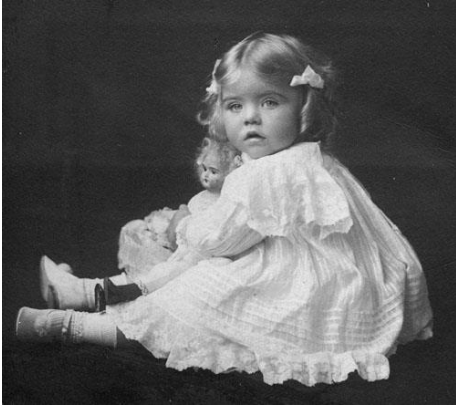


## VIDA BATES – November 2007

We have, in our midst, an incredible lady called Vida Bates. Vida was 99 this year and is still living in her own home, doing much of her own shopping and managing, 'with a little help from her friends', as the song goes, to live independently. Her life began as the second youngest in a family of 4 boys and 4 girls, who lived in a lovely old house called 'Macklands' near Rainham in Kent. Her father owned Bates Stores in Chatham High Street. One set of grandparents lived at Alksford Farm at Groombridge, which Vida recalls visiting. When we paid a return visit there recently, she was delighted to recognise features that can still be found in the old building, despite many alterations over the last 90 years.



Vida trained as a children's nurse and worked in homes in the south of England for a number of years. After her parents retired to 'Stella Maris' in Semaphore Road, Birchington, she used to come and visit them whenever she could, eventually coming to care for them full time.

After their deaths, she moved into a bungalow of her own, first in Essex Gardens and then in Kent Gardens. This second move was to get her nearer to the village and also

give her a smaller garden to look after. She has help in the garden, but is still very involved with its care and planning. She is very interested in history, particularly her old home area and now also with Birchington's heritage. She belongs to several organisations and actively supports each one, whenever she is able.



She drove her car until not many years ago, travelling all over Britain, but now has to depend on public transport and kindly lifts from friends. Last year she travelled to Sweden to visit some of her far-flung relatives. Many of them call on her in her own home, which always delights her. She has one sister, Phyllis, still living and travelled by coach to Wisbech in Cambridgeshire this summer, to visit her just before her 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday.



Vida's interests are varied and she still reads widely without glasses. She grumbles sometimes about how she forgets words, but she never forgets a kindness and her sense of humour is delightful. Is that perhaps where her secret of long life lies?