

A Verbatim Record

Part of the transcript of a taped conversation with Mrs Violet Calton, aged 97, of 1 East Cliff, Dover

I was born 97 years ago. I've lived in this house for nearly 40 years. – and the remainder at Athol Terrace – No. 12 We moved there when my mother has six children. We had to get a bigger house so father thought he would buy No. 12 Athol Terrace – in 1895 I think it was – no, 1898 when I was three. We moved in there and then, as the years went on, I had seven more brothers younger than me. It was a very big family but a very nice house. We needed it with such a family, eleven boys and two girls.

My great-grandfather started the horse business. He started in 1842. He came to Dover in 1842 and started horses and cabs. He did very well.. He had a wonderful business. He had riding stables. He used to teach ladies to ride. He was a very busy man. He prospered. The stables were down in Flying Horse Lane, just off the Market Square and he had brakes – you know, in the old days instead of going on a bus you'd go on a brake – all open and driven by a couple of horses. Then, his son, my grandfather, took it on afterwards, but unfortunately he only lived to be 42 and he had a brain haemorrhage and died so the business went to my mother. She was the eldest of three children and she took on the business from that time, and one of the men who worked in the firm fell in love with her and she was married at 16.

We used to go to school when we were three in those days and one day when I was coming home from school from St. James's Street to Athol Terrace, we passed this house (No. 1) and it had all the red carpet out and we could see something was happening – and being little girls we

we were inquisitive – we had to stand and watch – and along came a horse and trap and there was a driver and there was a coachman – and he got down and helped the gentleman out and it was Lord Roberts. He was absolutely one mass of brass, medals and brass on his hat and you know how, in those days, they really used to get trimmed up and he came to lunch – and the gentleman who had this house was General Bruce and he was entertaining him. In those days my father supplied all the horse cabs and that's how we got to know a lot of people. General Bruce was a big customer of my father.

I went to St. James's School. It was a little tiny school but very nice – they were very kind. I believe I am the oldest one alive from St. James's School. St. James's Street was a very busy street. We used to spend our half-pennies in the little sweet shop. It left a great memory. Then Mother thought the school wasn't quite good enough so she sent me to St. Mary's School. You went to the Market Square and up the hill to St. Mary's School, which was a grade better. You had a place for hanging your clothes and you paid a little each week.

Memories of St. Radigund's Road

JOE HARMAN

Having lived in the road all my life I have many memories. I think I was about two and a half years old when I recall a big bang in 1917, and crawling out from under the bed where we had been sleeping to see my father going out in police uniform. This I believe was the time when a bomb was dropped in Poulton Wood. The next vivid recollection was in 1922 when one of Nash's horse-drawn carriages arrived to collect my sister and I to take us to the

30 Isolation Hospital with diphtheria. I can still hear the horse trotting up to Noah's Ark Road and I was not to see my parents for three months. Five years later I again travelled in one of Nash's carriages to my father's funeral. This could have been one of the last horse-drawn funerals, as Mr Nash closed down his stables in 1927.

On November 5th we used to look out to see the local lads queuing up at Guy Mannering's side gate with their guys, hoping for five bob if theirs was approved. I can still see their efforts perched on a four wheel truck. One day my truck went out of control and crashed into the gate. I went flying through the air to collect gravel rash on both hands. A little way up the road from our house there was a manhole cover which we used for a game of 'Tip-Cat'. We always kept a weather eye for the "Coppers".

In 1940 one of the first shells landed just above the railway bridge, killing two of our neighbours. Later on in the War, I was walking down the road by Mannering's wall and heard what I thought was a pistol shot and looked round to see chimney pots spinning off the house opposite. Later I realised that it was the first of another bout of shelling and luckily it landed in soft

ground in the garden and not too close to the wall.

After the bombing of the East Kent garage I was working a night-shift at the old Buckland tramshed. On coming off duty I felt so rough and made an attempt to see Dr. Dick at the Royal Victoria Hospital. I was feeling so ill that I crawled home and went to bed at about 11 am. The next thing I remember was that it was 11 pm and that I should have been on duty at ten. I had a high temperature and I realised that I must report sick. On going out in the black-out, I put my hand out to open the gate, and it was not there and I was sure I was delirious. Next day I was told that they had smashed down my fence with sledge-hammers while I was having a good long sleep.

It may surprise some people to know that the road did not get its name until about 1865 after the railway arrived. Prior to that it was known as 'Butcher's Lane'. A local butcher, Mr Qusted, owned land in the area and may have had a slaughter-house in the vicinity.

After the war I replaced the fence by using old cave shelter bunks which it was possible to purchase for a reasonable price. I think I can claim to be the longest surviving inhabitant in the road.

CHILDREN'S VIEWS

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT DOVER

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I like Dover because of all the boot-fairs and activities. I like the White Cliffs Experience but the picture gallery (in the Museum) is boring. I like the shops in Dover, they have got cute toys and nice jewellery. My favourite shop is John Menzies. They have good toys and lots of stationery. I wish there were more tourists

here from abroad. The parks are good. I like climbing hills at Kearsney Abbey and playing on the swings and slides. Pencester is good. They have a river with ducks i and a little park with a roundabout, adult swings, baby swings and a see-saw. I don't like the road works out side Marine Parade it is ruining the beach. I think it is sad because Dover will never be the same again.

Lezanne Cesar
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