

MEMORIES OF GROWING UP ON JORDANS IN 1920's BY CONNIE LOMAS

AND HOW THE LOMAS FAMILY CAME TO JORDANS



Above: Connie Lomas aged around 3 ½

My mother, Connie Lomas, who was born in 1911 and grew up on Jordans, wrote a memoir of her life when she was in her 70's and 80's. All the information in this little article comes from what she wrote, and I have used her own words wherever possible.

To give some general background, my grandmother, Alice Lomas was the first member of the family to come and live on Jordans when she moved there late in 1920 with her 4 children Bob, born in 1903, Maud born in 1908, my mother Connie born in 1911 and Bert born in 1914.

Alice Glaze was born and bred in central London and married William Lomas in 1903 and eventually they lived in a Peabody Building in Westminster, which was just a short walk from Waterloo Bridge where William was stationed as a Thames River Policeman. They were still living there when William, as a reservist Marine, went off to fight right at the start of the Great War. Before he left, he told Alice, 'You are on your own now and you must decide what is best for the children'. She took him at his word and moved out of London to Chalfont St Giles and rented a small cottage there. It was a brave move as she had always lived in London, but her brother Bert lived nearby so she had family support and she took to country life like a duck to water.

But tragedy struck just 2 weeks before the end of the War when William cruelly died of the Spanish flu. He had been gassed at Gallipoli and then put on light duties in Osborne House on the Isle of Wight

which was being used as a Naval Hospital. Alice was told by an Inspector in Scotland Yard that there wouldn't be enough money for her to live on and that she would have to move back to London and find a job and that they, the Police would help her. So back she moved to the Peabody Buildings in Westminster and a job was found for her as a cook in Scotland Yard.

The following is the account that my mother wrote about how their move to Jordans came about:

'When we lived in London 1919 to 1920, one day my mother had a day with her brother at Chalfont St Giles. The village fair was on with swing boats and roundabouts and she went there with her brother and us. There she met Mrs Brown (a Londoner) from Jordans. Uncle Bert was working on the new village and my brother Bob worked for him. Bob lived with Uncle Bert and Aunt Lizzie. The latter was not our favourite aunt. Uncle Bert we loved but not Aunt Lizzie.

Mrs Brown said to Mother, 'Mrs Lomas your Bob is neglected. Why don't you move to Jordans and look after him? There's an empty cottage you can stay in. (thought to be Puers – CJ)

And that was how we moved to Jordans in 1920 and now there's a huge family of Lomas living nearby. The extraordinary thing is that most have not moved further than Seer Green and Chalfont St Giles. All from Mother meeting Mrs Brown at Chalfont fair.

We had a happy time in London, but once Mother had tasted country life, she was unsettled. We went from a 2 roomed flat and kitchen in the heart of London to a 3 bedroomed, bathroom, sitting room, dining room and kitchen in the heart of Bucks and from a rent of 6/6d (36p) to 19s (90p) plus rates. Mother's family thought she was mad. But how we loved Jordans, the house was full of wildflowers, we loved the garden and the fields and the beech woods.

Our house at Jordans had electricity. This was only for lighting, so cooking was still by a coal stove, a modern version, also a 4-burner paraffin cooker with oven which was very efficient, the washing was by hand and a copper with a coal fire for boiling. When we came from school for lunch on Mondays, Mother would still be working. It took all day. We walked everywhere, if late coming back we had a hurricane lamp.

When we moved from London to Jordans in 1920 it changed our lives completely. This new village of Quakers and others opened up a new world. We had open air plays in the beech woods. I was a fairy in Midsummer Night's Dream. I always entered for the flower show and won first prizes for wildflowers and darning and a patch. I still have a book of wildflowers, a child's garden fork and a pair of shears which were the prizes. Bonfires on the green on 5th November. Mother joined the Adult School Movement, the forerunners of adult education. We played tennis and cricket. We had harvest suppers in the village hall. A great community village, we knew everyone, and everyone knew us. Two MPs lived on the village, both Labour. We went to the Meeting House on Sunday mornings.

Herbert and I went to school at Seer Green, one and a half miles over the fields, a C of E school and a poor one. If only Mother had sent us to Chalfont St Giles school, a Council one and far better. From there some children went onto the Grammar school but not from Seer Green. Mother wasn't ambitious and so I finished school at 14 and started work.

I worked for Mrs Greenwood who lived on the village as a daily help. What would a girl of 14 know! I had my meals with them, no children and worked in the house under her supervision. After lunch I went home, then back again at 5.30 to get the evening meal and finished after I'd washed up. All for 10 shillings (50p) and food. I worked here for a few years, then in the village shop. At 16 I worked for Mrs Gibb outside Jordans, here I lived in and here I was old enough to see how other people lived and soon caught on.'

Postscript

My mother Connie Lomas worked for Mrs Gibb for a while and then moved to work for her friend Mrs Sanderson of the wallpaper family. It was a large house with plenty of staff and a butler and eventually they taught her to drive, and she became their children's nanny.

My mother wrote, 'One evening Mrs Sanderson and Mrs Gibb said to me, 'we were talking about you Connie and wondered why you hadn't done better for yourself and put it down to a lack of education' and for the first time in my life I took stock of myself. So I gave up my job to everyone's horror and trained at the Westminster Foot Hospital as a chiropodist'.

Once she was qualified, my mother worked in the East End of London and later spent the war in Shrewsbury where she established her own practice and then in 1946, she met my father, Ainsley Harrison. The naturalist, Ronald Locksley, wanted to reopen the island of Skokholm off the coast of Pembrokeshire to farming again after it had been requisitioned during the War and he put an advert in a newspaper asking for volunteers to help him and my parents separately responded having read his books. They met on the boat going over to Skokholm where she suddenly decided to use her middle name of Margaret - new name, new start after the War. They married in 1947 and she lived the rest of her life in Penarth, a small seaside town just outside Cardiff. She carried on working as a chiropodist, had 2 children (me and my brother), built 2 houses, travelled widely, and lived to be 93. She was always full of energy and game for new experiences and adventures.

Members of the Lomas family have been living on Jordans for over a hundred years now, all descendants of Alice Lomas who came in 1920 and there are also many others living in the surrounding villages and towns.

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