



EDWARD BRIAN VAN LOOCK

17<sup>th</sup> May 1928 to 20<sup>th</sup> August 2023

*Reflections of a long and happy life*



## EDWARD'S TALE –

*A precis of his own words*

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Life was ordinary for me until I was 3 or so, then came the big depression. Mother decided to go out to work to supplement the family income, which she did at Kennards in Croydon. It was arranged that I would live with great Aunt Emily two streets away. This was great fun. Aunt Emily and Aunt Edith were very kind to me. I don't know how it all ended but eventually I had to return home to start school.

One of the highlights at that time was father acquiring a car. He had a bricklaying gang and needed the transport. Mother loved to be taken for countryside rides in it together with the family. The family Clan would adjourn en masse to tented accommodation at Selsey. We seemed to be there for ages and it never rained. We played games, swam in the sea and did our fishing which I enjoyed and was good at.

At the age of 18, having left school in July I was called up into the army in September and went to Maidstone for basic training, and so moved abruptly into adult life.

I reached the heady rank of lance-corporal. It did however set me on the course of my future livelihood. Whilst doing my 6 week demob course I found I was quite good at draftsmanship, so when the opportunity arose to go for full-time education at the expense of the government I chose Surveying at the Brixton School of Building. An odd coincidence arose. My Father decided at that time to build us a new house on a vacant plot he bought in Meadvale. Foolish lad that I was I volunteered to work as his labourer free of charge for the next 20 months every weekend. This venture involved digging trenches, laying concrete foundations, all the brickwork, (I was the labourer), all the carpentry and joinery. Debts however had piled up until Father had to sell but we moved to a bigger affordable 5 bedroom, 3 reception semi-detached with basement at 184 Sandcross Lane where we were very happy, well housed and out of debt.

## STUDIES AND WORK

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I was 24 when I took my first Job working for two years for British Rail at the Euston office surveyors department. All this time doing my night school at the Brixton School of building. I changed jobs to work at a private surveying firm, the office was superbly placed Park Lane office. There were excellent staff, money was good and work was enjoyable and I did a good job. The time came however when my Father needed a new secretary in his building company and at the age of 29 I left London and joined him in Cummings and Son Betchworth. For the first time I have to say I started to get to know my Father. We became good friends, but tragically, already suffering from cancer, he died 6 months later. The next four years in the building work was harrowing and something with which I could not successfully cope. The one great joy of my life was meeting and marrying my wife in 1959. My life completely changed.

## ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

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Up to that time I was involved with various singing activities, starting in 1949 with the Operetta Bitter Sweet. I met Joyce Hooper the conductor. Joyce wanted to move on to more interesting and demanding music where I followed her. She started the Redhill Madrigal Singers, the Redhill and Reigate Bach Choir, the Opera Club performing Gilbert and Sullivan Operas and Surrey Opera performing Mozart Operas and one Beethoven. It was in these events that I met Sheila my future wife. We played opposite one another in Patience and I was hooked. We married a year later.

We needed somewhere to live and having been offered a cottage in Betchworth, sadly in need of repair, at a rental of £10 a month I took it. I set too and created a kitchen from an outhouse, built a new bathroom, laid a new floor in the one living room, installed a heating system, a new side entrance door, and a completely new electric circuit. I remember Sheila's dad doing much of the plumbing. To start with we had the minimum of furniture so we could move in from day one. Sheila said there was no way she would start married life with our parents. 11 months later our daughter Sara was born. Within a couple of years or so things were becoming very difficult with the building business. It was losing money, I had virtually none, the business was broke, so settling matters with my workmen I closed it down with enormous relief.



With much good fortune a vacancy for me arose with an Architects firm in Reigate requiring a Surveyor at £50 a month part-time. This was the new start which turned into a fruitful future for me.

In 1963 David was born and the year after we moved from Dillon Cottage to 184 Sandcross Lane to keep an eye on my mother, living there by herself, and to continue life in a bigger house and a growing family. In moving to 184 I took on the many repairs and improvements that it needed. The semi-basement was a mess. I demolished the 9 inch brick wall with a steel beam across the opening. Lined the walls and ceiling and laid a new floor, and repaired the wooden staircase. This became our living area with the children who had now expanded to four with the birth of Jane in 1965 and Mark in 1972.

A baker's shop a few doors away from my office became vacant. I had the bright idea of setting up a small dress shop with my Mother in charge. We called the Shop "Louise" in memory of my grandmother Van Look. We were not to know at the time, but the value of this investment was not the shop but the enormous increase in the property worth over the next 20 years or so. I had now been in Practice for well over 3 years and was entitled to become a Fellow of the Institute. I applied

and was appointed a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

A sad event occurred with the death of Sheila's mother, particularly as Mum and Dad had only recently sold their house in Merstham to move into the empty bungalow next to 184. The garden had a vacant area at the side big enough for a new bungalow. So I took up the challenge and did the design, obtained planning consent and engaged the builders. Dad moved in by himself.

Now came an unexpected opportunity at work. I was invited to apply for the post of Clerk and Surveyor of Marshal's Charity in London. I handed in my resignation as Diocese Surveyor and began my new appointment shortly after in 1972 at the age of 44. I closed down the Bell St. Office and concentrated on my new appointment.

I impressed the Chairman sufficiently enough that he proposed an increase in my Pension arrangement and this was approved. Another mark of approval came when the Chairman Bill Young recommended me for attendance at Buckingham Palace Garden Party together with my wife and daughter, Bill did not know I had two daughters. As Clerk to two other Charities at my office I was privileged to meet The Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Anne, Princess Margaret and the Queen Mother. At my retirement dinner I was able to say with all sincerity that the last 20 years had been the happiest of my life.

I mustn't forget my leisure time which in addition to all the singing was playing a reasonable game of golf at one time with a handicap of 7. I was elected Captain at Redhill and Reigate and when I changed courses, Captain at Bletchingley golf course.

Surprise, surprise, on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2013 we saw the "For Sale" board go up on The Nook 1B Allingham Rd. I looked through the window and my heart sank as it looked so sad and neglected. However 184 was becoming a burden to manage with three floors, 5 bedrooms and a biggish garden. I had built The Nook for Sheila's Dad 45 years ago so here was a chance to make a move that must be investigated. So taking heart I started negotiations. Before 184 was put on the Market we hived off the rear of the garden containing the "Stables". This joined very neatly onto the rear of The Nook. A moving-in date was given of February 14<sup>th</sup> 2014. We are now safely and satisfactorily moved in with hardly any complaints. We are happily living with all the alteration works around us and admiring them. We are two happy bunnies.





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*A long and happy Life*