



**Cider with Sally, or sixty odd years.**

*The childhood memories of Grace Sarah Miller-Smith (Sally to her father), who grew up in Eastington, near Stonehouse, Gloucestershire in the late 1800's.*

*(Grace is centre front foreground)*





## Foreword

The text of this brief set of memories was recorded in an 'Ideal' series hard cover notebook, bought for Grace by her son Robert (my father) in 1967. 'If Laurie Lee can turn out a book based on Slad, you ought to do the same for Eastington!' The notebook lived in the top drawer of the secretaire in the living room of the family home in Maidstone; the fifty or so pages covered in her neat and distinctive loop cursive script; no signs of editing, virtually no 'crossings out.'

The initial excitement and motivation to record these memories was evidently short lived; or more likely, deferred as a result of the demands of looking after her husband Fred who suffered a major stroke in 1969.

What follows is an exact copy of the handwritten text. There is no overarching structure, simply a series of snapshots of her early childhood in Eastington; her family, neighbours and local inhabitants; their homes and trades. Names have not been changed, nor my grandmother's blunt assessments of the appearance and abilities of individual 'characters' who lived at that time. These descriptions are occasionally expressed in language uncomfortable for a 21st century reader, but a language that was still in common usage in the mid-twentieth century – be warned!

I've never visited Eastington, but I do remember one family trip from south Birmingham with my parents and grandparents to Red Lodge at Stonehouse; where the Miller-Smith family had moved in 1901. The house was empty, but it's setting in a large garden, close to a canal was delightful. Google maps suggests that Red Lodge no longer exists, replaced by a large industrial estate. However, if you scroll westwards to Eastington many of the names and landmarks included in Grace's memoir remain; Cleeve Cottage, the village cross and The Kings Head all clearly visible. What happened to the Howells who ran the village forge? Do the descendants of Jimmy Bloodworth and Sarah Underwood still live in the village, or like Grace, did life take them elsewhere? Whatever the changes in Eastington over the past 125 years, this brief document successfully captures the fragments of a childhood memory written midway at a distance of '60 odd years.'

We lived then at **Albion House** and the Whites lived a few houses further up the road. Mr White, a rather pale, delicate looking man was a baker in quite a small way. His wife was large and shapeless and always seemed to be reading. There were three children, Lionel (called Brother), Norton and Dorothy. Mr White's parents lived with them. Grandpa was like a prophet in appearance, with a flowing white beard and faded blue eyes. Grandma was small and neat, with straight dark hair parted in the middle and a tight looking face.

The Whites ran a small shop in the front room of the house and we children hated grandma to serve when we went to buy a 'happoth' of sweets – she was so 'stingey.' Old grandpa White spent most of his time in building or re-painting an old pipe-organ which was in one of the upstairs rooms of the house.

Once or twice a week Mr Alec White delivered bread in some of the hamlets around Eastington, and occasionally Mrs White accompanied him and invited me to go with them. We went in a small cart, very much like a box on wheels, with one seat going from side to side and drawn by a pony called Trotty. I sat on the seat between Mr and Mrs White and the loaves of bread were bundled into the back part of the trap, covered with a sack and topped by the delivery basket. There were a number of stops to deliver the bread and I can remember to this day the delicious smell of the crusty cottage loaves whenever the sack was removed. Even on these journeys Mrs White always took a book and I couldn't understand how she managed to read without saying the words. The days when I went on the bread delivery outings were real highlights.

I wasn't so fond of going into the bake house at the Whites, especially when the oven door was open and the loaves were being taken out with a long handled, spade like utensil. Mr White in a long white smock and hat with floury hands looked very different from the man who went round delivering the bread.

I remember Janet's christening. Our pew was at the back of the chapel, so I was allowed to stand on the seat to see what was taking place. When the minister announced the baby's name, Fanny Miles, sitting in the next pew, tittered audibly. Janet was a new name in the village and I expect Fanny Miles had never heard it before. As a matter of fact, Mother and Father had decided to name the baby Lucy Hilda (Lucy after great grandmother Smith and Hilda after aunt Jo) but when he went to register the birth Father decided to add Janet. He discovered afterwards that his own father had a sister called Janet, who died

when she was young, just as our own Janet did. (I have later learned that she was Elizabeth Jeanette).

We attended the same little dame school in Eastington that mother, and later aunt Jo went to and it was kept by the same Miss Powell. She was lame and couldn't move without crutches. She was a short, plump little body, something like Queen Victoria when she was old. Her hair, straight and parted in the middle was done in the usual style of the day. She had plenty of bosom, a small waist and skirt which was floor length. For a long time I thought that she hadn't any feet and that was the reason for the crutches.

Every day when she came into the schoolroom, which was part of the house, she sat at the end of a long narrow table, placed her crutches together and propped them against her chair. They were in a very precarious position, but woe-betide any child who fell over the or knocked them down. The older children in the school sat along the sides of the long table and the beginners on a very low, narrow form at right angles with a higher form in front of us as a table or desk. At first we wrote on slates which were kept in a pile in a large cupboard. As every morning my slate seemed to be near the bottom of the pile, it was an awful struggle for a five-year-old to pull it out. To make matters worse it was an old slate which had previously belonged to Uncle Edgar and although father had cut notches in the corners of the wooden frame, the wretched frame was constantly coming away from the slate and the daily tugging of it from the cupboard didn't do it any good. That slate was the bane of my life.

The young children were taught by Mrs Moore, a niece of Miss Powell. I well remember one day she wrote my name on my slate – Gracie Sarah Smith – and I told her there was no 'I' in Grace when Sarah was used. I can't remember learning to read so I was probably able to do that before I started school. Father had always read to us a lot and I expect that's how I learnt. At school though, I can visualise the little 'text' books we used; history, geography and 'Common Things.' They were written in question and answer form, and I remember that 'Common Things' started with:

Q: What is bread made of?

A: Flour.

Q: What is flour?

A: Wheat ground into powder.

We had spelling homework every day. We took a small book home with lists of words, and we had to learn about six words each day. Before I left the school at the age of seven I was doing long division sums, composition, dictation etc and I had crocheted several anti-macassars, one of which by the way was in use on father's arm chair at Red Lodge. Even to this day I can sing one of the songs we learnt.

Three little forms in the twilight grey,  
Scanning the shadows across the way,  
Two pairs of brown eyes and one of blue,  
Brimful of love and mischief too.

Chorus:

Watching for Pa, watching for Pa,  
Sitting by the window, watching for Pa.

May with her placid and thoughtful brow  
Beaming with kindness and love just now,  
Nellie the youngest so roguish and gay,  
Stealing sly kisses from sister May.

Chorus:

Mabel of ringlets with sunny hue,  
Cosily nestled between the two,  
Pressing her cheek to the window pane,  
Wishing the absent one home again.

Chorus:

Now there's a shout from the window seat,  
There is a patter of tiny feet,  
Gaily they rush through the lighted hall,  
Coming at last is the joyful call!

Chorus:

We moved from *Albion House* to *Chapel House* soon after Janet was born and Auntie Nanna (Hannah) then lived in Albion House to be near us. Albion House was just at the entrance of Chapel House drive. Nearly every day, Auntie Nanna

came up to tea. Sometimes she brought a bread and butter pudding. It was always made in an oval cream china dish, patterned in blue and I've never ever had any bread and butter pudding like hers. She'd hold the pudding out to us saying, 'Those who ask won't have and those that don't ask don't want.' I never solved this problem, though I always had my share of pudding!

Auntie Nanna who was a sister of grandma Smith, was a beautiful old lady, as grandma was too. They both had very good features and wonderfully wavy white hair. When Auntie Nanna came up to tea, she often wore queer looking half clogs, half sandals on her feet. There was a wooden platform in the shape of a shoe mounted on a metal ring with straps to secure it to the foot. They were worn over shoes and were called pattens. When Auntie Nanna came to the house she always left her pattens in the porch.

Auntie Nanna was so disgusted that Janet wasn't a boy that she said she'd have nothing to whatever to do with the baby. Yet directly she was in the house her first words were always, 'Give me the baby Olive,' and there she would sit by the fire nursing the baby as she drank her tea.

In our breakfast room there hung a picture of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Auntie N couldn't bear the look of him and if we were having tea in that room she either insisted on sitting with her back to him or else that the picture be turned to face the wall. I remember taking a message to her one day and when she answered the door I began to wipe my shoes on the mat. 'You needn't trouble to wipe your shoes,' she said, 'because I'm not going to ask you in.' On another occasion she said, 'I saw a little bird in my garden yesterday, eating the raspberries,' and I felt very guilty. Her garden was close to ours and we hadn't any raspberries at that time. Then when Dorothy and I were both in bed with measles, Auntie Nanna brought us raspberries for tea every day.

*Chapel House* was beautiful and there was a lovely garden. When grandpa and grandma Smith and their family first came to Eastington they lived there for a time before moving to *Cleeve Cottage*, which was another attractive house. About twenty years after he lived there as a boy, father took his own family there. It was one of the few houses in the village with an indoor WC complete with flush. I remember how frightened I was one day when deluges of water came through the lavatory ceiling, bringing the plaster down with it.

Also, when we were at Chapel House there was a bad chimney fire. Mother had washed us all one morning and had put a bowl of water and the soap on the table. When she'd finished she put the newspaper on which the bowl had been standing onto the fire. The flames leapt up and there was a sudden roaring in the chimney as soot and debris began to fall into the room. We were told to sit on the stairs and were very frightened whilst mother remained in the room to clear up the dreadful mess.

We had lots of visitors at Chapel House, and nearly every Sunday the preacher came to dinner and tea. I cannot think how mother managed to cope with a large house, a family of four and certainly not a large income. One Sunday I remember being sent to the lav just before dinner and unwisely mother said, 'Now don't go in and say where you've been.' Of course I went straight into the sitting room and announced, 'I've been to the WC.'

An old minister of the Eastington circuit (as it was called in those days) and their family came to stay with us once. Rev and Mrs GW Corke, Stanley and Gladys. In the garden there was a special apple tree which we children were not allowed to touch because father always left the apples till they had reached 'perfection.' I remember how amazed and mad I was when I saw Mr Corke picking apples from that special tree and giving them to his children and not offering one to me. Mrs Corke did odd jobs in the house during the few days they were with us and one day when she was dusting the sitting room she found a little pool of liquid on the floor and said to me, 'That's baby's water I expect, I'll fetch a cloth and mop it up.' When she'd gone I thought, she doesn't know its wee and I shan't tell her.

During the years we were at Chapel House, our circuit minister who lived at Stonehouse was the Rev Thos Berry. His wife was very slim, had a prunes and prisms way of speaking and I though she was very grand. She visited us occasionally with her two girls, Daisy and May, and it was Mrs Berry who first taught us to play, 'Leeley Loo.' Once I remember going to Stonehouse with mother and Dorothy to visit the Berrys. We went by bus, so it was quite an occasion. As we were leaving Mrs Berry said, 'Would Gracie like to make herself comfortable before you leave?' I hadn't the faintest idea of what she meant until mother whispered 'Do you want to go to pee?!'

Grandma Evans lived with us at Eastington. Grandpa had died two months before father and mother were married. Grandma occasionally went out nursing in the neighbourhood, so she was always with us. I have vivid recollections of walking with her on bright sunny days in the fields that came right up to our garden, and we returned with bunches of flowers or armfuls of dry wood for the fire. Grandma was a short, plump little body and for these walks in the fields she wore a lilac point sun bonnet. In the house she always wore a cap made of black lace and net and decorated with bead work flowers. When she was dressed to go out she wore a bonnet, black of course and a garment called a mantle, which was half cape, half coat. Her boots had gussets of elastic at the sides so they could be more easily put on.

I was grandma's favourite and when she was with us, I always slept with her in her four-poster bed which had hangings of white with red flowers. In the bedroom there were texts on the wall and my favourite was a green, shield shaped one with silver lettering which said, 'Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.'

Her favourite bible story seemed to be 'The Good Samaritan' because as she once said, 'Even your old grandma can understand it.' She told it to me often enough, before we got up in the morning, so I expect that she thought I too would understand it.

One afternoon when I arrived home from school, I found Aunt Rodway coming downstairs with grandma. She was grandma's sister Elizabeth but was always called Aunt Rodway, which was her married name. Grandma was wearing her usual black cap, but on Aunt Rodway's head was Grandma's very best hat that was only worn on very special occasions. It was made of beautiful cream lace and decorated with pinky-mauve velvet and small flowers to match made of beads and wire. At every movement of the head the bead flowers would vibrate. I couldn't understand why grandma didn't wear this beautiful cap herself instead of lending it to grandma Rodway who had come to stay without one. She lived only a few miles away at Kings Stanley and had come to spend a few days with grandma – even so, for those few days it was necessary to have a cap.

We like visiting Kings Stanley very much, but as it was a very long walk from Eastington we were not often able to go. Uncle Rodway was a cork cutter and worked with his son Harry in a shed behind the house. There was a solid table all along one wall and let into the edge at intervals were pieces of metal or stone. These were kept oiled and were used to sharpen the knives. The cork was first of all cut into strips, then into cubes of various sizes depending on the requirements for the finished corks. Uncle Rodney sat on an old chair surrounded by flattish rush baskets, some for the cubes, others for the finished corks. The knives he used were shorter than a carving knife and with a broader blade. He would pick up a cube of cork, rub the knife along the stone in the table and then back again before rounding off the corner of the cork. It was all done so deliberately and rhythmically – one corner rounded off, a rub of the knife on the stone, another corner gone, another rub and so on... There was never a suggestion of hurry, yet during the day the rush baskets became filled with finished corks. When uncle came in for tea he always brought a basketful of cuttings from the floor which were always inches deep and lovely to walk on. As he sat drinking his tea by the fire he scattered on handfuls of cuttings whenever the flames died down – I can still remember the smell of burning cork to this day.

Living in a tiny cottage behind the Rodway's house were two little old ladies. Mother spoke of them as Aunt Polly and Aunt Emma, but as they were a good deal older than Grandma and Aunt Rodway I think they must have been their aunts and therefore great aunts of my mother – my great, great aunts! I never went into their cottage, but we were sent to wave to them through the window and I must admit I was half-afraid of them. They stood in the window and as they always appeared to be dressed in white, I can only think that they spent most of their time in bed. They both wore white caps or bonnets with strings and thinking of them now they remind me of pictures of the Biddenden Maids. (Conjoined twins supposedly born in Biddenden, Kent in 1100 and living joined at shoulder and hip for 34 years).

Our lives were very much mixed up with the Howell family. Mrs Howell had two children older than any of us, but Dorothy (my sister) and May Howell were born in the same year and Fred Howell was exactly one year older than me. He was my first sweetheart. Mr Howell was the village blacksmith and we

all love to go to the blacksmith's forge. There was always such a hot burning smell and we loved to see the fire flare up when the boy set to work with the bellows. When horses were there being shod we were not allowed in, but often, in the evenings the bigger children in the village, led by Johnny and Harry Howell arranged a concert which was held in the blacksmith's forge. The entrance fee was always two pieces of slate pencil and somehow I could never find any, so I hung around the door hoping I should be allowed in and sure enough Johnny Howell would say, 'Stand out on the cross and kiss our Freddie for all to see and you can come in.' I had no hesitation in doing this so I usually managed to get in!

There was a great hue and cry in the village one day when Gladys Howell and I were missing. It happened before I started school and Gladys was about two years younger. We set off to visit Auntie Lucy and Auntie Jo who lived at **Cleeve Cottage**, about 10-15 minutes walk from home. We had Gladys's dolls pram with us and after Auntie had given us a biscuit each she told us to go straight back home. However, I thought it would be a good idea to go to **Church End** and meet the children coming out from the National school. We set off in that direction and then I suggested we went across the meadows to Bonds Mill to where father worked. These meadows were five fields which were a short cut to the mill and were used regularly by Easington people who worked there. We couldn't manage to lift the pram over the stile so we left it there and set off across the fields. I remember that some time afterwards as we finally passed the entrance to the mill, several folk came running after us and in a few minutes father appeared. I sensed that he was not at all pleased with me. He had to carry Gladys all the way home and walked so fast that I had to trot to keep up with him. I remember next day when I saw Mr Howell he said, 'If ever you take our Gladys off again I'll smack your bottom!'

The commotion had been raised in the village when the children going home from school had found the pram at the entrance to the meadows. As there was a stream nearby, the river Frome, our mothers were naturally worried. The mill was a half hour walk by adult standards from the village so ordinarily father did not return home for dinner. No wonder he was not very pleased with me.

I never like Mr Howell and after this episode I like him even less. Whenever he

saw me he had an unpleasant habit of pinching my rather plump cheeks between the backs of two of his fingers, gritting his teeth and going, ‘Mmmm’ as though he liked it.

Another man who delighted in pinching my cheeks and neck was Sidney Smith who was engaged to Aunt Lucy. I didn’t like him either. He was a schoolmaster and the son of an Eastington farmer. He came home as usual on one of his school holidays and left at the end as usual to catch the train at Stonehouse station to return to his school in Faversham. I have an idea that he bought the ticket but he never reached Faversham; he was never heard of again. His father became more and more of a recluse and when he died further efforts were made to find Sidney for the money that was left was a good sum in those days. Auntie Lucy never married and as far as I know, never had another sweetheart.

In Eastington, as in all villages, there were some queer inhabitants. Jimmy Bloodworth was a scruffy looking old man who worked on Mr Keyes’ farm. He was sturdy and thickset and had an untidy square beard. He lived in a tumble-down tiny cottage in the fields near Miss Powell’s school. He was alright as long as he was sober, but quite often he was not and then he stood on Alkerton Cross and preached! He held forth with gusto and I was quite terrified of the man when he was ‘religious’! His hot gospel spells always coincided with the making of cider at Keyes’ farm.

Then there was Sarah Underwood who was, I’m sure, completely mentally deficient, though all I knew was that she was ‘different.’ She was a little person and must have been about mothers’ age (30 or so). She wore a flat straw hat which was kept in place by a piece of elastic under chin, a black cape which came to her waist and was edged with a frill and a skirt that reached her feet. She was often sent to the Victoria Inn and I knew there was something secretive about these visits. She carried a square bag like a fish creel? And the older children used to ask her what she’d got in the bag. She would get furious, spit at them and cry. She had the typical Mongolian look. I don’t think the drink was for her but for a relative with whom she lived. I was half afraid of her too just because I knew she was different and I couldn’t understand why.

Billy Goodrich was another odd character, but certainly not at all mental. He was a fine-looking man, neatly dressed in breeches and gaiters. He always wore

a 'billy cock' hat and carried a long stick with a notched top. He lived alone and there were all sorts of tales about him; that he was 'well-born' and was probably the illegitimate son of someone well known. He lived across the fields in the direction of Bluebell Wood between Frocester and Leonard Stanley, but he came to Eastington regularly; usually with a sack over his shoulder which contained a ferret or the rabbit he had caught for someone's supper. There was always an animal with him, once at least a little pig was following him on a leash. He read a lot we were told, and when he died, after we left Eastington, his house was found to be full of daily newspapers which were tidily stacked and which he'd saved for years. He was always welcomed in the village and often he visited the blacksmith's shop where he had odd jobs done to his tools etc. He always called Mr Howells, 'Gentleman John' and Uncle Jim was always 'James.' Mr Budding, who was the village Barber, was 'Sweet William.'

We always had a dog in those days. Our favourite was a little white fox terrier called Prince, who always accompanied on my errands. Whenever I stopped Prince stopped too and 'sat.' He was remarkably obedient and well behaved. I can't remember what happened to him; maybe we were never told, but a great range-y, nut brown animal came in his place. He was called Barney and was as mad as Prince was docile. He chased across the roads, over people's gardens and I chased after him, often crying at the top of my voice. I remember Mrs Brown telling me she'd give me one of Mr Brown's whips though I don't know what use that would have been!

Mrs Brown was a widow with five children, three boys and two girls who were very much the age of us four girls. John, the oldest, was probably a littler older than Dorothy. Mr Brown had driven Hoopers' waggons carrying bales of wool and cloth between **Bonds' Mill** and **Churchend Mill**. I think he died from TB and I remember the gloom that his death caused. Mrs Brown was a remarkable woman and a good Christian and her family grew up to be a real credit to her. John became a schoolmaster in the army having joined the ranks as a boy. Harry and Fred both went into the navy and became Commanders. Harry was another of my childhood sweethearts but he eventually married the Admiral's daughter. Mrs Brown was an older sister of Billie Tipping's mother and after the death of her husband, she came to work for mother and did so for a number of years.

Grandma Smith, Grandma Evans and Auntie Nanna all died during the first few

years of my life. Grandma Smith's death was first and I remember being taken to Cleeve Cottage to see her in her coffin. (Grandma Smith died in December 1899 aged 66 years and was buried on Boxing Day, the birthday of her son Fred). I wasn't in the least afraid, and my memory of her is that she was still beautiful. She had a bunch of Christmas roses in her hands and Auntie Lucy who was standing by her ran her fingers along the deep creases in grandma's lovely white hair. The Christmas roses came from two huge clumps in Cleeve Cottage garden, one each side of the steep path that led up to the front door.

Grandma Evans was visiting her son in York when she died in March 1901. I remember that mother dashed off to York taking Janet with her a day or two before grandma died. Her body was brought to Eastington for burial and the coffin was placed in our sitting room at Chapel House until the funeral on the morrow. She was 71 when she died.

About a month later Auntie Nana's death took place. I remember that her son, Rev James Henning of Cockermouth came for the funeral and also Auntie Nanna's sister Annie Burnett and two of her daughters (Uncle John's grandmother and Aunts Clara and Edith). I was banished to the Howells for the day, so I have no further recollections of the funeral itself. I do remember though that when we went back to school after the Easter holidays, Mrs Powell said to Dorothy, 'I'm sorry to hear of the death of your dear Aunt Dolly.' Dorothy then told her how Cousin Jim had given Aunt Dolly's watch to mama. 'I'm glad to hear it,' said Mrs Powell, 'Your mama was always very good to Mrs Hemming.'

It was in the autumn of this year, 1901 that we left Eastington for Red Lodge in Stonehouse.

We loved visiting **Cleeve Cottage**. Grandpa of course lived there, also Aunt Lucy and Aunt Jo, Uncle Fred, Uncle Jim and Uncle Edgar. We were usually taken there by mother to tea, when only the two aunts were there, but I remember once visiting with father when a huge joint of beef was cooking on a spit before the fire. Auntie Lucy basted it with the juices that fell from the meat into the large pan below. Perhaps this was a Christmas Day, but when I occasionally went for Sunday lunch Grandpa Smith always did the carving. He was an expert at the job I was told. During his younger days he did the carving at large hotels in the Chippenham area at special evening functions.

Mrs Griffin lived in a thatched cottage quite near **Chapel House**. She grew begonias and during the summer months she had dozens of pots on a stand outside the house. Every day I visited her with my little basket and collected all the flower heads that had fallen. She had two daughters who both worked at the mill – one tall and thin called Lizzie and the other Lottie, who was short and round like her mother.

Further up the Lane from **Cleeve Cottage** was a little shop which was really just a room in the house used as a shop but with no proper conversion. It was kept by Nathaniel Biddle and was always referred to as ‘Natty Biddle’s.’ Aunt Lucy would sometimes give us a penny so we could go to Natty’s and buy ‘fair-icings,’ the loveliest ‘gooey-ist’ sweets I’ve ever tasted.

I once went with Grandma Evans to visit her youngest son Will, who was crippled with chronic rheumatism. We went on a Friday, when Friars carrier vans did the journey to Stroud from Frampton via Eastington. The van was like a small furniture removal van, except that there were a few very small windows in the sides – too high up for the travellers to see out. Advertisements were painted over the sides such as, Lewis and Godfrey, Drapers, Stroud. One entered the van at the back by two or three steps. So, in this way, grandma and I set off for Stroud on our way to Marlborough with a funny little tin trunk with knobs all over it accompanying us. We also took a huge bunch of roses.

I remember that we had to change not only trains, but stations at Swindon before finally being met at Marlborough by Uncle Will’s daughter ‘Auntie Kitty.’ Grandma and the tin trunk went by bus or van to the house on the High Street and Kitty and I walked. We met a young man on the way, clearly an admirer of Kitty. He also admired the roses and to my annoyance, took out his pen knife and cut the best rose from the middle of the bunch for his button-hole!

As Uncle Will was unable to work, his wife, Aunt Sarah, with her two daughters Kitty and Minnie ran a small laundry and did a lot of work for Marlborough College, their boys and the staff. At the beginning of the holiday Grandma bought me a large white hat of coarse weave (was it paper?) as I’d only taken my best one. I picked and picked at this new hat until one side of the brim had completely gone. One of my most vivid memories of that holiday is of buying a pennyworth of cherries at a shop just up the street. When I got back

to grandma with them she suggested that I should save some for Jack who was at school (Aunt Kitty's youngest brother). I put two cherries at the very back of a small table against the wall, but later I couldn't resist the temptation and ate them! When Jack came in from school Grandma told him I'd left two cherries for him and I remember scrabbling on the floor helping Jack to look for them!

When we were quite small children we loved to brush mother's hair. In the early evening she would sit in the old rocking chair with one or two of us on her knee and as she rocked gently backwards and forwards, Dorothy or I would stand behind the chair and brush her hair. She often sang at the same time and her two favourite songs appeared to be, 'Two little girls in blue,' and 'Grandfather's clock.' This last was certainly my favourite and always there was the sound of our old grandfather clock ticking away in the corner of the room. That old clock has always been a very real part of my life and even now, seventy years later than those days when mother sang to us, 'grandfather' is still ticking away and is one of my most treasured possessions. It originally belonged to Isiah Evans of Uley, and as I understand it from Peter Boneil that about 200 years ago Uley was noted for its clock making and that it is more than likely that our clock was made there. I presume that Isiah Evans must have been born in about 1800 for he lived to be over 90 and outlived his son Thomas (mother's father) who died suddenly at the age of 60 in 1890. Isiah must have died soon afterwards I think – at any rate, before I was born.

Most people in Eastington kept a pig. Indeed, I've heard mother say that until her own father's death they always had a pig. From time to time news went around the village that 'so and so's' pig was to be killed and most folk ordered a part of the animal. The gruesome business usually took place in the evening and I was never present at an actual killing, but I well remember the squealing of the pig which seemed to go on for a considerable time; the sparks from the bonfire of straw which was part of the ritual and the smell of burning fat and hair. I remember too seeing on several occasions the cleaned pink animal on a bench before it was cut up. I know that we usually had some of the pig's fry from which mother made the most delicious faggots. Then we forgot the squeals we had heard from the friendly old animal we'd often prodded with sticks through the bars of its sty. This was left empty for a few days whilst it was cleaned and whitewashed and then another small piglet was installed and the process started again. We children spent quite a lot of time playing around other people's pig sties.

Monday was always washing day and it really did mean a day's work. I think I had mixed feelings about it; I didn't like the cold dinner very much, but there was a little extra commotion in the house which I did like and Mrs Lewis came which I liked very much.

In our back kitchen known in some homes as the wash house or brew house; built into the corner was the 'copper.' This cube shaped erection of brick contained the large, smooth and shiny copper basin which was used for boiling our clothes. This was covered by a wooden lid made of planks and with a heavy handle across the top. Underneath the copper, a door in the supporting brickwork opened to allow a fire to be laid and heat the water in the copper,

Before Mrs Lewis arrived, the copper was filled with water carried in buckets filled by hand from the tap over the sink and then the fire was lit. On a large bench nearby there were three zinc bath tubs; one for washing, one for rinsing and one for 'blue water.' Sometimes Mrs Lewis would allow me to stand on a stool and squeeze the little flannel bag containing the square of 'blue' into the smallest bath until the water became quite blue. I would never understand why white clothes had to be 'blued' to keep them white! Mrs Lewis always brought with her an apron made of hessian neatly rolled and tied round with the tapes which later fastened the apron to her tubby little body. And then washing actually began. She scrubbed away at the clothes in the largest bath and from time to time stirred the clothes already in the copper with a stout stick. When it was time for the clothes to be taken from the copper, they were lifted out, twisted round the stick and deposited on the upturned lid and carried to the wash tub, dripping water across the uneven stones of the back-kitchen floor. Then at those times the place was filled with billowing clouds of steam. Occasionally Mrs Lewis opened the fire-door and shovelled in more coal which was an operation I loved to see.

She always had a glass of beer for her elevenses, fetched especially from the Kings Head. No-one else who came to our house ever had beer and I felt she was a very favoured person indeed. Her fingers, I noticed as she ate her lunch, were covered with fine lines, so was the end of the stick, both caused I supposed by endless soaking in hot water.

There was a very nice feeling at the end of Monday afternoons. The large clothes basket was filled with a pile of neatly folded garments, clean and sweet-

smelling. Mrs Lewis received her pay and folded up her apron. I can picture her as clearly as though it was yesterday, walking down the garden path wearing a shabby, old, black hat, her 'coarse' apron tucked under her arm and her arms folded under her little black cape which was frilled at the edge and came half-way down her long black skirt which covered her feet. Another washing day over and dear Mrs Lewis was going home.

After washing day came the ironing which took up a great part of another day. For this there had to be a large fire in the kitchen to heat the irons. A metal contraption was hooked onto the front of the fire and on this stood the irons. Mother did the ironing on the kitchen table over which was spread the ironing mantel with a piece of sheeting on top. With a very thick holder/glove she would take an iron from the fire, holding it near her face to test the heat before starting to iron. Sometimes she would spit on the iron instead and if it sizzled the iron was ready for use!

In the summer time we four girls wore white cotton coats with large collars made up of needlework frills, and we had hats to match. In addition to being ironed all the frills were goffered with a goffering iron which looked like a pair of scissors with smooth round blades which had to be heated in the fire and then cleaned quickly on a cloth. The frills were then crimped and looked beautiful. As the garments were ironed, they were placed on a huge clothes horse in front of the fire. When the horse was full it was a sight worth seeing and the warm smell of freshly ironed clothes was lovely. I remember that occasionally, whether by accident or design, I don't know, the knees of my knickers were starched and how those goffered frills prickled my chubby knees!

## Afterword

Grace finally left Stonehouse in 1921 when she married Frederick Henry Protherough from Cheltenham. The relationship had begun before the outbreak of the Great War and survived Fred's lengthy absence whilst he served in the Army Ordnance Corps. He witnessed the horror of Gallipoli and then had a lengthy posting in Egypt. Fred's tiny diary for 1918 survives and faithfully records the date of every letter he sent to Grace and those he received from her. It also records his journey home in September, from Port Said across the Mediterranean to Tarranto, then the train rides through Italy and France. Every port and town they passed through is listed, but no word of description or emotion felt, (rather different from his wife to be!)

*Mon 30th September – Arrived Southampton at daybreak; arrived London after dinner.*

*Tuesday 1st October - Reported to War Office. Left Paddington 3.00 arr. Stonehouse 6.00.*

*The next few days spent between Gloucester and Stonehouse until;*

*Saturday 5th October – Bought G engagement ring and gave it to her at Red Lodge in evening.*

It was another two and a half years whilst Fred established his post-war career before he and Grace finally married at Stonehouse Methodist Church on 14th May 1921. In the early years of their marriage Fred did office work in Gloucester and London gathering qualifications and experience. In January 1926 son Robert was born at their home in Tuffley. Robert's own lengthy memoir provides detailed insight into family life during that period including Fred's promotion within the Powell Lane company which manufactured wax paper and packaging materials. Fred was invited to oversee the development of their new factory in the Loose valley, Kent that would manufacture corrugated paper. He agreed and the family moved to Maidstone in 1929 where the business thrived. Fred became a director of Reeds Corrugated Paper and Chairman of the Association of Corrugated Paper Manufacturers.

Meanwhile Grace, in the tradition of her mother and like many other women in the early 20th century focussed on running 'a good home,' at which she excelled. 'Sixty years on' and many miles from that Eastington childhood she continued many of the routines and behaviours that had framed her childhood.

Each day, once she had served a full English breakfast for herself and Fred and greeted Mrs Chieseman, the daily help, she would set off down the drive with her shopping basket and walk into town. She had accounts with favoured butchers, greengrocers, bakers and other tradespeople and would queue in person to place her orders (or to complain if the Sunday joint hadn't come up to scratch!) Supermarkets were beginning to appear in Maidstone but were shunned.

Mondays were still devoted to washing and I remember as a child watching Mrs Chieseman scrubbing away at the scullery sink much as my granny had watched 'dear Mrs Lewis.' There was no copper, no coal fire, but some items such as Fred's collars were boiled on the electric hob and subsequently 'blued'. I used to watch her struggling to hang out the sheets on the washing line, wrestling with the acres of linen when there was a high wind. And yes, Tuesdays remained the day for ironing, but with the benefit of an electric iron and collapsible ironing board.

Like her father before her, Grace loved to be able to grow her own fruit and vegetables in the large garden at Cotswold. The lugubrious and aptly named gardener, Mr Rose, would attend to help with this two mornings a week. My brother Mark and I would sometimes be charged with taking his morning 'elevenses' to the potting shed where we would watch in awe as he sat on an upturned wooden crate, pour tea from his cup into the saucer; blow on it and then slurp happily through his large, drooping, grey moustache. There were fruits trees aplenty; different types of apple, plum, pear and a huge mulberry tree which produced prodigious amounts of fruit, usually towards the end of our summer holidays. Meanwhile the carefully tended vegetable plot provided seasonal vegetables throughout the year.

Meal times, menus and routines were as fixed as those in the days of Cleeve Cottage and Albion House. Lunch was always served at 1.00 prompt in the dining room, the main meal of the day. It was usually variations on meat and two veg, (fish on Fridays) and for pudding there was always Fred's favourite home-made egg custard ('EC' – everlasting custard as Grace called it.) The ceremonial arrival of the tea trolley usually coincided with the last part of 'Children's Hour' and prior to start of the BBC news. The three shelves of the trolley filled with plates of bread and butter, a variety of jams, sponge cake, fruit cake, cup-cakes (all home-made) and on top, cups and saucers, a large pot

of tea and a thermos of boiling water with which to top it up.

The comfortable predictability of school holidays spent with my grandparents was always an attraction in early childhood, but this steadily gave way to a feeling of claustrophobia and resentment during my teenage years when I would have far preferred to stay at home in Birmingham with my friends. Even so, we always remained close and the news of Grace's death on 2nd March 1973 came as a huge shock. Following Fred's stroke three years previously I had begun to prepare for his departure, but I was in no way ready for the sudden loss of my granny.

Grace lived very much in the present. As a child, I never heard anything of the characters and events recorded here, and my first reading in the spring of 2019 opened my eyes to the cheek by jowl existence of a small, remote community in the late Victorian era. I was also sad that, unlike Fred, she didn't live long enough to see her 'townie' grandson opt to spend most of his adult life in a similar rural setting, albeit at the latter end of the 20th century. My own reminiscence of over forty years in Hook Norton is not for this publication, but as I came to the end of 'Cider with Sally' I was transported back to a bright Friday evening during our first autumn at Vale Cottage in 1978. The renovation of our derelict home was progressing steadily and Paula and I were thrilled to have possession of a large garden complete with the remains of an unoccupied pig sty. As we were lifting some potatoes from the garden for our tea, we heard what we thought was 30 seconds of screaming followed by a shot. Soon afterwards a plume of smoke rose from the top of the slope of next door's small-holding. It wasn't until the next day that we were able to confirm that our neighbours had slaughtered one of their pigs. We became good friends, (still are good friends), and at intervals throughout the year we used to receive trays of pork and lamb for our freezer; at least until the local vet built a house on the orchard, issuing stern warnings about the illegality of home slaughtering. We never made faggots, but oh how we wish we might have shared with Grace the home cured ham I made that Christmas.



### **And what of the other Miller-Smith girls?**

This photo dates from around the time of the Great War. Grace is at the front left...

**Dorothy** (third from left) married Campbell Cameron-Johnson, an up and coming architect who had designed several new homes in Cheltenham and Gloucester. They moved to Castle Donington near Nottingham in the 1920's and had two sons; William (artist and theatre designer) and Alan (a designer of undercarriages for aircraft.) Dorothy died in 1954.

**Margaret** (Markie fourth from left) married John Burnett, a chemist. They lived in Aylesford, Kent, not far from Grace and Fred. They had one son, Christopher, a school teacher. Markie died in April 1974.

**Lucey** (second from left) never married. She trained as a teacher during the Great War at Southlands College in London before returning home to Red Lodge where she died in her early twenties.



**William Miller Smith and Olive on the announcement of  
their engagement**

**26th June 1883**



**Frederick Henry Protherough and Grace Miller-Smith on  
their wedding day**

**14th May 1921**

The photograph on the back cover was taken in August 1952.  
Olive is seated on the chair that remains in use at our home in Hook Norton to  
this very day. Grace stands behind her mother and next to her son Robert who is  
holding aloft his two month old son Hugh in much the same way that the  
captains of victorious football teams lift the FA cup!





