

Chapter 6

Life in Willesborough Lees - Grandfather Ward

As I recall, we used to travel by train, probably to Ashford, and then walk to the Lees. My Grandfather had a pleasant house, it being half of what had once been a much larger house. The other part housed the Sinclair family. Mrs Sinclair was French and she had a daughter of about nineteen with whom I, at ten, was in love. They used to love to get me into their house and persuade me to sing to them.

My Grandfather had a large garden, beautifully maintained, a dog called Gyp and an interesting old shed. There was also a prolific apple tree and to my delight, an old wash house in which stood a huge rain butt filled with water. Rainy days saw me spend hours floating homemade boats in this rain butt.



**Granddad Ward & Me
aged about 16**

Grandfather had been trained as a Railway Engineer but was working as the Maintenance Engineer at The Union, or Workhouse. My Mother always claimed that he drank too much and didn't treat her Mother very well but, although he liked the odd pint every day, I never saw him the worse for it and he treated his second wife, Grandma to me, with great respect. They seemed very happy.

My Grandma allowed me to do anything I liked during the day and I ran wild. At night I was bathed, given my supper and went to bed when they did which was much later than at home. My favourite playground, when the weather was fine, was the old apple tree and the field at the back of the house.

My Grandfather taught me a lot about the countryside by taking me on long walks. He used to carry a heavy pocket knife and whilst walking, make me bows and arrows showing me what woods to use. He also taught me how to recognise edible mushrooms, different trees, where to find hazelnuts, chestnuts, etc. He also used to take me haymaking. In those days rabbits abounded and many were caught whilst haymaking. Although he couldn't kill a chicken, he showed me how to despatch a rabbit we found injured by a stoat.

Another favourite place for me in Willesborough was the old Windmill which had an adjacent cricket ground. There was also a farm where we got fresh milk and butter.

Granddad used to grow wonderful chrysanthemums in his garden. Anyone asking to buy a bunch got a massive collection for only sixpence. He also made me wonderful kites; although only made from odd bits of wood and wallpaper, they would fly superbly and I had many happy hours in the back field with both the kites and bows and arrows. Indoors was a collection of illustrated books of the Boer War and I used to read these by the hour. My Grandfather didn't read much as his eyesight was far from perfect and, when he was persuaded to go for glasses, he bought them in Woolworth, sixpence each lens, sixpence the frame ie. One and Six the lot.

His greatest friend was a chap called Jesse Owens. Long afterwards, when both Jesse and Grandma had died, Granddad went to live with Mrs Owens. After she fell ill and left Willesborough, he spent a short time as a lodger at the house of another lady. She didn't treat him very well and so he moved to Winchelsea and lived with his daughter, Aunt Rose. After a time, she was no longer able to look after him so he joined my Mother in Canterbury where he was to die. His original house in Willesborough was taken over by the Sinclair's.



*Believed to be Victoria Nina
& John Ward*