

A
DIARY
OF
A
"VICTORIAN"
COUNTRY
LADY

A BIOGRAPHY OF MISS ADA KINCH

CHAPTER 1

I am Ada Kinch, seventh child of a working class family. I was born in 1893, so I am now over 90 years old.

My family at that time, lived in Northamptonshire, at a nice little village called Moreton Pinkney.

In those days, most of the men were connected with farming, either as farmers or labourers. In this village, there was a church, a chapel, a post office, and shops for a carpenter, a builder, and a tailor. There was also a school and a number of general shops and several public houses etc. In Moreton, there was a large house, called 'The Manor', where a family named Grey lived. He was an Admiral and the family was a large one. They were very generous, and took a lively interest in the village. They built and maintained for some years, a coffee-house in rivalry to the public houses, to save the men from spending all their money on drink. There was a weekly cattle market in a public house yard, and two railways having passenger and goods facilities ran near the village. The railways were, 'The (old) East and West', which went across the county, and had connections with Northampton, Stratford-on-Avon and Banbury; and 'THE GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY' from Marylebone in London, to Nottingham. It was built when I was very young, and now (sadly) now longer exists as a passenger line.

In close proximity to Moreton Pinkney was Canons Ashby House, with its park and church. This was the seat of the Drydens, a family which has now died out, but was the descendant of the poet Dryden long ago. My Father's young teenage life was spent with Lady Dryden, and she was very influential with him.

One of my recollections, is seeing the only man from the village coming home from the BOER WAR. The men of the place took a carriage to the G.C. station and pulled him to the village, amid cheers and flags.

Another early thing, is the 1897 Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The village

celebrated it with a tea and fireworks, to which Mother took us. She pushed Irene Alice, (Rene) in a pram, and I walked beside her. I was terrified every time a firework exploded, and often hid in Mother's voluminous skirts.

Another memory, is of my Mother taking me, (walking) to the next village, Weston by Weedon, to a tea meeting. Weston was the mother church to Moreton. Mother of course met many friends. One of these was Laban Underwood, who sat next to Mother at tea time. I was very excited at this, and longed to ask Mother if this was the Laban of the Bible.

CHAPTER 2

I also remember Queen Victoria's death. Soon after this we left Moreton Pinkney for Woodford Halse, or Woodford-cum-Membris, as that included Hinton, and Farndon, as well as old houses and farms. The house at Moreton was brown-brick, and was on the village green. It had an orchard, and a large garden where fruits and vegetables grew, quite profusely. The house was commodious, containing four bedrooms and three large rooms downstairs, and a cellar. I think this house may have been a monastery or a Manor House. On the outside, it had a cobbled yard and a roofed opening between the house and the lately built farmhouse. The rooms upstairs were The Front Room, kept for visitors, The Boy's Room, The Girl's Room and our Parent's Room. The Boy's Room was large, and open to the back stairs. It joined the Girl's Room which was commodious, containing always two iron bedsteads. The Parents Room was small comparatively, and it led from the Boy's Room. The bedsteads in the Girl's Room were both used when the older girls came home for the holidays. The Front Room was off a landing from the stairs. It was a large room. The landing had a large Chiffonier or cupboard, with a glass front. Our Sunday shoes and dresses were in this cupboard.

The orchard had fruit trees of all sorts in it, as well as our swing, from which cousin Louis Diclon from London, (who was about my age) fell and cut his lip

In the garden we grew gooseberries, strawberries and raspberries in their seasons.

The house was covered with a Jargonel Pear, a Cabbage Rose bush and a Moss Rose

The front door opened in the passage to both rooms. The yard of the house held the stables, the cowshed, and a lot of buildings connected with farming. At Moreton, we kept a horse and a cow. My Father was a carrier, between Banbury and Northampton and Moreton. He went twice a week to Northampton and once a week to Banbury. He also gardened at home and at the Manor, and worked with the horse and cart if any need arose.

In the house downstairs there was a front room, a large stone floored dining room, where we usually had our meals and a very large scullery or kitchen where we played in Winter. There as also a pantry and a dairy at the back of the house.

A large wooden table with a white wood top was in the kitchen, and we often used it to play on.

In the living room, was a roasting rack, (used at Christmas), fixed up in a large chimney piece from which one might view the sky outside, if the fire wasn't lighted. Mother cooked in the living room as there was a stove with an oven. Later in this story I hope to tell you of my family.

CHAPTER 3

About January 1901, we went to Woodford. My Father's maternal grandparents lived in Moreton in the early days and my Grandfather was a cattle dealer and farmer. My Grandfather Kinch lived with his son, my Father, until Father was married. Mother did well for him, until her children came, when he went to Badby to live with his only daughter.

He was married three times and his last wife outlived him. The other Grandparents went to their daughter, my Aunt Lizzie, to live and later died at

Gardiner's Hall at Braiseworth, Suffolk. At Woodford Halse we lived in a small house one of a row. We often wondered how we lived in such a small house, but Mother was dauntless. My Father then worked for his cousin, who had a machine for making parts of a house, e.g. doors and windows. All went well until his cousin, for some unaccountable reason, got an arm badly injured in the machinery. The result was, he sold up and went to Canada.

After this my Father worked for his maternal cousin who had a builder's business in Hinton. He worked there for many years and then at early retiring age went to the sheds at Woodford on the Railway painting wagons until 65 years when he had to retire.

CHAPTER 4

The little house at Woodford became too small and we went to a larger one, owned and resided in, by my Father's cousin, until his accident. This house was called Mount Pleasant, because the upstairs view was beautiful.

It had two sitting rooms, a kitchen and five bedrooms. There was a Parent's Room, a large one, the Girl's room, also large, the Boy's small room and two attics on the next floor.

We stayed here until 1921 when I took Gosbeck School in Suffolk and we went to Suffolk to live.

CHAPTER 5

Now I must go back a few years, to relate about our childhood.

First, our home was a very happy one, disciplined strongly, but always wisely and justly.

We played many games which children still play, such as Hopscotch on smooth ground with a stone and much hopping. Tip Cat we played with a piece of wood (cat) and a stick. The wood (or stone) we picked up from the roadsides and was pointed at both ends, somewhat resembling a loom shuttle and the game was to hit the tip cat with the stick and strike it into the air as far as we

could!

We played many ring- games such as Nuts in May, Sally Sits Weeping and Bingo or Carlo, a dog's name. This game consisted of all, bar one, forming a ring by joining hands. The single player stood in the centre. The people in the ring sang "A farmer had a dog called Bingo (or Carlo)". When the singing stops the centre man points to one player to spell Bongo or Carlo. If he can O.K., if he can't then he goes into the centre.

Marbles was a favourite pastime that we played in the street during the summer; we continued to play it in the winter, but then we played indoors with a piece of wood out of which arches had been cut. The idea was to get the marble through an arch; of course we had several goes in one game. We also played rounders, cricket and badminton on summer days and catches of each other in winter.

Every year, on March 25th, we had our fair day in Moreton Pinkney. Stalls of various kinds were set up on the village green and there were coconut shies, Aunt Sally and roundabouts.

I started extra study at Woodford Church School, when I was 12yrs old. When I was 14yrs, I became a Probationer Monitor at school with a very small wage £5 per calendar month. I attended Mr. Stubbs morning class which started at 7:45am 'till 9:00am. He was a strict Yorkshireman, but extremely good. In two years I became a pupil teacher and was in the school until 1911. The P.T.'s exam was held at Brackley, so Father took me by train. I passed, and was accepted. During those four years training, I went to help any teacher in the school for half a day, and studied for the other half. I lived at home and studied every night until bedtime. My Mother was adamant about my sister Rene and I going for a short time each evening for a walk in the air.

These four years were very hard, but were profitable and were thorough. During that period, Mrs. Stubbs died. I lost a good helpful friend in her. At the end of my pupil study I sat for the Government exam at Banbury Tech. School, it was the preliminary certificate for getting a teacher's certificate.

Later on, to qualify as a teacher in December 1912 I went to Northampton for the certificate exam, but failed. I sat again in 1916, and passed.

During these five years, I taught at Woodford School, and left in 1916 and took a post as assistant teacher in Braunston. The Head Master was Mr. Parson and he was a particularly kind man. I took Standard Two at first, but later took the charge of the infant group. I was very happy in Braunston, which was a

pretty village on the border of Warwickshire and was a boat building centre, situated at the junction of the Oxford Canal with the Grand Union Canal.

In September 1919, I applied to go to Avery Hill Teachers Training College, Eltham, and was accepted as a student. I enjoyed my time at A.T.C. and lived in Fry Hostel one of the four residences in connection with the college.

A great many students lived in the college itself, but there was not room for all. When my training was over I went to Banbury, to St. Mary's Boys School. I was very unhappy there and only stayed 6 months. Then I went into Suffolk as head of Gosbeck School. It was small but good. My family, Father, Mother, and Rene went to Gosbeck, into the School House. Fifteen years were spent there, very happy ones.

CHAPTER 6

In 1932, a great blow was my Mother's death.

I stayed on. Nell, my eldest sister, came to keep house. In 1935, I went to Stowupland School, and stayed 21 years. The parents were nice and friendly, and we lived very happy lives there. My Father died in 1948, after attaining the age of 92 years. We lived, Nell, Rene and I at Stowupland School House, till 1955, that is 20 years. On the whole we were happy, Rene taught at Gosbeck after I left, and at several schools as vacancies occurred. I retired from work at Stowupland School in December 1953, when I was 60 years old. I had wanted to retire in the July but the Council asked me to stay. Later the County Ch.(?) asked me to take on David Pratt to teach in his home, as he was unfit physically for education in a C. School. I was at home, doing part of the work, at that time, but I decided I was fit to teach, in 1957 I started with David at the Police House at Whersteads, his Father was Constable of the village. I travelled daily by bus from the Cattle Market at Ipswich to Wherstead. When I first saw David, he rode on his tricycle, but it had to be given up because of his illness, Dystrophy of the Muscles. He was ten years old and read nicely, and wanted to learn, and so the task was easy. He was not in pain and was very intelligent and content. In the six years I taught him, I never heard him complain. I was fond of him and he was very fond of me, so he usually was most amenable to discipline. His Mother carried him into a small sitting room, where we worked until dinner time, 12 noon, when I went to get my bus home. His Father got promotion to sergeant in the police force, and

was transferred to Eye. I went to Eye three times a week to continue David's education. He took a treatise about the historic town of Eye. He collected information from books and pictures, and altogether made a creditable booklet of Eye. The C.E. were pleased and the finished book was published by them. David worked well, till he was 16 years old when the council ceased his education and granted him a small pension. He took up jewellery work with his Father's great help and worked putting stones into brooches. He died when he was 21 years in the hospital at Ipswich, and was buried at Eye.

Of course we had to leave the School House at Stowuplands and bought 81 Constable Road which was a large house and had a garden which was large too. Nell, our eldest sister, kept house for Rene and I until 1956 when W. Bradley and Edith came to live in part of the Constable Road house. They were there until Willie died in November 1956 and Edie stayed with us. We worked in house and garden for twenty years, Rene doing her part on Saturdays, Holidays and evenings, as she was still at school until 1966. Soon after, Meg came to live with us. Nell died suddenly in 1965, so Edie took the housekeeping. Meg went to live in Worcester, so there were now five people.

Rene died in the early 1970's, so the house was too large for ourselves, I sold it, and bought a bungalow for us three at 69 Ashcroft Road, in Ipswich. We lived there seven years. Meg went back to Derbyshire to be near her son. Edith and I lived together most of the time most agreeably. In 1981, Edith complained of one leg being painful, so the doctor ordered hospital treatment, an X-Ray. Her hip bone was broken, she got through an operation for the hip, but died in hospital soon after. I was left in the bungalow alone, but the neighbours were most kind.

Marie, my niece from Norwich, came to keep house, but I had a slight stroke, which resulted in my going to hospital. While I was away the house and furniture were sold. When I got better I came to a house in Ipswich for older people, and have been here for two years. I was happy at Ipswich until new owners came. Marie then found me my present abode which is very nice in every way (1984).

CHAPTER 7

My Family.

Nell Ellen Frances KINCH

She was the eldest in our family. She was a good cook, and a careful housekeeper, but she was given to having fits of temper. She kept our house for many years in Stowuplands, and died suddenly. She was never ill for long and was very fond of dress.

Alice Annie May KINCH

She was second in line. She lived with Aunt Lizzie and kept house for her. She married Ernest Cooper, in 1918, who was an engine driver at Woodford. They went to Grimsby to live and then had one child, Wm. Ernest Cooper who now lives in Penzance. May had 'Parkinson's Disease' for many years and died from it. Ernie's dead now but lived longer than May.

Edith Elizabeth KINCH

She was third. She lived in service, in many parts of England. She married Willie Bradley and they lived at Long Eaton and Leicester. Later they came to Suffolk, where they both died.

Wm. Edwin George KINCH

He was fourth. He was the tallest of the family. Helped Father with his business and went to be a clerk at Nottingham Victoria. Later, he married Maud Annie Wills of Hinton. They lived at Hucknall. They had three sons and two daughters. Their sons were Sidney, Clifford and Eric, and the daughters were May and Connie. Eric is in Africa now and Connie lives in Nottingham, all the others are dead.

Will KINCH

Will another child was still born.

Mary (Meg) KINCH

She is the fifth child. She lived happily at Badby with Aunty Bessie for a long time. She later went as a children's nurse. She married Wm. Hopley and Cyril was their only child. She lives at Derby and Cyril lives at Long Eaton.

Harry KINCH

He was very hot tempered as a boy, and he and I would not agree if left alone, but Rene was always a peace maker. When he was old enough, he was apprenticed to the Wagon Making Trade in Woodford Railway. After this apprenticeship he became a wagon maker, until he went to the 1914 war. As he grew, he was very humorous. He was wounded three times and was brought back to Southampton, Blackpool and Henley Green Warwickshire to convalesce. He later, in 1919, married Gertrude Elizabeth Lumbe, an only child. Marie Yvonne Elizabeth was their only child. He lived in Norfolk and later went to Norwich.

Rene KINCH

When she grew up, she went to Worcester and London to help in May's work: later she took up teaching and was in several schools Charwelton and Badby in Northants., and Ashbooking and Claydon in Suffolk and Gosbeck in Suffolk.

She and I were very close friends, hardly ever being separated except when she was away, and I was at College. Rene kept on teaching and we paid her grant for a pension which she had for a few years.

CHAPTER 8

Incidents I remember when I was young.

Mother sent us to her grocers for some Leibig. Father was very ill at the time and it was not far, but somehow the bottle of Leibig tipped out of the basket. It fell on the grass, we told Mother we would get it in the morning. She said, "I want it for Father, you will get it NOW!" So we fetched it.

We thought it a good idea one day when we had been left at home to put Rene in a large bag. She had a new red skirt on and scorched it on the grate as she walked about. She was fearful of telling Mother about it.

Mother

Mother always dressed in black, with a bonnet and a cape. The cape had black beads on the velvet, of which it was made.

Her hair, at my earliest remembrance, was white. She always had a black

velvet ribbon on her head instead of a cap.

When she stayed at Felixstowe once with Aunt Nellie, she made Mother wear a hat, which she did for the latter part of her life.

She was a beautiful character, always ready to comfort.

She was so thankful to have more in the later years of her life as formerly most of the spare was spent on we-folk: the family.

ADA KING

APRIL 1984