. We were told that the bus was going to Ruardean Hill, but we could be dropped off at a point from which we could walk to Ruardean. We could get a return ride all the way if we took the service bus from Ruardean Square at four o'clock.

Het had managed to get the day off. We kept in close contact by letter and were well informed of one another's doings. As we travelled down the High Street, "You know Glad, I think this must be the same way we came in the dark, when we went to see Stan Brown at the Walford races!" [quite why there was a bus going to Ruardean Hill from Cinderford which did not go on to Ruardean is a mystery to me.]

"You're right", I said, "See there's the sign marked Drybrook, but straight up the hill we go."

Cottages up each side of the road, then a crossroads, where we were advised to get off.

"Which way?" we asked.

"Straight up, over the top and down the other side. Anybody will tell you when you've reached the village. But don't forget, be in the Square at four o'clock if you want a ride home."

Het and I walked together for about half a mile until we came to the very top of the hill. Fields lay on each side, hedges bound the sides of the road. It resembled a mountain pass. My heart lifted as we gazed over a tremendous panorama. The road at our feet ran steeply down to what was evidently the village of Ruardean. Looking straight before us, green pastures spread below our gaze. For miles we could see a pattern of farms, copses and distant white houses. The further the eye was taken the turned earth seemed to get redder and richer until on the far horizon, mountain ranges set against the sky and one that stood apart shaped like a volcano with a pointed top.

Het and I stood gazing.

I said to Het, "I was absolutely sure that the view across the Severn from Pleasant Style was the most wonderful view in all the world, but now I'm not so sure".

"Anyway", said Het, "We're not out admiring views. We've got a job to do. Best see about it".

Down the hill we walked, and halfway down met a solitary figure walking towards us. It was a little old lady, quite elderly but by no means infirm. In fact she stepped firmly out apparently feeling no discomfort from the steepness of the road, but briskly and straight ahead she came. We gazed at her. She seemed like one who came walking from the past. Dressed all in black, a flat black hat set squarely on her head, a close-fitting bodice, a long black gathered skirt, just clearing the ground and tiny black buttoned boots on her feet. Everything about her was small and neat, except for a few white wisps of hair that had escaped from her bun. Her face was small and pale, and she had a cataract in one eye.

As she came level with us, she made a remark to us, that seemed to suggest that we were well known to her, and that we were quite familiar with her relations and way of life.

We both said, "Good afternoon", and she went busily on.

'I wonder who she is,'? said Het, "She didn't seem quite you know..."

"No, I agree strange - she looked as if she had stepped straight from the pages of a Victorian novel! she was real I suppose."

"I didn't see anything ghostly about her", said Het.

We continued on our passing a few cottages. The beautiful stone-built church came nearer every minute and the amazingly high spire soared high above us. The place seemed deserted.

As we were about to pass the large house just above on the opposite side of the road, one of the high doors opened, and down the steps came two dwarf-like women. They closely resembled one another, both being very squat and square, wearing woolly caps, Scarves, winter coats, woollen gloves and leather boots. They came past us without looking, and walking before us on their short fat legs in rolling motion, Were soon out of sight down the village street' r was feeling nervous. There was something about them that suggested weakness of mind'

"What do you think?", I asked Het? "Don't you find It strange that the first three people we lay our eyes on when we enter this village, appear to be weak in the head? Is it an ill omen' do you suppose"?

“Oh said Het, very worldly-wise and knowledgeable, “I’m not at all surprised. You might expect it.”

“I can’t think what you mean Het. I find it quite frightening”

“No, no, it’s quite understandable. It’s these isolated villages you know……. “interbreeding!” she whispered the word forming it importantly with her lips.

“Leads to weakness of the intellect”.

I’m sure that Het doesn’t know as much as she makes out, I thought. ‘There must be another reason I won’t worry about it.’

We enquired for Mr. Aubrey Bennett’s address, and were directed to go straight through the village to the West End. The house was described (to us?). The village seemed to be one long street. And coming from Cinderford you entered by the East End, and went through to the West End’

A thin soberly clad gentleman opened the door to us, shook hands with Het, whom he addressed as Miss Worgan. Het said she would like him to meet my younger sister, Gladys.

He said, “Would we please come in and meet his wife.”

As we were about to enter, a slapping stepping sound drew my attention to the road, to see a long line of cows walking down the middle-of the road making messes, swinging their tails and turning into an entrance on the opposite side of the street. Behind them came a tall thin young man, tanned brown, swinging a leafy stick, whistling, a dog at his side.

Mr. Bennett had opened the door past the hall and was introducing us to his wife who was sitting in an armchair at a large Victorian table. She excused herself from rising. She had she said, bad legs. She was dressed all in black and was not at all pleasant looking. She had smooth black hair and rather squashy lips. The furnishings were all Victorian in style, but there was a bright fire in the grate. She said if we did decide to take the house, she could recommend a very good milkman who would be regular and reliable. It turned out to be her nephew. She herself was childless but Mr. Whittington was certainly very helpful to all his customers.

I said I was really more concerned to know if I could get back and forth to Cinderford every day as I had to attend the Grammar School. She quickly named quite a large number of pupils who went to the Grammar School and used the bus daily. Het asked if it would be convenient to view the house, and Mr Bennett was happy to oblige.

In fact, the house was no farther than next door, but there was a wide black gate between it and the Bennett’s property. The house to be let was a large stone-faced house, standing flush with the road, but had a flagstone paving before it. Double-fronted, it was attached to the next-door premises below, which were of an entirely different design. That one had four or five semi-circular stone steps at its front door, a bay window, and a stone archway admitting through a covered way to the back entrance.

Mr. Bennett said we would go through the back entrance of the empty house. We followed him through a fair-sized yard into a red tiled kitchen. An old-style stone sink was at the base of the window and an iron pump with a handle overhung the sink. A black-leaded iron range stood in the corner with a high mantelpiece. In the opposite wall wooden shelves were let into the wall with a cupboard beneath. It was roomy enough to use as a living kitchen and had what was referred to as a pantry leading off it. This was quite dark, ventilated by a wire grill, had a flag-stone floor and was intended for the storing of foods and wines. It also had a large slab of stone that could act as a table. Mr. Bennett called it a salting stone.



True Blue house on the left (dated 1763). The house attached on the right was once inhabited by the Horlicks family, famous for their malted milk drink.

The room was reasonably clean and dry but Het's housewifely soul was already brandishing a whitewash brush about the bumpy walls. We asked about the pump. The landlord said it might need a bit of attention and priming, but there was a capacious reservoir just out back, quite safe as it had recently been re-roofed in corrugated iron. The technicalities of this contraption were quite outside our province.

We went through the front premises which had been designed as dining room on right and parlour on the left. The dining room also served as access to the front lobby, front door and base of stairs. I lost my heart to the parlour which had a finely wrought plaster ceiling with a pleasing design radiating from the centre.

Het said, "Piano here, three piece-suite here, nice marble mantelpiece."

"Good board floor", put in Mr. Bennett, "you will be wanting to see upstairs, I expect."

We followed him through a panelled door into the lobby and upstairs. There were three bedrooms on this floor, one also having a hanging cupboard, a step down into the back room. A partly sloping ceiling came to the top of the window which overlooked a long garden, farm land behind. Out of this room a door lead into a bathroom. Lined in pitch pine the room was sound but the bath did not seem to have been much used.

Another open-sided staircase ran up to attic rooms. Mr. Bennett went into more technical details about the pump taking water from the reservoir to the tank in the attic, and the water feeding the boiler at the back of the range.

Neither Het nor I could voice any opinion on these amenities, but I rather fancied the little back bedroom, but wondered whether there were any ghosts or bats lurking about there.

We were told there was a good area of garden which we could see for ourselves, good coal and woodsheds in the yard, a lavatory down the garden with a flagged path where the honeysuckle climbed. There was also a good piece of walled garden on the opposite side of the road which went with the property. Altogether the house made a very good impression on both of us. We both ignored the vital necessity of drinking water, and took it for granted that the pumping department would be looked after by the males. We told Mr. Bennett we would give Dad a good report, and

could he please direct us to the square. He seemed very much in favour of us taking up the option on the house, and said he would help us with any problems.

He directed us to the Square which was but a few yards down the road. We excused ourselves from going into seeing Mrs. Bennett and promised to write. As we walked through to (the) Square I mentioned to Het that practically every house in the street, had leaning against the wall, a square of wood, made by simply nailing together crude pieces of battening across one another at right-angles, forming an open square with a cross at each corner. I meditated on the significance of this phenomenon but failed to reach any solution. Although there seemed much that was strange about this place, it seemed too much to interpret it as of religious significance.



An old postcard of Ruardean showing the yoke-type water carrying frames with buckets which mum disliked so much. The Square is on the right of where the two women are standing in the middle ground.

We passed a muddy lane on the left, leading to a farm with large barns. Opposite a public House of ancient design, a heavy sign hanging at right angles, swinging and squeaking in the breeze. It had a painting of a pile of golden grain and a broad shovel and proclaimed itself to be 'Ye Old Malt Shovel', Proprietor A. J. Wilkes.

On the corner of the square stood a large bakery establishment, Proprietor Frederick Knight. A number of corner steps up which we climbed formed a good waiting place for the bus. The houses at the side of the street were respectable villas. A lane went up right of the square showing signs of colliery workings up the hill. Signs of dwellings could be seen high above us on the hillside.

Dad liked the sound of the house, and decided it had sufficient rooms to take over the dining room, which had a stone floor, as a work-room. The shed could be erected in the yard. He found a plumber to look into the problems of the pumping; we very soon discovered the practical character of the wooden squares. All drinking water had to be carried, there was no main supply. I had seen in

pictures a shoulder-yoke being used with swinging pails for the transport of liquids, but this was a simpler invention.

Everybody spoke very highly of the reliability of 'Caudle', the spring in the hillside above the square. It never failed. Here every morning or evening some member of the family had to line up with the pails, fill them at the spout, place them in the square which served to balance them, and stop one's feet getting soaked. Dad had to purchase several terra-cotta glazed pans which were kept under the salting stone and daily filled with water.

We pumped and pumped but never did succeed getting more than a quart or two of rusty water. The conclusion was reached, that the reservoir itself was leaking and need cleaning and relining.

Much preparation was needed to get the transportation of our goods underway. A good deal of outdoor things including the shed was brought by Mr. Tom Parry in his horse and trap. Many journeys were made by bus and eventually everything was in place. There was no lack of willing hands when the news went round that Dad was blind.

On one of my last days in Cinderford, I was at the Midland Bank doing some last-minute business for Dad.

"Is this right what I hear", said the clerk to me, "that you are leaving us and going to live up at Ruardean"?

"Quite right", I said, "why?"

"You want to watch it up there!" he said, "That's where they killed the bear!"

What could he mean??

We had everything in reasonable order by the time Mam first set foot in Ruardean, getting off the bus. Vi, Phyl, and I went down to meet her. She had George [born 1922] by the hand, he had started school for some time, but she was carrying another little white bundle - my second brother, Edward, had arrived.

[Eddie was born at the end of 1926. That, taken with George being in school, means, I believe, the move to Ruardean happened in the first half of 1927.]

HARES ON THE MOUNTAIN

The Memoirs of Gladys Duberley— part 3

Chapter 1

By the simple procedure of transferring our family to (a) house of little more than three miles distance, I soon found we had entered an entirely new world.

The tenuous connection of the bus link with Cinderford, was a strict and unforgiving discipline.

The extra burden of carrying water from the spring for every need was a chore to be shared by all of us. Nor was there any flush lavatory in the house, but a long trip down the garden, whatever the weather.

Hetty was still at Lydney, Lil in Cheltenham. I was travelling to school daily, and Vi, Phyl and George were at the village school.

Even the school routine was strange. It had a church foundation, but was financially supported by the Council.

The children were instructed in the Church Catechism which sounded like a lot of gibberish to me.

“What is your name?-----Answer A or N. I read in the prayer book.

Who gave you that name?-----My Godfather or my Godmother at my Baptism.”

They recited it like the alphabet or the two times table.

This was followed by a lesson from the Rector, sometimes concerning the correct colouring for Altar Cloths, a different one for every variation in the Church Calendar. Phyl told me how they went through the same routine every morning. The Rector had the right of entry, and sometimes spent a good part of the morning instructing the children in Church Procedure.

“I can't see the value of it! I said.

“I've heard that that new Headmaster at your school is a Heathen!” said a visitor present at this conversation.

Always, since I had started school, we had started the day, the whole school present, with a Hymn and a Prayer, followed by notices.

It was true however, that classes: in Religious Education did not now consist of analysis of Parables, or any comment on moral issues, but consisted of map drawing, and historical evidence of the wanderings of the Tribes of Israel.

I was never near the top of the school, and the class above had the School Captain and several Prefects within its confines. I had no wish to aspire to these honours.

Mr. Saunders had adjusted the classes in anticipation of obtaining one hundred percent passes in our year. Several pupils from the class above had joined us, and were going through the course again paying special attention to their weak subjects.

The truth had also dawned that my only way to be rid of the scraping. together of school fees and. other such grovelling of the spirit, was to become independent and earn my own living. Dad being what he was, it was best that as soon as possible I should take control of my own finances.

Representatives of St. Dunstan's still visited us, and when we had been at Ruardean a short while, Miss Oliphant came to see us. [Miss Oliphant was still working with the organisation much later on. See the St. Dunstan's Review No. 232 — Volume XXII. [New Series] JULY, 1937]

After talking to Mam, she buttonholed me for a little private conversation. In short what she wanted to know, me being a girl with plenty of common sense and academically capable, was - "How did Dad manage to get through his income so quickly?"

My old total belief in my father's skill, and certainly of his superiority to most sighted men, was unshaken.

"This moving to Ruardean for instance," continued the lady. "It has certainly resolved the rating problem, but I can't see that the move benefits your mother. Conditions here are very primitive, and she still has a young family. She has been living in Commercial Street for a long while, shops for all her needs close at hand, friendly and respected ladies living near. Here she knows no one, has the choice of two shops, and every spot of water has to be carried from a spring. She does not complain, but I fail to see what benefit she finds from this upheaval."

This was certainly true.

I could have told the St. Dunstan's official that Dad was an over-generous friend. If his mates at the domino or cribbage matches were unable to stand their corner, Dad's was the hand that quickly squared the account.

I could have told her that it was unrealistic to expect Dad to change his ideas as fast as the world around, him changed. In many ways he was still almost in the Victorian era, his female relatives dependant on him for a roof over their heads and sufficient food and clothes.

I said to the lady, "I don't think Dad thinks anybody has any right to tell him how to spend his pension. After all, he paid for it a long time ago...What extra he is able to make in his disabled state is his to do what he likes with."

"And your mother?"

"I agree that this move is hard on her, but I don't see what I can do. My father is a very proud and stubborn man. You don't imagine anybody is going to make him change his mind now, do you?"

"Anyway, we've all been dropped into this new life. You don't suppose I enjoy walking up and down the street with buckets of water in some contrivance that must have been invented before the ark. I believe they had shoulder-yokes in Biblical times! What is more, the people who live here watch me every step of the way! We only came from Cinderford for goodness sake! Probably have suited them better if we'd come from Outer Mongolia! That clerk at the bank told me they shot bears up here — I haven't seen any of, those yet."

Miss Oliphant looked at me ruefully.

"Well my dear, I don't think I'd be any good with bears either, but I'd be happy to do anything to help. I live at Warminster, and this address will always find me. Don't hesitate to write if you want any advice, or think I can help in any way."

So we were left to make what we could of Ruardean. There was certainly more room in the house, and I was allowed the little back bedroom, which pleased me.

Vi had had ambitions to join me at the Grammar School, but when she sat for the scholarship examination, the long years of foundation work which she had missed recovering from the burning, told their tale, and she finished her education at Ruardean school.

We were still close and went out together in the evening to see what Ruardean had to offer. We joined the Sunday School and were invited to join a group of girls to practice a play in the evening. This was held in the school hall.

We only attended the play rehearsal for two nights when I attempted to dramatise the part I had been allocated, the others went quiet and gaped open-mouthed, or giggled in corners,

Vi and I opted out, and ran down the lane making up our own version of the sketch, and ran back home, arriving in the kitchen where Mam was getting George and Eddie ready for bed in stitches of laughter.

Every Friday evening, it was my job to take the rent round to Mr. Bennett's. Of course this was only next door.

I would take the money and the book, and knock at the door under the porch. Mr. Bennett would appear and ask me to come inside. Mrs. Bennett would always be sitting in the same arm chair, dressed in the same black sateen dated-looking clothes.

I don't think Dad had ever complained about the useless reservoir, pump and bathroom, and we still had to boil water on the kitchen and drag in the bath in front of the fire.

The mystery of the empty reservoir had been solved. The lining was useless and would not hold water.

I rather gathered that the repairs could not be done without raising the rent.

There were several rain water butts as well, and we were able to use the water for washing our hair while there was a good rainfall.

Mr. Bennett seem(ed) to hold a position of some authority, although he never seemed to go on any regular business. However he did possess a car, a grey Renault, which was kept in a garage at the side of the house. [From what I found Mr. Bennett was a retired butcher, and had been a miner in his younger days.]

He told me that one of his duties was to keep an eye on the running of the Workhouse which was situated in Ross-on-Wye. I also believed he acted as a kind of intermediary for the Registrar, who visited the house periodically for the registering of births.

I could never understand how he came by these positions, as he never struck me as a man of education.

He had certainly misled us over the pumping situation. The truth was, there seemed so very little to do in this village, and that was one house I had good reason to go inside, although the company rather grim.

Every morning there was the rush to get everything in my satchel, swallow my breakfast, and hurry down to the Square, very conscious of the fact that this bus was the one and only means of getting to school.

A number of people were always waiting, and we collected other Grammar School students as we went along, none of whom were in my form.

As the days got warmer and I walked up from the square, my satchel over my shoulder, I realised that another hazard had appeared in this strange village.



The Square as mum would have known it; bus parked ready to leave for Cinderford. The shop on the corner on the right is Knight's Bakery. Past this, about one hundred yards up Caudle Lane, takes you to the spout for your buckets of fresh water.

At this time, there seemed to be only three of us Grammar School pupils to go to the end of the run and get off in the Square. We walked up the street, Jasper Duberley who turned into their entry on the left, a very tall boy called Nelmes, who lived higher up the road, and me.

The three semi-circular stone steps, that mounted to the front door of the house below ours, seemed to have been turned into a very convenient grand-stand.

Several people, one the lady of the house, a couple of young men, and another young woman, were sitting in the pleasant afternoon sunshine watching the world go by - and that part of the world they were watching was me.

I was not familiar enough with any of them to make a remark, but I could feel their eyes searching me as I approached, giving me close scrutiny as I walked by, and studying my back view as I passed.

I supposed every one of them had been born and bred where they lived, and were interested in this strange new phenomenon that had come amongst them.

I had no doubt that they were now comparing notes as to my appearance, why I had come to Ruardean, and my future prospects.

It was in fact extremely difficult to find anyone who was not related in some way to some other habitant of that village. Once a label had been attached to you, curiosity was satisfied and you could go on your way.

On my first encounter with what I might call, "The Meek steps examination committee", it was only natural that I should wonder what the general verdict had been. It was in a round-about way that I heard what had been said. The scene goes something like this, as soon as I disappeared through our own gate.

Gertie- Well you can take it from me that that girl's wasting her time going to that Grammar School.

Dorothy- I don't know how you can say that Gert. Our Ada's boy do go there, and he says she do always get good marks! [Mum's future mother-in-law's first name was Ada.]

Gertie- I don't know nothing about examination marks- but I got eyes in my head. Look at her hair - look at her legs - look at the way her do walk. She might have her head cram-full of all them books she do carry, but if she haven't got herself a husband before long, she'll wish she had.

When I considered this opinion, I took a closer look at myself.

I had certainly filled out during the last few months. My hair which had always been fine and wispy, had suddenly got strong, and sprang out in a large crop of fuzzy curls, and my felt school hat had to perch somewhere on top. On passing rude groups of lads, I had often been followed by whistles and such remarks as.

"Hi, that's a nice pair of calves you got there!"

In common with other girls of my age, I avidly read all the books of romance I could get hold of. However these all seem to have as their setting, wealthy homes, completely removed from any sign of poverty, ill health or plain hard work. They all culminated in delightful love marriages. This sort of environment was very far removed from anything I saw in my daily life.

My only hope was to press on with my education.

Then, one evening, I was approached by a young man and asked if I would care to take a walk with him that evening.

In the first few words we exchanged, we found we had a common bond in that we were both new to the district.

The family had come from Gloucester, and had taken over the lease of Ye Old Malt Shovel, the hostelry that was situated not fifty yards from our own front door on the opposite side of the road.

His name was Arthur Wilkes. He was a good-looking young man, tall, slim, fresh faced and a crop of golden wavy hair.

I said, "All right", and by seven had washed, got rid of the heavy gym-slip and black woollen stockings, changed into a cool dress, and combed out my hair. I told no one where I was off to, but started walking up the road.

Evidently Arthur assumed I should go that way. He joined me just past the two cottages where the Nelmes boy lived. He fell within the normal pattern. Mrs. Bennett had told me that Mr. Nelmes was her brother, and the tall boy her nephew. [Elizabeth Addy Nelmes married Aubrey Bennet in 1895 at Drybrook Church. The Nelmes family, like the Duberleys, have been living in Ruardean for a very long time.]

We walked up the road which now started to ascend fairly quickly, a steep bank on our left. A narrow lane descended on our right, but we kept to the road. We passed a small bungalow with high bushes before it. A strange old man with very fierce black eyes, very small in build, and with a small jutting beard, looked suspiciously at us.

We came to a substantial five barred gate and leaned on the top rail, looking over a large field slanting away down into the valley. The grass was long and luscious and, as the light breeze passed over it, waves rippled over the surface like water.

I was reminded of my very early years picking moon daisies, sour-sally and quaking grass in the grounds of Littledean Hall.

Here the same mixture applied, but more vibrant, burgeoning with life and untouched.

"I believe there's a path through here," said Arthur, "but it looks as if it's up for mowing. We shan't be very popular if we walk in it."

He seemed to know a lot more about it than I did.

We walked farther up the road, and came to where the road divided. The one on the left ascended still more steeply, getting very shady as it rose between very steep banks, and strangely marked. by a sign post saying 'Pludds Only'.

We stood and looked at it.

"Surely there's no such village called Pludds Only," I said.

"I expect it means that the road goes to the Pludds and no further," said Arthur. "I think the other goes to Joys Green."

"Let's go that way then", I said, a little peeved that I had not thought of that explanation.

We went down a very steep little lane and turned off the hard road on to broad ash-surfaced lane that presently broadened into a wide green, broken up and rutted ground with a cottage or two away on the left.

As we went down one of the little paths, I could smell a strong heavy perfume that lay thick upon the air.

We could see large mis-shapen bushes, some to a height of fifteen feet or more, completely laden with heavy creamy blossom. They were May blossom, wild hawthorn, standing at random over a fair area of the rough ground. The scent came at us in waves - almost overwhelming our senses.

Arthur was looking around and shouted to me, "Come and stand just where I tell you," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders and went and stood where he told me. He went round the side of the tree, and I realised he was half-up the spiny trunk, and shaking it violently. The petals came down in a great shower falling in my hair where they lodged, and over my shoulders and dress.

[the above presumably late May or early June 1927]

Arthur came down, took my hand, and led me out of the shade.

"There you look just like a bride!" He said.

I laughed and thought, *he seems a very romantic young man.*

I bent my head and shook it, trying to dislodge the petals.

I really had no idea what to talk to Arthur about. He didn't seem to be like the boys at school, but there of course we always had the common ground of tests, arguments about the right way to attack certain problems, always a group of us with varying points of view.

I tried to find out how he and his family liked living in a village pub what it had been like in Gloucester, did he think of having one of his own sometime?

He seemed totally disinterested, but gave me civil answers. He was certainly pleasant and polite, but I couldn't get at his thoughts.

We started to make our way back. Everywhere was very hilly and it would take longer to get back home.

We went back up the green, the perfume of blossom gradually receding, when suddenly, Arthur startled me by making a great leap and bringing his one foot down - heel downward; with great force

"Got him!" he said and leaned downwards.

"Not bad eh?" he said.

I was totally bewildered.

Arthur straightened up and held out his hand.

I was completely horrified.

On his palm was a soft little animal, grey and silky with tiny pink hands, but quite dead, though still quivering.

I could feel tears filling my eyes.

"What is it?" I whispered.

"A mole, of course," he said, "They make good coats."

"But you killed it!"

"Yes! got it first time" - as if he wanted commending for it!

"Want to hold it?"

I snatched my hand away.

"Not if it's dead. It's a lovely thing. You shouldn't have killed it."

I tried to think of something else. I couldn't go home looking as if I'd been crying. Let's see if I can do the pluperfect of aimer. I started murmuring to myself.

So we came home silently and I said "Good-night" shortly and went through the gate.

"See you on Thursday," said Arthur.

"Maybe," I said.

I went into the kitchen.

"You disappeared a bit quick, didn't you?" said Vi. "I had to fetch all the water!"

"I went for a walk," I said, "I've got a test of French verbs tomorrow. I'll do the water tomorrow evening."

"What've you got in your hair? Little bits of white, looks like confetti!"

"I had to walk under a hawthorn tree, absolutely covered with May blossom. I've never smelled anything so strong - made you feel quite queer!"

I lay in bed thinking of Arthur Wilkes. He seemed well brought up, behaved in a gentlemanly manner. He seemed romantic, making me stand under the falling blossoms.

But that poor little mole! I never saw anything so fast in all my life!

I had been looking at the ground as well, the green was so steep. It was like the Vengeance of God - the way that boot came down.

One second nothing but brown earth and bits of grass, the next a poor little quivering dead body! Amazing!

I was baffled.

The next evening, as soon as we had had tea, I went out and fetched the water. It was not so bad in the summer. That spout in the lane continually gushed out clear fresh water. It was called 'Caudle' by the local people.

I worked it out, it probably started life as Cold well, but nowhere could I find anything to confirm this. I stayed in the house, finished my homework.

I was coming from school a few days later, when Arthur came from behind the Malt Shovel.

"Hi Glads!" (He had decided to call me this.) "Come up the road this evening, I've got something for you, alright?"

"Yes well, alright, but I can't go far."

I couldn't think what he could possibly have for me, but, out of curiosity, I walked up the road after tea.

He was waiting at the top of the hill as I went up.

"Let's get over Duberleys' stile if you don't want to go far."

There was a strong stile up the bank on the left, with a public footpath going steeply up to the top of the hill.

We climbed up and sat on the grass behind the hedge.

He put his hand in his pocket and took out a bundle wrapped in tissue.

Inside was the moleskin. It had been stretched out and cured, and although not more than about eight inches long, looked exactly like any sheepskin rug or other animal skin used for furnishing a home.

The grey fur was perfect, silky and sleek. I asked him how he had done it, and he described the process skinning, stretching, curing that had to be gone through before it could be safely kept.

"You've certainly done it beautifully," I said.

"Have you forgiven me for killing it?" he asked. "Will you promise to keep it for ever?"

"I can't bear that life should be taken," I said, "but I will promise to keep it."

"Thank you," said Arthur, "Don't think about killings. Things have to die."

Chapter 2

It was in very different company that I was to explore another part of the district, and that happened to be the very next weekend.

I went as usual on Friday evening to Bennett's with the rent book and money.

When the book had been signed, Mrs. Bennett looked up at me with a simpering expression.

"The weather's settled very fair," she said. "How would you care for a nice walk on Sunday morning, see a very nice view of the village?"

I stared at her thinking, *what can she mean!*

As far as my knowledge went, Mrs. Bennett was permanently settled in that large armchair. For one thing she was immensely stout, and for another, she often alluded to the fact of the trouble she had with her legs.

It suddenly struck her what I was thinking, and her face crumpled and her stomach started quivering, her eyes nearly disappeared and I realised that she was convulsed with silent laughter.

I began to be concerned that she might do herself an injury, but, after a few wheezes, she took control of herself.

"Oh dear! oh dear! you thought I was taking you for a walk!!

Oh that is very funny- Oh that's most amusing! No! No! No!

You see we support the Chapel at Crooked End - you must have noticed it on your way up the hill.

Yes, I had certainly noticed the Chapel.

There seemed three places for Sunday worship in Ruardean, one the Congregational Chapel by the Pound which you passed on your way to the Post Office, next the beautiful old church with the very high spire, and half way up the very steep hill another Chapel.

It had one lane going right up the hill near it [Walker's Lane], and another crossing the road and going steeply downwards in an elongated cross [towards Varnister and Howle Hill]. I supposed this what gave it the strange name of Crooked End, and the Chapel the name of Crooked End Chapel."

Mr. Bennett and Mr. Nelmes were regular attenders at the chapel she said. Mr. Bennett said, "You don't seem to have anyone to show you round the district. So if you would care to come to the service, we could take a stroll up the lane, and across the top. There are some very fine views to be had up there, and as Lizzie's brother will be coming too, it will be a good chance."

It was on the tip of my tongue to say, "I went down the other way in the week, quite the other end of the village, I believe it was called the Moorwood. I hope you don't get the idea of killing moles when you go for walks!"

But I kept the thought to myself. There seemed no sense of humour about these people, except that Mrs. Bennett had almost choked herself at the idea of getting out of her chair and walking on her own two feet, which seemed a very perverse sense of humour to me.

I told Mam what had been suggested and she said, "If you intend to go, you'd better get plenty of water in over Saturday. Don't forget it's bath night and Washing Day on Monday and you'll be at school."

Dad had found a washerwoman for Mam. Mrs. Bishop from next door had when she knew who was coming [A new expression to me. I found one reference for **pulled a lip** when I Googled it]. I don't think she

regarded Mrs. Skinner as of the highest rank in washerwomen. Mrs. Skinner lived on Pettycroft, a high lane which overlooked the village, and sat right on top of the hill. No alternative was forthcoming, so Mrs. Skinner arrived every Monday morning.

Dad had also acquired some large clean milk churns which sat on the stone floored shed where the boiler was, and provided extra water for washing day. Vi gave me a hand to carry in numerous journeys of water.

The appointment to go to Chapel was to be at 10.30 am.

I dressed in my Sunday dress and went outside. When I beheld the two gentlemen who were to accompany me, nothing could be further from the mind than romantic interludes with May blossom, or assaults on small wild mammals.

Mr. Bennett was attired in a newer version of grey, herringbone tweed very spare and straight, a stiff white collar, grey trilby hat, thin very red face. Mr. Nelmes, a rather larger version of a man, seemed heavier still at both ends of his figure. He wore a very large sized bowler hat, had huge hands protruding from his black sleeves, a bushy light brown moustache, and huge feet splaying outwards from his ankles in large black shiny boots. At each step they plonked themselves at a wide angle on the road in no uncertain manner.

He seemed a man of few words. I had a brief nod in reply to Mr. Bennett's attempted introduction.

The Church bell suddenly struck out as we made our way through the village. It echoed and re-echoed among the houses. Soberly clad figures were turning into the squat white-washed Chapel on the right. [The Congregational Chapel, just after the Square in Ruardean] I was given to understand later, that families usually favoured a place of worship attended by men of some authority in the mine in which they worked.

We walked up the street, the echoing bells bouncing from the stone houses on either side seem to make an almost physical barrier.

By the time we reached the Crooked End, a fair congregation had assembled there, quite a number of whom, I noticed, coming down the steep lane which went immediately up on the right.

Mr. Bennett explained that there was a visiting preacher who shared his Sundays between various Chapels.

A matronly woman was playing the organ. The hymns and prayers were similar to a service I had attended with my friend Doris in Cinderford.

Coming out of the Chapel, Mr. Bennett suggested we started on our walk straight away, and time it to get home for dinner.

The lane was so steep and leafy, that it took all our attention to get ourselves up. I thought it a good idea to creep out in an inconspicuous manner, or I should probably be a subject of discussion, as groups of people showed a tendency to linger in the courtyard and the road outside.

The banks were far too steep to look out and we saw nothing but leafy hazels and thorny hollies until we reached a leveller spot and a cottage standing back in a garden. A little farther along the lane the prospect opened out and a square built house stood with a monkey puzzle tree at the corner. [This house was later the home of my uncle Austin Duberley]

Before us the road stretched away on level ground, stone walls, large stone barns, and roughish fenced in fields, and cottages here and there.

I asked if we were still in Ruardean and was told that the road led into the Ruardean Woodside area.

However we were to turn right-handed by the monkey puzzle house, climb a stile and go across the top of the hill.

A hedge blocked the view on our right, and on the left, a scattering of fields ran into totally forested ground, fold after fold to the far horizon. I was told that the farthest point I could see, was at the top of Bream which was quite near Lydney, which was on the Severn. We stood a moment gazing over the massive forest.

The ground on which we walked was divided into several fields, each seeming to belong to different owners with very different ideas on how to build a stile. One was a high V shape where you stepped up and were lucky not to twist an ankle, another a huge solid block of stone where the gentlemen kindly walked ahead, while I managed to get a brief foothold, get one leg over and jump down the other side, stumbling on a few worn stones protruding above ground level.

As I steadied my footsteps and raised my eyes, I seemed to be confronted by an apparition.

The tall hedge that had blocked the view had come to an end, and there seemingly floating in, mid-air was the top of Ruardean church spire.

To all intents and purposes, I felt that I could lean across and touch the shining Cockerel that surmounted the weathervane. The sight bewitched me - a church spire floating on air.

My two companions waited on the path. I felt bemused

“Is it really possible to touch that spire?” I said.

“Not unless your arm is a few hundred yards long! There are several fields, cottages, gardens, a hard road and a graveyard between us and the church.”

I realised that he was right - but the illusion was still there.

I was directed to look beyond the spire, and I could trace the road up which we had walked, winding down past the chapel, past fields and farms, wandering between copses, then disappearing.

I was told it eventually got to Ross-on-Wye, which lay behind a substantial hill.

They directed me to look almost straight down to my left, and at last, at the bottom of the valley. I could see the glimmer of the Wye as it glistened between green fields and overhanging woods.

The two men could identify every farm and smallholding, and pointed out The Home Farm with its pitched red roofs which was attached to the main landowner's ground. His name was Storey.

[Bishopswood House (previously known as The Coppice) was bought by Robert Holme Storey in the early 20th century. His son, Roy Frederick Storey, was living there in 1921, aged 8. The Home Farm, which is just up the hill, from Bishopswood House can be seen from various vantage points in Ruardean.]

They also pointed out a house with a storied turret peeping through and above the trees, the home of the gamekeeper, a Mr. Matthews.

All these places were in Herefordshire, the county boundary being a little stream which found its way to the Wye and crossed the road below Crooked End, not a mile from the chapel.

Beyond Herefordshire, ranges of hills and mountains flattened themselves on the far horizon.

These were the Brecon Beacons, my guides told me and behind them the Black Mountains. More to the southwest was a triangular shaped mountain, which they called the Sugar loaf and which they said was near Abergavenny.

It was easy to see the layout of the countryside from the ridge on which we were walking, and realised that most of the Forest of Dean lay behind us, the Severn being the boundary on that side and the Wye being at our feet in a steep drop below.

We continued along the ridge and came on to a lane between cottage gardens which came out by the church. We decided to keep to the top and walked across Pettycroft, and down Kingsway lane past Caudle Spring, and so into the Square. We passed a small coal mine, called a level because the coal cropped out here. I was told that Kingsway Lane was so called because of the route that royal parties had taken coming from the fertile Hereford regions to hunt wild boar in the wild Forest of Dean.

As we went home, I thanked Mr. Bennett and his brother-in-law for accompanying me. I said I could see that there was a great deal to learn about the Ruardean area, and I was sure I might find some books where I might learn more of its history.

I thought I would do better to ignore the probing suspicious looks that followed one everywhere. I was sure there were echoes of the distant past in Ruardean that had more to offer.

Chapter 3

If there appeared little of a social nature to entertain us in Ruardean, our school days were packed to capacity.

Having got his forces marshalled for a hundred per cent pass result, it was not going to be Mr. Saunders' fault if the plan failed.

He himself taught Geography, was an excellent teacher, inspiring us with understanding of the Earth's forces and the influence of these on climatic conditions, and how they necessarily affected the developing of varying cultures.

He was not content to leave other subjects completely in the hands of the rest of his staff, but was always in and out of lessons questioning at random and, if dissatisfied, taking the lesson into his own hands.

He once came into the Physics Laboratory and found several students hazy on the subject of specific heat. By the time he had finished with us we had the basic principles firmly fixed in our minds.

We were constantly reminded of the requirements for a pass in the compulsory subjects and were encouraged to take two or three extra subjects to examination level, if we showed any aptitude, mine were English Literature and Art.

It was also necessary to complete forms for admission to University, Teacher Training College, or a Commercial Course. There were grants available, but when I contemplated the skirmishes that were likely to ensue at any suggestion of prying into Dad's personal income, I decided to apply to become an uncertificated teacher. [This was a type of teaching apprenticeship, where the new teacher went to help in the class of an experienced teacher, and learnt on the job.]

This offered at least the possibility of local employment, and being able to stay at home.

Vi reached her fourteenth birthday and left school. Dad had decided to apprentice her to a local Dressmaker. Vi said she had no intention of being stuck in Ruardean, and sorted through papers offering employment in other parts of the country. She liked the sound of 'Between Maid', so offered her services in this capacity in one of the Southern Counties. She was a determined girl, and soon had herself organised and away into the unknown. [Vi born in early 1915, so this was presumably 1929 – Mum would have been 17 then, turning 18 later that year.]

To start myself on the uncertificated teaching career I had I first to select a school other than in my own village, to do a probationary year. I put down Joys Green Primary School, and was then directed to make myself available for a Medical Examination by the G.P. from Lydbrook.

I was then interviewed by a lady who clearly expected me to be starry-eyed at the prospect of being allowed to help to mould the minds of the young.

Attempting to say something to recommend myself, I said that in her youth all my mother's Aunts had been teachers, and she herself had been a teacher for a short time. This was quite true and indeed Mam's Family Album was dominated by determined looking dark-haired ladies in long skirts, tightly corseted figures and high-necked blouses.

Mam would point them out saying, "That is Aunty Fanny Royal; Headmistress, and that's her cousin Ellen Royal, Head of Infants." [Slight spelling mistake here. Annie Maria Forrester, mum's mother's aunt, married a Thomas Hilditch Royle in 1887. So the people in the photo album were Royles. There was also a whole slew of female Forresters who were teachers. I haven't identified either Fanny or Ellen.]

Mam had found herself doing better with her piano playing and was about to take her cap and gown, when tragedy struck her family, and her mother and young sister had both died in an epidemic of what she called the English Disease or Green Sickness. From then on Mam had given up study, supported her father, and acted as mother to her two young brothers, Henry and Frank.

[I believe this story became slightly confused. Mum's mother, Ethel Gamble, had a sister, and two brothers. Her sister, Elizabeth Lily Ann Gamble, died in 1895 aged 4. Ethel's mother, Jane Gamble (née Forrester) died 1st of July 1902 – cause of death on the cert is Bright's disease. Granny Ethel was 17, almost 18, when her mother died.]

I was then inspired to say that I had several younger brothers and sisters.

"And do you sometimes take care of them?" asked the lady.

"All the time, when I'm not doing homework."

"Yes," she said, "you would find that practical experience very useful. I would also advise you to offer your services as a Sunday School Teacher, invaluable experience always readily available.

"Interesting," she said, "how often School Teaching seems to run in families."

I forbore to tell her that my mother had simply hated it.

All I had to do now was to pass my exams, and I should soon become a member of the teaching profession.

I viewed the prospect with a slight shudder.



Tom Duberley – Mum's future father-in-law walking back past the shop in Ruardean towards his home. Probably taken around 1920. See notes at the end for info on Claude Parnell.

In spite of Mrs. Bennett's persuasion in favour of her nephew as a reliable milkman, my mother found that it was more convenient to buy her milk from (the) Duberleys who kept milking cows, and whose milk-sheds and dairy were just across the road, to the back of their house.



Another photo of my grandfather Tom Duberley taken in roughly the same place as the one above. This time with his horse and trap. The horse's name was Dinah. An earlier photo c1914. The house on the right had not been converted into a shop.

One or other of us always fetched milk as it was needed. I knew Mrs. Duberley as an extremely busy lady who had given birth to eleven sons, nine of whom had survived to manhood.

All of them had been given unusual high-sounding names, and Jasper was the youngest of the brood who now attended the Grammar School, and was in the form next below mine.

I was one day at the door waiting for my jug to be filled, when Mrs. Duberley came from the dairy and said, "I wonder if I could ask you a favour Gladys?"

"Yes, I expect so, if it's something I can do!"

"Well you know Jasper is having trouble with some of his homework, and I can't help him."

"Would you like me to come round after tea?"

"I should be very grateful," she said. "He's too shy to ask you himself."

So I went over after tea.

I only knew Jasper as an apparently reserved boy, and in fact it was quite unusual, to have anything to do with people in other forms.

I found him sitting at the far end of the big farmhouse table struggling with algebraic equations. As it happened these were some of my favourite exercises.

We worked through a couple of problems together, and he was soon on the right road.

Mrs. Duberley thanked me.

"You didn't seem to have much trouble with those," she said.

"No, I like Algebra."

She told me that she liked nursing, and would have loved to be a hospital nurse.

"How strange," I said, "That's the one profession I'd shy clean away from. Seems that I'm going to be a teacher, and I'm not so mad about that."

"Oh, I think that's a very good profession, I think you should persevere with that", she said, "I should like Jasper to become a teacher."

She herself satisfied her need for nursing by acting in many capacities associated with medicine; midwifery, visiting sick people confined to bed, and doing what had to be done if a patient died. She had many mothers visiting her door for advice on ailing children.

"Early in my married life," she said, "I vowed I would become independent."

Looking at her, I thought, *I would think this woman would achieve anything she put her mind to.*

I went thoughtfully away. To achieve that sort of dedication, you had first to make up your mind what you wanted.

The Summer indeed seemed settling into beautiful weather. Lil wrote to say she had some time off and would be calling home for a short holiday.

Lil had to share my bedroom, but she was a great asset in the house as she was always good, thorough, and quick at housework. She and Ewart were still courting and planned to get married but times were not encouraging, and men were still on short time in the industry.

It was amazing how quickly the housework was under control with Lil about the house. For one thing she was always an early riser, while I clung to my bed to the last possible moment. Occasionally when I had been labouring with a problem later into the evening, I would go to bed, wake up with a start about 5.30, and see the solution as clear as crystal before my eyes. I would get up, rustle around with my candle and my satchel, write up the problem, rule it off, back to bed, and fall immediately to sleep.

I had some trouble wresting myself from bed the second time.

One evening Lil said to me, "I heard someone telling Dad that they were starting haymaking this week."

"Yes," I said, "I dare say. Everybody keeps saying it's a marvellous season."

"You don't seem to realise how lucky you are living among all these hayfields, and the moon being full as well." said Lil.

"Well," I said, "Hayfields are very nice and smell lovely, but I've got to try and keep all these facts in my head. I don't see how the moon helps a great deal."

"That's all you seem to think about. Exams," said Lil. "I was thinking about Beauty!"

"Beauty!" I said, "Whatever are you talking about?"

"Well, if we planned it right, there is nothing to stop us going out in the moonlight, in all that long grass, and watch the dawn break, and bathe our whole bodies and faces in the dew, get the beautifying effect, get back indoors, and nobody would know a thing about it."

“You’re not having me on, are you?” I said.

Now Lil, under Ewart’s guidance, had been in her time, baptised by Total Immersion, sang under the flag and collected for the Salvation Army, and attended some place of Worship every Sunday.

Moreover, she and Ewart had been exclusively attached to one another for several years.

Now this suggestion of hers, smacked of sheer paganism. It seemed to me a singularly uncomfortable proposition for one thing, and for another she seemed to be so faithfully cemented to Ewart, that it seemed a bit pointless, taking all that trouble for a sudden surge of beauty!

What’s more, I hadn’t the slightest faith in the theory.

“Where on earth did you get this idea from?” I said. “And what’s the use of it? It sounds like the Middle-Ages. You can’t possibly believe it!”

“You don’t know. There’s a great deal that people don’t know. There’s everything waiting for you out there and we can do it in complete secrecy. I think it’s stupid not to try it out. It might be fate.”

I thought about it, and at last agreed, thinking that if she was so besotted as to go on her own, I should be stuck in bed imagining all sorts of nameless horrors happening to her.

We undressed and got into bed. We heard Mam and Dad come to bed. We waited until the house was quiet.

Lil was trying to explain why a quality in the dew falling at certain angles of the sun’s rays had a marvellous effect on human skin exposed to its influence. I could feel myself submerging into subconsciousness.

I was dead tired, and beginning to get bad tempered.

All at once I found a new thought piercing my cloudy mind.

Why!! Had Lil got some more urgent reason for going through this business to beautify her appearance?

Was there another young man on the horizon whose attention she was trying to attract?

If so, good luck to the power of the morning dew. I never could stand Ewart.

“Glad! stop going to sleep. I can tell from your breathing, you keep going under.”

At last Lil said, “Come on wake up, we can get ready.”

We crept downstairs. Dad had locked and bolted front and back doors' Lil said we would take our macks to cover us and a pair of shoes.

She unlocked the backdoor and put the key under a stone.

We got safely out on to the road, and suddenly it seemed quite frightening. A pale moon was riding high in the sky. The houses threw grey silhouettes on the roadway. There was no sign of life anywhere.

Lil whispered there was a barn and a wall just past Bennett’s, and we could get over the low wall, and go into the mowing grass behind Nelmes’s.

Never was there a less enthusiastic seeker after ‘dawn beauty’ than myself. There seemed no movement, no sound. anywhere. Over the long grass a silver mist was beginning to hover - over the far end of the village a paler colour in the sky.

"Get ready to take off your coat and nightdress and put your nightgown inside your coat and your shoes by the side," said Lil. "Then you have to dance about in the grass, and wave your arms about until you see the sun's first rays."

I was already shivering with cold, my nightgown flapping soggily wet about my ankles.

Lil's hair was loosed about her body, and she went through the motions of bowing and weaving to dawn.

As I watched her, I could not help thinking how much more becoming her long dark hair was to this sort of exercise. Pale flesh gleamed; dark tresses moved sinuously.

My hair seemed to be stand on end with fright, my teeth chattered, my flesh cringed from cold wet swathes of grass, every time I put a foot down a sharp thorn pierced it. After a few minutes of this, I pointed to the East.

"Quick," I hissed. "The first ray appears! Come, or all may be in vain."

My rolled nightgown under my arm, I slipped into coat and shoes and raced Lil to the wall, over the wall, and through our gate.

I had a wonderful vision of towels draped round the guard in front of the warm stove, and I was going to be the first to grab them!

[The full moon in June 1929 was around 5am on Saturday, the 22nd. The Oxford School Certificate Examinations mum was revising for would have begun in the second or third week in July, I believe. Therefore the exciting early morning dance to the rising Sun happened around the fourth week in June of 1929.]

Chapter 4

At the end of the week, Lil went back to Cheltenham.

I had watched her keenly but could see no change in her healthy colouring and staid figure.

Everywhere the sweet smell of hay lay heavily over the village. Mrs. Duberley's elder sons were haymaking, on the top fields. Other helpers joined in with getting in the last of the hay, and pitching it into the French barn.

On Saturday evening, Mam sent me with a jug to get a quart of milk for making custard for Sunday. I wandered up the entry, thinking of nothing in particular, but as I reached the door was covered with confusion.

The big living kitchen, which went from the back porch straight through to a bay window overlooking the road, had a large table running down the centre, and seemed completely surrounded. with seated men.

I realised they must all have been helping with the hay, and were now enjoying some reward for their labour.

Loaves of bread, a large ham, a huge wedge of cheese, and a very large fruit cake were prominent among the edibles on the table. A small keg of cider was tilted at an angle on a bench in the porch.

Nobody seemed to take much notice of me, being mostly engaged in munching and drinking.

I was relieved to see Mrs. Duberley come up the passage from the dairy.

"Come in," she said, and made a motion I was to follow her.

I followed her down a stone passage. There was a sitting room, not half the size of the Kitchen, then a door on the right leading through a stone-floored outhouse, and carrying on through a dairy.

The room through which we went had a strange smell and strange sounds of fizzing and popping. I looked around and saw huge glass containers, some foaming. There were also large earthenware pans, full to the brim with liquids with slices of orange and lemon and pieces of toast floating on the surface. Rows of bottles, some full and corked stood under the one wall.

"You looking at my wine?" she said.

"Is that what it is?" I said.

"Haven't you seen home-made wine being made before?" she said.

"I certainly haven't," I said. "I've no idea. What do you make it of?"

"Why anything," she said. "I guess I've made wine out of practically everything under the sun, dandelion, cowslip, blackberry, plum, barley, wheat."

She told me a little of the process of using yeast and sugar to start fermentation, and pointed at the various stages through which the wine was going. She held up a small bundle of (a) strange looking substance.

"I don't suppose you've any idea what this is?" she said.

I shook my head.

"That's isinglass. It is used to clarify the wine."

"Isn't it an awful lot of work?" I said.

"You can't call this work!" she said, "just a pleasant hobby."

"Mind you," she said, "when you're talking to me, you're talking to someone who knows what work is!"

I was beginning to feel that I was getting; a little out of my depth, and was at a loss for an answer.

"You should have been here a few years ago to see me work. Five sons in, the pits and their father. On different shifts, like as not. Bags to be cut, baths got ready for them coming back. Sit up most of the night treadling at the old sewing machine. Always got in a boulding of flannelette in the autumn, from Blinkhornes of Gloucester. Always made up their warm shirts, two apiece for the winter."

I gaped at her.

"I told you I made up my mind to be independent. Now this wine making, sheer pleasure - nice to have something to offer visitors in the winter. D'you like wine?"

"I don't know, I've never really had any. I don't think I do really."

"What would do you good is a nice glass of stout every evening, and your mother too, you both look rather pale."

"Anyway let's get this milk for you and I'll let you out the other way. First I'll pour this glass of parsnip wine for you - it's nice and mellow by now."

She handed me the glass filled with a clear pale-yellow liquid, and went to the dairy to get the milk.

I raised the glass and sipped the wine. I supposed it tasted like wine, but hadn't much appeal for me. I supposed I'd better drink some more or she might get offended.

She came back with the milk.

"You still messing about with that drop!" she said. "It won't kill you, you know."

With an effort I swallowed a little more. I was at a loss to know, what to do with the rest of it.

Mrs. Duberley was unbolting and unlocking the door of what could be called the Still Room.

"Go out this way," she said, "then you won't have to go through the men."

I took a good swallow, gave her the money, said, "I thank you so much for the wine," and, keeping my hand steady with the full jug, went down the entry to the road.

I stood for a moment looking towards the village.

I could see the church spire, and the church spire was behaving in a very strange manner.

The slim point was bowing towards me, flopping around like a melting taper, then sweeping around to the right. [The taper meant would be a wax one I think - like a very thin candle.]

I put two hands on the jug, one foot before the other, and stepped carefully over the road, through the gate, and into the kitchen.

I put the jug on the table and sat down.

"What do you think of home-made wine, Mam?," I asked.

"I haven't tasted it myself," said Mam, "But I've been told that it's very sly. Yes that's the word that was used. Sly."

"I should think that's a very good word too," I said. "Very Sly."

“I should think it’s the very worst thing you could drink if you were taking an examination.”

[Mum remained a total lightweight all her life when it came to drinking anything with alcohol in it.]

[The Duberley Family of Ruardean c1922](#)

My homework now consisted mainly of revision, and I would take my French vocabulary, or other lists of information and walk down one of the lanes trying to commit facts to memory.

A lane opposite the Malt Shovel Inn led down to the Warfield Farm. You climbed two lots of stiles, crossing a farmyard, and came into a field which seemed to form a natural crossing for tracks coming from other directions.

The Warfield, I was told, was named for battles that had been fought during the Cromwellian Wars. The rugged hill on which the school was built, was called ‘Shoot Hill’. Royalist Troops had fired from Shoot Hill on the Roundheads approaching from Herefordshire. The Warfield Farm had been a scene of carnage.

It was clear that there had been a village here while the Cinderford area had still been afforested.

It had been a matter of obligation, living in Ruardean, to accept the fact, that all cows were not bulls, intent on goring you to death, which as a small child had been my firm conviction.

I learnt that grazing cows had in common one consuming vice, inquisitiveness. They're compelled to inquire into the matter of anything unusual. I learnt to wait to climb a stile until the cows were well at the other side of the pasture, cross quickly, and let myself over the next stile. By crossing one field after another one arrived, eventually, into the Glasp Lane, proceed up the lane and came onto the hard road, down the road and so home.

I rarely saw any living thing except cows. All was peace and quiet, and I would set myself targets to commit to memory by the next stile.

My association with Arthur had been very brief, as in fact Mr. Wilkes found that the Malt Shovel had not fulfilled his expectations, and the family had soon moved on.

The little moleskin mat still sat on my dressing table.

I began to think that I was destined for a lonely life. Arthur had disappeared, school friends were too far removed to contact, in the evenings, and in fact when we descended from the school bus that was the last we saw of it except on Saturdays.

One evening I was walking up the road from the Square when I was much impressed by a fine example of picturesque rural life approaching.

Several splendid cart horses were harnessed to a long waggon - which in turn supported a number of sturdy felled tree-trunks. A healthy-looking young man held firmly to one of the big creature’s heads, grappling with the restraining leather straps. An older man was near to the middle of the equipage.

The lad’s eyes fastened to mine, and I stood looking at him, but he was soon called to attention by a yell from the rear.

This affair of the eyes continued for several days, during which I found he was called Bruce and his father was the waggoner

By some means known only to the young and fervent, I found I had an assignment with Bruce at the top of the Glasp Lane one evening at 7 o’clock.

Bruce, blond, well built, curly haired and extremely well-scrubbed was much given to giggling at every word I said.

I got nowhere with my enquiries relating to the science of tree-felling but he did manage to say, "Would your mam let you go to the pictures on Saturday?"

I said, "I think that boils down to, 'Have I got enough money?' and 'Is there a Bus?'"

"Our Ethel said, I could have the money if I was taking you to the Pictures, and there's a bus at the end of the show, but I got to behave myself."

"Who is your Ethel?"

"That's my sister. Our Mam is an invalid. Her've got the Arthritis."

I agreed to accompany Bruce to the pictures, but there were two aspects of the arrangement that I found annoying. One was that after leaving the Palace, there seemed no fixed place to board the bus, and sometimes it could take a quarter of an hour chasing round in the dark trying to find which bus intending going to Ruardean.

Then there was Bruce himself. It was impossible to discuss any aspect of the films actors or actresses with him. I wanted a companion to thoroughly examine the material that had been entertaining us, but could get no response.

In any case exams were practically upon us.

It was unusually hot. My friends and I succeeded in getting an interview with the Head, and being granted a concession in the matter of wearing light dresses and stockings, instead of the heavy serge tunics and black woollen hose that formed our normal uniform.

I liked exams.

After the everlasting revision, it was good to have the organised seriousness of the examination room, and really get down to business.

Then there were the discussions at break, when we compared answers and had fierce arguments, over the exact meanings of certain questions.

It went on into the second week.

The rest of the time up till breaking up, was spent in going through the papers with our teachers, and handing in books no longer required.

I daren't think that these were the last days at the school I loved so much. I just could not imagine life without school. It would be like entering an alien dimension. I could not bear to say goodbye to my friends.

Inevitably the doomed-day arrived, and we wended our way to the Ruardean bus. We should be notified when Examination Results were available at the school.

Chapter 5

We were on holiday, but at home the daily chores continued.

Fetching water from Caudle, sitting on the back lawn scraping new potatoes, podding peas into a large colander, and keeping Eddie amused.

The wall behind the triangular lawn, had a lovely climbing rose. no doubt suffering from neglect, but heavy-headed pink roses, sweetly scented drooped from the topmost branches and scattered shell-like petals over the garden.

We collected them and tried to make potpourri, fascinated by the name, but lacking the knowledge of how this was to be done.

The top part of the vegetable garden, was a forest of tall canes and ripe raspberries. We spent hours and hours picking raspberries into dishes.

In between some of the tallest canes, I sometimes came upon very large juicy raspberries, and sat in the blue green shade stretching and...

----- The typed manuscript ends abruptly at the bottom of an A4 page (#24). It seems certain that mum wrote more, but I have been unable to find it. As it was mum finished school at the age of 18, in the summer of 1929, and went on to do her training as an assistant teacher at Joy's Green school for one year. Living in Ruardean that meant a walk of a little less than 3 miles round trip each day. I don't think there were any buses going that way back then. -----



The photo above is one of the few I have of my grandfather, George Worgan. The man with him is his brother-in-law Alfred Howe, his sister Ruth's first husband. Mr Howe died in December 1939, aged 49. I'm guessing this photo was taken when the Howes visited Ruardean in 1934. Mum describes a visit to Longton in the first part of her memoirs, when she and her dad stayed with the Howes. George and Ruth were very close, and visited one another numerous times.

Claude W Parnell who was the son of the Ruardean vicar was a keen amateur photographer There's a chapter about him in Leonard Clark's first book of reminiscences. I believe a number of the early 20th century photos of Ruardean were taken by Mr. Parnell.

Plaque in Ruardean Church: *The Reverend Edward Parnell (vicar 1894 – 1925) and his wife Emily – erected by his son Claude W. Parnell 1939.*

https://www.sungreen.co.uk/EDGS/EDGS_1925_2.html 3rd row back 3rd from left?