

KATHLEEN HUDSON :

13 Kent Gardens / 842 106

Kathleen was born in Broomfield on 7th June 1913 and baptised at All Saints Birchington on 24th August 1913. She went to school at Herne. She had an older sister, Dora, born in 1910, who later died in 1961, aged only 50. Their mother died in 1941, aged just 55, and their father remarried. Their stepmother had also been widowed, and had daughters by her first husband. She was very warm and loving towards Kath and Dora and the stepsisters and nieces and nephews are all just as fond of Kath to this day. Kathleen left school at 14, in 1927, and started work as a maid for a married couple and their daughter, who lived in Mickelburgh, Herne Bay. She had to walk across there from her home in Gore's Lane, Broomfield each day. She was paid 4s. a week, 3s. of which went to her mother and the other shilling she was allowed to keep. She began work at 8 o'clock in the morning and worked until quite late in the evening each day. She found the scrubbing and housework very hard and tiring, but there was nothing else she could do. In about 1930, the husband of the couple died and Kath was asked to leave – probably because of lack of money, once the breadwinner had died.

In May 1930, her aunt Ree in Birchington asked her if she would come over and help her in her little grocery and sweet shop in Canterbury Road, opposite the old village pond. The shop had originally been built for Kath's grandmother, Mrs. Rebecca Hudson (née Wood) in 1906. Old Mrs Hudson originally came from High Halden. Her husband, Horace, worked for a tailor in Birchington. Charles Hudson, a second-cousin-once-removed, was the owner and miller of Hudson's Mill at the end of Mill Row. The family had connections with Wingham, hence the name of 'Wingham Cottage'. Charles owned the cottage and land, which he sold to his cousin Horace. On one occasion, Horace went up to Faversham on business in a pony and trap. While he was there, another pony and trap knocked him down. Part of the shaft pierced his lung and an infection set in, from which he died soon after.

Mrs Hudson was only 45 when Horace died, leaving her with 9 children to support. She lived in 'Wingham Cottage', which had about an acre of land surrounding it, so she used this land to keep chicken and ducks. She would kill them and pluck them herself and then get the children to go and deliver them to her various clients, many of whom lived along Spenser Road, including the new 'Tower Bungalows'. The ducks were allowed to cross over the road and enjoy the village pond in Church Street (as it was then known). When it was time to feed them, she would go out to the front of the cottage and bang on their metal feeding dish and they would all come waddling back 'post-haste'! She also had a large shed at the side of the cottage, which she turned into a shop. From this, she sold anything she could grow in the garden, plus jams and preserves she had prepared.

In the early 1900's, she decided to invest the small amount of capital she had saved, into the building of two shops to the side of her cottage. She planned initially that the shops would both have flats above them. One of her sons began to build them, but before they could be completed, the money ran out. She wished that she had only started to have the one shop and flat built, but

rather than waste the money and effort so far expended, she decided to have the two shops roofed over with a single pitch roof. This could then be removed with ease, to enable the upper storey to be added later. The shops first opened in 1906 without their upper storey. Old Mrs Hudson died in 1929, leaving the cottage and shops to her daughter Ree. Ree's nephew, Horace junior, finally added the upper storey to both shops in 1934.

Old Mrs Hudson ran the left hand shop as a sweet shop and general store, and the property was listed in Kelly's as 'Wingham Lodge'. The adjoining shop was called 'Leeds House'. She let the right side to one of her sons in the early days. Her daughter Rebecca (but always known as Ree), came into the shop and helped her. Because there was no sleeping accommodation over the shop, any of the family who were still at home continued to live in 'Wingham Cottage'. The cottage was a low, red brick dwelling with some accommodation in the attic, lit by small dormer windows. There was a stone plaque on the outside back wall of the building with a date in the 1600's. Kath cannot now remember exactly what date it said. There is a similar plaque on one of the cottages in Quex Park, with the date 1611 on it.

It was soon after old Mrs Hudson died that her daughter Ree got in touch with her niece Kath in Broomfield, to ask if she would come and help her in the shop. When they closed for lunchtime, they would walk across to the cottage and have their meal there. Kath lived with Ree in the cottage, because it was too far for her to travel home to Broomfield each day, and although there was a fairly good train service by this date, the walk from Herne Bay Station to Broomfield was considerable and the fares were more than Kath could have afforded anyway. Kath remembers the flats eventually being added above the shops, when she was about 21. She also recalls that Maxted the butcher had a slaughter yard in Mill Lane, which stood behind the Red House.

Ree obtained her stock for her shop from travellers, who would call at the business. Some would bring well-stocked vans, from which she could make her choice, while others took her order and then brought the goods when they came for the next order. Sweets were bought from firms like Barrett's, while tea came from the Brooke Bond or Lyon's Tea agents. Biscuits were bought from Crawford's and came in the large glass topped tins. They were sold loose and put in paper bags for the customers. There was also a wholesaler who used to ride over from Ramsgate, once or twice a week to take the orders from the shop.

In 1960, Ree decided she wanted to retire and asked Kath if she would like to buy the business. Kath, who had worked in the shop for 30 years, had neither the money nor the inclination to take on such a venture. So Ree sold the business to Mr and Mrs Lee, who came down from Acton in London. She also sold off the other shop to Mr and Mrs Matthews and included the acre of land in the deal. Ree had married Walter Morris and she eventually died in 1969. Mr and Mrs Matthews used the land to produce vegetables, flowers and some soft fruit, which they then sold in their greengrocery shop.