

EILEEN LILLIAS MACKARNESS NÉE GODFREY, 1888-1984

A short autobiography, and memories shared by her relatives

Eileen wrote the following autobiographical notes in 1978, on the occasion of the 'Noughts Party' held to celebrate her 90th birthday, and other 'noughts' family birthdays:

Born in Malton **May 30th 1888** – eldest daughter of Dr. F W G Godfrey and Mabel (née Hartley)

Educated Home (Scarborough) and Queen Margaret's School

1905 – Frankfurt – studying violin and German

1907-1912 Home which included visit to Melbourne with my father – and engagement to CGM Mackarness, 2nd son of Archdeacon CC Mackarness and Grace (née Milford)

1912 – Cuth left for India to join Indian Forestry Service Assam



Violet, Aunt Ethel and Eileen Godfrey, 1890s



In Norland Nanny uniform

1913 – I trained at the Norland Institute in London

1914 – C home. Sick leave after Enteric. Autumn returned Assam.

1915 – C cabled me after Scarborough Bombardment. Late January I sailed to Calcutta – arrived March 4th. Hosts Archdeacon and Mrs Firminger. Married March 5th by the Archdeacon, Parish Church. Mrs F 'gave me away'. Best man Col. Coppinger (friend of Cuth's). Two nights in Great Eastern Hotel, Calcutta, then to Assam by train and steamer. Assam – station Sibsagar – settling in Forest Officer's Bungalow. Touring with C by marching and elephant riding.

Autumn – C received permission to 'join up'. Rawalpindi – C for training with Green Howards.

1916 – Bannu. NWF [North West Frontier?]. C attached 25th Punjabis. I to Murree for Hot Weather – Richard born August 17th.

Autumn – R and I joined C recruiting in Amritsar.

1917 - Jullundar. C still recruiting – applied for active service. Result – drafted to Rajah of Alloars Service Troops.

Serving in Palestine – I to Dalhousie for Hot Weather.

Sharing bungalow with 2 friends.

Spanish flu raging – all – plus our children were victims – 3 servants died – R and I back to Jullundar.

1918 – To Dalhousie again – Hot Weather. Armistice signed – wives allowed free passages to join husbands serving in Palestine.

I applied and received orders to proceed to Bombay (from Jullundar) to sail for Cairo. R and I – 2 nights and 2 days journey – no ayah – sailed from Bombay on troopship – disembarked Ismailia – by train to Cairo where Cuth met us – He on sick leave from Jerusalem – 3 weeks later C ordered back to India.

1919 I Home. C's plan to rejoin me that summer not possible. I with my parents (Scarborough). Peter born August 25th.

1920 March – C Home on leave – He back to Assam in Autumn. Passages impossible for me and sons.

1921 I with R and P and English Nannie sailed in Jan to join Cuth in Jorhat (Assam). He at last an IFS officer again.

1924 Whole family Home via Burma and Capetown (Canal closed). Stayed in Cape Town with Guy and Nancy and their John. On Home for C's leave. Sons had to be left. Plans had to be considered for them during our periods abroad. Accepted Margot Booker's wonderful offer to have them with her family of five at Elmbridge. Richard to Packwood. Peter 1st lessons with Eleanor (Margot teaching). November - C returned to Assam, Station Jorhat.



Peter, Richard and their parents in 1923

1925 January – I rejoined him, having stayed at Home for Richard's 1st holiday.

1927 January – I Home alone. Saw Peter to Etton Rectory School. Returned Assam that autumn.



Eileen, Cuthbert and Peter in 1938

1930 – Both on leave. Richard to Lancing. C tried out HSG (Home Service Association) re. possible retirement. (No success.) Peter to Bradfield 1933 – 4th scholarship.

1933 – I Home on short leave after operation.

1936 – Both Home on leave. Bought Tas Combe [house in Eastbourne]. Again considering retiring. Assam Govt cabled offering C post as Conservator – accepted. Both returned Shillong HQ.

1937 – I Home alone. Peter left Bradfield.

1938 January – I returned to Shillong. Peter with me. Richard came out to join us that Hot weather. Peter Home. R to temp.? Art job in Bombay then Home.

1939 War declared. Peter called up – Richard applied Air Force – ordered to complete medical training. Served in India – Home on sick leave.

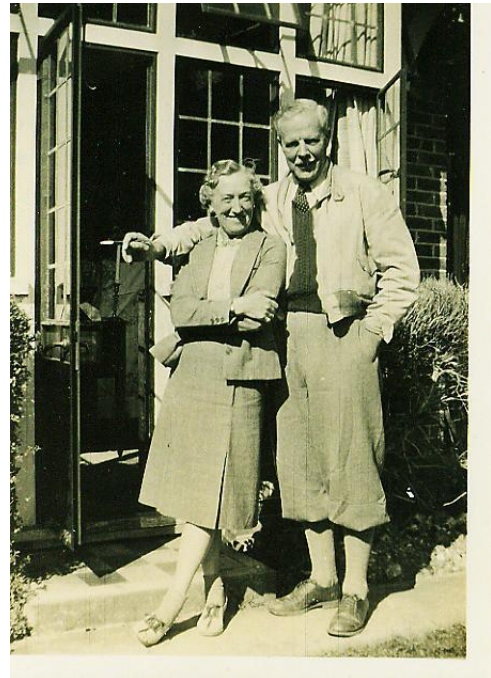
1942 C awarded CIE. I Hon. Secretary WVS Shillong for 52 Working Parties. Awarded KJH [Kaiser i Hind medal] 1944.

1948 C retired from IFS. Home via Cape Town. Dutch ship – stripped for war service – landed Liverpool. Home for ‘Good’. Settled at Tas Combe. C joined Home Guard, I Willingdon WI and WVS. Peter and Torla married September 1943, Richard and Margie May 1947. Both C’s and my mother died 1944. All happy and well until 1960.

1960 Start of C’s illness – we moved to flat in Eastbourne.

1962 – We moved to flat, Petersfield (2 Winchester House) May 8th. Cuth died June 13th. I stayed on Winchester House.

1974 I moved to 1 Albany Chambers, High Street – opposite Peter’s office.



1978 My 90th birthday May 30th. July 16th to celebrate 90th Peter and Torla gave a marvellous ‘Noughts’ party* in their garden – for Mackarness and Godfrey (represented by my sister Elma Foster and family). Torla planned and arranged this beautiful book, a vivid and lasting memory of it all.

Having achieved my 90th I now sit back with all happiness surrounded by my 2 beloved families, Peter’s here in Petersfield and Richard’s in Longparish. For what more could I wish?

Eileen Mackarness

*Noughts Party 1978 – there is a gallery in the ‘photos’ section of The Mackarness Place site, devoted to this event.

Next page: Memories of Eileen

MEMORIES OF EILEEN

Jane Mackarness, Eileen's great-niece: I have such fond memories of Aunt Eileen, Auntie Tiny was our affectionate term for her. Never a Christmas or birthday passed without a card from her for each of us 3 (Christopher, Sue and me), containing a crisp 10 bob note. She was such a kind, wise woman, very close to my mother Ruth; she gave her much needed love and support on many occasions. They felt they were telepathic, borne out by Aunt Eileen phoning my mother when she was seriously ill and alone, giving her the strength to crawl to the phone (Auntie Tiny sensing something was wrong), and she called the ambulance.

Simon Mackarness: My main memory of Little Granny, and why I shall always be grateful to her, is that, a few days before her 90th birthday, she brought Di and me together.

Across the passage in Albany Chambers lived a certain Peggy Reid and her unmarried daughter, Diana (who always much preferred the shortened version of "Di"). These two ladies hatched a plan to bring us together.

Little Granny invited Di and me to supper one evening at the end of May 1978, where she produced her signature dish of Brown Windsor Stew (as an aside she had only learned to cook at the age of 60, having spent most of her adult life in India where the cooking was done for her).

At the end of the meal Little Granny withdrew to her kitchen so discreetly that we hardly noticed, leaving the two of us to chat for what seemed a long time. As they say, the rest is history, and we were married 6 months later.

I also remember how kind (and trusting!) Little Granny was to lend me (and Tom as well, I think) her pretty nippy Riley 1.5 when we were still in our teens.

Tom Mackarness: Probably like all of us who were around Petersfield at the time, I had a key to her flat in Albany Chambers and used to go there in the evenings after work, often when Coronation Street was showing; her sight and hearing were by then failing and she would be seated within, I would say, 2 feet of the TV in order to see and hear her favourite programme. She and I often had a good laugh about it.

For some time while she lived in Albany Chambers, probably years rather than months, she had Andie and me to supper every Wednesday evening.

I think she had a wide range of dishes to offer us, but, by mutual choice, we always had one of two and they both involved eggs: ham omelette or a dish of which I don't know the name but which had hard-boiled eggs, bacon and sliced, boiled potatoes in a cheese sauce; both were irresistible and for many years afterwards I tried to recreate the latter at home, conspicuously without success.

She was truly unique and, like all of us, I loved her dearly.

Kate Perry née Mackarness: I have early 1950s memories of going for the day to Willingdon for lunch with Granny and Grandfather. A long journey, I needed travel sick pills. I remember playing with a toy farm on a green carpet.

When she lived in Albany Chambers it was lovely to visit, in between shopping, usually with small children in tow. I have a photo of Little Granny sitting with 2 year old Jessica and baby Laura in our Woodbury Avenue house in summer 1981. She had very gamely walked there from the town centre and found it more challenging than expected. She must have been 93 at the time!

She was beautifully turned out always. She loved wearing colours in the autumnal palette - green, brown, rust - I don't remember seeing her in pink or blue. I picture her in a skirt, never trousers though she must have had them, and heels. Dad said I'd inherited my slender ankles from Granny!

Patience Jones née Mackarness: A very early memory of mine is of being in Granny's flat and playing with her brass elephants, snake, mongoose, and Ganesh idol - all mementoes of her years in India.

When in my teens, I was sometimes invited for lunch and served with my favourite 'brown stew' - the same dish Simon recalls fondly above!

She liked to tell how she and Grandfather, when young, used a system of pulleys to exchange gifts and messages. Their houses in Scarborough faced each other across the street and their bedroom windows, in 1 Montpellier Terrace and St Martin's Vicarage, were directly opposite. (Grandfather's first gift to her was a book.)

She also told me how, as a small girl, she was riding her bike outside, lost control and drove the bike's front wheel between the legs of an old man, who was terribly angry. It was strange to think that this story connected me, a late-twentieth-century listener, with a man born in the early nineteenth century!

When I went to India by myself in 1979, equipped as a post-hippy backpacker, Granny very seriously advised me against packing a silk ballgown, as it would stick to me in the heat.

In later years I remember seeing her cross Petersfield High Street, her white stick held out in front of her like a flag to warn motorists she was almost blind.

I only knew her as an old lady, the sweetest old lady imaginable; I can still hear her voice saying "Righto, darling!" and buzzing me into Albany Chambers after I announced myself via the intercom, and "My dear!" if one had said something surprising. It has been a delight and a privilege to meet the younger Eileen through letters, diaries and other family papers; 'little Eileen', who trained as a Norland nanny to prepare her for motherhood in India; who 1915 followed her fiancé to Assam, a long and dangerous sea journey in wartime; and whose father wrote emotionally to that fiancé, Cuthbert, that he must always love her and treat her well, because "She is one in a thousand and is just full of heart, of sympathy, of love and unselfishness".