

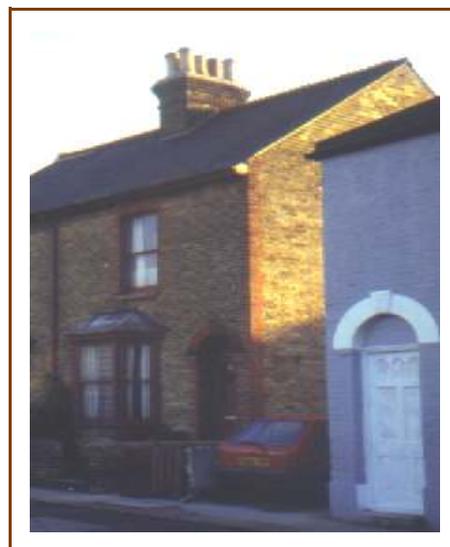
# Chapter 1

## Fragments of Early Memories

*I cannot remember much of my life before the age of seven; come to think of it, not much before the age of twelve, however this chapter reaches to about 1918 when I was four.*

*Apparently I was born on 3rd July 1914 at 16, Swanfield Road, Whitstable. I didn't know anything about it but I expect that my mother did. She never did tell me whether or not I was wanted but I have always assumed that I was.*

*My earliest memories include running down the garden path dressed only in a vest and of a child who lived nearby, suffering from sunstroke; I didn't know what that was but it sounded awful. I also learned how to kill slugs by sprinkling salt on them and black beetles with powder (Keatings I suppose). There were chickens next door but I don't remember much about them. I have a vague memory of my Mother feeding my sister, Betty, covering her breast with a curious pad, presumably to stop milk dripping onto her clothes. There was also a gramophone which seemed to play "The Grandfather's Clock" all the time. Perhaps it was the only record we had. Another vague memory is of a little boy called Percy who always seemed to be in trouble. Cries from his mother "What has Percy done now" could often be heard. One day I believe he got hold of a kitchen knife and slashed the sheets which were hanging out to dry.*



**16 Swanfield Road  
Whitstable.  
Photographed in 1988**

*I cannot remember going to Church at this time but assume that we must have done because somehow I heard about the Crucifixion. This was to turn out to be unfortunate for some minnows I was given in a jam jar. One of my favourite hobbies was to hammer nails into a bench in our shed. I was only about three at the time, but, for some reason, the crucifixion had stuck in my mind and I proceeded to take the minnows out of their jam jar home and hammer them to the bench with my collection of nails. I hope that they died through lack of air. I cannot recollect being cruel to an animal ever again.*

*My happiest day in Whitstable was the day I found a small discarded milk churn. In those days, milkmen used to bring milk round in a milk float pulled by a horse. They used to dip a small oval tin measure, fitted with a lid, into a big one of the same type and measure out the milk into our jug. I was walking across the spare piece of land behind the Railway Station with my Mother when, to my delight, I found one of the small measures. It was my prized possession although I don't think it was taken to Canterbury when we moved; my Mum was a rare one for clearing out! The only other memory I have is of the Rag and Bone man who used to come round swapping balloons for jam jars. I never did find out what they did with the jars, but the balloons burst!*

*The 1914-1918 war was, of course, on during this time, but I cannot remember any of it. We must have been surrounded by grief and unhappiness, but somehow we were shielded from it. My Father had been called up in 1914 but turned down on medical grounds and, I believe, was working as an Insurance Agent for Pearl Insurance. Anyway, the war did not seem to affect my sister or me, which goes to show how love and affection can protect children even in a working class home where money is short.*