

Conversation with Miss Dorothy Wall at her home in Venson Terrace, March 23rd 1988.

We came to Broughton on December the tenth, 1936; the day king Edward abdicated; I'll always remember that. We came from Newbury. We wanted to move and it didn't matter where we went, I motored all over the south of England, right down to Selsey Bill and one day I said to Mother; "I am so tired of motoring. There's a cottage advertised in a place called Browton, let's go there." So we did. Old Mr. and Mrs. Keay [Next the village hall?] yes, the white cottage with the white rabbit; they had the key of the cottage. We got the key and I said to Mother, "let's have it." It had just been modernised, it had just been re-thatched so it looked very nice. The only thing that Mother didn't like was the garden didn't have a plant in it. We came from such a lovely house, half Queen Anne and half Tudor with a lovely garden, pathway, high brick wall and wrought iron gate. Mother literally cried when she saw the garden; but I made it in the end.

The Thatch was quite a big property; it had eleven rooms, four bedrooms and seven downstairs. Years and years ago it was a farmhouse; there were the stables and a granary. I got very annoyed with the insurance people, they insured a farm and out buildings, I wrote back and said I haven't got a farm. Before it was modernised it was Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson because he worked in the shop next door; they were there for ten years. Before them it was the carriers, Mays or was it Morgans. Miss Langdon, sister of the Reverend Langdon, Ursula Langdon, she used to stay there. She did a painting of the old kitchen which she gave Mother. I'll leave it to your collection; eighteen something or other [1898] and The Guesthouse drawing, 1936.

Oh Yes, it was our intention to have a guesthouse. In Newbury we used to take one or two people but it wasn't a guesthouse as such. That was December but we didn't intend to have anybody until about the following Easter but our bank manager in Newbury wrote and said could he bring his aunt down for Christmas so we were open by Christmas. And it was an awful job, I shall never forget the day we moved in; the snow, how the pantehnicon got up Hurstbourne Tarrant Hill, I don't know, the snow was so bad. And old Mr. Aitken came and said would we come and have tea? Mother said, "For Heaven's sake! You'll have to go." Of course I forgot all about it then Robert Aitken put his head round the door and said, "Tea's ready." So I had to go.

My first reception in Broughton was good. With snow on the ground, we had bread and butter and sardines for tea. Mother didn't go because she was tired out with organising things. Mrs. Aitken's face was funny, she said, "It was so nice to have people living neighbourly." So I said we shouldn't have much time to be social because we are going to open as a guesthouse. Her face fell on the floor. She didn't approve of us at all; though she made use of it afterwards; because Robert used to come. It was so funny because if she had a guest and didn't have room for her, sometimes she sent her guests to us. She sent a message to us; "Would we like to have so-and-so or would we like to have Robert?" As if we had a choice! He was such a funny old boy. Something happened, I think the well went wrong and we were short of water, he came to stay with us and he brought a can of hot water for a cold sluice in the morning. They were a funny couple. Of course they were both brilliant people.

The day I shall never forget – the men were bringing in the furniture and I was upstairs directing, Mother was downstairs and of course we had a collision. The men staggered upstairs with a double bed and said, "He's done it." They had just got the news

from somebody in the village that the king had abdicated. The two men and myself sat on the stairs and discussed the abdication. It was so awful, a twice-divorced woman he got entangled with. Not the person to become Queen, she never even got H.R.H., her Royal Highness; they never granted her even that.

The Ambulance ? That started with the war. We had the civil defence ambulance; with Major Love in charge of the Home Guard and nothing else, and I was the ambulance driver for that [Civil Defence]. We used that for patients sometimes to help keep the ambulance in the area. The Civil Defence provided the ambulance, A.R.P. then. The woman who lived down the bottom of Paynes Lane, wife of an Air Force officer; his name was d,e,a,t,h, but they didn't pronounce it death. She was my attendant. I remember when we had a call-out for an air-raid, she was down in the air-raid shelter, I said, "Come on, we've got a callout." It started with that, in 1939 but when the war ended I had a Red Cross ambulance, provided by the Red Cross. I was voluntary driver. I got my messages personally from the doctors. Dr. Hobbs walked into my hall and said, Can you take Mrs. So-and-so to hospital tomorrow for 11 o'clock at Winchester or whatever it was. I blotted my copy-book terribly one day with him. I had completely forgotten something he had given. He was a sweetie; he came in and said what about Mrs. So-and-so? That was yesterdays. I said, "Oh, Doctor!" "Don't worry my dear; we have altered the appointment." Things were easier then; you could alter things but that was a very bad boob.

We used to have Mrs. Hinwood and Mrs. Blake as my attendants. Mrs. Blake was excellent with the patients, excellent but all Mrs. Hinwood would do was find out if they had got any history, even if a patient was badly hurt she would cross-question them all about their family and things like that, you know. If they'd got any scandal, she liked it very much.

I was asked to join the Hampshire ambulance service. The National Health Service came into being in 1948, Major Love and I were asked if we would fall in with others with the ambulance which we had which we agreed: that was '48. I was invited to join the Hampshire Ambulance Service May 2nd 1952. The day I joined that I had the application form sent to me; the day I started! From 1948 to '52 I was on duty, day and night without a break; mind you I was working from home. I never had any time off at all in all that time; then I dug my toes and said I must have some free time. So they worked it that I should have every other weekend off, at first I was on call at nights too you see.

Our chief job, of course was Nine Mile, every weekend, it got to the stage when whoever called me up, they called me Wallie because my name's Wall, "Wallie, usual place." I didn't ask where, I just went to Nine Mile. It was dreadful, till they resurfaced it, then it was a bit better. Leonards Grave, that's another bad spot, Nine Mile was worse, people just drove straight across, you see, not stopping; and again at Leonards Grave. We had a police case, a court case once: I was not on duty and I had a call out at half past eleven at night. There had been a bad accident at Nine Mile, the other ambulance had been called out and had gone with two very seriously injured people so would I go and pick up the body and take it to Winchester? I went along there and Doctor Johnson was there and P.C. Harper. The car had been travelling towards Salisbury and gone straight into that tree. You know they used to hit that tree on that nasty bend and this woman was killed outright. Any way I had my vehicle there, my lights on, the back doors open, the