

A London Girl in Brighton



*A History of my
life
by
Barbara Joan
Symmons*





I was born on the 12th of November, 1939. I was born in Cumberly, Finley, Surrey. Because of the war years, there wasn't any room in the hospital near our London Home. They were filled up with old age soldiers. My mother was evacuated there and we lived near her sister in Farnham. I think it was early Sunday morning that I was born., Dad had to get leave to come over from Dunkirk. I had to stay with mums sister until I was two until I was about 2 . We stayed above one of the shops. Her sister's husband, (my uncle Alec) had a Taylor shop who sold men's shirts, suits, socks, under ware, that sort of thing. He actually had three shops. He had one up Canberly, one in Aldershop, one up Farmbrough airport. (that's where he was brought up). He was a country man who didn't like London very much.

When I was three I was in Hospital having my tonsils out. The earliest I remember was going in the ambulance to hospital because my mouth was bleeding so much. That was when I had really bad whooping Cough and kept spitting up blood all of the time. Mum got worried. When I was nine I had my teeth out and had a full blood transfusion. That was three years after the war, 1948 (the same year Prince Charles was born) I have scars on my inner arm and on my ankle from the transfusion.. I was in there for a month. I felt terrible, I felt helpless wondering when I would stop bleeding. I was in there for a month.

Barbara's Mum



This is my Mum. She was very pretty, she was beautiful, and she was. Mum had fair, smooth skin. She was an angel, always taking care of me. Mum had blue eyes and brown hair. Dad had blue eyes as well. All of our family did. Mum came from Clapham, London. She dressed like a queen. I remember mum in a patterned blue dress with imitation gold buttons down the front. Mum used to have a lovely blue jacket that went with a blue skirt, nothing too old fashioned, mostly from the 50's she had a nice fur evening coat. Mum had a pink dress with beads round the neck. Mum had a dressing table in her bed room. It was varnished oak with a mirror fastened with screws on it. You could take the mirror off if you needed. Mum had a doily on the dressing table with a pink brush and comb set. The chair was made out of weaving it was painted blue with a gold cushion with embroidery of a teddy bear on it a friend of mums made it especially for the chair. The dresser had 6 drawers in it. Mum kept nice underwear in the drawers, petit-coats, vests, bras, knickers suspender clips and silk stockings. . In one of the drawers, mum kept 1 of her jewellery boxes in it. The other she kept on top. In her wardrobe she had a manicure set in a case and a zip. I remember she had a dark brown box on to when she died; the only thing I saw on the mantle piece was the long brown makeup box with dried up nail varnish in it. A pair of knit mittens and a dark brown leather handbag. Mums jewellery box that had a zip on it she had a gold charm bracelet

with charms of London bridge, tower bridge, Eiffel tower, Vie still got it somewhere... On special occasions, Mum set her hair in tin curlers mum wore lipstick that had a mirror attached to the lipstick tube and used a powder puff. Mum was a care free person. She always enjoyed herself. When we went out with Dad in the car she was always laughing. She was never too serious... well; sometimes she was, when she got tired. When we went on our summer breaks to Devon, she would have a good old joke and a laugh. Some of my favourite times were when we went out to shows or shopping. That was a good ol' time. I remember when we used to have birthday parties she used to wear a party hat and get all of the children on the street to come in. When we had the Coronation Street party in 1953 mum got some tickets and somebody she knew in the Houses of Parliament made a cake. The

Mayor came and a gentleman played the piano for the coronation party. He played the good ol' songs like it's a long way to Tipperary and Roll out the barrel. The piano wasn't tuned in properly so of course it lost some of its notes.

Mum used to work part time. She would go in at 12:00 and come back at 6:00pm. Mum used to work near Mill Bank near Lamberth Bridge. She did short hand and typing. Years and Years ago, before that, she worked at Gambridges, a big store in London, where she met dad.

Barbara's Garden



We had a rocking horse brought to us by a friend from my dad's work and somebody took this photograph of me and my friend, Francis. She lived three doors away we played together as children and she had a sister called Sally. We always played together in the garden when her mum was at work. When mum was off work during the holidays, she would take us to London to see a show. We used to play blind mans bluff. We used to play oranges and lemons and sometimes we had tea in the garden, we would have egg and bacon or egg and chips, or salads. My favourite was egg and chips. Our garden was a small garden with houses out of the back of us in the next road it was bombed in the war. Later on they built some more houses. We used to play in the old bomb sites. Skipping games, hopscotch, blind man's bluff and we play on swings in the common sometimes because it was safe. My birthday is the 12th of November. I used to celebrate it alongside Bonfire night in our garden. We had fireworks and sparklers that you hold in your hands. We saved up a lot of money to buy them especially for my Birthday and all the children enjoyed them very much. We had a lovely grey cat that stayed indoors because he was afraid of the fireworks. After it all finished we had Ovaltine and biscuits before they

all went home.

Barbara's First Tricycle



This photograph was taken in somebody's garden, one of mum's friends. Mum had some friend in Margate, where she stayed during some of the war years. I remember the old shed in the background they used to keep tools in there, old bicycles, children's toys, prams. I remember the garden, it was fairly over grown. The grass felt prickly under my feet lucky there was no snakes there then! There was a path going from our house going through the garden. There was a field out of the back of the house with horses in it. I had my first tricycle when I was about two years old. When I was three or four I had a three wheeler one. I think it was blue. Then I had a dog on wheels, I named him Mickey. The dog was sort of a brown colour it looked like a mongrel mixture. It had a long tail. I used to cart it about with me all the time, take it everywhere. I think he went to my cousin in the end as I was getting a bit too old for it then; it went by boat I think. I didn't mind, I missed it a bit. Then for Christmas I had a doll pram. It had wheels on it and made a rattle. When I was twelve I had a two wheeler bike, what you could ride on the pavement. I had it until I was fourteen. Dad taught me to ride it. He took me out to the Common I used to fall off it quite a bit but in the end I didn't. I used to ride the bike up and down the road. It felt nice the wind blowing against me. Then I had it for the Coronation, bought a flag to put on the handle bar. As I got older, I sort of grew out of it, it used to bump against my knees cuz it was getting too small for me, (or rather I was getting too big for it) so When I was about fifteen, I decided to give it to my friend, and dad cleaned it up cus all the kids started scratching it, got new tires on it, had it all done up, in the end I decided to send it to Canada. I then had a proper road bike which was a bit dangerous I didn't ride it very much cuz nobody took me out to show me the road, cus when a car came up behind me I was too frightened to ride it. It was a modern bike. When Mum died in 1956, dad sold it.

Party Time



This photograph was taken at a friend's party. I was with was Shelia and Sally. We went to Jean's birthday party. She lived three doors away. We were wearing paper hats out of a cracker. We used to play blind man's bluff. Where you cover your eyes up and you have to sit on somebody's lap and guess who it is. Blind man's bluff, that's what it was called. We used to play Piggy in the Middle and you have to squeak and someone has to guess who you are. Someone stands in the middle with a number on a plate and then you have to roll the dice and guess the number. We would have, Nursery Rhymes and Pass the Parcel. They used to play a piano with that. We had special party dresses. I had a pink dress with a frill down the front. And it was all silk. I had a white cardigan on, white sandals and white socks. And we had lemonade, orangeade and ginger beer. Teddy bears were a popular toy, dolls I only had two china dolls but you had stuffed dolls, rag dolls. I used to go to Sunday school parties I remember from Sunday school, I had a congregational hymn book for my birthday. I remember mum used to do my hair for me. She would curl my hair up with tin curlers. I remember I used to have to sleep in them. Mum used to bake my birthday cake. What I miss her for is my birthday.

Little Girl on the beach



I must have been about five in this picture. I remember the beach. There was wire all around it. I don't know what it was for exactly but it had to do with the war. In this picture I had a Union Jack. I saw it in the shop one day and mum bought me it. I would wave it about. I enjoyed myself on the beach. I used to make sand pies, castles, used to lay in it. I used to dig a hole and put myself in it and lay in it. This was outside Devon somewhere, Clayton perhaps. I remember going here by train. Dad had a car but no one else could drive it. We stayed in a hotel I don't remember what it was called but it was a nice hotel. We stayed there for a fortnight. You had to walk a long way to the beach. We were on Holiday with Mum, her mum, and mum's friend. Dad must have been in the war then. This photograph could have been near the end of the war.

Barbara's TV



Mum bought a black and white television for the Queen's Coronation in 1953. Some of the characters I recall are Cisco Kid. "The Upper Half" was about children. It was on the BBC, and it was really good. I remember the "Grove Family 4", that was in the evening. And Rupert Pickles, if a child wrote to him if they wanted to see a film star, they would. If a child wanted to see the Big Ben he would take them to see it. I think they must have used someone from behind the scenes. Some of the stars he had on it were Shirley Temple. "What's My Line?" was a panel game where they ask questions. Simon Andrews, he, with Barbara Kenny and lady Isobel Barnet. David Nixon, he used to do magic, like, you get coloured hankies out of the hat. Bill and Ben, Andy Pandy, "Time to go home, time to go home, we are all saying bye bye". How about the wooden tops dolls?! They were puppets on BBC 2 a long time ago. The use play with toys. I remember Muffin the Mule, he was a John Mills' sister Annette played the piano and Ann Hogarve pulled the strings. They use to sing "We want muffin, muffin the mule. Dear muffin, muffin the mule, here he comes". Louise the Lamb. Penguin the Green, Willy the Worm, and Ostrich the Bird. That was in the 1960's. Muffin gave great fun to all of the children in the world. "What's with mother?" Apple Art, they were children, they got up to mischief. Trevor came on tele in the

1960's. He came over to England in the 1960s. We still listened to the news on the wireless. Radio 1 came in 1967. Radio 2, Radio 4 is a very old station. Radio 3, that's has always been a classical station. Radio Luxemburg was done in France on the boat. I vaguely remember Radio Caroline and Tony Blackburn. BBC home service Radio, they've done away with that now. There were some good programmes on that. I listened to that in the mornings in my bedroom. I also remember Harry Davidson and his band, that was old time dancing. "Music While you Work", was on before Mrs. Dale's Diary. Max Bygraves was going in the 1960's. Henry Hall, he did comedy. Dales Diary, was a family, her real name was Alice Pale. Her husband was a Doctor. She had a daughter named Gwen. It was a serious story that continued every day except weekends. Her mother was Mrs. Freeman. Her daughter got married to David in the story. She had two boys and one daughter, I think. My bedroom had pink wall paper. Dad painted the walls white. They were originally brown.

Christmas time at Barbara's.



Every year mum would have a Christmas party. We had turkey dinner at home after dinner on Christmas dinner mum got a Christmas tree in Northbrook road. I don't know how much it was in those days. We put it up on Christmas Eve in one of those old-fashioned bread pans and we put it in the living room. We had another one and we would put that in the front room. It was a proper Christmas tree. We didn't have artificial trees in them days. We decorated it with paper chains, silver tinsel, and cotton wool to make it look snowy underneath the Christmas tree. It looked gorgeous! The cat never liked the prickles. We put a fairy doll on top... I don't know where it is now... We put on red fairy lights.

Barbara in Worthing.



I was with my cousins, on my mum's side, Ronald and Gill. Gill was 6 months older than me, born in 1939 but in the June. Gill died of cancer years ago, leukaemia or something like that. We were on holiday in Worthing. I was about 13 years old. The only place we could sit was in this boat because of the stones and the seaweed. It was anchored, tied up. My auntie took a photo of us in this boat. We didn't go no where cus' we didn't have no oars. We stayed in a hotel for 2 weeks on school holidays. We stayed there over Easter. A dog ate somebody's Easter egg. He was lovely, a retriever. He chased the ducks around the pond. We enjoyed ourselves we had quite good food there. We went for coach rides don't know how much it cost in them days, not much. The coach took us across to the Isle of

Wight for a day. It was really beautiful. Lovely on the ferry. My Uncle Alec came down in the car for a week to take us home later on. We went to Farnham in Surrey and we stayed for another week before we went home to London.

Mr Mercer etc



When I was about 10 years old, I started reading lessons with Mr. Mercer. He was a schoolteacher in Tooting Broadway for Special Needs children. He took me for reading and writing lessons. He had two young children, two boys, one about four and the other eighteen months. He was kind and I stayed with him until my mother died.

Because I got on so well he gave me a present of a storybook of Jesus' life with lots of pictures. Some of it was in Latin. When I was on my own I used to read over and over again the words 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do.' Other books I remember having were 'the Famous Five,' 'the Secret Seven' and 'The Adventures of Heidi.' That and the life history of Cliff Richard. When I went into care I think they probably got sent to a jumble sale. When you go in to care all your things go. I still miss them now.



School at Sixteen

I went to a particular school when I was sixteen. It wasn't a very nice school. In fact, it was horrible. Swearing, dirty, nobody cleans their self, always smoking. "Don't tell" they use to say, I says, "Why? It's nothing to do with me if you smoke." The girls in school were very rough, like Tom boys. Common lot. I wasn't like them, you know, they were not posh or anything. There were boys downstairs, course the boys are like boys. One girl I liked, Irene. She had a bad character on her. When she

got with other rough people, she used to smoke a lot and swear. She was nice to me, and kind. I think she felt sorry for me cus somebody had told her I lost my mother. After that I went to a day Centre.

The Queen's Coronation 1953



I remember when she was crowned. I wasn't very old then about 13 years old. I was living in Clapham Junction on Battersea. Mum was alive then, before 19955-1956, That's when Mum died. I was beginning to read then. I read it in the News and heard it on the radio. Before the coronation we went up for rehearsal. One of her maids had a spotted dress on and Richard Dimbly was a speaker then. The actual coronation was on tele, black and white back then. I watched the coronation on tele. First of all you saw her maids and matrons go off, then the children, Charles and Anne, he wasn't very old then, probably about 3 years old. They sat in their seats in

the Abbey and started to get a bit fidgety. It was raining a bit during the day but it cleared up in the afternoon. People were cheering and trying to climb up the gates to the palace. The soldiers wouldn't let them in.

In the evening we saw fireworks, the display didn't end until about quarter to 11:00pm. They came out on the balcony one last time to wave goodbye to the people before they went in again.

The Royal Britannia was especially made for it. They toured around the world so that everyone could see them.

Work History

When I left school at 16, mum didn't want me to go to work in the envelope factory. I felt awful because I felt I couldn't have a try. In 1956, when mum died I stayed at home with dad. I didn't have confidence because I never had been to work. In 1958 I first went to a day centre. We helped to serve the dinners out but I did not work. Wasn't on then, they didn't let you go. Probably there were no jobs.

My first job was working in Brighthelm. I used to clear up all the tables, tea things and that and wash up in the kitchen. I used the dishwasher, a 'modern one'. That was when Jean was here, my social worker who helped me to get the job. That was in 1982. I was at the Sargents then. I worked there for quite a long time. I was quite pleased when I got the job, and quite proud. I didn't get paid as it was voluntary. I worked at Brighthelm for four years.

After Brighthelm, I began work at Zara'a. I've been at Zara's now for ten years. I worked with Sally in the kitchen at first, washing up the dinner and kitchen things. I had two pounds pocket money for helping. I wanted to do full time so I asked Jean and she sorted it out. I work Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. I do some of the sinks and the bathrooms.

I enjoy work very much. It gets you out of the Centre, you see people and have conversations with them, I keep myself busy. I have a key for a special shed where I get all my cleaning stuff out. I have a bucket and mop like I do at Centre and I go around and do the floors, bathrooms and put the toilet rolls out for them and any rubbish in the bathrooms I empty and put it all in a black sack. All of the bottles and cans of drink I put in the black sack. You get paid there, and I feel like I am helping the old people. I got confidence now cuz I have been working for so long.

My cousin Jill



This photo was taken at mum's sister's house at Tupnil corner near Epsom Downs. This is one of the best photographs I have ever had. This is my cousin and myself in the lounge. A gentleman came to take it. I had a pink striped dress on and a pink ribbon in my hair. I am holding my baby doll. My cousin Jill had a doll with a velvet dress on. In the morning we went out to do a little bit of shopping for my Auntie. After breakfast we tidied up and made our beds. Jill washed my hair for me and she put it in curlers. She had lovely long plats, she did. Lovely long

hair. Looking at this photograph makes me feel young. I wasn't very old then, I was about 12. My cousin and myself look quite alike, except that she has long hair. As she got older she altered a bit. I haven't altered much. I've gotten plumper. I'm learning a bit more now, doing the computer, going out a bit more, going to college. When I left school I wanted to be with animals. Not a vet, that is a bit complicated, a nurse helping the animals. But that never came off at all.

London Paladium



In 1954 we went to the Scarlet theatre in Tottenham Court road not far from the Palladium to see Peter Pan with Barbara Kelly, she's Canadian. I went with my family, Mums two sisters and my two cousins, Jill and Ronald. It didn't cost much in those days I was too young to know the cost; I didn't know how much mum paid. Getting ready we did dress up it felt nice, mum did my hair in rollers and we all met up at a café near there, we all had dinner the my grandmothers brother and his wife and son joined us there. I think I had a royal blue velvet dress with a white lace collar and a petticoat underneath and white socks. I was 13 or 14 years old. We went to the 2:00pm show. Th theatre is old. The reception area was lovely. Seeing Peter Pan flying above the stage. Seeing her dressed up in costume she looked quite different from "What's My Line." The dancing fairies were 9 or 10 children. After that we went and had a slap up tea (salads and that) at the Corner House in Charring Cross. The people talked a bit posh; they were posh in them days.

We used to go out shopping Saturday's afternoons in London cuss it is not far from us. And uh, out to dinner, and had a look around London we went to Selfridges bought myself a coat a blue bass with a hood. And a dress. I had a pink dress to go with it she was working all the time and she liked to go out Saturday afternoons. And uh, in the evenings we went home and got the tea ready mum made cakes butterfly fairy cakes with icing and we had tea when we went home and in town tonight that was a programme that was on the radio first in the 1960s I think. On Tele was Brian Johnson went into

London to talk about who was in town tonight. A lot of people were on his show Wilfred pickles; he used to do a lot of shows with children.

Balham Centre

I left Tooting school when I was 11, I then went to a church school in Wandsworth, then in a few years moved school to Shillington Street. This particular school, when I was 16, was on Battersea and Clapham junction, prefabs had been built around the school. I couldn't leave. I wasn't a very nice school. In fact it was horrible. Swearing, dirty, nobody cleans their self, always smonking. "Don't tell" they used to say, I says "Why? It's nothing to do with me if you smoke." The girls in the school were very rough, like Tom Boys. Common lot. I wasn't like them, you know, they were not posh or anything. There were boys downstairs, course the boys are like boys. One girl I liked, Irene. She had a bad character on her. When she got with other rough people, she used to smoke a lot and swear. She was nice to me, and kind. I think she felt sorry for me cus somebody had told her I lost my mother. I stayed on till I was seventeen.

After that I went to a Day Centre. It was in 1958, that's when Cliff Richard started his singing career. The name of the Day Centre was Elsfield. We had dinner there. We did a lot of open days, like dancing and PE. We went by coach, Bluebell United Coach Company, and we had a nice ride home. In them days we went all over London like Chelsea, Wandsworth, RowHampton. We dropped everyone off near their homes. Some of them were capable. I got off about 4:45pm. They used to drop me off at the end of my road. I walked up the road to my home. I was living with my dad and my step-mother. It was nice at Elsfield it was in a church hall and we borrowed the hall until the bought a place in Balham. The Centre then became known as Balham Elder Girl's Centre. The Centre was small but it was nice and warm. Originally it was a house. There were people living up the top, those who owned the place. They came from Belgium. They kept the centre nice and clean. We used to do cane work and made needle work table cloths. I used to help make the dinners there. Because I used to live near to Balham, I took the number 155 bus that goes to Clapham. Bus fare was 6 pence in them days. I got the number 37 bus home.

Moving to Brighton



One Day, well, I know I went to the Day Center as I usually do, and nobody told me... I went home and saw me cases packed. I thought I was going to Farnham with me Aunt Marjorie. And I thought ' why is me wardrobe turned up?' so I unpacked it and put all my clothes back again. I didn't know. And so in the end nobody told me till I got to Centre the next day. We used to have prayers then, and a cup of tea. Some of them take turns and wash up and I thought 'oo, it was my turn to wash up the dinner plates'. I thought ' oo that's good I like doing that', and all of the sudden the supervisor who was there in charge of it, well she said, "we've gotta say good bye to Barbara." I said "What for? I'm not going nowhere." I said, "I'm commin' here". The she said, "No, you're going to somewhere else. Down to Brighton" I said, "whatever for?" She said, "wouldn't you like to live at the seaside?" I said, "No it's cold in the winter". She said, "No you're going down there to..." she didn't tell me the details. In the end, we all had dinner, washed up and cleared the plates. About quarter to three I was doing something, when my step mother came and that, and dad. I thought ' what an unkind thing not to tell me where I was going.' Of course I was hoofed off down here, and went to Peacehaven. We stopped on the way. I'd never been to Peacehaven. I'd never been there and when we got there I though 'oh what a funny lot.' I though to myself, 'Whatever for?' When I first met Auntie, she looked a bit strict and stern, really Victorian, you know. And I thought 'Oo she looks a bit strict and stern.'



Of course I had a new routine, had to get up early, I had a wash basin in my room. I had to wash the paint down on the stairs, What a funny idea that was, to have to wash the paint down every day. It was a mad house there, they all kept arguing all the time. Quarrelling over nothing sometimes. I had never had strictness in my life before. Sometimes she became bad tempered. I don't know what upset her, whether it was her or us, I thought the change was horrible. When I lived with my family I had love and kindness, probably I had been pampered when I was ill a lot... At the home. Well some of them were a bit old, much much older than me. Frieda and Edna were there in the

1960s, they come from South Hampton. I used to look after them and take them out. Being with older girls in the home, I had to look after them and I don't feel that was right because I didn't get paid for it. I used to help them in and out of the bath.



When auntie's husband was alive, he was a very nice gentleman, he never interfered. He was ever so plump and tall, then he went thin. He had cancer and nobody told me until Auntie went up to Sussex to see him. The police came about half past 5 to ask for Auntie. They then told me he had cancer. We went to the funeral and he was buried in New Haven. I felt sorry for auntie that she lost her partner, she got over it but she didn't eat a lot. I used to go to the co-op to get some bacon bones, we didn't pay for them, I would take them home and she would make soup. My favourite thing to do was to do the shopping and meeting other people. At the Co-op Mr. H. was the manager and another young man who was Newhaven school type, Peter. I think he's married now, got two children of his own. I used to enjoy myself there had a bit of a chat and a laugh. Another favourite young man of mine was named Martin, when he became the manager he spent more

time out the back with the other managers. I was lost without him, because he couldn't help me get the shopping. Cus I musn't talk to them while they were on duty in the co-op. When the old shop closed, martin moved up to the new co-op, and I occasionally I saw him. I gradually lost contact with him, he really wanted to get on in the world. When the decimal money came in, I couldn't figure it out, I had to ask for help at the counter and they sorted it out. Even though I had a co-op price book I couldn't change it. I remember when the new co-op was built. I remember the bricks being there. It had been all fields and a few houses in Peacehaven. They also put up new houses, modern houses, and built a car park. I think they spoilt it, the countryside that is.

Surrenden Road

Auntie died in the 1970's. I stayed there until auntie completely gone. First of all she had gull stones. Then she had to have an operation, that was the first time she was in hospital. She was in there for a month. The people next door

looked after us for a long time. Auntie then had a fall and never recovered after that. Auntie finally died in the June. Little Rosie, Edna and Frieda went to Horsham to a big nursing home there. Joyce, who was here as a social worker then and Francis took them. There was only Violet, Wendy and me left. I went to live in another care home in Surrenden Road. Francis took me there. I was a bit upset because I had been at Auntie's such a long time. I had seen it grow up, seen the others grow up. Loosing my friends in the co-op upset me. and missing Brenda and Susan and that...There was lovely field there and I did like a walk. We used to go to Newhaven quite a lot on our own. During the walk there, I remember crossing the railway bridge. I knew some of the roads there. When I moved to Surrenden Road, that's when I slowed down a bit. I mean I stopped doing me own washing. I stopped that cuz they had a washing machine. When I had a bath I'd to do it all together. Four baths, every week. I've never had so many baths in my life. Cuz sometimes the bath wasn't very clean at Peacehaven and I never had a bath when Auntie wasn't there. Wasn't allowed to have a bath 'til she said so. Sometimes the waters didn't get hot - I never bothered. I had a good wash down. In Peacehaven, I was always doing something. Tutting around, that's how I got thinner. Tuttin' around doing all the shopping. We had a co-op book we used put our own prices in, how much the bread, how much the sugar. 12 lbs. of sugar to make jam, all that sugar to make jam! I used to go on scrubbing floors. Used to like doing that, give me something to do 'cept sometimes I used to have to weigh out the tea. Auntie and her friend used to have a teapot for lunch, it was nice and peaceful. Every time they came out I washed 'em up. I had a drop out of it, course all of the others wanted a drop. Had to give 'em some. But I musn't give it to 'em out of auntie's cups, she had lovely china cups with flowers on them, The reason I washed them up really was because I didn't want anyone else to do the cups because I didn't want, they were so precious, I didn't want 'em to break them. So that was the reason.

At Surrenden Road I began to slow down. I also started here at Centre. During the 80's I saw more of my father, that was after my step-mum Jenny died. He came down to see me more often than before. That was before he became ill.

Dad and Jan



This is a photograph of me with my dad and step mum. I was in Farnham when mum died and I went back to London and stayed with dad and mum's mum for a long time.

Dad was in Tooting Hospital when he collapsed and died. He had lung cancer. He was 84. When he died Betty and Monty, social workers at the Centre took me to the funeral in South London. He wasn't religious. He believed in the Stars. He was cremated. I think my step-brother took the ashes. He was going to spread some on my mother's grave and some in Epping Forest. Dad used to play there as a child.. He had eight sisters and one brother. It was a big family and old fashioned. His father worked at Gamage's. Their house was really big like a mansion. It was in

Woodford opposite the station. It had steps going up and a basement downstairs. We used to go there a lot, past Petticoat Lane and stop on the way for a cup of tea. There was a soap factory on the way. I remember the scent. Dad's sister and her husband used to live there. He was in the Navy in the War years based at Portsmouth. His family went to live in America - I don't know what part.