

## 36 Memories of Old Dover May Bradley

On 9th January 1901 my parents, Charles Wilde and Mabel Elvey were married in St. Mary's Church, Dover and opened a shop at Barrington House in Townwall Street, selling tobacco, cigarettes, sweets and confectionery: neither had any experience of business but the shop survived until blown up by German bombs on 11th September 1940.

C. A. Wilde's shop in Barrington House  
almost exactly on site of present Light of India



Townwall Street was a busy place of shops and *five* public houses! In those days, on Friday mornings, the "German Band" played in the street near the iron gate leading down to the river, opposite Smith's ice store which stood between Mill and St. James's Lanes and straddled the river. Barrington House, No. 35, was a lovely old two-storeyed building with a dozen rooms and a well in the back-yard. The house was directly opposite Wellesley Road and there was a clear view to the sea. The extensive cellars – where we sheltered from bombs in the 1914 war – were lined with coloured Dutch tiles, some of which may be seen in the Tile section of the Ironbridge Museum. On the corner opposite was the Round House, built, we were told, so that no devils could hide

in corners! Across Camden Crescent – a few houses are left there – were the well-loved Granville Gardens, where in the summer military bands played, twice and sometimes three times, each day. During the interval the hot and thirsty bandsmen invaded our shop to drink bottles of lemonade, zolakane, ginger beer – from a large stone container – cherry cider, cream soda, etc..

Opposite the Gardens stood the well-known Grand Hotel, sadly destroyed on 11th September 1940, at the same time that our house was wrecked. In the early part of the 1939-45 war a number of foreign correspondents stayed at the hotel and visited our shop for cigarettes and papers.

On the other corner stood a block of red brick buildings and shops, one selling antiques, really bric-a-brac!, and occupied by Mrs Pritchard and her son, Horace, plus a large bad tempered green and red parrot in his cage outside the shop. The Sailors's Hostel was on the corner of Liverpool Street.

My sister Winifred and I had a very happy childhood in a loving home, making most of our own amusements, going for long walks, up the Zig-Zag, over the hills and back down the East Cliff path, paddling and playing games on the seashore or walking to the end of the Admiralty Pier, watching the new station and the landing stages being built.

I well remember the day King Edward was crowned, We both had measles and were in the 'drawing room' when a regiment of soldiers with a band came down Wellesley Road, and I was bitterly disappointed not to be able to see the King! One of our favourite winter amusements was to cut out the figure of a child from a pattern book – not much ready-made clothing in those days – stick it on cardboard and then cut out different

dresses and coats to hang on the model, and we much enjoyed sticking coloured scraps on a large screen which was put around us at bath-time – in a metal ‘hip bath’ – in front of the dining room fire to keep the draughts off.

In 1935 I married into the well-known Prescott family – seven sisters-in-law, all of whom attended the Grammar School.

We enjoyed many happy years of camping with the East Kent District Association of the Camping Club, and abroad with the Bradley family from Canterbury, so when we both lost our partners Eric and I decided to join forces and had twenty-two very happy years together, until last spring when, almost ninety-six and full of energy, Eric died.

## E. A. J. BRADLEY

Eric Alfred James Bradley, who recently died in Dover, was always proud of the fact that in 1914 he “defended the shores of England against invasion” at Sandwich Bay as a member of the Kent Cyclist Battalion. He was later transferred to the Signal Corps and served in India from 1915 to 1919, during which time he wrote regularly to his parents in Canterbury. His mother kept these letters which gave a good idea of the life of a young soldier of that time and will be preserved at the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London.

Eric was born in Grimsby in 1896, his family coming from a small village, Scamblesby, where they had farmed

for over 400 years. Eric’s father left school at the age of ten and has left a beautifully written story of his life, the various jobs he worked at, riding a “boneshaker” and being coachman to a well-to-do dentist, Mr Husbands, who took him on a trip to Maderia where he met a Mr Allen Pollock Morris, a Scot, who asked him to accompany him on a world trip to Japan, India, Australia and New Zealand as his “gentleman’s gentleman”. Mr Husbands later started a dental practice in Canterbury with Eric’s father as assistant.

The family moved to Canterbury in 1899 and there Eric attended the Simon Langton School. After the war he trained as a dentist and was later joined by two of his three sons in practice in the lovely old St. Peter’s House. In his retirement he took up amateur radio work and joined the local Radio Society, passing the examinations required at the age of eighty-seven, granting him his licence as G4 VNP. His interest in communications probably started while he was a keen member of the

