

Chapter 11

A Portrait of My Mother

Mum was born in Sevington, Kent on 5th May 1886 and Christened Elsie Ella Ward.



Elsie Ella Turner
c. 1924

I do not remember her mother, Victoria Nina (nee Down)¹, but believe that she saw me. She died young from Tuberculosis.

I know little of her girlhood but she must have gone to the local school. Certainly her writing etc. was perfectly adequate. She came from what may be described as sturdy country stock. She had a strong sense of duty, would fiercely defend her "cubs", possessed integrity but most of all was blessed with common sense. At the age of

fourteen she went "into service". In those days, that was the fate of an enormous number of girls. Underpaid and overworked, the only way out was in marriage. She started off at a place called Sandgate in Kent and went on to St. Edmund's School in Canterbury where she worked her way up to head cook. This was good progress but, as far as I know, her annual wage never exceeded £14. She seemed happy enough however and looked back on her time there with affection. As it happens, her sister Rose Kate took her place at the school so it became a place to revisit over the years until Rose left during the WW2. It was here too that she struck up a friendship with Alice Philpotts which continued until Alice's death. Alice with Rose and later on Molly became to me the "Three Aunts". Despite the problems, she loyally followed my Dad wherever he was posted; this involved living in many substandard Married Quarters. Nonetheless she cheerfully maintained a clean home and, as she was a good cook, first class food.



Aunt Triss, Aunt Rose & Mum at Winchelsea.

¹ - Victoria Nina Ward died 13 November 1914, aged 52



Mum in the 1960s

After Dad died, she looked after my Grandfather for some time until he died. She was always a worrier and eventually left the house in Canterbury and moved into a Council house made of steel. Eventually, ill health forced a move to live with my sister in Leeds, where, unfortunately, she slowly became senile. It was painful to watch her change from a bright as a button woman, running her own house, tilling her own garden etc., to an old lady who was no longer bright and

no longer talked much sense. She could remember the old days but not the hour before.

When she was still running her own home, she ran her life in a very organised manner, working to lunchtime then changing and out for a walk and shopping in the afternoon. I should mention here, and I am sure that she would like me to, the wonderful job my sister did, looking after her during the final difficult years of her life.

She died in a Leeds hospital on 25th March 1971. Her ashes were placed in my father's grave in Canterbury. May She Rest in Peace.