EAST LOTHIAN COASTAL VILLAGES

TIMES PAST TO PRESENT

IN

GULLANE AND DIRLETON

HISTORICAL ESSAYS

Edited by

Michael Cox - Secretary to the Gullane Local History Society

Published by

The Gullane Local History Society and the Dirleton Local History Group

1994

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ISBN 1 870479 02 5

The Committees of the two Societies wish to thank all the contributors for giving of their time and help in providing the essays and illustrations. Photographs are reproduced by permission of the Evening News, National Monuments Record of Scotland and the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum. The Societies are also grateful to the National Monuments Record of Scotland and the Bank of Scotland for their financial support towards the printing costs; to Mrs. P. Mavor for allowing the publication of extracts from Nurse Sowler's autobiography; Geoffrey Quick and Ian Fullerton for undertaking the photographic work, and, to Michael Cox for progressing the enterprise. The Editor is also indebted to the invaluable help given to him by Mrs. D. Bell, Mrs. A. Hay, and, M. D. Print and Design.

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BACKGROUND

The Dirleton Local History Group (DLHG) was established in 1983 and the Gullane Local History Society (GLHS) two years later. The first modest books about aspects of the history of the two villages were Collected Essays 1985 and 1989 by the DLHG, and Reminiscences in 1987 and Gullane Parish Church 1888-1988 by the GLHS. In 1993 it was decided to combine resources and publish a new book of essays which would add to our knowledge of people and events of the past up to the present in the Parish of Dirleton, formerly Gullane.

THE GIFT OF 'MY LIFE'

Autobiography by I. A. Sowler

Introduction

In the Autumn of 1992 Mrs Pat Mavor (now living in Edinburgh) handed a small attaché case of papers to Maurice Timson, a member of the Committee of the Gullane Local History Society as she felt the contents could well be of interest to the members of the Society as well as the older people living in the district who would remember their first District Nurse.

The case contained the typescript of the autobiography which Nurse Sowler had written after she retired in 1961. There were also scrapbooks covering some of the pantomimes she and her friend of many years, Betty Donaldson, had presented in the village plus some press cuttings, and photographs of some of the children she had brought into the world when living and working in Gullane and district. The Society is extremely grateful to Mrs Mavor for not only letting the Committee look at this treasure chest but also to agreeing to the publication of the autobiographical material contained in that small attaché case of many memories.

Ida Sowler's Early Life

Ida Sowler was born on the 15th November 1897 in Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland. She was the third child of Emily and William Sowler. Her father, at that time, was employed as a clerk by the brewers Bass, Ratcliffe and Gretton. He augmented his income by 'keeping the books' for a large drapery store. Ida's brother James (Jim), the eldest child, was born in April 1894, her elder sister Dorothy Mary (Dolly) in June 1895 and her younger sister Marjorie in September 1899. When a baby she had gastro-enteritis and she was two years old before she was able to walk. During her childhood she commented that her mother was often ill.

In November 1907 William Sowler was offered the position of cashier at his company's Edinburgh office and the family moved to a house at 6 Whitehouse Terrace in Corstorphine, then a village some four miles west of the city centre on the Glasgow road. In Edinburgh Jim went to George Heriot's School whilst the girls went to James Gillespie's School. As Emily's sciatica got progressively worse Dolly left school at 14 to look after her mother and the family. When Ida reached 14 she also left school taking over from Dolly who then took a secretarial course. During this period the three girls joined the 4th Midlothian Girl Scouts (later the Girl Guides) and by 1914 Ida was a Patrol Leader - she was then 17 years of age. Ida's greatest joy during her teenage years was taking part in children's pantomimes, an activity which continued with breaks during the rest of her life. These were family affairs. Her father was the treasurer of the group; her mother made all the costumes; all the young people took part and proceeds went to augment the funds of the St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Corstorphine. Shows included Beauty and the Beast, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Robin Hood and Aladdin.

At the end of November 1915, Ida Sowler went to look after her grandmother who was living on her own in Stockton-on-Tees. It was not a happy experience and when her father visited her over the Christmas holiday she told him she was homesick and didn't like the life she was having to live. Her father then arranged for one of his nieces, who lived near his mother, to look after her and Ida returned to Edinburgh at the end of February 1916. Shortly afterwards, having spent some time helping run the West Maitland Street sub Post Office in the West End of Edinburgh, she got a job as a clerkess with an Edinburgh life assurance company earning 15/0 (75p) per week.

For as long as she could remember she had always longed to be a nurse and it was therefore a great disappointment to her that her parents refused their permission for her to make nursing her career. However, during 1919 she saw an advertisement in an evening paper in which the Deaconess Hospital, Edinburgh, was looking for a probationer. Following her acceptance her father was "raging and prophesying that I would only last a month, my brother gave me six weeks". So just before her 22nd birthday she started on a career which lasted for 42 years.

In her autobiography Ida Sowler gives a detailed description of her training and experience at the Deaconess Hospital. For the first two years she was on duty from 7.00am to 10.00pm with two hours off alternately morning and afternoon; with one long evening (6.00pm to 10.00pm) one week with a half day (2.00pm to 10.00pm) the following week. She also had one day off a month! Third year probationers did slightly better, but only the Sister had one weekend off a month! Duties saw her working in both the male and female wards and later she had spells of night duty.

Christmas 1921 was a period which threatened her whole career. Two days before Christmas an infant had been admitted and died during the night before the result of a swab tests had proved positive for diphtheria which affected many children at that time. Ida Sowler together with a nurse and an infant were rushed off to the City Hospital in case they had become carriers of the disease. Ida Sowler became ill with diphtheria herself and spent ten weeks at the hospital before going home for three months to convalesce. Her return to the Deaconess Hospital was shortlived as she again became ill. After recovering, the doctor at the Deaconess felt that she was not strong enough to continue her training and she was offered a post as staff nurse at Gogarburn House, a home for small children between two and five years of age suffering from malnutrition, which was run by the Edinburgh Town Council.

In August 1922 she again asked the Matron at the Deaconess Hospital if she could go back and complete her training. This time she was accepted and went there in October and passed her final examinations the following Spring. She left the Deaconess Hospital in September 1923 and entered the Training School of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses (Scottish Branch) in Castle Terrace on the 1st October. The course of training to become a Queen's Nurse with additional training so that she could qualify to become a Health Visitor and Midwife lasted for ten months. Trainees accompanied a qualified Health Visitor to learn about the cases in a particular district. Nurse Sowler was assigned to the Castle Hill area of Edinburgh which included the High Street, Grassmarket and West Port. Visits were undertaken in the mornings and evenings and lectures held in the afternoons at the Old University Quadrant. The last month of the training consisted of helping out at Child Welfare Clinics.

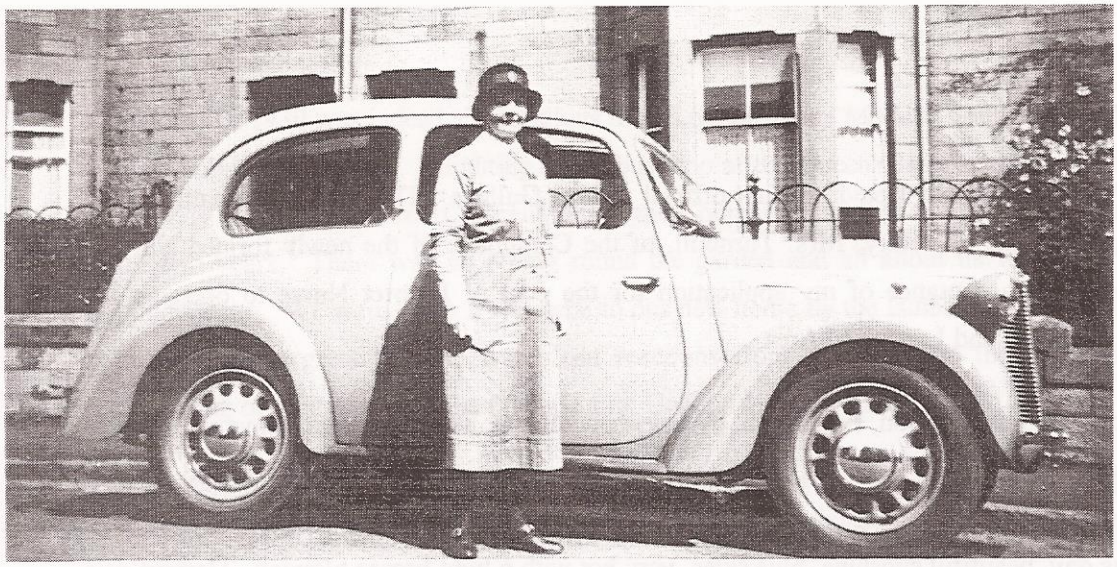
Before she could obtain her full Certificate as a Health Visitor she had to spend two years as a Probationary Health Visitor. "It was a sultry Monday afternoon in the second week of August 1924, that I, now a fully fledged Queen's Nursing Sister, launched forth on my wonderful venture, to take up my duties on my first district at Lochgelly, a mining village in Fife". There she was supervised by a Miss Hall. At Lochgelly she started a children's club and later when it had grown she contacted a Miss Donaldson who a few years earlier had built a hall alongside her bungalow in which she held a Sunday School, ran a Girls Friendly Society, and held meetings there for Brownies and Girl Guides. They joined forces with Nurse Sowler taking on the Brownies. Her friendship with Betty Donaldson lasted for the rest of her life. There were many outings to arrange and a pantomime was presented to the children of Lochgelly in a hall with no chairs! The friendship between Ida Sowler and Betty Donaldson developed to the extent that when the two year probationary period came near to its end they agreed that they "would make a home together and carry on the good work among girls".

Towards the end of 1926 Nurse Sowler answered an advertisement in the Nursing Times for a District Nurse, with a friend to keep house for her, to develop a new district at Douglas Water in Lanarkshire. She took up her duties on 26th January 1927, but, as there was no house immediately available she went into lodgings. In her autobiography we read about the life in this mining village and the range and scope of the duties she undertook. It was a year and a half before the new house was ready for the District Nurse and her friend. They occupied a top flat and it was furnished by the local Nursing Association. "Apart from Ponfeigh (Douglas Water) and the village of Rigside I had a five mile area to cover. Quite frequently Dr. Collier and I would meet at confinements, for minor operations and treatments. I had a great admiration for Dr. Collier; he was a very clever, kindly and trustworthy doctor. He instilled confidence into his patients which of course is half the battle to recovery". During her first year Betty Donaldson formed a company of Girl Guides and started a Sunday School. "During the winter with Betty as producer, we produced various entertainments including a pantomime".

"In the days when Betty had her Sunday School for children whose parents were in poor circumstances, there was one little girl who used to attend who had been adopted during the First World War. The foster mother became ill and worried what would happen to 15 year old Ivy if she died, as her husband was a heavy drinker. Betty assured her that she would look after Ivy. When the poor woman died, Betty with the consent of the foster father took her home and adopted her. More will be heard of Ivy later".

In the Summer of 1930 Ida Sowler applied for the post of District Nurse to open up a new district in the Gullane, Dirleton and landward area in East Lothian. The rest of this essay recalls Nurse Ida Sowler's life in Gullane and district as told in her own words.

(*Michael Cox*)



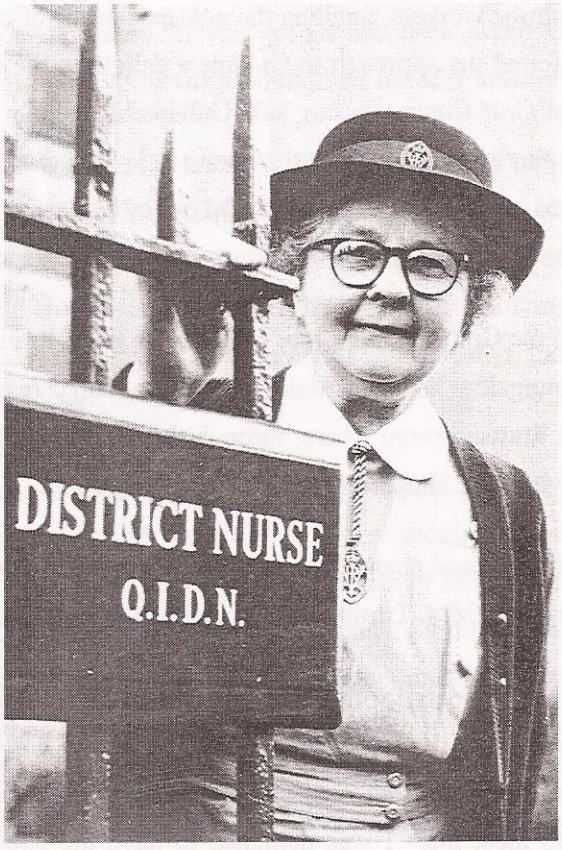
Nurse Ida Sowler - 1939

'Wohelo', 23 Hopetoun Terrace - 1933

At retirement - 1961

Ida Sowler during training

Betty Donaldson and Ida Sowler - 1920s



My Third District - Gullane

It was during August 1930 that I paid my first official visit to Gullane. This was in the nature of an interview arranged by the Secretary, Mrs. Turnbull, of the Committee of the newly formed Nursing Association, following acceptance of my application for the post of District Nurse to open up the district Gullane, Dirleton and Landward Area.

I was met at the Caledonian Station, Edinburgh, by a nephew of Mrs. Turnbull's who drove me down to Gullane. As we drew nearer to the coast I had the impression of being transferred to a land flowing with milk and honey, such as was visualised by the Israelites on their pilgrimage to the promised land. It was a glorious day, beautiful sunshine, blue skies, very hot with a light breeze blowing. Harvest was in full swing with the workers handling the golden sheaves of corn, the like of which I had not seen for many a day. I found the approach to Gullane a delight to the eye. Luffness Golf Course on our right with the Gullane Golf Course on our left; Gullane hill giving way to gentle dips and decreasing rises until the greens gently converge with the main road. The dwellings of the affluent built, as it were, on terraces, snuggled together under the watchful eye of Gullane Hill House. I look back with nostalgia on Gullane as it was during the first fifteen years of my abode there.

We drove left of the Gullane Golf Club, up Hummel Road turning first right along Nisbet Road, halting at Girlsta, the bungalow home of Major Patrick (a retired regular soldier) and Mrs. Turnbull. I was ushered into the drawing-room where, through the open French windows, I had a view of a wonderful picture garden with the Lammermoor Hills as a background.

After being introduced and chatting for a while with Major Turnbull and Mrs. Turnbull, my companion and I in company with Mrs. Turnbull proceeded by car to my home to be.

There we found the builders for the East Lothian County Council in the process of building a crescent (Hamilton Crescent) of three-roomed houses. The one we were to occupy was almost complete. Several members of the Nursing Association Committee had arranged to be present at the inspection of the house and to meet me. I was delighted to have the opportunity of meeting these ladies and in particular a Miss Kirkwood, former Infant Mistress of Dirleton Public School. This lady lived in Dirleton and on being introduced to her I was informed that anything I wished to know regarding directions in finding out the whereabouts of my patients or any other information required, Miss Kirkwood was the one to go to. Most certainly Miss Kirkwood proved a valuable friend.

I was not in the least enamoured of the house, it being much smaller than the one my friend and I occupied at Douglas Water and also the cupboard accommodation was practically nil. The living-room had an ordinary kitchen range and there was no pulley in the kitchenette for drying clothes. This was going to be a great drawback for one arriving home drenched after cycling miles in pouring rain. On my return to Douglas Water I am afraid I had not a favourable report to present to my dear friend Betty.

October of 1930 was indeed a marvellous month of sunshine. Monday afternoon of the 1st we travelled down to Gullane by bus. Alighting at the bus stop at the Queen's Hotel we crossed the road and made our way down to Hamilton Crescent and to the Council house at the corner which was to be our home for two years. There was no paling round the garden and all about us workmen were busy on the building site. We were given a welcome to our new home by the ladies of the Committee who were all present and in great heart to watch our reactions from the results in their labours in planning the furnishing of the Nurses' Home for their first Queen's Nursing Sister.

We received a warm welcome. A bright fire burned in the kitchen grate and the table was laid for tea for two. My beautiful table with brass feet which had been a gift from an elderly lady at Douglas Water made the living-room look quite like home. Other pieces of our own furniture scattered over the house helped quell our feelings of home sickness. I was glad I had been asked what type of bed I preferred and thankful I had chosen hospital beds as the hair mattress induces healthy sleep.

Although the larger bedroom was small it accommodated the twin beds, a large old-fashioned chest of drawers (that had seen service during the First World War with the Red Cross) with an old-fashioned mirror on a swivel on top; two chairs and a hanging wardrobe built of three lengths of wood, no back to it and fitted with a curtain. My faithful trunk was placed across the fireside at an angle of the room; to my mind it looked disparagingly at me as if to say 'what have I done to be treated like this?'. I am sure she pined for her cupboard at Douglas Water.

Our reactions so far as the Committee were concerned were satisfactory. We sent them off with the impression of a job well done. Now they could picture their Nurse moving around the little house planned and furnished by their own fair hands. There would be a cheery fire in the grate to welcome Nurse home after a tiring day's work, battling along the country roads, fighting against strong easterly gales or through drenching rain. A fireside chair would be awaiting her and a comfortable bed to lie on at night. To crown all had they not specified they wanted a Nurse with a friend who could look after her personal comforts? A pleasant thought indeed and the 7/6 (37½p) a week extra would help towards the friend's keep and provide cleaning material! A happy picture and God bless them; they did their best. Those at the top of the tree could not be blamed for being born at the tail end of the Victorian era. They had received their cue while young from their autocratic parents and, as was their habit, thought and acted as their forebears of that period, claiming service as their right without considering remuneration.

Although the population was, at this period, served by the East Lothian Benefit Nursing Association, the Cottage Trained Nurses who gave excellent service to East Lothian, and also two Midwives (elderly) who worked with the local doctor, Dr. Kirk, for whose services he must have been most grateful, there grew an increasing need for a resident District Nurse in Gullane.

There arose a group of ladies, Mrs. Aitchison being the actual pioneer, who formed themselves into a Committee for the purpose of raising funds and making provision to establish a Queen's Nursing Sister

to be domiciled in Gullane. These ladies worked hard to carry out their project and very satisfied they must have been to see their dream materialise. Mrs. Chalmers Watson, residing at Fenton Barns, supervising her wonderful Dairy Farm, was our Chairman. We were indeed most fortunate in having so capable a person in the chair. Mrs. Patrick Turnbull, our principal Secretary, who was a member of the Scottish Council of the Queen's Institute, must have been a great asset to the Committee as she would have firsthand knowledge of the procedure in the working of the Nursing Association. During the seventeen years Mrs. Turnbull served on the Committee I feel it was to her we owed the smoothness by which the working of the Committee was run.

Miss Eeles of Gullane also acted as a Secretary, attending to much of the actual business incurred. Miss Foulis held the post as third Secretary, representing Dirleton. Mr. J. P. Sinclair, Chemist, served as Treasurer; this entailed sacrificing a great deal of his free time which was generously given. I must not forget to mention our President, Colonel Grant of Biel, a man of stature, prepossessing, shy, with, no doubt, a heart of gold.

For many months the acquisition of a resident Nurse in Gullane provided the members of the Committee of the District Nursing Association with a new interest. At all hours during the day, quite frequently while we were having a meal, we would receive callers. "Just to see how you are settling down," was a usual comment. We were delighted to see our visitors, nevertheless the difficulty was that we did not have a suitable sitting-room in which to receive them. The bedroom at the back was very small. I made it my duty room in which was placed a large roll-top desk, two chairs, my nursing cupboard and a single bed to be used for an occasional visitor. The phone stood on my desk.

One caller we had, a little lady I became very attached to, relaxing one evening at our fireside, boasting how she had paid £300 for her drawing-room carpet, announced, with eye on the kitchen range, "Now, this is just what I should love." We sometimes had a visit from Mr. Caesar, the Parish Church Minister. These visits we both greatly appreciated and enjoyed. One day we were on the point of sitting down to our evening meal of sausages and egg when on looking out of the window we espied him coming down the road towards our house; we quickly popped the frying pan into the oven with the handle sticking out in view. Mr. Caesar was favoured with the tantalising aroma during his visit.

One very charming lady on the Committee commonly known as the immaculate Mrs. Carpenter offered to purchase a new bicycle for me to replace an old one that had been given to me to use temporarily. I travelled up to Edinburgh by bus with Mrs. Carter; she was dressed immaculately in a grey silken costume with hat to match, carrying a handsome handbag and grey silk umbrella, tightly rolled. We made our purchase and then travelled by taxi to Jenners for afternoon tea. I was in uniform and trotted behind my companion like a pet dog. Mrs. Carter was a very sweet lady, with a marvellous pink and cream complexion.

It was said at the time of our arrival that there were as many classes in Gullane as there were castes in India. The population was principally made up of successful businessmen, retired Army and Naval

Officers and others from various professions; including those who serve the public such as the Minister, Doctors, District Nurse, School Master, Post Master, Shopkeepers, Police and the many other services which are in action, showing us the real need we have of one another.

Those in the possession of larger establishments, clustered together at the west side of Gullane, practically lived in segregation. Their lives at the time of my entering Gullane appeared to revolve around the Golf Club. Golf, bridge and the social round took up much of their time. A weekly visit to Church, an occasional appearance at a village function, shopping in the village in the mornings, made up their lives. We who served the community had little time for sport. A large percentage of the residents do, however, make good use of the Golf Course, Bowling Green and Tennis Courts.

My friend and I found it a very lonely business settling down in Gullane. Apart from invitations to afternoon tea by several ladies on the Committee, we felt very much like castaways on a desert island. The people did not seem forthcoming, almost suspicious and afraid, appearing to resent the offering (or appeal) of a hand in friendship, so different to those we had become accustomed to in the West.

Soulless as Gullane appeared to be, we were prepared to serve the population five years and to make the best of the situation. Not that we had the fashioning of our lives; as time marched on our destiny was unfolded to us. Betty, who had always been a keen Church Worker, undertook to lift up the organisation of the Women's Guild which had been in abeyance for some time before we arrived. Then, having much time on her hands, she took in four daily pupils; Mr. Smith Mellis, the United Free Church Minister's small, charming, tomboy daughter, two boys from abroad, and a local boy who was backward; all aged between 8 and 10 years. Anne, the sprite-like child, always made her entry and departure by the sitting-room window.

Shortly after our arrival two schoolgirls called on Betty to ask her if she would form a company of Girl Guides; these had also been in abeyance. It seemed as if Gullane had been waiting for us to bring it to life. Not many months later we had a fine Company of Girl Guides and one of Rangers. I took on the Rangers for a year or two when, on the departure of the Brown Owl from Gullane, I changed to the Brownies, they appealing to me more than the Rangers.

Slowly and surely the inevitable happened. My life as a District Nurse became enveloped by the lives who made up our community. Betty, as had happened at Douglas Water, proved a tremendous asset to me in the pioneer work of opening up a new district. Her interests brought her in touch with the older generation, adolescents and young children. Our home grew to be a nucleus of activity. I was thus brought into contact with the healthy element of the population and thereby made myself known.

Dr. Bruce Kirk, the local doctor, made his social-cum-professional visit on the morning after my arrival. A tall, slim gentleman of boundless energy, now, as I write, retired. He was a mountain of strength to his patients. He spoke of his pleasure on the realisation of the establishment of a District Nurse in Gullane. My presence was going to mean so much to him; I should be such a help to him with

his patients. I remained as, in his own words, a great help right through the years. I learned very quickly that here in Gullane I should have to tread the road alone, not working, as is the ideal state, as a team. We worked pleasantly together and Dr. Kirk was always profuse in his thanks for the great help I had been to him and his patients. The sad part was, those who could do with my help were not always put in the way of obtaining it and some could have done with a little less of my time. No, I cannot say that Gullane District was the happiest place to nurse in, at least for the first few years of my stay there.

One of my difficulties in my pioneer work of opening up this district was the fact that the Cottage Trained Nurses (East Lothian Benefit Nurses), with two years' training, the majority trained as Midwives only, were accustomed to take the place of the mother in the home; taking on all her duties such as lighting fires, cooking, washing, shopping and keeping the home tidy. Also it was expected of her to see to the schoolchildren and toddlers. I salute these grand women for the wonderful work they accomplished. My trouble was that there was an element in my district who thought that I also should carry out some of these duties. They would enquire "Of what great benefit was a District Nurse going to be to the community?". I was successful in overcoming this difficulty.

Speaking aside, our Queen's Nurses are always ready to supply the needful, be it light a fire, make a light meal for a patient living alone, carry an urgent message, put the cat out, call the dog in, answer the door, post letters, hand in prescriptions to the Chemist and many other little services. I don't think the local doctor ever managed to differentiate between the partially trained nurse and the highly trained Queen's Nurses. I was never really made to feel I had my rightful place in Gullane.

Times changed however and, as the North Berwick, East Linton and Haddington doctors gradually became aware of my presence in Gullane and called on my services I once again threw off my feelings of inferiority and with gladness in my heart served those doctors in the knowledge that I held their full confidence in my ability to carry out my duty to them and their patients.

As the work increased so life became more interesting. Many difficulties arose calling for diplomacy. At first I was constantly being asked to undertake duties not normally undertaken by district nurses. For instance, we relieved private nurses for their days off duty, paying morning and evening visits to attend to their patients' general comfort, relatives or friends attending to the patient during the intervening hours of our absence. Several members of the community hoped I would stay with patients while the private nurse had her afternoon off; sit with an ill husband while the wife went up to Edinburgh to do some shopping; whilst another family stated they could manage to do the day nursing if I would undertake the night work. One dear lady, an American, asked me to sit with her husband for an afternoon and announced me thus, "Now, darling, here is Nurse; I am sure you are going to like her; she will sit beside you and hold your hand!". Needless to say I did not thus conduct myself.

Now all these requests came naturally from anxious relatives or friends and were conceded to for the one occasion followed tactfully by the explanation of the reason for not continuing these services. Gradually the population became educated to the fact that the services of a District Nurse had to be

shared by the Community and that as a District Nurse was on call for twenty-four hours of the day, it was not possible to pay more than one or two visits a day to patients, attending to general comfort and to carry out treatments. It was a disappointment to the relatives that I was not allowed to perform last offices; my explanation for not being able to comply with their wishes on these occasions was fully accepted.

Two years elapsed; my district was now settling down and I was feeling content with progress made. My Committee, doctors, patients and visiting Superintendents appeared satisfied with my work and the annual reports showed that many more out-patients were seeking my services.

By this time Betty and I were desperate to acquire a larger house. We approached the Committee with the proposal that if they agreed we should rent No. 23 Hopetoun Terrace, a six roomed villa built the previous year; we would furnish it ourselves and pay the difference in rent. After much persuasion and having approached my father to stand as Guarantor, we took possession of the house which we named 'Wohelo'. This name we adopted after reading of an American Camp Fire Girl's Motto - the first two letters of the words, Work - Health - Love. We thought it quite appropriate for a Nurses' home and for the work which my friend had voluntarily taken up.

My salary of £144 per annum proved inadequate to keep two, so we had planned together that by moving into the larger house my friend would be able to augment our income if she looked after summer visitors. This meant very hard work for her. Indeed, so kind had she been to the many families and latterly mostly elderly ladies who have stayed for periods ranging from three months to five years at 'Wohelo', that I am sorry to relate she has spent her strength to the uttermost. Now she suffers from an anaemic condition which necessitates my giving her weekly injections to prevent pernicious anaemia. The undergoing of two operations no doubt presupposed this condition.

May 1933 found us settled into our new home. It was a treat to live and move around in more spacious surroundings. Furthermore our whole outlook on life changed. From our cramped, deadlock life we awoke to find we were full of ambition. There was the joy of furnishing the house, the preparations for the arrival of our summer guests, the getting to know the many people who crossed our threshold and the setting of ourselves to do our best for these holidaymakers so that on their return home they would look back on 'the holiday that was'. During the summer months we kept the small sitting-room (our den) private so that any doctors calling, expectant mothers or patients requiring treatment might be seen privately by me and not brought in contact with the summer visitors.

As is so often brought to our notice that God causes good to spring from evil, the following good deed was showered on me. A tragedy occurred to Mrs. Jackson Russell, Archerfield, Dirleton, during the month of August 1933. While reversing her new car at North Berwick harbour she inadvertently backed into the harbour. The good lady was drowned although other occupants of the car were saved. Her husband, remembering that he had on several occasions heard his wife remark, on witnessing my struggles on my bicycle against the elements, "I wish I could be the one to give that nurse a car",

handed over a new Austin 8 to the Committee of the Gullane, Dirleton and Landward Area Nursing Association as a Memorial to his wife.

Thus it was that I then continued in the future to travel in comfort. Now that I had a car my district was extended from five miles to a ten-mile radius. I embraced more patients, giving me much more work and experience. Looking back I consider the following ten years as living on the crest of my life as District Nurse for this district.

I was so very grateful for the gift of that car and only wish that it had been gifted before Mrs. Jackson Russell's sad death. I should so much have wished to thank her and with what pleasure I should have had in saluting her in the passing. At times I would drive along the road, window open and singing at the top of my voice. One day, using the 95th Psalm with great gusto I became alarmed by half a dozen heads popping up from the other side of a hedge; naturally my performance came suddenly to a halt and I sheepishly exchanged a smile with six large grins.

That winter of 1933 Betty and I produced our first entertainment with the Rangers, Guides and Brownies in Gullane. We chose 'The Masque of Empire'; following this an exhibition of dancing, songs and recitations round a Camp Fire by the girls. This entertainment proved to be a great success. Our audience was appreciative. The inevitable amateur performance faux pas happened when the curtains drawn prematurely showed the hall keeper with a large broom sweeping up a broken bulb, bringing the house down. I never regret a mishap when it causes someone to laugh; that is good entertainment.

We had by this time made friends with, whom I will call, young adults. There was Mr. Robert Sinclair, the Chemist's son, who was our Stage Manager; his sister Jenny, our Secretary; Miss Aikman (Peggy), now married to Robert, our Wardrobe Mistress; Mr. Jack Gilchrist, our pianist (later taken over by the late Mrs. Baxter); Betty, the producer. Mr. J. P. Sinclair kindly took over the work of Treasurer. Owing to the nature of my work I was unable to take on any special position. I wrote several of the scripts for the pantomimes, helped the girls with their 'parts' and provided the Pantomime Committee with ideas. They called me the 'Ideaist'. Robert and his pals made all the scenery and attended to the lighting arrangements. We had a splendid Dancing Mistress in Mrs. Henderson of North Berwick.

I cannot describe fully all the fun, all the happiness and delight we gained in the companionship of all these young people. The hard work of keeping the cast together; of getting out of them just what one wanted; of putting into them all one wanted; of demanding of the Stage Manager exactly what had to be; and using one's art of persuasion on the Wardrobe Mistress to produce almost the impossible in the way of animal costumes, demon costumes, etc.

After our first entertainment in Gullane we produced in succession the pantomimes Dick Whittington, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty. During the War years we produced a

musical programme, The Market Square. Finally with a lapse of time we produced Aladdin in 1950 and Cinderella in 1952.

I well remember the excitement caused by the arrival of the hired costumes and all the preparations for the production; particularly the night of the dress rehearsal. Our hopes were so often dashed during the rehearsal and we would cheer ourselves up by saying a bad rehearsal means a good first night; we were never disappointed. Then the great night arrived. The Stage Manager and his helpers were on the spot in good time to put the finishing touches to their arrangements. The scenery was something wonderful and our little fairies were sweet in their ballet dresses. The girls, all excited, arrived backstage to claim their rightful corner of the dressing room; their costumes beautifully ironed awaiting them. A friend of ours who had at one time been an actress made up the principal characters while I attended to the younger artists. We always had packed houses and the pantomimes usually ran for three nights. We once had a special request for a Saturday matinée for the fathers. There was a cast of sixty-seven artists. The excitement rose to a pitch both with the audience and back stage when the signal for the curtain to rise was given. One could almost feel the gasp of delight provoked by the sight that met the eye. We always made a speciality of the opening scene and what child lover could be unmoved by the figure of a tiny fairy infant asleep under a tree in a fairy glade, wakening up to dance in a spotlight, being joined in her dancing by other little fairy folk? Each year we varied the picture and immediately the scene was finished fond mothers would bear the child off home to bed.

It was very difficult keeping the girls quiet in the dressing rooms. We provided books and games to occupy their time. Those in charge relieved one another to enable each to rush round to the back of the hall to have a glimpse of the girls and to report how things were going. I really was nervous when my plays were produced; however I am glad to say they 'took' alright.

I imagine there are several motives for writing one's autobiography. In some cases, such as my own, having completed a full, busy, useful, happy life, suddenly finding oneself laid aside, outmoded, gains consolation in re-living one's life by placing on paper those signposts (events) which are the means by which one travels down memory lane. To this end I will now reminisce on events occurring during the period 1935 to 1961.

There was a time when a large representation of Queen's Nursing Sisters assembled on the lawn of Buckingham Palace to be inspected by their Patroness, Her Majesty Queen Mary. The party from Edinburgh travelled overnight from Waverley Station to King's Cross. Arriving early in the morning we were escorted to the Y.W.C.A. where we breakfasted, had a wash and were then taken for a delightful tour round London. We were shown the House of Commons, Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Downing Street, St. Martin-in-the-fields and other buildings of interest. I was disappointed to find Buckingham Palace windows draped with Nottingham lace curtains.

It was a day in June, not too bright although dry and comfortably warm. I cannot say I was enamoured by the excursion; it simply left me flat. No doubt the fact that I had been out all night previously at a maternity case, followed by the overnight journey to London, meant I was too tired mentally and physically to appreciate the honour to be present at the inspection by Queen Mary.

Following the partaking of lunch at the Y.W.C.A., we were taken by bus to Buckingham Palace. Here we were all lined up for inspection on the lawn facing the Palace. The atmosphere was one of dreamy inertia. The Nurses, one and all, appeared apathetic, lacking enthusiasm for this Royal occasion. Most of us were desperately disappointed our Royal Patroness did not greet us with a word of welcome or bestow on us a few words of encouragement in our work. Queen Mary, walking up and down the ranks, casting a quick side glance here and there, calm, self-possessed, in all her regality, strangely hiding her true nature, known to those only who lived near her to be shy, kind and most understanding, left in her wake a deep sense of admiration.

The inspection completed, several Superintendents were presented to Her Majesty. This event was followed by the presentation of long service badges to senior nurses. The programme completed, Queen Mary returned to the Palace. It was astonishing how quickly the lawn was cleared of the gathering of the nurses. Miss Elliot from Pencaitland and I hung back for a few moments to take a quick look around. The door to the Palace remained open and we were greatly tempted to dart inside to see what we could see. We however resisted the temptation, knowing full well we would not have got very far without being discovered. Soon we found ourselves in a packed hall where a help-yourself service of tea, sandwiches and cakes was in process. It was a scramble to get a cup of tea and something to eat. After wandering about we made our way to King's Cross to catch the overnight train home.

I don't remember having before mentioned my reason for leaving Douglas Water to take up District Nursing in Gullane. My father retired in 1932. My parents had decided they would retire to North Berwick to live. Very soon after this decision was made, Gullane District was advertised and I applied for it as I felt if I came to Gullane I should be able to keep an eye on them in their older age. Woe was me! My application for this district was accepted and by 1932 just when after two years of settling down here and looking forward to having them near to me, my parents changed their minds and decided to make Whitby their future home. This was their 'home' ground where they spent five happy years together. On holiday with us during the month of September 1937, father fell ill with heart trouble and died on 31st October. This was a great blow to mother and all our family. It was difficult to think of life without father; he and I had always been such good friends.

For eleven years my dear mother lived all alone in her bungalow, Royston, quite near to me. It was her own wish to keep a home of her own. I did my best to watch over her and saw to it that she was never left too long alone. On 27th April 1948 mother, in her eighty-third year, passed on, as I like to believe, to join father. My brother Jim from Liverpool, my sister Dorothy from Fife and myself very sadly disposed of the bungalow and its contents; we felt desperately sad and lonely by the departure of both

parents. As my brother Jim grievously remarked, 'That is the end of that chapter'. Our hearts went out to our sister Marjorie in Canada who, unable to be with us during this period of sorrow, had to bear the sorrow alone. This sad episode over, we each returned to our appointed paths to carry on to the end of the road where we hope to meet with those whom we hold so dear.

By this time Ivy, the first adopted child, had come to North Berwick to be Children's Nurse to Admiral and Mrs. Dewar's three sons (*Admiral Dewar and his family moved to Glebe Cottage in Gullane in 1939*). On 11th November 1937 we gave her a party to celebrate her 21st Birthday. It was shortly after this event that Ivy left North Berwick to look after Lady Mary Baillie Hamilton at Mellerstain. Lady Mary at that time was 3½ years of age. She was a delightful elfin child. During the seven years Ivy was at Mellerstain we visited her several times, when we were privileged to see over the house and have tea in the Nursery or outside the Play House in the garden. By the time Lady Mary reached the age for a Governess, a little brother arrived, Lord Binning (John), who kept Ivy busy up to the time of her leaving for marriage in 1944.

Ivy married a former school chum, George Neillands, who was in the Air Force during the War, returning later to his job as a draughtsman. We had the marriage from our house, the birth of their first son at Wohelo and the boy, Alistair, was christened in Wohelo; Lady Mary stood as a Godmother. A daughter, Anne, was born to the young couple in Gullane before leaving for Canada. Later they moved to America where two more boys were born to them. They are now settled in California.

The 1939-1945 War

Strain. Hardship. Heartbreaks. Calamity. Disruption. Hell. All these arise in the wake of a devil at large. Once again in our lifetime the World was turned topsy-turvy. Once again rose the conflict between Might and Right, Life or Death. Not one of us living today who passed through the two great Wars 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, requires to be reminded of the horrors and heartbreaks brought about by wars. In the cause of Truth, Justice, Liberty, Patriotism, and the safety of our homes so many, yes, so great a number sacrificed their lives that we might live in peace. In sorrow and in gratitude I salute that noble army of defenders; those who died in action, those who for our sakes were maimed and those who lived on with their memories of the battlefield.

I well remember the day War broke out. As happened with the 1914 War, it was on a Sunday. I was attending to a patient in Dirleton during the morning when the siren went off for the first time. It proved to be a false alarm, nevertheless at the time those present in the room with me looked from one to another as if to say "this is it". The patient was not enlightened on the situation and after making her comfortable I made my way back home to find out if all was well with them there.

Looking back now on the happenings on that Sunday morning one can afford to smile. It appeared that quite a number of Gullane residents had quickly gathered their earthly treasures and made their way to the beach. I cannot understand how they came to the conclusion that they would be safe there. Our summer visitors were already down on the beach when the siren sounded. Betty, thinking mother might

be nervous being alone, dashed up to the bungalow to find her quite unconcerned, busy waving her hair. On being implored to accompany Betty to safety she replied that she couldn't possibly leave the house before waving her hair. The 'All Clear' was sounded and Gullane settled down quietly.

How did the War affect Gullane, you may ask. It hurt with a hurt deeper than the deepest pool. The reports of the hideous cruelties, the shootings, the bombings, created within us a pity for all unfortunate sufferers; a pity which swelled to the extent our hearts were nearly broken by the fact of our being quite unable to go to their assistance. Our duty was to stay at home, leaving Hitler and his satellites to be dealt with by our defenders. We opened our door to evacuees, we played hostess to the forces stationed in our midst. They were mostly Air Force, Royal Scots and Poles.

My work was greatly increased by the coming of the evacuees, two-thirds of whom returned to their homes within a few months. Quite a number of the wives of the men in the forces stayed with us for months at a time. Often there were expectant mothers among them whom I attended at their confinement. All the bombing we experienced was one night we had fire bombs dropped over a scattered area. These did little damage. Gullane was certainly a seat of activity in those days. We had our Home Guards, Observer Corps, Special Police, Voluntary Aid Detachment and Women's Voluntary Service as our contribution to the Services.

I found the blackout very trying when called out at night. Twice, a man tried to gain control of the car only I managed to evade him. Once I was returning home from attending a maternity case ten miles out in the country; not knowing there had been a warning of an air raid I had on my car lights and was challenged by a sentinel on duty. It was an eerie experience to be faced by a man with a gun.

14th January 1946 is a day I shall never forget - the time Betty and I legally adopted Pat, our second child. She was registered Patricia Elizabeth Forsyth Sowler. The first two names were given her as an infant, Forsyth is Betty's middle name and of course she was registered as my adopted child. It happened this way. At the time of the evacuation of a large number of persons from Croydon there arrived next door a little family who had been allotted a furnished house. The family consisted of two mothers each with two children. One of the mothers left after a short stay leaving behind Pat, her mother and a younger brother. Pat was 4½ years of age at this time.

Once the War was over, with patience we awaited word from her mother to make arrangements to return Pat to her home. No word came, however, so we wrote asking if she and her husband would like us to adopt Pat. The reply came that she and her husband would be pleased for us to adopt Pat as they both felt we could do so much better for her than it was possible for them to do. She wished Pat to understand that this was their reason and not that they did not love her. One day, shortly before Pat came to stay with us, she said to Betty in her cockney accent, "You 'aven't got a little girl, 'ave you? You can 'ave me if you like." Having made final arrangements for Pat's adoption and on leaving the County Council Building, Pat exclaimed "I 'aven't got a daddy now!" With a lump in my throat I replied, "I will be your daddy." She gave my hand such a squeeze I shall never forget it. And so it

happened that just when we were about to lose Ivy, on her marriage, this little girl came into our lives. We never regretted taking Pat. She was a very loyal girl. Whenever we had occasion to check her for misbehaviour she never spoke back but always answered, "Alright." Sometimes, if she really required to be reprimanded for misdemeanour she would gaze into one's face with an expression of 'couldn't care less' attitude, which was very misleading. Quite a few days later it was noticeable that the advice had taken root and was being acted upon.

Pat has always been a sports' girl; a champion at sports at School, she was also an excellent swimmer and plays a good game of golf. She trained as a Sick Children's Nurse, passing her exams with credit. The first summer Pat came to us she would stand and gaze longingly at the sight of summer visitors riding by on horseback. We couldn't resist setting her up with a riding habit and allowing her to have lessons in riding. She sat well on her horse and we were thrilled to watch her riding by. Pat was a sweet little singer and danced beautifully. It was a treat to have our own little girl taking part in our pantomimes; first as a fairy and latterly as one of our 'Stars'.

Now we are over sixty, how we wish Pat had never had to grow up. When she was little one of my favourite tasks was to bath her and hear her prayers. Now she is married with two little boys of her own, Graham 2½ years and Gordon 1 year. They are all in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Fortunately they come home for three months after twelve months' service. Pat married the son of a local family in January 1959, Ronald Mavor. He, like Pat, is a keen sportsman. Their children are lively sparks and I think they will be good sportsmen too some day.

After the War

On 1st June 1945 I received a letter from my Headquarters in Edinburgh which told me:

> ".... there is to be a Victory Parade in London on Sunday, 10th June, and you have been nominated to go to this Parade to represent the Queen's Nurses in Scotland. You will require to travel South on Saturday by day and to take with you a "haversack lunch" for the journey. When you get to London all food and accommodation with be provided ....."

This was indeed an honour and I was only too delighted to accept the invitation. I shall never forget the experience. Mr. Peter Leslie, Rescue Training Officer for East Lothian, represented the Civil Defence Services of the County, and Special Constable Jack Gilchrist, Gullane, represented the East Lothian Constabulary. We joined personnel selected from the East of Scotland on Saturday, 9th June, on the 10.00am train from Edinburgh (Waverley) to London (King's Cross).

We arrived at King's Cross at 6.45pm and were escorted to the deep tube shelters at Camden Town in Buck Street. There, on arrival, we reported to the Marshalling Officer on duty who distributed tickets for bed and meals. To be actually eating and sleeping along with 2,000 other people for two nights and one day in the deep tube shelters was a great adventure. The shelters were spotlessly clean and the food excellent. The Rev. Reuben F. Skinner of the Camden Town Mission, a wonderful man, watched over

be nervous being alone, dashed up to the bungalow to find her quite unconcerned, busy waving her hair. On being implored to accompany Betty to safety she replied that she couldn't possibly leave the house before waving her hair. The 'All Clear' was sounded and Gullane settled down quietly.

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us. He must have been a great comfort to thousands during the War who took shelter under his roof. While lying on my bunk I well imagined how safe the former bed occupants must have felt so far down in the bowels of the earth. Nevertheless what anxiety must they have felt lest in the morning they found their homes in ruins.

My companions were all very friendly; it was most interesting to meet confederates from all parts of Scotland. The 1,000 representatives had a rehearsal of their positions for the parade on Sunday morning. Those in charge must have been nearly demented while trying to put those inexperienced to military orders through their paces. After the midday meal we boarded Green Line coaches for conveyance to the assembly area.

The ceremonial parade was formed "en masse" on positions previously marked and inspected by their Majesties. After the inspection contingents marched past three abreast, 20 feet between contingents and the officer-in-charge 1½ paces in the centre of and in front of the leading file.

This was indeed a great occasion, a 'Memorial Day'. There were we, representatives of all those whose duty had been to serve their country by staying at home, taking their part in Services of Civil Defence, all manner of Voluntary Services, Domiciliary Services, or just striving to keep home fires burning; marching triumphantly through Hyde Park to the strains of Military Bands and the skirl of Bagpipes. On passing the saluting base our hearts swelled with pride and love for our beloved King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. "Britain never, never, shall be slaves." Do you believe this to be true? I do.

The drums of war are silent once more. Victory is ours; yes, but with what a price! Our boys who were killed on the battlefield will not arise and come home. We may build up our bombed sites only our friends and relations will not come back to occupy the rebuilt areas. We cannot mend broken hearts, broken bodies, broken minds. What we can do is endeavour to prevent for ever the fear of war.

Events following the War were so numerous it would be impossible to treat any one at length; I shall therefore mark them down as signposts whereby I may occasionally wander down memory lane, there to re-live the company of friends or maybe enjoy the exquisiteness of past pleasures or perhaps bring back to memory time spent in enlarging my knowledge for the purpose of relieving further the distress of my patients.

On 18th February, 1946, during the Annual Meeting of the Scottish Council of the Institute, held in the City Chambers, Edinburgh, I was presented with my 21 years long service badge.

1948 brought the birth of the National Health Scheme. To many the scheme has proved a great blessing. The medical profession complains of having much more clerical work thrust on them. Their surgeries are busier than ever. Now, I, being an onlooker, would say there is going to be, in the not so very far away, a complete reformation of the medical services. It is sad to say the family doctor is gradually fading out. The local ambulance is becoming more and more a familiar sight. The modern patient is much more familiar with the inside of an Out-patients' department than that of the doctor's

patient is much more familiar with the inside of an Out-patients' department than that of the doctor's surgery. Patients with rheumatic conditions receive much more care now from hospital staffs through the Physiotherapy Clinic. Treatments and many surgical dressings formerly attended to by the local doctor are carried out in the hospital's Out-patients department. The revolutionised science of Chemotherapy has, by the introduction of penicillin and sulphonamide drugs, cut the duration of many diseases, thus saving the victim's distress and weakness and saving time, anxiety and weariness in those in whose care they are placed.

From the District Nurse's point of view there has had to be a good deal of adaptation by her during the past few years. Up to the time of my retirement I had to contend with many changes. At least two-thirds of the expectant mothers were going to hospital for their confinements. Most of what I would term interesting dressings were being attended to at the doctor's surgery and really ill patients were mostly being sent off to hospital. Unless there is also a reformation in the field of Nursing I cannot see in the years to come really keen highly trained nurses being drawn to District Nursing. General care cases, of whom there are goodly numbers, require skilful, kindly nursing; as do those requiring injections, some treatments and minor dressings; these services could well be maintained by Nurses with say two years' training. A Queen's Nursing Sister might be employed to supervise two or three districts. She might also attend to the maternity cases.

One of the advantages of the National Health Scheme was that the District Nurses and Health Visitors in the County became linked to one another. The local Nursing Associations were disbanded. The districts were linked together for the purpose of relieving one another for half-days and weekends. Several joint meetings took place in the Council Room of the East Lothian County Council whose servants we now are. Dr. Campbell, the then Medical Officer of Health, presided. We were encouraged to talk over any difficulties and make suggestions regarding our work. This was a great opportunity to get to know better our Medical Officer, our Superintendent, Miss Macrae and our colleagues. The Queen's Nurses had previously enjoyed at regular intervals social evenings in one another's homes. Shortly after the National Health Scheme came into being there was started in the County a Branch of the College of Midwives. Through the kindness of the Matron, Miss Lambie, regular enjoyable meetings were held in a small hall at the Vert Hospital, Haddington. Miss Macrae was our first Chairman.

In the year 1950 I received my Certificate following my training at the Elsie Inglis Maternity Hospital, Edinburgh, in the administration of nitrous oxide and air by means of Minnitt's Apparatus. In 1956, I received another certificate following my training in the administration of Trilene at the Simpson Maternity Pavilion, Edinburgh.

Quite an exciting event took place on the 21st July, 1954. Lady Mary Baillie-Hamilton, daughter of the Earl and Countess of Haddington, was married to Mr. Adrian Bailey at the Roman Catholic Church, St. James, Spanish Place, London. Ivy, the first child we adopted and Mary's former Nurse, being abroad with her family, could not attend the wedding. Mary's parents very kindly invited my

friend Betty, Pat and myself in her stead. We travelled down to London overnight along with two bus-loads of employees from Tyninghame. We thoroughly enjoyed the wedding; the reception took place at Hutchison House, Stafford Place. We joined the accustomed column of well-wishers and had a word with Mary. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, and Princess Margaret all attended the reception and mingled with the guests talking to one here and there.

Round about that period I had the pleasure of seeing Royalty quite a few times. A garden party was held in the garden at the Binns (West Lothian), owned by Mr. and Mrs. Dalyell. Queen Elizabeth attended and invitations were extended to Queen's Nursing Sisters. We spent a very happy afternoon. It is always pleasing to gaze on our Queen at close quarters. Her Majesty seems so petite, with a porcelain-like skin marvellously made up, resembling a vision from fairyland. She appears so different when photographed by the press.

Then there was the Inspection by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother at Holyrood Palace. Her Majesty is always so friendly with a merry twinkle in her eye. It was early evening, following the Annual Garden Party of the General Assembly. Princess Margaret accompanied her mother. Before Her Majesty's appearance there was a hum of expectancy in the air. Queen Elizabeth moved about us looking perfectly happy, talking freely among the Nurses. For her entertainment an exhibition of dancing by small children had been arranged. These she appeared to enjoy immensely, watching them as she partook of a cup of tea in the shelter of a band stand.

Then there was the great day when the Scottish Omnibus Company opened their Bus Station. The Provost and Councillors were all present along with their guests. It was a great occasion. The Superintendents and Queen's Nurses were invited also and were specially treated by being the first to enter a bus and be driven out of the Station. The Provost and Councillors waved us off and we felt terribly important. The excitement did not end there. The bus drew up at the Grosvenor Hotel where we were entertained to a marvellous lunch.

Shortly before the War and since, following the reading of interesting articles in journals and listening to the narration of friends' experiences at Open Circles, I determined to find out for myself the truth of this wonderful doctrine of Spiritualism. Over the period of two years I attended probably half-a-dozen times, meetings held at Northumberland Street, Edinburgh. Mrs. Sleigh was a wonderful medium; her meetings became so popular that owing to growing numbers attending she was obliged to retire to her formal private gatherings. I found the meetings quite uplifting. They were opened by prayer; we then all sang a well-known hymn during which the medium went into a trance. Her Spirit Guide would then speak up announcing the first 'Spirit' friend's arrival. To me it was perfectly wonderful. I was a perfect stranger among the company so there could be no-one there who knew anything about me. The first visit I paid, father was the first to come through. We heard some queer noises in the room as if someone was having difficulty in breathing. The Guide explained not to worry; this was a gentleman who had come through for the first time and that he was remembering he had had a difficult passing. Should he again return to us he would not remember a second time.

"Is that you, Ida" he exclaimed, "you know how I disliked this sort of thing before I passed over; now I feel different. Tell me, why is mother away from home so often?" I explained to father that mother liked to go down to Liverpool occasionally to be with Jim, my brother, and over to Fife to stay with my sister Dorothy, awhile. "I know, I know," he replied, "but I don't like her staying alone." He said he quite understood how she didn't want to stay with any of her family but keep her own home; nevertheless would I promise always to keep a key of the bungalow so I could keep an eye on her. Also he questioned if mother had been very disappointed over her financial position after he died. I assured him she was well satisfied. You see so much expense had been incurred during father's lifetime trying to cure him of psoriasis. He said he would not go far away but would wait for mother to join him.

Before we came up to Scotland from Stockton-on-Tees to live, father had a great friend, an artist, Mr. James Allen. He had a daughter, Jessie, a beautiful pianist who gave me piano lessons. I was a child of eight years at that time. At the end of the lesson Jessie and I entertained her parents with a sing-song round the piano; our favourite song was, 'Where my caravan has rested.' During one of my sittings at the 'Open Circles' the Guide announced there was someone with the name Jim Allen wished to speak with a friend in the company. I had no idea Mr. Allen had passed on; we had not kept up the friendship after coming to Scotland. I said "Is that you, Mr. Allen?", he replied "Yes, it is, my dear; your father is here too; but I was determined to speak with you first. Tell me, do you still sing 'Where my caravan has rested'?" He then carried on saying what a pity it was that such great friends as we were should become separated. It was such a long time since we had visited them at Saltburn and wouldn't I think to go down to visit Jessie soon? He also spoke of his life on the other side; how he was still carrying on with his painting and described the beauty of nature around him, mocking the delusion of golden stairs and golden harps. Surely this is wonderful proof of life continuing after life on earth.

Farewell

Now it is time to ring the bell, drop the curtain and say farewell to the compressed story of my life during the years of my Nursing career. I trust my successor, Miss Nicholl, in whose hands I place my district, will be happy in Gullane and that the residents will learn to appreciate the excellent qualities which I have observed her to be endowed. The following cutting taken from my album of treasures relates the end of my journey; this I deem to be a suitable 'winding up'.

[*Here follows an extract from a report in the Scotsman describing the farewell meeting which took place in the Village Hall on 14th April 1961 marking her retirement*]

GULLANE NURSE HONOURED

People in the parishes of Dirleton and Gullane gathered in the Gullane Community Hall, to honour the only District Nurse that the parishes have ever had - Miss I. Sowler, S.R.N., S.C.M., H.V. - on her retirement.

Mr. R. Sinclair, chairman of the Community Association, welcoming a large gathering, said they were present to pay tribute to one who held the affection and esteem of the whole district. He went on to introduce the principal guests - Miss Macrae, Nursing Superintendent of East Lothian; D. H. D.

Wilson, County Medical Officer of Health; Dr. John McDonald, North Berwick; the Rev. H. O. Wallace, Dirleton; and Dr. H. B. Kirk, Gullane. Speaking of Nurse Sowler's interest outside her work, Mr. Sinclair said she did not take an obvious part in public affairs, but worked quietly in the background. Most characteristic was her love of children and animals (laughter), and he stated she had been the brains behind many novel ideas for their village pantomimes both before and after the War. It had been her ideas that kept the shows so fresh and alive.

Speaking on behalf of the people of Dirleton, the Rev. H. O. Wallace, in a witty address, said he remembered clearly when Nurse Sowler came to the village. In those days, it had been the Dirleton and Gullane District Nursing Association. They remembered those days when enthusiasm was so strong, and they had all been very keen to give Nurse the very best possible start in her work. Mr. Wallace had been in many homes in Dirleton, and when speaking to anyone who had "enjoyed Nurse Sowler's ministrations" had never heard anything but undiluted and unbounding praise for her. She came into homes simply bubbling over with happiness and joy, and he described her as a "very dear and charming little soul to us all." In conclusion, Mr. Wallace said that they would all miss Nurse, but wished her long life, happiness and prosperity. He expressed the very sincere and heartfelt thanks of the Parish for her work.

Dr. Kirk, prior to making the presentation, which took the form of a coffee table incorporating a canteen of cutlery and a cheque for £180, said that it had originally been intended to have the first "baby" which Nurse Sowler had delivered - now a sprightly "youngster" of 30 (Mrs. Sheena Young) - to make the presentation. Unfortunately, as she was in England, this had not been possible, but on her behalf, he asked Mr. Sinclair to hand over a bouquet which Mrs. Young had sent together with another gift. Dr. Kirk said that Miss Sowler had started work in the Parish on 1st October 1930. He felt that to do her the honour of making the presentation was for him, a great privilege. However, they were not the first to do her honour, and he went on to mention that she had represented the nursing fraternity at Buckingham Palace in 1935, and later, had been the sole Scottish representative at another similar function.

Continuing, Dr. Kirk said that Nurse Sowler's work had always been of the highest standard, and he was sure that any of the other doctors who had worked with her would say the same. She had been utterly unselfish in her work and thoroughly competent. The doctors knew this, and he felt that it inspired confidence in her. He now came to what he called the "hackneyed" phrase - that no one was indispensable - but he assured her that they dispensed with her services with great reluctance.

In reply, Nurse Sowler said she was deeply moved by the many kind words and generosity to her. For this, she thanked them with all her heart. She had enjoyed her work in the district and only hoped that her successor would find as much pleasure in it as she had done. They mentioned that she was their first District Nurse, but she would not like the occasion to pass without saluting the memory of the ladies who had been responsible for bringing her to Gullane - the members of the Nursing Association. She would like to think that they were really close in spirit. Nurse Sowler said that although her sun was setting, she expected to be with them a little longer - until her successor was found (*Miss Nicholl took over on 1st October 1961*). She thanked them for receiving her into their homes and assured them that she would carry many happy memories of her associations with the village.

Lady Ford later presented Miss Sowler's housekeeper and companion, Miss E. F. Donaldson, with a gift token, and a memorable evening closed with a rousing pantomime chorus. The accompanist was Mr. Jack Gilchrist.

[*Nurse Sowler died at the end of 1980 and is buried in the Dirleton Cemetery alongside her mother and father.*]

EAST LOTHIAN COASTAL VILLAGES

TIMES PAST TO PRESENT IN GULLANE AND DIRLETON

HISTORICAL ESSAYS