

Mrs SHEILA HEARSEY (née FAIRCLOTH)

7th August, 2004

THE FAIRCLOTH FAMILY

My Grandfather, William, married Lucy Goldsmith and they had three sons and five daughters. My Grandmother's Father worked at Swaylands. My Grandfather was a blacksmith prior to becoming a farmer. His Smithy is now a private house, namely The Old Forge, Poundsbridge Lane. Therefore my Father lived next door at Marlpit Corner with his Mother, Father and seven<sup>(\*\*\*)</sup> siblings. After that my Grandfather became a farmer and rented Charcott Farm (near Chiddingstone Causeway). At one time my Grandfather rented FOUR farms, namely Charcott, Warren Farm, Penshurst, Great and Little Barnetts, Leigh. My Father, William, looked after the Warren Farm, my Uncle Alf was at Great Barnetts and my Uncle Char. was at Little Barnetts. My parents William and Edith lived at the Warren Farm and except for my eldest Brother, William, all of us Faircloths were born at The Warren Farm. According to his birth certificate my Brother William was born at Speldhurst. There were eight of us - five sons and <sup>three</sup> daughters. Alas, at this moment in time, only two of us survive - William the eldest (aged 90) and me Sheila (aged 73). The Faircloths have rented the Warren Farm from the De L'Isles for about 100 years. All eight of us children attended the village school. Apparently when my Brother, William, attended the Headmaster was a Mr. Baker. Later on Mr & Mrs Wyles were the Headmaster and Head mistress. A Miss Hubbard taught the youngest children. She was wonderful and all of us children thought the world of her. I must tell you that when we were in the Middle class with Mrs Wyles, we were all given a penny on our birthdays!

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THE DURRANT FAMILY

Everyone always associates the Warren Farm with the name of Faircloth but in actual fact my Mother lived there with her family before she was married to my Father.

My Mother was previously Edith Baber Durrant and she lived at The Warren Farm with her parents and siblings. There were six sons and five daughters (alms, one daughter died in infancy). My Mother met my Father at The Warren when he was managing the farm for his Father. All the Durrants were christened with the second name of Baber - which was my Grandmother's maiden name. One of my Mother's younger Brothers Frank Baber Durrant was killed in the First World war and his name is on the War Memorial in Penshurst Church. One of my nephews, namely William and his wife Caroline took me to France a couple of years ago to visit his grave in a place called Pernes. Uncle Frank was killed in June just before the war ended aged only 18 years. The cemetery was beautifully kept, as are all of them I understand.

We have a photograph of the Durrant family taken outside the back door at The Warren just prior to my Uncle Horace emigrating to Canada in 1909 aged 19 years.

My eldest Brother, William, was born at Speldhurst in 1914, Edith and Francis were born in the cottage nearest to the farm buildings and Joan, Horace, Philip, Peter and I were born in my Mother's old home in the cottage adjoining the Warren Farm.

Apart from William (who was married in London) and Philip who never married, all the other six of the family were married in Penshurst Church.

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MEMORIES OF PENSHURST FROM MY YOUNGER DAYS

The Skinner family were at The Forge. Naturally it was used to shoe horses from all the local farms. (I am talking about old days before the tractor, etc.). I used to enjoy watching 'Topper' Skinner shoe the horses. No doubt Mr. Skinner, senior, and the other son did this also but I do not remember it. No doubt horses came from all the local large estates, namely Swaylands, Redleaf, South Park, Penshurst Place, Oakfield, etc. We all took our accumulators to The Forge for 'topping' up to use with our radios.

There was a grocery store adjacent to the Spotted Dog. The building is still there and it is on the roadside to the left of the pub. It was run by a family called Hardwick.

Also Chapmans and Jacksons ran the grocery stores in the village.

Chapmans was in the centre of the village and the Chapmans were Bill, Henry, Claude, Edith and Edna. Jacksons was in the 'top shop'.

The second Mrs Jackson (I do not remember the first Mrs Jackson) was a wonderful seamstress and in fact made my wedding gown.

Next door to the Chapmans was an Ironmongers shop run by Mr & Mrs Cecil Barrow. (Mrs Barrow was the former Edna Chapman). "Quaintways"

was a bakery owned by a Mr & Mrs Cook. Marjorie Cook (one of the daughters) was our Brown Owl when I was in the Brownies.

We used to meet each week in the room above the archway in Leicester Square - where the Church shop was in later years.

Lord & Lady De L'Isle and Dudley (now Viscount and Viscountess De L'Isle) came to live in Penshurst Place in 1945/6. The Present

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Viscount De L'Isle was a very young child at that time. He had two elder sisters Elizabeth & Catherine and two more daughters were born after the family moved to Penshurst Place, namely Anne & Lucy. Lady De L'Isle was a wonderful person. Unfortunately she passed away in 1962 whilst His Lordship was Governor General of Australia. Lady De L'Isle was unique in that her Father, Lord Gort, and her Husband, William, both won the Victoria Cross. I doubt if this will ever happen again to one person. Lady De L'Isle started a Girls' Club in Penshurst Place and we met every Thursday. Personally, I will always be grateful to her Ladyship for doing this. She arranged for professional people to teach us Ballroom dancing and on those occasions the young men in the village were invited to the Village Hall to partner us girls. Also, we used to go Carol Singing every Christmas. His Lordship always came to help and he collected the cash. During the Summer we were always invited by Mr & Mrs Manwaring of The Grove to use their Tennis Court. Again, his Lordship very often used to come to support us girls. Also, Miss Doris Goodwin, was always willing to give a helping hand and Mrs Wood (Dr, Arthur Wood's wife) prepared sandwiches each Thursday.

Lady De L'Isle and Mrs Hooper (the then Rector's wife of Penshurst) started the Church Shop in the room above the archway in Leicester Square. It was extremely successful and a lot of money was made for our Church each Summer. It was popular with locals and visitors and it was very sad when it closed.

Fortunately I had a wonderful Mother but the other two ladies who were so influential in my early life were Lady De L'Isle and Mrs Rosamond DuBuisson. (I will say more about Mrs DuBuisson when I mention Penshurst Stoolball Club later).

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The Eagleton family were at the Post Office in Leicester Square.

Mr. Eagleton, Senior, was also a tailor. Telegrams were sent on special days and events and, of course, they were sent via the Post Office.

I recall that Mr. Eagleton, Senior, used to wear a smoking cap.

Mrs Eagleton and Mrs Henry Chapman were Sisters - so they both married shop owners.

Mr. Thompsett kept the Butcher's shop and his Father before him. It was situated in Star House, adjacent to the Village School. I understand it was previously a Public House but this was before my time. My Grandfather (Mr. Horace Durrant) worked for Mr. Thompsett in his Butcher's shop, possibly as a Roundsman. (See separate note about the Durrant family).

The Penshurst Stoolball Club was started in about 1946/7 by Mrs DuBuisson. Beforehand she asked me what I thought about the idea - so therefore I was one of the founder members. So we must always be grateful to Mrs DuBuisson for starting the Stoolball Club, which still exists today. Mrs DuBuisson said to us girls, "it doesn't matter about winning the match but you must always look nice on the pitch"!! In fact, later on we had a very good team and very often won the League Cup. Mrs DuBuisson also took over running the Brownie Pack when Marjorie Cook got married. Mrs DuBuisson also run the Girl Guides. It was wonderful to me to be a Brownie and Girl Guide and I always admire the folks who give up their time to run such organisations. The DuBuisson family lived at Saints Hill House. We had a Steward at the Village Hall and his name was Mr. Bob Martin. He served teas in the Village Hall: there was also a Library and a snooker/billiards table in what is now known as the Victoria Room upstairs. Dances were often held in the Village Hall and also neighbouring villages held dances, i.e. Leigh, Chiddingstone Causeway, etc. but the best ones

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were held at Chiddingstone. It was the smallest Village Hall but we all loved 'Chidd' dances!!! Very few people had a car - so we all used to cycle there. Later on when we were more prosperous, we could afford to have a taxi ONE way!

There used to be The Green Tea Room, which is now known as Colquhouns Cottage, (where Mr & Mrs Bryan Moon now live).

The Fir Tree Tearooms was previously a Saddlers' shop run by Mr. Will Meade (Ginger's Father). He was a fine poet and I think some of his poems were published. 'Ginger' was the youngest of four children.

There were Frank, Cyril, Olive and 'Ginger' (his real name was Edward Raymond John). He used to get up to all sorts of pranks but the

trouble was, he always got the blame, whether he was guilty or not!!!

In the Guild House in Leicester Square, Nurse Watson lived. She was our District Nurse and she followed a lady called Nurse Lister. Just after the 1939/45 war our Doctor's Surgery was at Dr. L.A.C. Wood's home, namely Petresfield. Prior to that it was held at The Moat, where Dr. Wood's Father, Dr. Charrington Wood lived with his wife and daughter, Miss Sylvia Wood. Dr. Charrington Wood attended my Mother/<sup>when she</sup> gave birth to us eight Faircloths.

Hops were grown on nearly all the farms in the neighbourhood and, of course, all the hops were dried in the farm's Oast House. I recall fond memories of my 'hop picking' days - very cold mornings and very hot afternoons. One could have a half bin or a full bin. The measurer did his/her job and the total bushels were recorded in a special book. Also, each person had a card on which the bushels were recorded. Strikes were held sometimes for an increase in the rate per bushel - so strikes are nothing new!

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There used to be a Public House at the bottom of Rogues Hill called the Bridge Tavern - known to locals as "The Lower House". Before I personally remember there was a row of cottages which went from the Pub towards The Yews. (In fact right across Rogues Hill, as we know it now). Apparently the main road was very close to The Yews, Elliotts House, etc. making the gardens very small on that side. It was very popular with families as we children had our lemonade and crisps at the rear of the building. An old game called Quoits used to be played in the Pub garden at the side of the property.

Before Glebelands was built many years ago, it used to be used for grazing. The reason I recall it so well, is that my Father used to rent it from the Church. There also used to be a well at the rear of Glebelands - from where the drinking<sup>water</sup>/for the cattle was obtained. Of course, the Warren Farm was situated only a few hundred yards away.

There was a tiny Church (I think it had a tin roof) just about fifty yards from the Bottle House - almost opposite to a house called 'Godfreys'. I recall attending Communion services on occasions. Also, there was a Chapel near the Spotted Dog - which is now a private house.

All the large houses employed lots of staff - both indoors and outside. To name but a few: Penshurst Place, Swaylands, South Park, Oakfield, Redleaf, Hammerfield, Latymers, The Glebe, etc.

Latymers was a private house before the 1939/45 war and the Hawkins family lived there. During the war it was occupied by the Marines. Afterwards it became flats and it was demolished and now lots of houses have been built on the site.

Also the Glebe was a private house. The Army took it over during the war.



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It then became a Country Club (Mr. & Mrs Robinson lived there).

Afterwards it was demolished and twelve houses were built on the site.

In fact my Nephew, William, now lives there with his family.

A curfew used to be rung every night at 8 p.m. A lady who lived at Saints Hill House left money in her Will, so that the curfew could be rung in our Church. The maiden lady was named Arnold.

There used to be a Rifle Range situated on the left hand side of The Warren - almost opposite to the Village School. (There is now a B.T. building on the site).

On August Bank Holiday Monday the British Legion organised a fete, with lots of sideshows, including Coconut-shy and also a brass band.

Penshurst Cricket Club always had a fixture against Chiddingstone Causeway. Also in my very young days the Flower Show was held in the Baron's Hall. I remember that I always entered the Class for wild flowers for children. Also, sports for everyone was held on the Cricket pitch after the cricket match.

Talking of cricketers, the Australian Touring XI visited Penshurst Place at the invitation of His Lordship in 1961. The captain on that tour was Richie Benaud and I well remember taking photos of them all near the pavilion.

In The Birches lived a Miss Clive - who, I always understood, was related to Clive of india.

To help with the War effort, we children collected all the scrap iron, etc. and it was later deposited and sorted in one of the Rectory stables.

(I have a photo of about twenty of us taken outside of The Forge).

I omitted to mention earlier that 'Ginger' Meade was our Church organist for 40 years. 'Ginger' and his son Michael lived in The Guild House in Leicester Square.. It was known as "The Meade Arms" and lots of us used to enjoy a drink, or three, very frequently!!!

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I undernote some of the old Penshurst surnames:

De L'Isle, Goodwin, Lambert, Coulstock, Izzard, Faircloth, Chapman, Ray, Frederick, Hardinge, Fenner, Seale, Lane, Skinner, Wyles, Fuller, Hazeldine, Wood, Cook, Thompsett, Mannerings, Manwaring, Meade, Pawson, DuBuisson, Hollingsworth, Kirby, Ball, Taylor, Letts, etc., Cricket has been played in front of Penshurst Place for very many years but as well as playing on Saturdays & Sundays there was also a Wednesday XI. My Brother William (Bill) used to play on a Wednesday sometimes because, due to having a milking herd, he couldn't get to Saturday and Sunday matches.

Years ago there was a Tennis Club. The grass court was on the right-hand side of the road, in the field nearest the river, between the back-water bridge and the Bridge Tavern.

There has been a Football Club for probably a century or more. My Brother Philip had an old photograph of the team in 1929/30, so I presume there was team before that year. In 1946/7 or a year later, our local Club won the League Cup - I remember it well as my Brothers Francis & Philip played in it. Mr. Tony Medhurst has been our local Shoe repairer since 1956. Before that the shoe repairs were carried out in a large shed just before you reach the <sup>six</sup> Warren cottages. In my early life a Mr. Snell had the business and in later years Mr. Norton was there. As a youngster I used to spend hours watching Mr. Snell at work.

The farmers locally were as follows:

South Park - Frederick; Elliotts - Goodwin; Mackenzie; Warren - Faircloth; Ford Place - Davidson; Nash's; Goodwin; Beale; Salmon's - Cunnington; Dockerty. Poundsbridge - Day, Bowens - Maxted. Ashour - Gayler. Well Place - Watters.

Local builders were - Constable, Edwards, Butcher, Johnston.