

GLIMPSES OF THE PAST

The Chaldercot Files by Sherifa Rashidally

As a child, Sherifa Rashidally lived in Chaldercot in Leyburne Road, which was the family home for many years of the Mowll family. By the time Sherifa lived there in the 1950s, the house had been divided into several maisonettes. She went to Castlemount School and studied art at South Kent College before moving with her mother to London where she continued her art studies. Some of her work was exhibited at Dover Museum.

She never forgot her beloved Dover home and in 2002 wrote a series of poems about the house and garden she remembered. Unfortunately, on a visit to Dover in 2000 she found the old house had been replaced by a modern block of flats. Despite all her efforts, she has been unable to find a photograph of the old house that is so dear to her.

Her poem about the tunnels around Chaldercot may be of particular interest:

*Tunnels winding, tunnels steep
Leading to the Castle Keep.
Tunnels dark and tunnels old
Dug in days of knights so bold.*

*Tunnels which were secret roads
Tunnels which were safe from foes
Where the guards of Dover's realm
Were hidden in that rocky helm.*

*And when at night the foes would sleep
From tunnels deep the guards would creep
And strike their blows to save this land
From foes who dealt a wicked hand.*

*Tunnels twisting under soil
To save this land from any spoil.
Tunnels deep and tunnels dark.
Beneath the land of Connaught Perk.*

*Beneath the grounds of Taswell too
And Godwynehurst and Maison Dieu
Beneath the grounds of Castlemount
Where endless tunnels one could count.*

*Where Leyburne stands and Salisbury, too
Are endless depths with tunnels through
Dug deep within that ancient rock
That glorious land of cliffs and dock.*

*Tunnels winding high and low
Dug so many years ago
Dug by many a labouring hand
Dug beneath this fair green land.*

*Beneath this garden plot so green
Which has seen many a king and queen
The tunnels deep spread far and wide
As do the cliffs toward the tide.*

*Of glorious songs I sing to thee
And go down low on bended knee
For I was born upon this land
Of great white cliffs and silvery sand.*

*Of tunnels deep, a castle high
With England's flag against the sky
For this is England's gate so proud
Of glorious deeds to shout aloud.*

*Far and wide your name is known
For all the glory you have shown.
And under fields with trees so green
The tunnels still run through unseen.*

*Tunnels which you may not know
Tunnels running to and fro.
Where Ladywell and Godwyne meet
They run toward the Castle Keep*

*But now I shall not speak a word
For of the tunnels you've now heard.
Yes, tunnels deep from history's past
Of Dover shall forever last!*