

FLOSS PRETT (nee Somerford) born 1920

Floss was born in Canterbury, where her father was a foundry worker, but a short time afterwards (about 3-4 months) the family moved to Birchington, from where her mother's people originated. They came and lived with her grandparents, the Tumber's at 5 Mill Cottages, Mill Lane, but her father continued to cycle into Canterbury every day to his work at the iron foundry.

At that time, the Denne family lived at 6 Mill Cottages, next door to the Slaughter House at the end of the land. The building was attached to No 6, using the end wall of No 6 as its south wall. The yard stretched up a little way towards Bedlam fields at the end of the lane, as well as across the back of the slaughter house. There was a low wall all round the yard, and as a small child, she used to 'bunk up' to peer over the wall, to watch proceedings in the yard. Several local men have mentioned actually sitting on the wall of the yard to watch the animals being slaughtered.

Floss and her family eventually left their grandparents' home and moved into two rooms up in Mill Row, until they were eventually able to move into one of the newly built Council Houses in Broadley Avenue in about 1926¹, when she was about 6. She went to Park Lane School for the whole of her school career, leaving at 14 in 1934. She recalls that her father was finding the ride to Canterbury very tiring by this time and so her mother decided that they would move back to Canterbury. They were only there a short while before they were all very ill with a flu-like virus. While the doctor was examining them, he discovered that Floss's father had developed T.B. Within a very short time, they had moved back to Birchington again, much to her mother's relief. She really disliked Canterbury. They moved into one of the 'Seven Houses', in Quex View Road, the terrace of houses numbered 42-54 now. Floss's father died in 1936, soon after Floss had left school.

Floss's first job was down at Minnis Bay, doing housework for a fairly wealthy family. Once the war started, however, she was called up to do war work and ended up at Worcester in a small-arms factory, making bullets – a job she really hated. The only bonus about it was that her pay was £4 a week, a small fortune to a young girl in those days. Her brother Fred went into the Army and now lives at Minster, while her brother Geoff went into the Navy. Towards the end of the war, his ship, HMS Dasher, was blown up while in an inlet in the north of Scotland. About 400 men were killed, but fortunately Geoff survived. However, all the survivors were told they must not talk about what had happened. It appeared that there was some kind of fiasco about the incident. It was only very recently that Geoff even mentioned it to his family. He managed to save several of his mates in the mayhem and was awarded a medal for this. He now lives at Margate.

Floss now lives in a flat in Stone Barn Avenue and was able to help me complete the names on the photo of Ron Oliver's parents' wedding.

¹ The houses in Broadley Avenue were built in two phases. The first group at the entrance to the street were completed about 1926, while the red brick group at the further end of the 'banjo', were not built till after W.W. 2, about 1948-50.