

## Chapter 121: Mum's Work in the Late Seventies

During the late seventies, according to her CV<sup>1</sup>, mum had a number of different jobs including running her own duplicating/typing business from home; working as a part-time receptionist for Drs Downes and Day; working as a part-time secretary for Rev G T Eddy; working as a part-time private secretary for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens; working as a part-time secretary in the Occupational Therapy Department of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital; and working as secretary/receptionist for Drs Brittain, Watkins and Leach. Each of these jobs is considered in turn. There are some differences between the CV and the diaries. These are highlighted for each job where relevant.

<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	1951-55	Two secretarial positions
	1955-58	Manager of Retail Shoe Shop
	1958-65	Caring for my children
	1965-75	Own duplicating/typing business run from home whilst continuing to look after the children
	1973-74	Caring for sick/elderly lady two days per week
	1974-75	Part-time Receptionist, Drs Downes and Day
	1973-77	Part-time Secretary for Rev G T Eddy, Chairman of the East Anglia District of the Methodist Church
	1975-80	Part-time Private Secretary to Mr M Handley Ashken, and Mr J P Stephens, Consultant Surgeons
	1976-77	Part-time Secretary, Occupational Therapy Department, Norfolk and Norwich Hospital
	1977-80	Part-time Secretary/Receptionist for Drs Brittain, Watkins and Leach, General Practitioners
	1980-91	Full-time Practice Manager for the above practice, which due to retirements is now Drs Leach, Barnard, Copson and Spring
	1991-92	Student at Cliff College
	1992 to date	Medical Secretary at various Norwich Hospitals

*Mum's CV covering the period from 1951 to at least 1992*

Mum continued to run her own duplicating and typing business during this period. Although her CV indicates that this ended in 1975, she did home duplicating and typing throughout this period. As her hours of paid employment increased, the amount of independent typing and duplicating she took on may have decreased. Certainly, increasingly, she did it out of hours, so in the evening or at the weekend. Quite a lot of this typing and duplicating, possibly the majority of it, seems to have been church-related.<sup>2</sup> Various people gave mum typing and duplicating to do including the Ministers<sup>3</sup> of St

<sup>1</sup> See [Chapter 105](#).

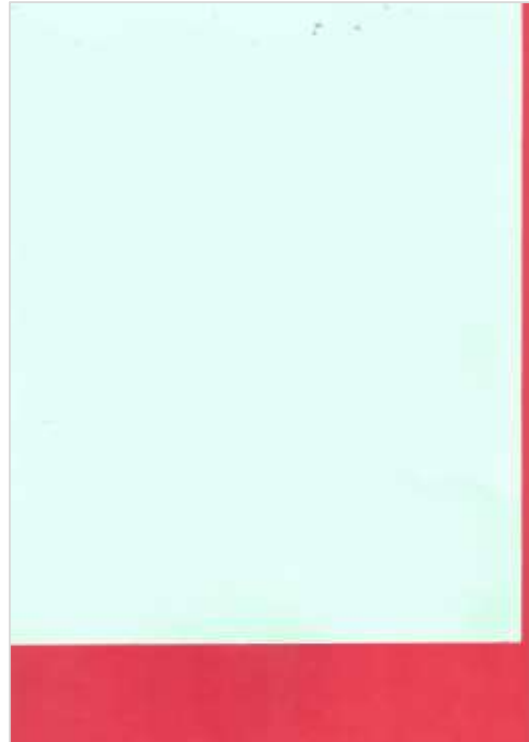
<sup>2</sup> See [Chapter 124](#).

<sup>3</sup> Including Rev Ream, Rev Elworthy and Rev Lemmon. In September 1976, mum noted that Rev Ream gave her his changes to the pastoral roll and also his order of service. In February 1975, Rev Elworthy came and dictated a report on the work of the UEA chaplains. He also brought her his order of service in September 1976. In November 1979, mum was concerned that Rev Lemmon brought her two reports for the church annual report after she had already duplicated them. She remarked with some frustration "what does he think I am?" I am not sure what mum did but she noted finishing the annual reports the next night.

Peter's Park Lane Methodist Church and others associated with that church.<sup>4</sup> It seems that mum expected a degree of personal interaction when people brought her work to do. For example, in September 1976, Rev Elworthy pushed his order of service through the letterbox and did not ring the doorbell. Mum commented that this depressed her even more. Similarly, when Andrew Wright brought the church notices in December 1976, mum noted that he did not stay long. Mum also did typing and duplicating for other Methodist Ministers who were part of the broader circuit<sup>5</sup>, had retired<sup>6</sup> or had been Minister at Park Lane previously.<sup>7</sup> She also did work for others including local preachers.<sup>8</sup> In January 1975, mum noted that she got some typing from Ken Hustler<sup>9</sup> at Eastern Counties' Newspapers.

Mum typed and duplicated a variety of documents during this period including letters, reports and church notices. One thing she noted, in February 1975, was that she used A4 paper for the church notices for the first time rather than quarto<sup>10</sup> as she had done previously.

One of the specific church publications I recall from that time was "*Retrospect*"<sup>11</sup> I am not sure exactly what it was but I think it was some kind of church or circuit newsletter. I recall it because I remember helping mum with it, particularly with collating it. It seems it was produced quarterly and mum was involved in typing<sup>12</sup>, duplicating, collating, stapling and delivering<sup>13</sup> it.<sup>14</sup>



*Illustration of the relative difference in size between quarto (light green) and A4 (red)*

<sup>4</sup> Including Sister Margaret and Andrew Wright.

<sup>5</sup> These included Rev Malcolm Carter with whom mum developed a friendship, see [Chapter 114](#).

<sup>6</sup> For example, Rev R W Hopper. I found details of him on the My Methodist History [website](#). He was Reginald West Hopper and was born on 12 May 1910 in Southgate in London. He was ordained in 1937. He died in Norwich on 22 November 1980. He appears in four family trees on [Ancestry](#). His father was George Hopper (b1875) and his mother was Mabel Annie West (1876-1975). So, his middle name, West, was his mother's maiden name. In 1911, they were living in Middlesex. There was an older brother Leslie George (b1908) and the family had a domestic servant Alice Carter. In 1921, they were in Wandsworth. The father George Hopper was a Wesleyan Minister and they had one servant Alice Sandbach and a visitor Mary Ellen Fothergill. It seems he may have married Greta Irene Fontaine Temple in Madras in 1943. In 1939, on 6 October, he travelled to India from Liverpool on the City of Canterbury. The voyage took 30 days and there were 153 passengers. He was recorded as a Methodist Minister. In February 1976, Rev Hopper approached mum to ask her if she might do some shorthand and typing for him. She agreed that she could do this on Mondays as needed. Based on the diaries, it appears that she may have only done this for a few months until June 1976.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Rev F R Dowson, see [Chapter 114](#).

<sup>8</sup> For example, Albert Ward brought her some duplicating in March 1976. There is possibly a picture of him on a [website](#) on Wroxham Road Methodist Church where he is described as organist and church member. It [seems](#) he was a local preacher and was involved with the church in White Woman Lane in the seventies. He may have been the author, with Norma Virgoe, of a book about the history of Norwich Methodist Circuits, Churches and Chapels called "*Through Cloud and Sunshine*".

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Sydney Hustler was someone mum knew from Eastern Counties Newspapers. He also seems to have been active in Methodist church and circuit matters.

<sup>10</sup> Vintage [paper sizes](#) included quarto (203 x 254mm) and foolscap (203 x 330mm). While the UK may have adopted the [standard A series](#) for paper sizes earlier, [the transition really occurred in the seventies](#). A4 (210 x 297mm) is both wider and longer than quarto. Foolscap was the same width as quarto but longer than both quarto and A4.

<sup>11</sup> Mum had been producing this since 1966, see [Chapter 90](#)

<sup>12</sup> On 25 August 1975, mum typed "*Retrospect*" on an electric typewriter at grandma and grandad's.

<sup>13</sup> I am not sure she delivered it to end-readers but probably to a central point for onward distribution. In February 1977, she noted delivering it to Essex Street but I am not sure to whom.

<sup>14</sup> In February 1975, mum was involved in sticking labels on "*Retrospect*". I am not sure if these were address or correction labels. Alan and I helped her although I do not recall this specifically.



*Example of certificate issued from Norwich Methodist Festival in 1975*

In March 1975, there was a Methodist Festival<sup>15</sup> and mum produced 400 copies of a festival brochure. Mum noted that Alan and I helped collating these and she stapled them. There was a similar festival two years later. Mum again duplicated a brochure which Alan and Liz helped to collate.<sup>16</sup>

As noted before, it was common for one or more of us children to help mum with her office work. I particularly remember collating documents but there were other examples. For example, in January 1978, mum noted that Alan did all the duplicating.

I am not exactly sure whether mum was paid for all her typing and duplicating, e.g. for the church, but she was clearly paid for some. In April 1976, Andrew Wright offered to help mum with her duplicating accounts if she needed an accountant. He advised that she should be claiming tax relief against capital outlay and this made her wonder if she should get him to do her accounts every year.

It seems that mum kept money she earned from typing and duplicating in a cash tin in the office. In March 1975, she was concerned that money was continually missing from that tin. So, she left a note in the tin asking for the money back! Oddly perhaps, within a week, she said the money had been returned. I really don't understand this. I wonder why mum didn't keep the money in a lockable box, tin or safe. I also wonder who she thought had taken and then returned the money. Also, I wonder if there is any possibility she might have miscounted originally.

Mum had her own office equipment including one or more typewriters<sup>17</sup> and a duplicating machine/duplicator<sup>18</sup>. In April 1975, mum had the duplicator serviced. But, the following month, according to grandma, she sold this for £60.<sup>19</sup> In September 1976, a man came from Leamons<sup>20</sup> to service the typewriter.<sup>21</sup> He said that in six months, possibly, she would need a new roller which would cost £10. In November 1978, mum noted that the duplicating machine went wrong. The next month, in December



*Advert for Leamons from 1971/2 Kelly's TradeFinder*

<sup>15</sup> See [Chapter 124](#).

<sup>16</sup> Mum noted that she paid Alan and Liz two pounds each. She did not mention if she paid Alan or me anything two years earlier!

<sup>17</sup> Based on the diaries, grandma and grandad bought their first typewriter, a Remington standard in 1947, see [Chapter 37](#). In October 1959, mum bought an Imperial portable typewriter, see [Chapter 68](#). Then, in December 1964, mum got a new typewriter from Robertsons, see [Chapter 85](#) and, in July 1974, grandad gave mum over £300 for a new typewriter, see [Chapter 105](#).

<sup>18</sup> Which she had bought at the end of 1963/beginning of 1964, see [Chapter 85](#).

<sup>19</sup> However, mum does not note this.

<sup>20</sup> R J Leamon Ltd were office machine suppliers. In 1960, they were called Leamons Typewriters and were based at 10 Upper King Street. From 1967, they were based at 90 Catton Grove Road where [Pegasus Models](#) are located currently. I have come across [newspaper personnel adverts](#) for the company from 1967 to 1979.

<sup>21</sup> I am not sure which typewriter this refers to. I think, at this point, mum had a portable and a "big" typewriter at least.



*Example of an Adler portable typewriter. Mum had one and she sold it for £16 in December 1978.*

1978, mum sold her Adler<sup>22</sup> portable typewriter for £16. On 3 December 1979, mum took her big typewriter to Robertson's<sup>23</sup> for an overhaul.

Mum needed to buy paper for both typing and duplicating and stencils for duplicating. She got these periodically from Roneo.<sup>24</sup>

Mum primarily did her typing and duplicating in an office she had at home. This was located in different rooms at different times but I recall it being in an attic room at one time and on the first floor at another.<sup>25</sup> While this was well before the days of the Internet and video-conferencing, mum was sometimes able to work in other locations. For example, in February 1976, when mum went to London, she went to the Coeliac Society office<sup>26</sup> and did some work there. She did not specify what kind of work it was or for whom. However, she did do secretarial-type work for the Society presumably for the local branch. For example, in August 1976, she noted typing "*Coeliac letters*" in the afternoon.

On rare occasions, when mum was unable to do typing or duplicating, she asked others to help. For example, in August 1976, mum was taken ill while on holiday in Dunoon.<sup>26</sup> When she got back, she ended up having surgery for a kidney stone. This meant that I took some duplicating to a Mrs Brake<sup>27</sup> for her to do it as mum couldn't.

<sup>22</sup> I don't think I have come across Adler before. I don't recall seeing any note of mum buying this typewriter. [Apparently](#), Adler is one of the better-known typewriter brands. Adler was established as a company in 1896. It initially focused on cars, motorbikes and bicycles but started producing typewriters in 1898. By this time, it had joined with Triumph—Werke to form the Triumph Adler AH Company. Early Adler typewriters had an innovative design and were very popular. There are many vintage Adler typewriters for sale online.

<sup>23</sup> A R Robertson supplied office equipment and were based at 62 West Pottergate, see [Chapter 85](#).

<sup>24</sup> I knew of Roneo as a manufacturer of office equipment, such as duplicators, but I was not aware that they were retailers of paper and stencils. I was also not aware that the name Roneo was an [abbreviation](#) of Rotary Neostyle. In 1967, according to Kelly's directory, Roneo did have a Norwich office/shop at Norfolk House in St John Maddermarket and I presume this is where mum got stencils and paper. It seems that Norfolk House may be the building that also houses the Maddermarket Theatre.

<sup>25</sup> See [Chapter 117](#). Until September 1976, the office was in an attic room but it was then switched with my room to give me a quieter place to work. Although this is the arrangement I mostly remember, it only lasted a couple of years as, in September 1978, rooms were moved around again with the office going back to the attic.

<sup>26</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>27</sup> I don't know who she was and I have not come across her elsewhere in the diaries.

According to her CV, mum started working as a receptionist for the practice of Drs Downes and Day<sup>28</sup> from 1974.<sup>29</sup> However, mum was not keeping a diary at that point which means we have no detail until the start of 1975. The practice was located at 38 Unthank Road and I recall [these premises](#) which are close to the Roman Catholic cathedral.<sup>30</sup>



*The GP surgery of Drs Downes and Day, where mum worked from 1974-75, was located at 38 Unthank Road. These photos were taken in 2025. They show the house number (left) and the building (right)*

Mum worked there from some time in 1974 until she left in around June 1975.<sup>31</sup> Based on the advert that was placed when she left, mum worked four evenings a week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, from 2.15-7pm and every third Saturday morning. Mum tended to refer to this job as “work” while referring to other work she did in more specific terms.<sup>32</sup> There were a number of other receptionists working at the practice. Mum referred to some of them in her diary but only by first

<sup>28</sup> I have not found much detail about either Dr Downes or Dr Day online but they are warmly remembered on [Facebook](#). Both were recalled as “great” and “brilliant” with some contributors remarking that they did house calls. It seems that there were two Dr Days, senior and junior, George and Arnold. So, I presume they were father and son. One contributor noted that they were really good when her mother was ill coming to the house to give injections. It seems that there was no appointment system at one time. People just turned up and waited their turn. I don’t believe that system was in operation when mum worked there. I am sure she would have hated it!! She liked organising (and having control over!) appointments. It seems that one of the two Dr Days, [Dr Arnold George Day](#), may have died in June 2025 aged 92. I am grateful to Paul Thompson for looking at his personal collection of phone books. These show that Dr A G Day was listed there until 1989 whereas Dr G W Downes was only there until 1986. Mum mentioned other doctors during her time she was there. For example, on one day in March 1975, Dr Day had flu so Dr Bryce senior did the surgery. Then, in May 1975, Dr Day was on holiday and Dr Wurr was his locum. Dr [Kirk Bryce](#) worked as a GP in Norwich for 43 years from when he joined the All Saints Green practice in 1930. He was referred to as Dr Bryce senior as his son David joined the practice in 1971. Dr David Bryce retired in May 2008.

<sup>29</sup> See [Chapter 105](#).

<sup>30</sup> It is no longer a GP practice and I had quite a struggle to find out when it closed or what happened to it. I did discover that earlier, from at least 1902 to 1935, it was Pembroke House School. Apparently, 36 Unthank Road is still known as Pembroke House. I am grateful to [Paul Thompson and his phone books](#) for confirming that the doctors who followed Drs Day and Downes, Drs Gall and Pyper, occupied these premises until 2005/6. It seems that the premises closed sometime after that and the surgery merged with others to form one of the current Norwich practices. While I have seen different possibilities online, the most plausible seems to be that it was incorporated into St Stephen’s Gate practice. This [opened a large new medical centre in Wessex Street in August 2006](#).

<sup>31</sup> I think mum’s last day working there was 23 June 1975. She went in to do forms to the end of the quarter. However, on 23 September 1975, Peggy phoned to say they had a new girl and no-one could do the salaries. So, mum went in from 5-6pm and did them.

<sup>32</sup> For example, she referred to her work for Rev Eddy as “chairman” or “GTE”. Later, she referred to her workplaces by the house number. So, “41” refers to the private practice of Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens at 41 Newmarket Road while “7” refers to the general practice of Drs Brittain, Watkins and Leach which was based at 7 Newmarket Road.

name, e.g. Jean and Peggy<sup>33</sup> and particularly when, for some reason, they were not at work!<sup>34</sup> Sometimes, the receptionists covered for each other when one had a particular commitment. So, for example, on one day in March 1975, Jean covered for mum between 6 and 7pm so she could go to school for my parent teacher evening.<sup>35</sup>

## SITUATIONS VACANT

<p><b>DOCTOR'S RECEPTIONIST</b>, central Norwich 2.15-7 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday; plus every third Saturday morning. — Tel. 24715. — (J19P)</p>	<p><b>PART-TIMER/FULL-TIMER</b> required  <b>TO SELL LATEST FASHIONS WIGS AND HAIR PIECES</b>          in central department store, good salary, commission and fringe benefits.          Please Tel. Mrs. Ashken  <b>NORWICH 40661</b> — (J18T)</p>	<p><b>TAYLOR DIVING</b> (a division of Brown &amp; Root (U.K.) Ltd.) require a Female <b>ACCOUNTS CLERK</b>, book-keeping experience essential, age immaterial. — Applications to the Accountant, Taylor Diving, Hudsons Euro Centre, North River Road, Great Yarmouth. Tel. Great Yarmouth 57011. Extn. 29. — (J19)</p> <p><b>EVENING Male ATTENDANT</b> required, five evenings per week. — Contact <b>ANC Cinema</b>, Prince of Wales Road.</p>
<p><b>EASTERN GAS, NORFOLK AREA</b>          A vacancy exists for a <b>TEMPORARY CLERK</b>          in the Distribution Department based on</p>		

The advert (top left) which appeared for mum's job with Dr Downes and Dr Day in the Eastern Evening News of 18 June 1975. This makes it clear that it would be four evenings a week and every third Saturday morning

Sometimes, mum noted, in general terms, how busy the surgery had been. For example, on two evenings in February 1975, mum described the evening surgery as very hectic or hectic.<sup>36</sup> There were a number of events or things that happened while mum worked for Dr Downes and Dr Day. In January 1975, although mum was not working, she went into the surgery to see Peggy and Jean. She noted "agreed to write letter". It is not completely clear if the three of them agreed to write a letter or mum agreed to write this for them.<sup>37</sup> I assume the letter was directed to Dr Downes and Dr Day. According to mum, it was to ask for a filing cabinet and to be "fenced off".<sup>38</sup> I am unsure why a letter was needed and why these requests could not be made verbally and directly. I wonder if they had any kind of practice management meetings as I would have thought such things could have been raised and dealt with there. At the end of that month, January 1975, mum noted that the Drug Squad came in to check up on "the altered prescriptions". I assume this involved them coming into the surgery but mum provides no further detail. Presumably, there had been some issue of prescriptions being altered but mum did not mention this anywhere else so I don't really know what was going on or what the outcome was! The following month, in February 1975, mum noted that they were locked out of the surgery "again".<sup>39</sup> She noted that Dr Day knew about it and that he arrived at 2.15pm. She seemed put out that there was no apology. Very occasionally, mum described patients who came to the surgery. For example, in March 1975, she noted that one man came in drunk. Dr Downes saw him and another patient looked after him "thank goodness".

I wondered if mum enjoyed her work for Dr Downes and Dr Day. There is some evidence that she did. For example, in April 1975, when she got back from a break in Eastbourne<sup>40</sup>, she noted that it was nice to be back at Dr Day's. However, when she got the opportunity, she moved on to other jobs.<sup>41</sup> Factors

<sup>33</sup> When mum took some of her jewellery to Parton's to be valued, in January 1975, mum also took Peggy's first engagement ring, see [Chapter 125](#).

<sup>34</sup> For example, on one day in February 1975, Jean was off work but Peggy did not tell mum until 11.30. She was also off work the next day but came back the next.

<sup>35</sup> See [Chapter 118](#).

<sup>36</sup> This coincided with when one of the other receptionists, Jean, was off but I am not sure if the two things were linked.

<sup>37</sup> Whichever this was, I suspect mum physically wrote the letter. Based on my experience, mum was good at getting people to appear to agree with what she wanted to do! So, I suspect the things mentioned in the letter were things mum wanted.

<sup>38</sup> I am not sure what or who they wanted to be "fenced off" from but perhaps it was patients. I have never liked these kind of window-based set-ups but I imagine many people and institutions do like them for reasons of security and infection control.

<sup>39</sup> The implication was that there had been a previous incident. However, this does not appear to have been recorded by mum in her diary.

<sup>40</sup> See [Chapter 122](#).

<sup>41</sup> Potentially, she could have combined the job at Dr Downes and Dr Day's with the secretary's job for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens as she did later with a role in a different general practice. However, this does not seem to have been something mum considered.

may have been fewer antisocial hours, e.g. evenings and weekends, better pay<sup>42</sup>, and the prospect of more interesting work and/or greater levels of responsibility. I suspect the latter issue was a major factor in whether mum took a job and particularly whether she continued with it. Mum liked being “*in charge*” and did not take kindly to being told what to do, particularly when what she was being told to do made no sense to her or could, in her view, be done in a better way.

I don't know whether mum was actively looking for another job but she must have kept her eye out for adverts as, at the end of May 1975, she saw the advert in the Eastern Evening News which ultimately led to her being offered the job as medical secretary with Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens. Just over two weeks later, mum noted that Dr Day had an advert in the Eastern Evening News for her old job. She also noted that eight people responded between 5 and 7pm. Two days after the advert had been placed, Miss Pauline Stormont came to the surgery from 4-7pm to learn “*the ropes*”, presumably from mum.

Similarly, according to her CV, mum had started working for Rev G T Eddy before the start of this period, some time in 1973. However, mum was not keeping a diary then so information prior to 1975 is very limited.<sup>43</sup> It seems<sup>44</sup> that there were two Rev Eddys working as Methodist Ministers within the district in the early seventies. Graham Eddy was the Minister at Mile Cross Methodist Church while it was Geoffrey Thackray Eddy<sup>45</sup> who was District Chairman.



The new president of the Methodist Conference, the Rev Donald English, met local ministers at Thetford last Friday. He's pictured above (extreme left) talking to the Rev Alan Ashton, minister of the Thetford circuit, Mr Clifford Jagger, superintendent of the Thetford circuit, and the Rev Geoffrey Thackray Eddy, chairman of the East Anglia District.

*This photo of Rev Eddy (far right) was taken on 26 January 1979 in Thetford on the occasion of a visit by the then President of Conference, Rev Donald English (far left). Others pictured are, from left to right, Rev Alan Ashton and Rev Clifford Jagger. Image obtained through paid subscription to [Find My Past](#). The role of District Chairman in the Methodist tradition is a senior one, broadly equivalent to an Anglican bishop. There are 30 Methodist districts in Britain and around 360 circuits. There are 15 circuits in the East Anglia district*

<sup>42</sup> Although I don't know this was definitely the case.

<sup>43</sup> See [Chapter 105](#).

<sup>44</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>45</sup> Geoffrey Thackray Eddy was born in Prestwich Lancashire in 1915, entered the Methodist Ministry in 1936 and died in Stratford-on-Avon in 2014. It appears he became Chairman of the East Anglia District in [1972](#) having previously held the [same post in Lincoln](#).

Mum's hours for Rev Eddy did not seem particularly onerous equating, it seems, to a morning once per week. There does not appear to have been a fixed day that she went to Rev Eddy's unlike in her other work. Rather, it seems that she fitted it in around other commitments that she had, particularly in relation to paid work. So, she mostly went on a Friday morning but also sometimes on Monday or Thursday.<sup>46</sup> Rarely, mum did not go to work because either she or Rev Eddy was sick.<sup>47</sup>

Fairly often, mum did work for Rev Eddy at other times. This was mainly at home but also at other places, e.g. at grandma's. She tended to do this outside of working hours, so in the evening or at the weekend, including on a Sunday, as she did for her other typing and duplicating work. From time to time, she did work early in the morning, e.g. before church on a Sunday. On occasions, she put in very long hours typing and duplicating. For example, on 28 February 1976, she noted spending ten hours doing such work. This was mainly work for Rev Eddy. Sometimes, for example on one occasion in October 1975, she noted that she resented having to work at these times.

Much of the work seems to have been typing official letters for Rev Eddy. There was some duplicating e.g. in preparation for Synod.<sup>48</sup> I recall mum being quite proud of her role as secretary to the Chairman of the District as his was a senior role and her role, as his secretary, would have meant that she was dealing with many confidential and sensitive issues. I think mum would have loved that! However, mum rarely commented on the nature of her work with Rev Eddy or what she thought of it. On one occasion, in November 1976, however, she noted it was not very interesting! She did not comment on what she thought of Rev Eddy but my impression is that she found him somewhat distant and aloof. In November 1975, shortly after grandad had died, mum noted that he sat her in a comfortable chair and they had coffee and talked about grandad. However, mum commented, "*I'm sure he is sincere but its just his way which makes it seem a "duty"*". I don't know if mum's was a paid role but I suspect it was, not least because she included it in her CV. However, I suspect it did not pay much due, in part at least, to the number of hours being low. Mum's last day working for Rev Eddy was 10 March 1977. It seems that she left this job when she got her new job working in the Occupational Therapy Department of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.



*This advert appeared in the Eastern Evening News on 31 May 1975. It is clear that it was advertising two medical secretary posts in the Newmarket Road area. Shorthand was required and medical experience was desirable. Exact hours were to be arranged and salary was said to be commensurate to age and experience. Mum applied*

At the end of May 1975, mum noted applying for a position which was advertised as "*med sec in Newmarket Rd area*". At lunch-time, on 11 June 1975, mum went for an interview with Dr Batty Shaw, Mr Stephens and Mr Ashken. She noted that the job paid £1 per hour and was 2½ days per week, nine to five with no Saturdays. She hoped she got the job. The next day, the 12<sup>th</sup>, Dr Batty Shaw rang at 1.50pm and mum went for a "*practical interview*".<sup>49</sup> While mum was out,

Dr Batty Shaw's secretary phoned and told Alan that mum had got the job. I am not sure if this was

<sup>46</sup> She never went on a Wednesday and she only went a few times on Tuesday, early in 1975, before she started working for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens.  
<sup>47</sup> For example, on one occasion in February 1976, mum did not go to Rev Eddy's as he had flu, see [Chapter 116](#). Similarly, on another occasion, in September 1976, mum did not go to Rev Eddy's as she had a cold.  
<sup>48</sup> A Synod is an official church meeting. It is used in Anglican and Roman Catholic churches in addition to Methodist ones. In this case, I suspect it related to a District Synod.  
<sup>49</sup> I am not entirely sure what that was.

the official notification as mum commented that she “*hoped its right*”.<sup>50</sup> The day after that, the 13<sup>th</sup>, at 10.45, mum heard from Mrs McKenzie that she had got the job.<sup>51</sup> Mum also noted that Elsie Stockley knew and told Peggy which meant that Dr Day knew before mum told him.<sup>52</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup>, mum went to see Mr Ashken in the morning. They agreed she would work Tuesday and Wednesday 9-5 and Friday afternoons.

Mum started on 18 June 1975 learning the ropes. I think she started formally on 24 June. She noted it was at 41 Newmarket Road. Mr Stephens was away but she worked with Mr Ashken in the afternoon. She thought he was very nice.<sup>53</sup> At the start of July 1975, mum went to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and met Mr Ashken there by accident. He took her to meet Sue who I assume was his NHS secretary. Mum then had a tour of the records office.



*The job mum got with Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens was based here at 41 Newmarket Road. I took this photo in May 2025, some 50 years after mum got the job!*

As noted above, mum worked at 41 Newmarket Road all day Tuesday and Wednesday and Friday afternoon. However, both sides were fairly flexible over the hours worked.<sup>54</sup> On 2 July 1975, Mr Ashken

<sup>50</sup> When I first read this, I thought she meant that she hoped that it was the right job for her but I think it probably meant that she hoped the information that she had got the job was right.

<sup>51</sup> I am not sure if this was the formal notification but assume it was. I do not know more details about Mrs McKenzie.

<sup>52</sup> I am not sure who Elsie Stockley was but Peggy worked with mum at Dr Day’s surgery. Mum noted that she did not know how Elsie Stockley had found out but, as I have noted elsewhere, see [Chapter 116](#), it seems that it was common for secretaries to share information with other secretaries. This makes me pretty uncomfortable but it seems it was commonplace and mum did this herself! While mum feigned annoyance, I suspect she was pleased to be the topic of conversation with Dr Day!

<sup>53</sup> Mum knew Mr Ashken as he had cared for her father. Mum discussed grandad with Mr Ashken, see [Chapter 116](#).

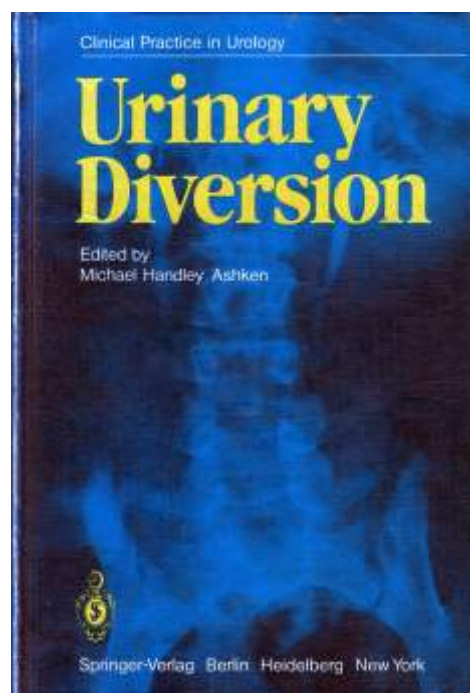
<sup>54</sup> On Tuesday and Wednesday, mum usually started early at 8.30 and, on Fridays, she usually worked from 1.15 to 5.15. However, there were times when she either started and/or finished earlier or later and presumably she arranged this directly with Mr Ashken and Mr

told mum that he thought she should have the same salary as Barbara<sup>55</sup> which was £1.20 per hour.<sup>56</sup> On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, mum noted that Mr Ashken had said that she should have four weeks paid holiday per year.

In July and August 1976, mum was off work for holiday<sup>57</sup> and subsequent illness.<sup>58</sup> When she returned, mum noted that Mr Ashken seemed pleased to see her back and that “*everything seemed in a muddle*”. Mum appreciated being valued at work and being given responsibility and authority. For example, in October 1976, Mr Ashken was going away to Preston. He asked mum to “*pp*”<sup>59</sup> two letters and requests for sperm counts.

Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens came to the surgery to see patients. They also gave mum work to do such as dictating letters. However, they were not present all the time mum was in the office. They might be away doing NHS work, private surgery, off sick<sup>60</sup> or on holiday<sup>61</sup>. On one occasion, in March 1976, mum noted that Mr Ashken was operating at “*St H*” so was not in until 10.30. Initially, I was unsure where this was referring to. However, on 19 January 1977, mum noted more explicitly that Mr Ashken was operating at St Helen’s. I am grateful to contributors on [Norwich Remembers Facebook Group](#) for explaining that St Helen’s was a private hospital, possibly owned by the Norwich Union in the Bishopgate area of Norwich within the grounds of the Great Hospital. It was used for routine private surgery but closed when a new BUPA Hospital opened in Colney.

*Mr Ashken was a very eminent urologist who edited this 1981 textbook on urinary diversion*



Stephens. Occasionally, mum popped in on a day she was not working, e.g. Monday, Thursday or Sunday to catch up on something specific, such as filing. She also sometimes picked up notes from the hospital on a non-working day.

<sup>55</sup> I think Barbara was Dr Batty Shaw’s secretary and that she was probably appointed at the same time as mum given that two jobs were advertised. There may have been some tension/competition between mum and Barbara. I am not sure if they sometimes did work for each other’s consultants but, on one Friday in December 1975, Mr Stephens had come in in the morning to get Barbara to type a letter. She did it but “*very badly*”. I presume that Mr Stephens had made comments and/or asked for corrections. Barbara did not do it but left it for mum to do. Mum refused as she said Mr Stephens had asked Barbara to sign it. I am not sure what the outcome of this was but presumably it was mum’s responsibility to do letters for “*her*” consultants. On a Tuesday in March 1976, mum noted that she was very busy at work because Barbara was not in because of her other job. Mum noted that she thought that Mr Ashken was not very pleased with Barbara. While this could be the case, it could also be true that mum was projecting her own feelings onto Mr Ashken! On 29 June 1976, mum noted that Barbara was leaving on 26 July. No more is said about this but I assume Barbara left and she was replaced by Daphne as, on 11 November 1976, mum went in on her day off to show Daphne how to put in a new carbon ribbon. The following year, at the end of January 1977, mum did some work for Dr Batty Shaw as Daphne was sick with diarrhoea and vomiting. Mum worked from 2.20 to 5.20 pm and half an hour on Tuesday. Apparently, Dr Batty Shaw told mum that the letters had been typed beautifully! I think Daphne may have depended on mum a lot. For example, on one day in March 1977, mum noted that Daphne phoned her three times. I imagine mum’s feelings on this were quite mixed. She would like to give the impression that she was irritated but I suspect she liked being indispensable! In September 1978, Daphne phoned mum to say that Mr Stephens was not well so could mum go in to cancel his appointments for Friday. She did. Daphne picked her up and took her home.

<sup>56</sup> This was a 20p, and 20%, rise. Mum noted that she was paid on 23 July 1975. I think this was probably for the first time. She also noted being paid in August and September 1975. In June 1976, mum noted that they had been given a pay rise of £3 per week. This meant the hourly rate was now £1.35 which was a 12.5% pay rise. Three years later, in June 1978, mum noted that she got a rise to £1.55 per hour.

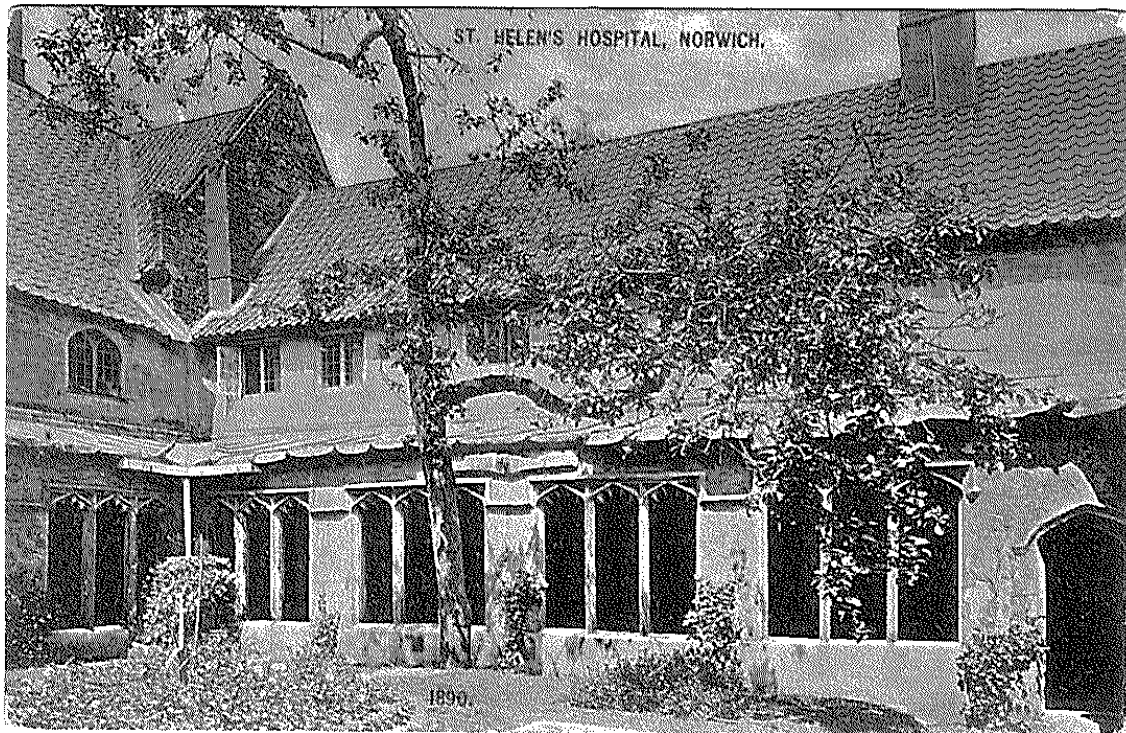
<sup>57</sup> See [Chapter 122](#).

<sup>58</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>59</sup> PP stands for the Latin phrase “*per procuracionem*” meaning by delegation. I think mum would have been delighted to be trusted by Mr Ashken to do this.

<sup>60</sup> At the beginning of April 1976, Mr Stephens told mum that he would be having gallbladder surgery at Barts in April, see [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>61</sup> On 7 January 1977, Mr Stephens was away as he was at the boat show. I assume this refers to the London/International Boat Show which took place at Earls Court in January. It ran from 1955 to 2018 when it was cancelled as commercially unviable. It was held at Earl’s Court until 2004 when it moved to the ExCel Exhibition Centre. A YouTube [video](#) is available for the 1977 show.



*St Helen's Hospital in Norwich. This was used for private operations in the late seventies*

Sometimes, mum was asked to do tasks to help Mr Ashken or Mr Stephens personally or that went beyond usual secretarial duties. For example, on 19 October 1977, Mr Ashken was not at work. However, he rang at 1.30pm to say he and his son had been playing golf and he had locked his keys in the boot! He asked mum to fetch him and take him to get the spare keys. She did. He gave her a gallon of petrol and showed her around his barn which they were hoping to sell. Mum noted that she had done letters about this. The following week, on the 25<sup>th</sup>, mum had to take one of Mr Stephens' patients home and then for admission to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

In July 1978, mum noted that orthopaedic surgeon John Gibson (Ian) Taylor<sup>62</sup> had started working from 41 Newmarket Road. She met him and his secretary.

The impression that the diaries give is that mum really enjoyed this job. She appeared to like the importance of the role and she enjoyed working with Mr Ashken, in particular.<sup>63</sup> She often used positive words to describe work including "good", "lovely", "interesting" and especially "nice". She quite often described work as "nice" or "very nice" "as usual". On one occasion, in September 1976, when mum was not working, she wished she was. Quite frequently, she commented that work was "busy". Sometimes, but much less often, she commented that work was quiet or not busy. Mum seemed to have a scale of busyness from "busy" to "very busy" to "very busy" to "very, very busy" and even, on one occasion, "v v v busy". In general, mum seemed to prefer work when it was busy sometimes referring to it being "nice and busy". When work was quiet, mum appears to have had the flexibility to do other things, such as leaving early, going to the hospital for a blood test, taking her car for an MOT or doing other work, e.g. for the Coeliac Society.

<sup>62</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>63</sup> She frequently described him as nice, see [Chapter 114](#).

Overall, the working conditions appear to have been good at 41 Newmarket Road although the office tended to be cold. On 2 January 1979, mum took me to the railway station for 7.30am. she went via the office to put the fires on so it would not be so cold when she got there. When the weather was hot, the coolness of the office was an advantage. For example, on one day in July 1975, mum noted that it had been hot and sticky all day but “*not at 41 though!*”

Occasionally, mum commented on specific patients or incidents which had happened at work.<sup>64</sup> For example, in October 1975, mum noted that Dr Baker had phoned in the afternoon to say that a boy aged 18 in Ward 7 had carcinoma of the prostate. Mum noted that Mr Ashken was very concerned. In March 1978, mum commented that someone she knew had had a vasectomy performed by Mr Ashken.

Sometimes, mum’s job meant she had to go to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, for example, to collect or deliver records, letters and/or xrays, to have things photocopied or to see other medical secretaries<sup>65</sup>. Mum sometimes took advantage of such trips to visit people she knew who were in hospital. At that time, the hospital was still at the old site on St Stephens Road only about one third of a mile from 41 Newmarket Road.



*Façade of the former Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. This is now called the Pavilion and consists of flats. Mum sometimes went there as part of her work for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens*

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<sup>64</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>65</sup> Particularly Sue and Dorothy who I think were NHS secretaries for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens respectively. In August 1977, Mr Stephens asked mum if she would like to swap jobs with Dorothy from next March/April. This would mean mum becoming Mr Stephens’ NHS secretary. Mum noted that if Mr Ashken had asked her this she would have had no hesitation but she said she was not sure about general surgery or leaving private practice. She wished she could discuss with someone and wondered about talking to Mr Ashken. I find this all rather odd as it is clear she particularly enjoyed working for Mr Ashken but this personal preference is not really discussed. While she might have preferred to stay in private practice, this was clearly not the be all or end all as she would have moved had Mr Ashken asked her. It is odd, but perhaps not out of character, for mum to have thought it would be a good idea to discuss with Mr Ashken. If Mr Stephens had not discussed with him, this could possibly have caused conflict between them and any advice Mr Ashken gave would have been coloured by the fact that he would be losing mum as his private secretary. I suspect this may have been mum’s main motive in thinking asking him about this might have been a good idea. In the end, she spoke to Dorothy who told her she would have to apply in the usual way and, as far as she knew, Mr Ashken had not been told. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, mum noted she was still undecided. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, mum did tell Mr Ashken about Mr Stephens’ suggestion. Mr Ashken told mum that he hoped she would stay. I don’t think anything came of this job swap but I think Dorothy must have left her post as Mr Stephens’ NHS secretary as, in August 1978, mum referred to Sue and Daphne as Mr Stephens’ and Mr Ashken’s secretaries respectively. I wonder if mum got this mixed up and if Sue was still Mr Ashken’s secretary and Daphne was Mr Stephens’ new secretary.

Occasionally, mum had to go elsewhere as part of her work for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens. For example on a couple of occasions, she had to go to the bank to withdraw money for Mr Stephens. Also, sometimes, mum did work for Mr Ashken or Mr Stephens at home, for example work on Mr Ashken's accounts. Very occasionally, people mum knew came to visit her at 41 Newmarket Road. For example, Daphne F<sup>66</sup> came to see her in August 1978. Mum used her position as a medical secretary to seek to gain what I consider to be preferential treatment for herself and others<sup>67</sup>. This included, in September 1975, looking at her own hospital records<sup>68</sup>. Sometimes, mum discussed one of the two surgeons she worked for with people she knew<sup>69</sup> and I think she derived a certain degree of kudos from this.

It seems that Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens valued mum and her work highly. They sometimes commented positively on mum's work. For example, in November 1976, Dorothy told mum that Mr Stephens had said "I was looking for more work & that I was good!" In January 1977, Mr Ashken told mum that he no longer ticked people off in his diary, when they had paid, as much as he had before as "your book is much more efficient". Mum would have loved being told this. She was convinced that the way she did things was the best way and she enjoyed when other people recognised this! In July 1977, Mr Ashken told mum to arrange IVPs<sup>70</sup> etc as she saw fit.<sup>71</sup>

I think mum usually drove to and from work.<sup>72</sup> I am not sure what the arrangements were for parking at work. It seems there was some parking at the back of the building but mum usually parked on the road. For example, in November 1977, mum said there was no parking on Newmarket Road so she parked at the back. It is possible that the parking at the back was not ideal as, in December 1977, there was a discussion about renovating/redoing it. Mr Ashken thought it was not necessary but Dr Batty Shaw said they needed to for mum's sake. I am not sure if this incident was linked but, in May 1977, mum noted



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*Example of an IVP/IVU. Mr Ashken authorised mum to arrange IVPs as she thought necessary. This IVP shows a congenital abnormality of partial duplication of the urinary tract on the left side*

<sup>66</sup> I think this was probably Daphne Francis who studied a typing course with mum at City College from September 1977. However, there may have been two, or probably three, Daphnes who were medical secretaries/receptionists that mum knew at this time. First, there was Daphne who was Dr Batty-Shaw's private secretary from November 1976. I don't think it could have been her as she worked at 41 Newmarket Road so mum would not have said she came to see her there. Second, there was a Daphne working at 7 Newmarket Road but I don't think mum knew her in September 1977 so probably not her. Third, the diaries mention a Daphne who in August 1978 was Mr Ashken's NHS secretary. On balance, I suspect it was her.

<sup>67</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>68</sup> She noted there was nothing very exciting!

<sup>69</sup> For example, in November 1977, when she was helping prepare a Gift Day stall, she spoke to Ann Halford about Mr Stephens. Her husband had been under him through the NHS for liver cancer.

<sup>70</sup> IVP refers to an intravenous pyelogram where a dye is injected allowing the urinary tract to be visualised. In my training, we were told to refer to them as intravenous urograms (IVU) as more than the kidney was visualised. While IVUs were the main way of investigating the urinary tract previously, they have been largely superseded by CT and MRI scans.

<sup>71</sup> Again, mum would have loved this responsibility and authority. While I guess it is good that Mr Ashken trusted mum and IVUs were needed on almost anyone with a urinary tract problem, it does make me a little uncomfortable that someone with no clinical training was able to authorise an invasive procedure with a finite albeit low risk.

<sup>72</sup> Despite the proximity of work to where we lived. It was about a mile away so a 15-20 minute walk. By way of comparison, my school was almost twice as far away (1.8m) and my places of work were 1.4m and 1.7m respectively.

that her car had been damaged while parked at work. She noted that the near offside orange light cover was broken.<sup>73</sup> Occasionally, other people gave mum a lift to or from work. Such people included Mr Ashken<sup>74</sup>, my sister Tricia and our next-door neighbour Grace Drury. On one occasion, in January 1978, when the car would not start, I took mum to work on my motorbike.<sup>75</sup> Mum did sometimes walk, particularly when there was a problem with the car or if the weather was particularly bad. When working a full day, mum usually went home for lunch<sup>76</sup> but sometimes she brought lunch with her.

Sometimes, Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens gave mum presents, particularly at Christmas. Mr Stephens always gave her a brace of pheasants and I recall these. Mr Ashken gave mum a Christmas present each year but most years mum did not specify what this was. However, in 1975, it was some Wedgewood and, in 1978, a pure silk scarf.

Sometimes, mum was off work for holidays or ill-health. In October 1976, mum discussed with Mr Stephens plans for her to be off in December for parathyroid surgery.<sup>77</sup> He said he could ask Shirley<sup>78</sup> to come in. That same month, mum collected a form for DHSS concerning the dates she would be off work for the operation. In December 1976, after the operation, mum noted that Dr Welch had given her a certificate for three weeks. Mum wrote and told Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens this. However, at the end of December, before mum was back at work, Mr Ashken rang up to ask mum if she could do the accounts. Tricia took mum to collect the books etc. Mr Ashken said he would pay her for December.<sup>79</sup> Officially, mum started back at work on 4 January 1977. She noted that both Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens were pleased to see her. Mr Ashken, in particular, had had to do lots of the work himself, e.g. sperm count results. Mum would have usually done such things when she was at work. In April 1978, mum was advised to have a hysterectomy but she told Mr Carron-Brown that she could not have eight weeks off work. Mum must have told Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens about this as she noted that they were “*nice about op*”. Mum took a summer holiday from 20 July to 6 August 1978.<sup>80</sup> Then she had a hysterectomy on 31 August 1978.<sup>81</sup> On 2 October 1978, Dr Welch said mum could go to work and could type but should not do GP work until after she had seen Mr Carron Brown.

My diary understandably does not have a great deal in it about mum’s work. What mentions there are really relate to how it affected me. So, for example, in February 1977, I noted that I was “*besieged*” by people who wanted to speak to mum who was at work. In April 1977, I noted that mum took me to grandma’s before she went to work. The next day, I noted that she left for work before I was up.<sup>82</sup>

Wednesday February 23rd 1977  
This morning Gerald and I went in the city to get the prize, we saw Spick and Ian at Halfords and met Simon and Chris at Just John's. They had been working in the library.  
In the afternoon I stayed at home and was besieged by people wanting to contact mum who was at work, he was at school and Alan went to the pictures.

*My diary entry for 23 February 1977 which noted that I was at home in the afternoon and I was “besieged” by people looking for mum who was at work*

<sup>73</sup> I don’t know exactly what had happened or what mum did about it.

<sup>74</sup> On the same day I took mum to work on my motorbike, Mr Ashken brought mum home in his new MG! He came back from the hospital specifically to do that.

<sup>75</sup> See [Chapter 127](#). I think I recall this. From memory, I only took mum on my motorbike once. If I recall correctly, it was snowing lightly!

<sup>76</sup> Particularly when it was half-term and we children would have been off school.

<sup>77</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>78</sup> I believe she may have been Mr Stephens’ NHS secretary at this time before Dorothy took on the role.

<sup>79</sup> I am not sure what the arrangements for sick pay were but I would have assumed she would have been entitled to this

<sup>80</sup> See [Chapter 122](#).

<sup>81</sup> See [Chapter 116](#). She got flowers from Mr Stephens, Mr & Mrs Ashken, Sue (who was recorded as Mr Stephens’ secretary) and Daphne (who was recorded as Mr Ashken’s secretary). Mr Ashken visited as did Sue and Daphne. She got cards from Sue, Daphne, Doreen and “*sister*”.

<sup>82</sup> This happened on other occasions.

In May 1979, mum decided she was leaving 41 Newmarket Road to work full-time for the GP practice of Drs Brittain, Watkins and Leach, at 7 Newmarket Road, where she had been working part-time. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, she told Mr Stephens who said it was terrible news. He made suggestions of alternatives such as Daphne<sup>83</sup> going to No 7 and mum working full-time for them.<sup>84</sup> Another option was to get another surgeon at 41.<sup>85</sup> Mr Stephens also said laughingly that Dr Brittain should feel bad. Mum also noted that she had a note from Mrs Ashken signed Iris. The next day, Dr Brittain said he would write to Mr Stephens.<sup>86</sup> Just under a week later, mum met Mrs Ashken at lunch-time and told her that she wanted to leave 41.<sup>87</sup> Mrs Ashken said it was bad news. Mum noted to herself that she hoped she was doing the right thing. About a week later mum did speak directly to Mr Ashken who was very upset that she was leaving. They talked a lot about it. He said she should let him know what the difference in salary was. Mum said she was quite upset by this.<sup>88</sup> She rang and spoke to Dr Watkins and Dr Brittain and went to see Peter Lemmon, the Minister at St Peter's Park Lane,<sup>89</sup> and his wife Christine. However, by the end of May 1979, Mr Ashken was a bit better and seemed to accept that mum was leaving. By mid-June 1979, mum noted that there had been three responses to the advert for her job with Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens. At the end of June 1979, Mr Stephens asked mum if she had changed her mind about leaving. However, he said they would accept her decision. Early in July 1979, Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens interviewed four women<sup>90</sup> for mum's job. Mr Ashken asked mum to ring one of them that night.<sup>91</sup> The next day, mum noted that Jane Hey had accepted the job. About three weeks later, Mrs Ashken asked mum what she would like from Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens when she left. In August 1979, mum went to the hospital. Sue and Daphne, Mr Ashken's and Mr Stephens' NHS secretaries, gave her a plant. Also, in August 1979, Jane Hey started to work. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Mr Ashken said he would come to say goodbye on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup>. Mum noted that she felt very sad to be leaving. Mr Ashken did come on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Mum said he was as choked as she was. He gave her a gold necklace from him and Mr Stephens. On 4 September 1979, mum took this to Tilletts to have it lengthened. In September 1979, mum went back to 41 to help Jane with the PAYE.



*This is the gold necklace that Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens gave mum when she left 41 Newmarket Road. It was identifiable among mum's possessions when she died and was inherited by my sister Tricia*

<sup>83</sup> Daphne, at this point, was Dr Batty Shaw's secretary. I don't know if anyone had discussed this idea with Daphne or the Drs Brittain, Watkins and Leach.

<sup>84</sup> If this was a possibility, I am not sure why two part-time posts were advertised in the first place.

<sup>85</sup> The odd thing was that they had done that when Ian Taylor joined them but he had brought his own secretary.

<sup>86</sup> I suspect mum had reported back some, possibly all, of what Mr Stephens had said.

<sup>87</sup> I am not sure why mum took this route rather than just speaking to Mr Ashken directly.

<sup>88</sup> I am not sure if she was upset by the conversation in general or the specific point about salary.

<sup>89</sup> See [Chapter 124](#).

<sup>90</sup> There must have been at least one additional applicant since mum noted that there had been three responses.

<sup>91</sup> It seems a bit odd that mum was the one who had to reach out to the successful applicant.

According to her CV, from 1973 to 1974, mum cared for a sick/elderly lady two days per week. This was Mrs Pauline Tilsley who lived at 24 Lime Tree Road.<sup>92</sup> Mum went to see her for an hour on 10 November 1975. She noted it was nice.

While mum enjoyed her work with Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens and she was also working for Rev Eddy and doing her own typing and duplicating, it is my impression that mum found things difficult financially. Presumably, mum talked about this with others leading perhaps to June<sup>93</sup> asking, in October 1976, why mum did not get another job on Monday and Thursday. Mum thought it was a good idea and asked June to let her know if she heard of anything. About a week later, mum saw an advert for a receptionist. She wrote about it. Also, she told Mr Ashken that she needed another job and he said he would remember. The next day, mum took the letter about the advert to the office of the Eastern Evening News. Two days later, Dr Pearson<sup>94</sup> rang. He wanted mum to go<sup>95</sup> but mum wrote “*think<sup>96</sup> my hours won’t fit*”.


**PART-TIME ASSISTANT** required, City Snack Bar. Hours 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Apply 12, Upper King Street. Tel. Dereham 3686.  
**PART-TIME RECEPTIONIST** required by doctors, Eartham Road area. Previous experience helpful. Box A897, Press Office, Norwich.

*Advert for a doctor’s receptionist which appeared in the Eastern Evening News on 20 October 1976. Mum enquired*

Then, mum saw an advert for a full-time hospital and private secretary a consultant surgeon who mum identified as Mr Birt.<sup>97</sup> Mum rang but Mrs Birt said it must be full-time. Mum described her as very offputting! A few days later, mum saw an advert for weekend work in the Bed Bureau of the Norfolk and Norwich. She noted she would get an application form. Three days later, she completed that

**SECRETARY** required by Norwich Consultant Surgeon, whole time post for hospital and private practice. Apply 8, Lime Tree Road, Norwich, NR2 2NQ or Tel. Norwich 53769.

*Above - advert for a secretary to a Consultant Surgeon which appeared in the Eastern Evening News of 23 October 1976. Mum enquired but found Mrs Birt offputting. However, the job clearly stated whole time and mum was looking for part-time Right – advert for weekend clerical duties in the Bed Bureau which appeared in the Eastern Evening News of 26 October 1976. Mum completed the application form. I assume she heard nothing*



**Norwich Health District**

**CROMER AND DISTRICT HOSPITAL**  
**PERSON REQUIRED FOR INTERESTING WORK IN VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS**

Duties involve the removing and replacing of plasters, the fitting and making of “Plastorex” casts, making orthopaedic splints, packing dressings and instruments and assisting in the operating theatre at St. Michael’s Hospital, Aylsham.  
Previous experience would be an advantage, but in-service training will be arranged.  
Commencing wage £31.68, plus £6 supplement, for a 40-hour week, Monday to Friday.  
Application form and job description available from: Administrator, Cromer and District Hospital, Mill Road, Cromer (Cromer 3571).  
Closing date for inquiries: November 2nd, 1976.

**NORFOLK AND NORWICH HOSPITAL**  
**ARE YOU AVAILABLE FOR WEEK-END CLERICAL DUTIES?**

We are looking for a Part-time Clerk to help provide cover in our Bed Bureau from 08.30 to 22.30 Saturday and Sunday each week. The duties are organised on a shift basis, and the successful applicant will be required to work an average of 14 hours per fortnight.  
A minimum starting salary of 8.10 per hour is offered plus 1.00 per hour non-embancable supplement. Hours worked after 12 noon Saturday are paid at time and a half.  
Please send S.A.E. for Job Description and application form from Hospital Secretary, Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, St. Stephen’s Road, Norwich.  
Please note that Acknowledgments will be sent only to applicants called for interview.

Mum must have mentioned that she was looking for an additional job to Mr Stephens as he said he would enquire for her. Early in November 1976, his NHS secretary Dorothy told mum that Mr Stephens had said “*I was looking for more work & that I was good!*” Despite her efforts and those of others, mum was not successful in finding additional employment before the end of 1976. In January 1977,

<sup>92</sup> See [Chapter 105](#).

<sup>93</sup> I am not sure exactly who this was but possibly this refers to Dr Welch’s secretary.

<sup>94</sup> It seems that [Dr David Pearson](#) may have been a GP who also worked at the Norfolk and Norwich as a clinical assistant in diabetes.

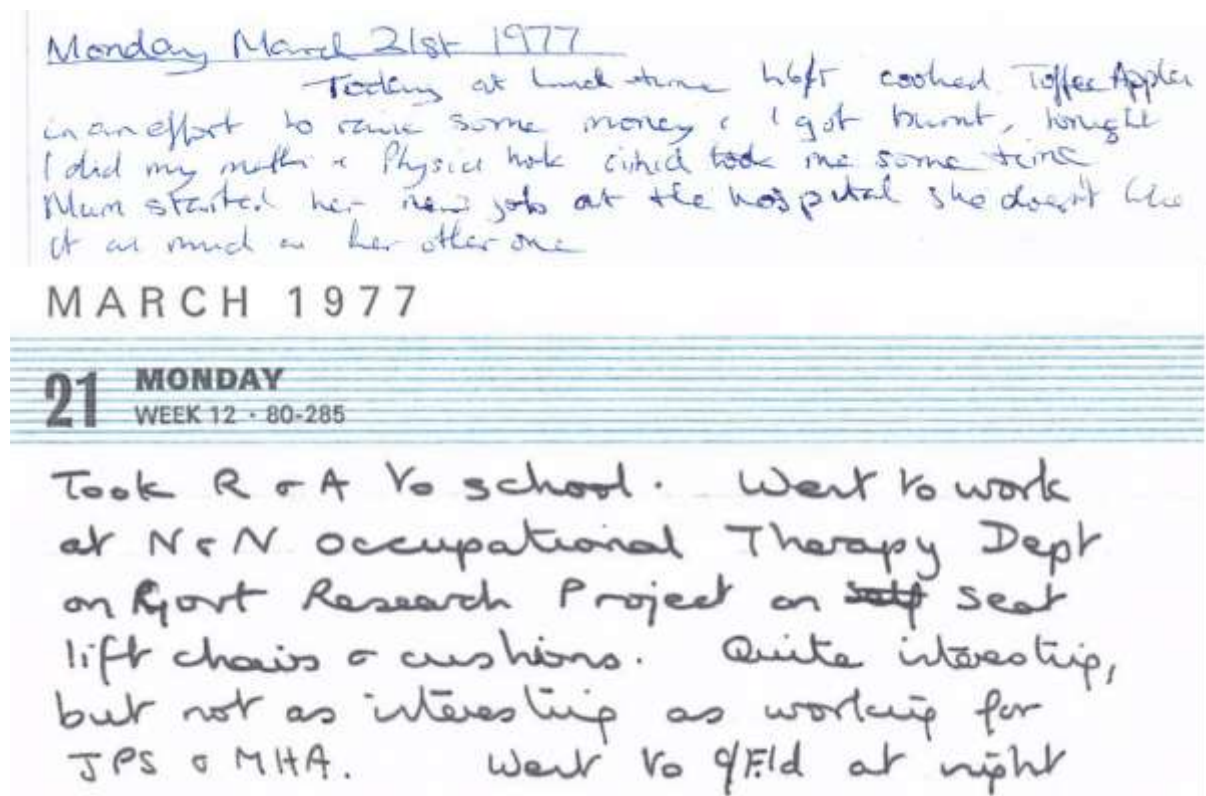
<sup>95</sup> Presumably for an interview.

<sup>96</sup> I am not sure who thought this, mum or Dr Pearson.

<sup>97</sup> [Alan Birt](#) was born on 24 June 1915. He was educated at Wellington College and St Thomas’s Hospital, where he qualified with honours in 1937. He held a number of junior appointments there and was later appointed senior registrar, having passed the FRCS in 1940. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and served in North Africa. In 1946, he was appointed surgeon to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, working in vascular and cardiac surgery. He chaired the advisory committee of the Association of Surgeons, of which he became President in 1979 the year he retired. He died on 12 August 1993.

mum had a chat with Joyce Stannard and Joyce Collins<sup>98</sup> about work at the hospital. A few days later, mum heard, possibly from Mr Ashken, that someone from the “cancer department” had said there might be a part-time job there at the end of January or February. I think Mr Ashken offered to let her know. The next day, mum noted that she had been asked to do a temporary job in the Cancer Registration Department but then the new girl said she could start earlier. Mum saw Joyce Collins who said there would be a vacancy to help with research in either the physio or occupational therapy department. Mum said she would be interested.

In February 1977, mum went to see Mr Garner<sup>99</sup> at the hospital about a part-time secretary’s job in the Occupational Therapy Department. She thought it sounded very interesting. Two days later, he phoned and offered mum the job. A few days after that, Mr Ashken told mum that Mr Garner had spoken to Mr Green about her.<sup>100</sup> In March 1977, I noted that mum had started her new job at the hospital and that she did not like it as much as the other one! Mum noted this too saying she went to work at the Norfolk and Norwich Occupational Therapy Department on a government research project on seat lift chairs and cushions.<sup>101</sup> She noted that it was quite interesting but not as interesting as working for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens.<sup>102</sup> This start date, confirmed by the two diaries, contradicts mum’s CV which says that she started this job in 1976.



Diary entries from 21 March 1977 concerning mum’s first day in her new job in the Occupational Therapy Department at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. These include entries from my diary ([top](#)) and mum’s diary ([above](#))

<sup>98</sup> I am not entirely sure who they were, presumably other medical secretaries.

<sup>99</sup> I don’t know who this was.

<sup>100</sup> This seems pretty unethical to me as Mr Green’s contact with mum was professional, i.e. as her surgeon for the parathyroid adenoma that she had.

<sup>101</sup> Ann Moy published this research in the [British Journal of Occupational Therapy in September 1981](#) under the title “An Assessment of Self Rise Chairs and Cushions”.

<sup>102</sup> I would have thought that was pretty difficult to judge on a first day! I wonder if interest was the main thing or if the importance of the role and how she was treated mattered more.

For this job, mum worked all day Monday and Thursday and Friday morning. This fitted perfectly with her hours for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens. On Fridays, she worked at the hospital in the morning and at 41 Newmarket Road in the afternoon.<sup>103</sup> One implication of the new job was that she was no longer able to continue her work for Rev G T Eddy. Her last day working for him was 10 March 1977.

On balance, and in summary, mum did not really enjoy this job certainly in comparison with her work for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens. She only stayed in post for seven months, until October 1977, which is much less than the two years implied by her CV. However, sometimes, she seemed to enjoy the job referring to it as “nice” or “quite nice”, “interesting” or “quite interesting” and “useful” but, on other occasions, she referred to it being “boring” or “very boring”. In general, I don’t think she found it as busy as her work for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens. Sometimes she referred to not being very busy, not having much to do<sup>104</sup> and/or being quiet or very quiet<sup>105</sup>. Nevertheless, sometimes, she did have more to do. When it was quiet, mum may have done some work for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens.<sup>106</sup> Very occasionally, it may have worked the other way round.

I think mum may have enjoyed being based at the hospital as sometimes this gave her the opportunity to meet people she knew there. For example, in March 1977, she met Mr Jones from 187 College Road and, in June 1977, she had lunch at the hospital with Malcolm Carter. He was there for a Chaplains’ study day.

Sometimes, mum’s work required her to travel outside of the hospital, usually with Ann Moy who was an occupational therapist<sup>107</sup> and lead researcher on the study. In May 1977, she and Ann took three men<sup>108</sup> from the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS)<sup>109</sup> to visit John Neville<sup>110</sup> at Laurence

<sup>103</sup> Sometimes, she went home for lunch, e.g. on 25 March 1977.

<sup>104</sup> On 23 September 1977, mum found she had nothing to do so she wrote her notice!

<sup>105</sup> On 19 September 1977, mum referred to it being “quiet as usual”.

<sup>106</sup> For example, on one occasion in April 1977, Mr Ashken phoned mum at the Norfolk and Norwich and asked her to call a private patient. Similarly, in August 1977, Mr Ashken phoned to ask mum to get some notes out. Also, as she was based in the hospital, she would check pigeonholes for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens. Occasionally, mum did typing for Mr Ashken when at the hospital.

<sup>107</sup> According to the published research, Ann’s qualifications were Diploma of Occupational Therapists (DipCOT) and Specialist Rehabilitation Occupational Therapist (SROT). She contributed Chapter 7 entitled “Which Aid” to the book “Occupational Therapy in the Community” which was edited by Eileen Bumphrey. According to the biographical details in that book, she began her career as an OT in 1975.

<sup>108</sup> Don Sturrock, John Hodge and Derek Turner.

<sup>109</sup> The funders of the research.

<sup>110</sup> According to a [Laurence Scott Facebook Group](#), John Neville oversaw the training of many apprentices in the mid- to late sixties. He sadly died in 2019 aged 79.

## AN ASSESSMENT OF SELF RISE CHAIRS AND CUSHIONS

by  
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**INTRODUCTION**

This study was sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Security under its Aids assessment programme, to assess in use in a clinical situation self rise chairs and cushions. The project was carried out at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital between 1977 and 1979. At the beginning of the study at least one self rise chair or cushion was purchased from each firm manufacturing self rise furniture at that time. For a variety of reasons however certain chairs were excluded resulting in 4 electrically operated and 9 mechanically operated chairs and 3 cushions being finally assessed.

**METHOD OF ASSESSMENT**

It was initially intended that for the purpose of the clinical trial the chairs and cushions should be distributed to various hospitals and individuals throughout Norfolk for a period of approximately 1 month. During the pilot study it was realised however that this method was completely impractical and the clinical trials were finally achieved by the following three methods:

1. Loaned chairs — Selected chairs and cushions were loaned for approximately 1 month to carefully selected patients and a questionnaire completed.
2. Study days — Three days were organised when small groups of patients attended the hospital for a day to assess personally a selection of chairs and cushions and completed questionnaires.
3. Postal questionnaires were sent to
  - (a) Persons with chairs and cushions on loan from Norfolk Social Services.
  - (b) Owners of chairs — names obtained from manufacturers.

All three methods had advantages and disadvantages but together they provided valuable material and an acceptable basis for the study.

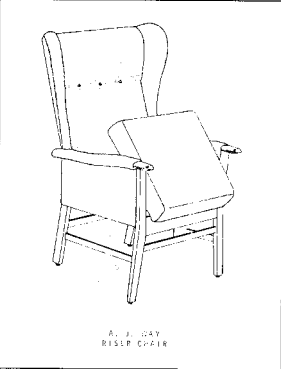
The total number of patients included in the clinical trials and their type of disability are shown in Table 1.

**FEATURES OF SELF RISE CHAIRS AND CUSHIONS**

Self rise chairs operate by one of a number of different working principles:

1. The seat cushion is hinged at the front. The user is lifted by the back of the cushion to the full extent of the cushion movement.
2. The seat cushion rises and tilts forwards all the motion being controlled by the linkage between the seat and the base.
3. The seat and arm rests rise through a straight line motion and can be tilted around a hinge in the middle of the seat by the movement of the user.
4. The seat and back rest rise together through a straight line motion only.

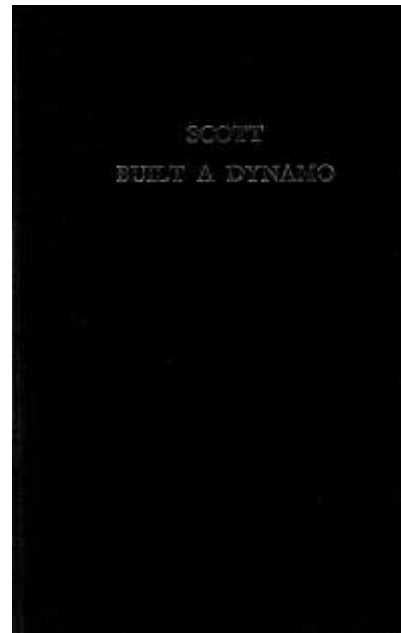
Many of the chairs lift the user mechanically by means of springs, gas-filled cylinders or rubber strips. The system works by utilising the force supplied by the user sitting down and this generates the energy to help him rise again. The mechanism must be carefully balanced to ensure that the maximum lifting force is available without however the user being lifted unexpectedly on those chairs with no lock down device. A few chairs are electrically powered and are designed to raise the user to his feet without effort.



Disability	Method of Assessment		
	Study days	Postal questionnaires	Home trials
Rheumatoid arthritis (R.A.)	7	85	11
Osteo-arthritis (O.A.)	3	30	3
Muscular dystrophy (M.D.)	1	18	1
Multiple sclerosis (M.S.)	—	3	1
Ankylosing spondylitis (A.S.)	—	5	—
Motor-neurone disease (M.N.D.)	2	12	—
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>16</b>
Total number of patients involved: 182			

*This is the first page of the research paper published as a result of the project mum supported briefly in 1977. The article was published in the [British Journal of Occupational Therapy](#) in September 1981. While this first page is free to view, the full article requires either a subscription or to be purchased*

Scott & Electromotors (LSE).<sup>111</sup> <sup>112</sup> Mum went to LSE the previous day to make sure she knew where she was going. She thought it was interesting and noted that afterwards she spoke to Dr Wenley.<sup>113</sup>



*Top left* – early advert for Laurence, Scott & Co.  
*Left* – Brass engine plate labelled Laurence Scott and Electromotors  
*Above* – “Scott Built a Dynamo” by T J Barfield

Also, on one Wednesday afternoon in June 1977, mum went to St Michael’s Hospital in Aylsham<sup>114</sup> to meet Ann to discuss chairs.<sup>115</sup> Other places mum went with Ann from June to August 1977 included Bishop Herbert House and home visits in Cromer, Beetley near Dereham and Diss.<sup>116</sup> Mum worked with a number of other people in this job. These included Eileen<sup>117</sup>, Sue Baddeley<sup>118</sup>, Gillian<sup>119</sup>, Janice and Muriel<sup>120</sup>.

<sup>111</sup> This company was [established](#) by Reginald Laurence and William Harding Scott in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The company’s initial focus was on electricity supply but soon moved on to building electrical motors. They were built at the Gothic Works on Hardy Road which is still in operation. By 1937, the factory employed 3,000 people. The company has been the subject of multiple takeovers and mergers but is still operating as [ATB Laurence and Scott](#). In 1968, a history of the first 80 years of the company was written by T J Barfield and printed for private circulation. It is entitled “*Scott Built a Dynamo*”.

<sup>112</sup> I am not entirely sure how LSE linked to the research study.

<sup>113</sup> [William Gilson Wenley](#) was a consultant rheumatologist at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital from 1964 to 1991. He was born in Chelmsford in 1923 and qualified in 1951. He was affected by polio which led to his interest in physical medicine and rehabilitation. He died in May 2003. I think he may have been the medical head of the department in which mum worked.

<sup>114</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>115</sup> Initially, I was not sure if this was for grandma or related to work. Mum noted that she would work Friday morning at 41 Newmarket Road to make the time up confirming this related to her second job.

<sup>116</sup> On one home visit, mum noted that Ann took her son Robert. This merited four exclamation marks.

<sup>117</sup> Mum referred fairly frequently to Eileen and, from the way mum wrote about her, I think she was probably another occupational therapist, possibly a more senior OT supervising Ann Moy. I am pretty sure she was Eileen E Bumphrey, an occupational therapist who worked in Norwich and who was the editor of the book entitled “*Occupational Therapy in the Community*”. This book includes contributions by Ann Moy and Susan Baddeley. It also includes useful biographical information about each contributor. According to that information, Eileen worked abroad in both India and Taiwan. On returning to the UK, she worked in Oxford and Norwich from 1971.

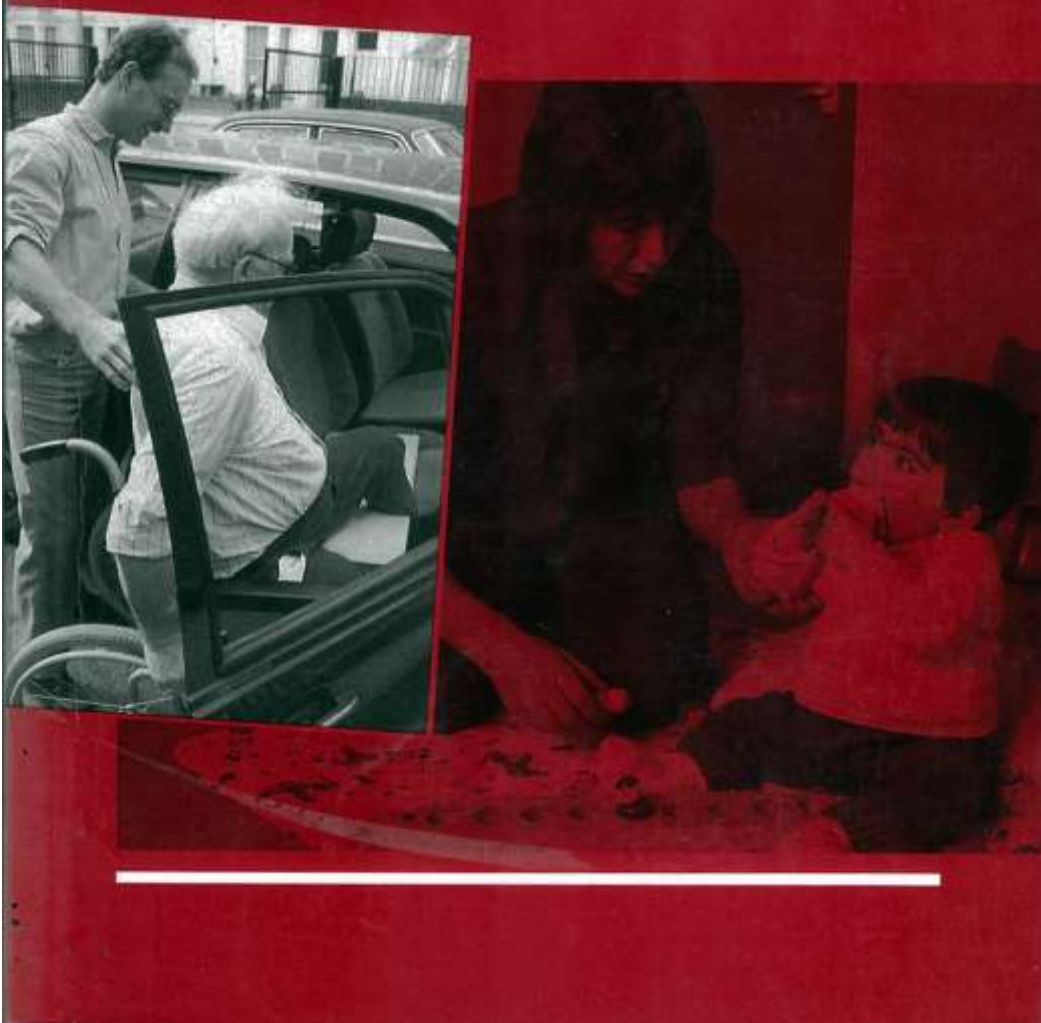
<sup>118</sup> I am not sure mum mentioned her in a work context but she saw her at the theatre in June 1977, see [Chapter 122](#), and noted that she was from the Occupational Therapy Department. She contributed, with physiotherapist Jane Page, Chapter 8 on “*Mobility*” in the book “*Occupational Therapy in the Community*” edited by Eileen Bumphrey. Biographical details given in that book noted that she joined the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital in 1975 and, at the time the book was published, was head of department.

<sup>119</sup> Dr Wenley’s secretary. Mum helped her with some audio typing in August 1977.

<sup>120</sup> I think Janice and Muriel were other secretaries/administrative staff working in the Occupational Therapy Department. Mum helped one or both of them on at least a couple of occasions in October 1977. I think the department may have had offices upstairs and downstairs.

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN THE COMMUNITY

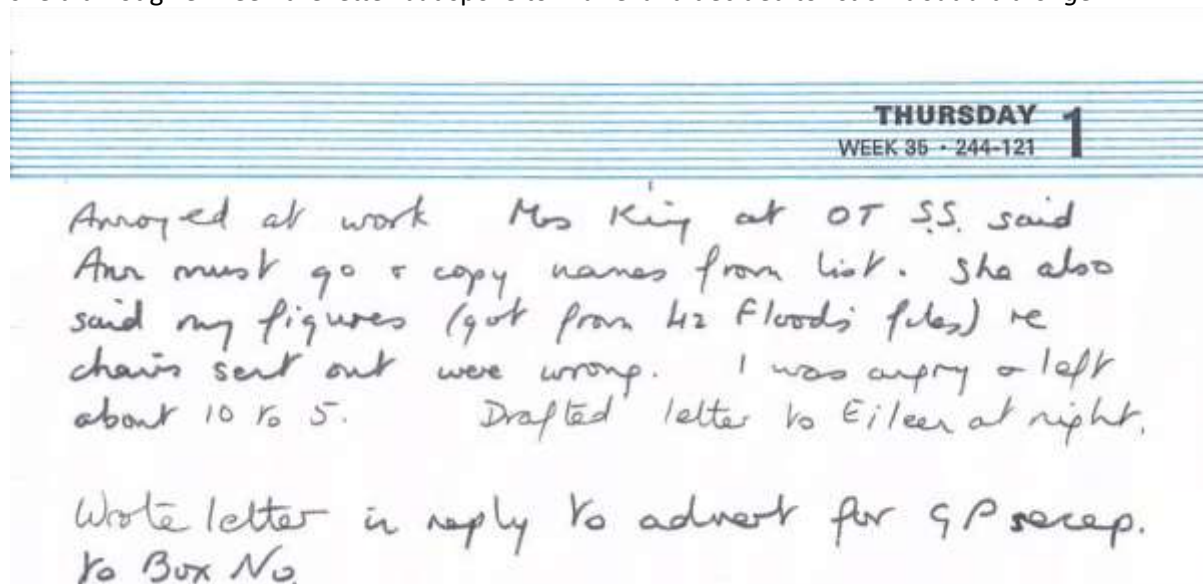
EDITED BY EILEEN E. BUMPHREY



*In 1977, mum worked with an occupational therapist called Eileen. I believe it was Eileen Bumphrey who edited this book in 1989. There were contributions by Ann Moy and Susan Baddeley. Mum mentions them both in her diary. The book contains brief biographical details of all contributors*

My impression is that mum was based upstairs while most of the other secretaries, including Janice and Muriel, were downstairs. On one day, in August 1977, mum said she worked downstairs and this was much better. She worked in the downstairs office again on at least one occasion in September 1977.

At the beginning of September 1977, an incident occurred related to this job which annoyed mum intensely. She noted that Mrs King of OT SS<sup>121</sup> told Ann that she must go and copy names from the list.<sup>122</sup> Mrs King also said that mum's figures, which mum said she had got from Liz Flood's<sup>123</sup> files, concerning chairs sent out were wrong.<sup>124</sup> Mum noted that she was angry and left work about 10 to 5. She drafted a letter to Eileen and also applied for another job! The next day, she wrote to Eileen to tell her what she thought about the job. However, three days later, she must have thought better of it as she did not give Eileen the letter but spoke to Muriel and decided to "stick it out a bit longer."



*Extract from mum's diary for 1 September 1977. This documents the issues raised by Mrs King which annoyed mum so much that she ultimately left her job in the Occupational Therapy Department of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital*

However, as luck would have it, it turned out that mum was offered the job she applied for in anger. This was working for GPs Drs Brittain, Watkins and Leach. She decided to accept their offer. I don't think the incident with Mrs King was the only reason mum left the Occupational Therapy Department. There were various dissatisfiers in play before then. But, it was the final straw which led directly to her applying for the job she was ultimately offered. So, on 23 September 1977, mum wrote her notice letter. Three days later, mum noted that Ann and Eileen were not very communicative about her notice. On the other hand, the secretaries Janice, Gillian, Muriel and others were sorry she was leaving. A further three days later, mum noted that neither Eileen nor Ann said anything about her leaving but she noted that it was nice with Janice and others. In mid-October 1977, Janice, Muriel, Joyce and Gillian asked mum if she would consider staying if Mrs B<sup>125</sup> agreed for her to work with them. She said no. About a week later, mum noted that the new girl, Marion Baxter came in for the day. Janice and the others gave mum a chrysanthemum plant. On mum's last day, 21 October 1977, Ann and Eileen gave mum a Blue Grass puff puff pack.

After she left, she sometimes went back to the Department to see the other secretaries and she kept in touch with them in different ways. At the end of October, mum called in at the hospital and saw

<sup>121</sup> I don't know exactly who Mrs King was but perhaps someone responsible for the project within Social Services.

<sup>122</sup> I assume that mum had been doing this on Ann's behalf. Mrs King seemed to be saying that Ann should do this herself.

<sup>123</sup> I am not sure who Liz Flood was.

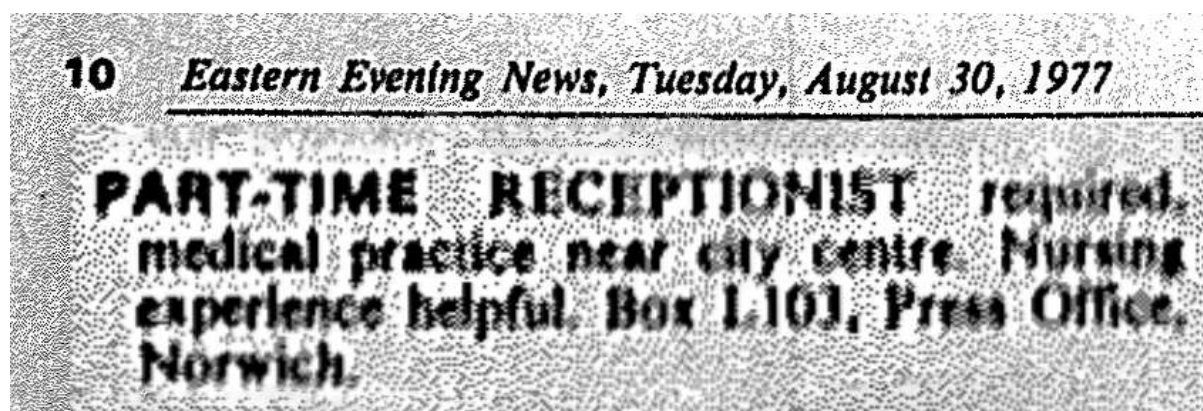
<sup>124</sup> I know for a fact that telling mum that figures she had produced were wrong was likely to trigger a strong and vehement reaction! In this case, I am not really sure why as presumably mum's figures were only as accurate as those she got from Liz Flood.

<sup>125</sup> I am not sure who this was. If Eileen was Eileen Bumphrey, it could refer to her or perhaps to Susan Baddeley. She was head of department in the eighties so maybe was in that role at this time. On balance, I think it is more likely to refer to her.

Janice and Sally. In November 1977, Muriel phoned mum as she had seen me on TV.<sup>126</sup> Just under a week later, mum had lunch with Muriel at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. Twice in December 1977, mum had lunch at the Norfolk and Norwich but did not specify with whom. In May 1978, mum went to the hospital and saw Janice in physio.

It is perhaps of interest that Ann Moy published the research that mum supported in the British Journal of Occupational Therapy in September 1981. Essentially, the research was sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Security under its aids assessment programme. The research was conducted at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital from 1977 to 1979. In the study, 13 chairs and three cushions were assessed. The study involved loaning chairs to selected patients (16), study days (13) and postal questionnaires (153). The numbers in brackets show the number of patients recruited through each method. A total of 182 patients took part in the trial with a variety of diseases including rheumatoid arthritis (103), osteoarthritis (36), muscular dystrophy (20), multiple sclerosis (4), ankylosing spondylitis (5) and motor neurone disease (14). The research first described how self-rise chairs and cushions work. Chairs were assessed, using a 1-3 star scoring system, according to six criteria namely comfort of user after two hours; method of operation of controls; assistance afforded to stand up; assistance afforded to sit down; appearance; and stability. The chair was also assessed as to whether it was suitable for moderately disabled or severely disabled users. Cushions were assessed in more general terms in relation to advantages and disadvantages in comparison to self-rise chairs.

As noted above, at the beginning of September 1977, following an incident in her then job in the Occupational Therapy Department of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, mum applied for a job as a GP's receptionist to a box number.



*This is the advert mum responded to when she was angry and upset in her role at the Occupational Therapy Department and which resulted in her getting a job for Drs Brittain, Watkins and Leach. Initially, I could not find it as it was not in the paper on the day mum recorded the incident. Rather, it had been in the paper two days earlier*

<sup>126</sup> This was when I represented my school in the regional quiz programme "Question 5", see [Chapter 118](#).

Some ten days later, Dr Brittain phoned to ask her to go for an interview at 6pm on Tuesday next. On that day, mum went to see Drs Brittain, Leach and Watkins about the job which was based at the surgery at 7 Newmarket Road. She noted that she half wanted the job and half didn't but did not explain her mixed feelings.<sup>127</sup> She noted that she would hear the following week. However, the next morning, at about 8.15, Dr Brittain phoned to offer her the job. That same day, she wrote her notice for the job in the Occupational Therapy Department of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and went to No 7 to have a proper look round.



*Newmarket Road Surgery at 7 Newmarket Road in May 2025. Mum worked here from 1977 and it remains in use as a surgery.*

Also on that day, she told Sally Bracewell and Malcolm Carter about the new job and they were glad/pleased. In the evening, Mr Ashken rang to congratulate her. Dr Brittain had rung him the previous evening. The next time she was at work for them, both Mr Stephens and Mr Ashken were nice about her new job.

Mum started her new job for Drs Brittain, Watkins and Leach on Friday 21 October 1977 working from 4-7pm. While there was some variety in the hours she worked week by week, it seems she mainly worked Monday and Thursday mornings, Wednesday and Friday evenings and every third Saturday morning. At first glance, these times did not fit completely with the times she worked for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens, particularly the Wednesdays and Fridays but it seems mum/they made it work with her finishing slightly earlier at the surgical practice those days.<sup>128</sup> The two workplaces are extremely close together, approximately 200 yards apart! One advantage of the hours was that mum had some

<sup>127</sup> I am not sure how mixed her feelings were as when she was offered the job she decided more or less straight away to accept it.

<sup>128</sup> Occasionally, she was delayed getting to the GP surgery but this did not appear unduly problematic.

free afternoons at home and, quite early on, mum noted that she liked that.<sup>129</sup> Sometimes, mum covered shifts for other staff and this meant, on quite a few Fridays, she worked in the morning at No 7, in the afternoon at No 41 and back to No 7 in the evening. From 1978, mum sometimes also worked on a Monday afternoon. Occasionally, mum worked a Tuesday morning, e.g. on 30 May 1978 after the bank holiday. From 3 August 1979, mum was working full-time at the surgery. This contradicts her CV which states that she was full-time there only from 1980.

Right from the start, mum enjoyed working at the surgery often remarking that work had been “nice”. Sometimes, she commented that work had been “nice as usual” and she appears to have particularly liked working with Dr Watkins.<sup>130</sup> More often than not, work was busy and, sometimes, mum described it as “hectic”<sup>131</sup> or “chaos”/“chaotic”.<sup>132</sup> Sometimes, but much less often, mum noted it was not busy.

At this practice, mum worked for three doctors. She got on best with Dr Watkins, reasonably well with Dr Brittain and, at least initially, found Dr Leach difficult to work for. On 1 February 1979, mum noted that Dr Stephen Downs started as a trainee.<sup>133</sup>

Mum described Dr Watkins as “nice”<sup>134</sup>. She found him easy to talk to. He showed an interest in her health and how she was feeling. He gave her increasing levels of responsibility and autonomy, for example over when she left work. She noted that his date of birth was 4 August 1928. She was delighted when she was invited to his daughter’s wedding in September 1979.<sup>135</sup> In April 1979, mum was concerned because Dr Watkins asked her to type a letter about, and an application for, a job in the Coronary Care Unit (CCU) of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. She noted that she was a bit down about this and that if he left she would too.<sup>136</sup> Dr Watkins was active in the work of the hospice [Priscilla Bacon Lodge](#)<sup>137</sup> and, in November 1979, mum noted discussing this with him. The following month, Dr Watkins agreed to speak about Priscilla Bacon Lodge to St Peter’s Guild<sup>138</sup>. That same month, December 1979, mum noted that Dr Watkins’ mother died. She had been in St Andrew’s Hospital for three years or more.



*Dr David Watkins was a GP in Norwich. Mum worked for him and his practice from October 1977. This photo is from a newspaper cutting which was tucked in the back of one of mum’s five-year diaries*

<sup>129</sup> However, purely on hours alone, I would have thought the job in the Occupational Therapy Department was a better fit for mum. When she first started working for Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens, she noted liking that it was 9-5 and did not involve Saturdays. With the new job, like her former job for Drs Day and Downes, it involved working some evenings and Saturdays. It seems pretty clear that other factors led to mum leaving the job in the Occupational Therapy Department.

<sup>130</sup> See [Chapter 114](#).

<sup>131</sup> On 4 December 1979, mum said it was very frustrating as Dr Leach, sister and Hilda said they did not know that Dr Watkins was away but mum noted they had been there the previous Wednesday when it was discussed.

<sup>132</sup> On Monday 17 December 1979, mum commented that it was chaos at work and she observed that Hilda had been on duty on Saturday. There were lots of treatment and letters. She also referred to chaos/being chaotic on 21 December 1979.

<sup>133</sup> Mum liked him describing him as very concerned and nice.

<sup>134</sup> See [Chapter 114](#).

<sup>135</sup> See [Chapter 115](#).

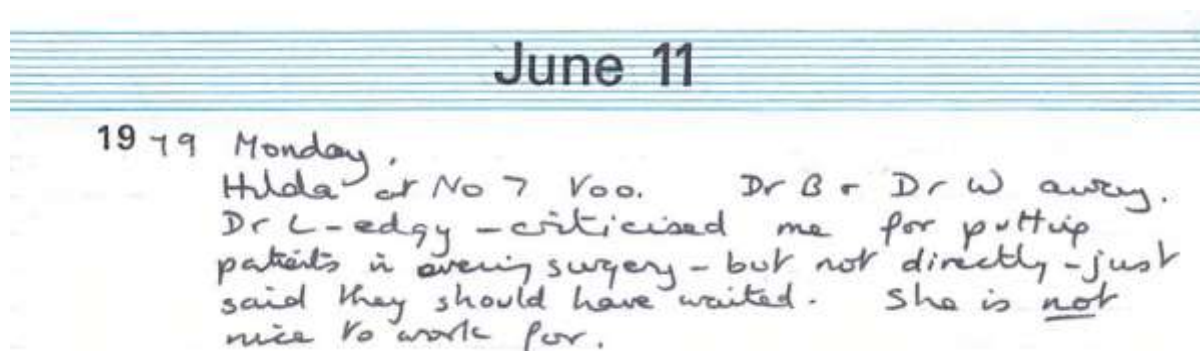
<sup>136</sup> Presumably, he did not get the job as mum’s diary does not say any more about this.

<sup>137</sup> This hospice originally opened in 1979 on Unthank Road but in 2023 moved to a new site close to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. The name comes from Lady Priscilla Bacon who led the fundraising for the original hospice.

<sup>138</sup> See [Chapter 124](#).

I think at this time Dr Brittain<sup>139</sup> was the senior partner and mum got on reasonably well with him. In June 1978, mum noted that Wimbledon started<sup>140</sup>. She mentioned that she would love to go. Dr Brittain told her to remind him next year and he would see what he could do.<sup>141</sup> In August 1978, mum visited Dr Brittain in Barford Ward.<sup>142</sup> In April 1979, Dr and Mrs Brittain came to see mum in a church play.<sup>143</sup> The following month, mum went to Dr Brittain's to see the Lord Mayor's Procession.<sup>144</sup>

Dr Julia Leach<sup>145</sup> was the third partner in this practice. At the very outset, in November 1977, mum commented that she was nice to work for. The following month, the staff went to Dr Leach's for Christmas drinks and food. However, from the following year, things became more difficult. In October 1978, mum noted that Dr Leach was "off colour". She said she burst into tears and threw a notepad across the room when called out just after evening surgery. Mum described this as "rather worrying!!" A few days later, mum described Dr Leach as "awkward as usual"! The following month, in November 1978, mum described work as nice without Dr Leach! However, mum and Dr Leach may have found a way of working reasonably amicably together. In April, and then again in June, 1979, mum did Saturday clinics with Dr Leach and said it wasn't too bad. But, only two days after the second of these clinics, mum described Dr Leach as "edgy". Apparently, she criticised mum for putting patients on the evening surgery. This criticism was not made directly but Dr Leach said they should have waited. Mum noted in her diary that she was not nice to work for.



Mum's diary entry for 11 June 1979. It summarises some of the difficulties mum encountered in working with Dr Leach

The next month, in July 1979 when mum was doing a Saturday morning clinic with Dr Leach, this merited two exclamation marks. On one occasion, in October 1979, mum commented that it had been nice at work. However, she modified this by saying "in the morning anyway" as Dr Leach had been in in the afternoon! A week later, mum noted that work was much easier when Dr Leach was not in! However, at the end of October 1979, mum noted that work was nice even though Dr Leach was back! The following day, mum described her as not too bad. But, the day after that, mum noted that Dr Leach was first very difficult and then very nice. Mum and Janet Bennett, another receptionist, agreed that they preferred the former! The following month, in November 1979, Dr Leach "scribbled" on "my"<sup>146</sup> letters, making alterations which mum deemed unnecessary. Nevertheless, the next day, mum went in early and re-did the letters. She thought Dr Leach was not happy because she had perforated a uterus with an IUD. Towards the end of November 1979, mum noted that Dr Leach was away and that work had been nice! At the beginning of December 1979, mum noted that Dr Leach was a bit touchy.

<sup>139</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>140</sup> See [Chapter 123](#).

<sup>141</sup> However, I am not aware that he ever got her Wimbledon tickets.

<sup>142</sup> She does not say any more about why he was in hospital.

<sup>143</sup> See [Chapter 124](#).

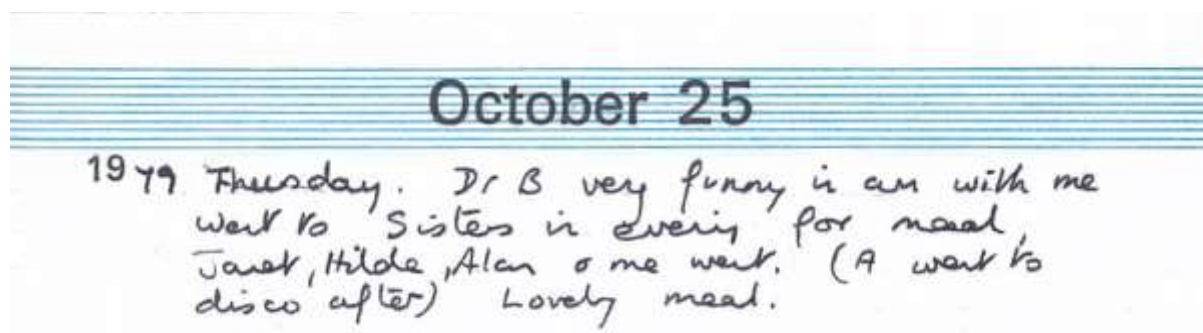
<sup>144</sup> See [Chapter 129](#).

<sup>145</sup> See [Chapter 116](#).

<sup>146</sup> It is interesting, and entirely in character, that mum describes the letters as hers. Presumably, they were Dr Leach's letters which mum had typed. So, if Dr Leach wanted some changes, presumably that should have been fine.

At the end of that month, Dr Leach remarked that she and Hilda Crowe were not a good combination. I am not sure why. Anyway, mum told Dr Leach that she was doing the Saturday morning clinic. Again, at the end of the month, mum noted that Dr Leach was not too bad. However, mum told her she was cross because notes from Friday had not been filed.<sup>147</sup>

The practice employed a nurse who mum always referred to as “sister”. I believe this was Janet Hardingham who had worked as the practice nurse since 1967.<sup>148</sup> She sometimes provided mum with clinical services, such as taking blood for haemoglobin in July 1978 and giving her a flu jab in October 1978. She was seen as a senior member of the practice and it seems mum got on well with her. In October 1979, mum went to hers for a meal with Janet Bennett, Hilda Crowe and my younger brother Alan. Mum described it as a lovely meal.



Mum's diary entry for 25 October 1979. I think the reference to “sister” is to Janet Hardingham. Mum went there for a meal with Janet Bennett, Hilda Crowe and my brother Alan.

Mum worked with a number of other administrative staff at the surgery during this period including Doreen, Margaret, Janet, Daphne and Hilda.

I think Doreen<sup>149</sup> was already working at the practice when mum joined. At the start of her time there, mum mostly noted when Doreen was off, either for a holiday or because of sickness.<sup>150</sup> I think Doreen may have been employed as a medical secretary at the practice. Tensions that arose between mum and Doreen may have been routed in issues relating to roles and responsibilities particularly when doctors dictated letters to mum for her to type. I don't think Doreen liked this.<sup>151</sup> Things seem to have come to a head two months later, in May 1979, when Doreen resigned.<sup>152</sup> Initially, after Doreen resigned, things were tense between her and mum with neither speaking to the other. However, towards the end of May 1979, mum noted that she was nice to Doreen. On 8 June 1979, Doreen left.

Margaret was also working at the practice when mum joined. I think her surname was Andrews. However, mum noted, on 15 March 1978, that she had left.<sup>153</sup> The next day, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, mum went to

<sup>147</sup> I am not sure whose responsibility this was. Not Dr Leach's presumably.

<sup>148</sup> See [Chapter 90](#).

<sup>149</sup> I do not know her surname.

<sup>150</sup> In April 1978, mum discovered that Doreen had booked to be away at Christmas. This merited an exclamation mark. When working with others on a rota that includes popular holidays such as Christmas, it is usual, I think, to discuss plans to take holiday at such popular times even where it is possible to just book it directly through the formal system. My impression is that mum was not best pleased that Doreen had just gone ahead and booked to be away at Christmas.

<sup>151</sup> For example, in February 1979, Dr Watkins dictated a letter to mum and mum described Doreen as “not delighted”. The following month, mum noted that Dr Watkins asked mum to take a letter and not Doreen. This merited two exclamation marks. Sometimes requests for mum to take letters came when Doreen was off sick, e.g. when she was hospitalised in March 1979.

<sup>152</sup> Initially, mum described Doreen speaking “in secret” to Dr Brittain and “sister”. Dr Brittain and “sister” spoke to mum the next day telling her that Doreen had handed in her notice saying that she couldn't cope with all the work and doing the letters of three doctors. Mum seemed to take this personally, although I am not sure why but she was effectively practice manager at this point. She noted that she was very upset and spoke to Dr Watkins.

<sup>153</sup> Mum had noted, in January 1978, that there was likely to be discontent among staff when Margaret left. I suspect this was because Margaret was “senior receptionist” and was “in charge”.

hers in the evening for a farewell party to the practice. Mum noted it was quite nice. She got married at 12 noon at the registry office in City Hall on 30 March 1978.<sup>154</sup> Her married name was Kerrison. In October 1979, mum, Janet, sister and Ella went to see Margaret and Ken Kerrison in Oulton Broad. They went round her surgery and got back at 9.30pm.

Janet Bennett worked at the surgery and she and mum became close friends. She is first mentioned in the diaries in August 1978. I don't know if that is when she started but mum noted that she and Doreen were not getting on.<sup>155</sup> Janet often came round, including for meals, and/or went places with mum, e.g. to the theatre.<sup>156</sup> They often went for lunch together.<sup>157</sup> Janet lived with the Watkins at 100 Newmarket Road and sometimes invited mum there.<sup>158</sup> Sometimes, Janet and mum swapped shifts or covered for each other. Sometimes, Janet stayed over. In September 1979, Janet helped me and mum move grandma's carpet from Drayton to Cromwell House. In October 1979, it was Janet's birthday. Mum noted that she made her a denim skirt, well she would when she came to fit it on.<sup>159</sup> In December 1979, Janet came to ours but her car battery was flat so we jump started it and followed her back to 100.



*Above - Janet Bennett. She worked at the GP surgery at 7 Newmarket Road at the same time as mum and they became good friends*  
*Left - Dr and Mrs Watkins lived in a large house at 100 Newmarket Road. Janet Bennett lived there too*

<sup>154</sup> See [Chapter 115](#).

<sup>155</sup> Mum noted that Doreen was very bitter about Janet. However, I am not sure why or what she was bitter about.

<sup>156</sup> See [Chapter 122](#). Sometimes, they went to other places together. For example, in June 1979, they both went to Hilda Crowe's for an Oriflame party and in July 1979, they went to the Winthrop Exhibition at Hotel Nelson at lunch-time. [Oriflame](#) is a Swedish cosmetics company that directly markets its products using a model similar to Tupperware and Pippa Dee, see [Chapter 92](#). While I am not entirely sure, the Winthrop Exhibition possibly refers to a display of items from the art collection of [Grenville Lindall Winthrop](#). In April 1979, Janet came for tea as did "sister" and Ella. They all then went to see mum in her church play, see [Chapter 124](#). Initially, I thought Ella might refer to Mrs Watkins but I am not sure as the names do not seem to match.

<sup>157</sup> To a variety of places including Jarrolds, Burger House and the Theatre Royal. Although there is currently a business called [the Burger House](#) in Castle Mall/the Castle Quarter, this is relatively new only having [opened in July 2024](#). However, according to the 1980 telephone directory, there was a restaurant by this name in Anglia Square that opened some time after 1978. By 1983, there were four branches in Norwich at 16 Anglia Square, 7 St Giles Street, 19 Prince of Wales Road and 4 Queens Road. I am grateful to [contributors on Facebook](#) for their memories of these restaurants and for explaining that Burger House took over locations previously operated by Wimpy.

<sup>158</sup> I am not sure what the arrangement was. I think Mrs Watkins' health was not good so it is possible she played some kind of caring role. I believe Janet was already living there when she started working at the surgery so presumably Dr Watkins arranged for her to have the job at the surgery. I thought Mrs Watkins' first name was Ella but it appears it was Gillian M Gould. She married David Watkins in Holborn in 1956. According to public records, Gillian M Watkins died aged 57 in 1989. I believe Dr Watkins and Janet Bennett later married but I have not yet confirmed this from public records possibly because this would have been in the nineties.

<sup>159</sup> See [Chapter 126](#).

While mum and Janet got on very well, I am not sure if there was some tension between them in November 1979. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, Janet invited others to 100 but mum was not included. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, mum noted that Janet was funny with Dr Watkins when he was nice to her and wondered if Janet was jealous.

Another of the administrative staff at the surgery was called Daphne. I am not sure what her surname was or when she started working there. However, in 1978, Dr Watkins asked mum what she thought about Daphne. I am not sure how she replied. Two days later, Dr Brittain told mum that they had decided to tell Daphne to go and they wanted to discuss it with mum. I don't think they wanted to



*Hilda Crowe was a friend of mum's from church. They also worked together.*

further discuss the decision to let Daphne go. Rather, they wanted to discuss getting a replacement. So, one evening, mum went to Dr Watkins' home at 100 Newmarket Road to discuss this with him and Dr Brittain. At the end, Dr Watkins said, "We haven't asked if you're happy because we don't want to know if you're not because we want you to stay."

I am not sure if this is directly related to Daphne leaving but, in September 1978, mum took Hilda Crowe<sup>160</sup> to the surgery as she was going to do relief work. Mum commented that she hoped it worked out OK this time.<sup>161</sup> It seems that, at first at least, Hilda stood in when someone was unable to work. However, there were challenges. In September 1979, despite being friends, mum commented that it was not as easy working with Hilda as with Janet. In October and November 1979, she described Hilda as very frustrating. That same month, Dr Watkins told mum that she and Hilda could not be on holiday together.<sup>162</sup> On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Hilda was off. Mum asked if she could speak to Dr Watkins some time. In December 1979, mum commented that it was chaos at work and she observed that Hilda had been on duty on Saturday leaving lots of treatment and letters.

Sometimes other people helped out at the surgery. These included Tricia, me and Dr Watkins' son Hugh. Tricia helped when particular people were away, e.g. Doreen, with specific tasks, e.g. filing, and when mum was away in Whitby in August 1979.<sup>163</sup> Apparently, I helped out at least once in April 1979. I have no recollection of this. Hugh also helped out later that month and around Christmas of that year.

Mum did not initially record any details of her salary at the surgery. However, she did note that, in 1978, they got a Christmas bonus of £10 and, in 1979, £15.

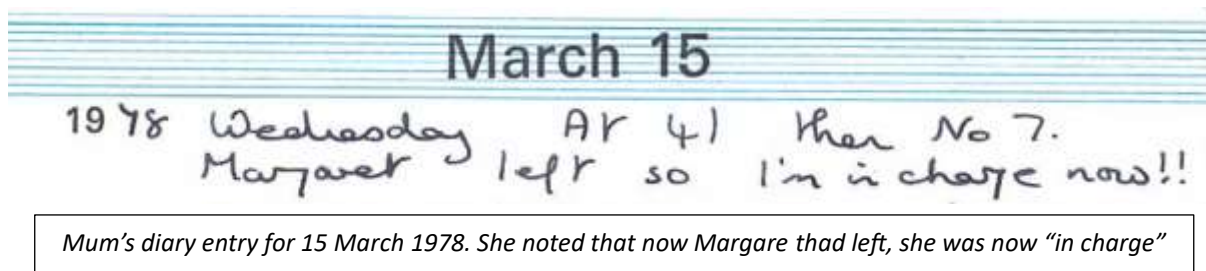
<sup>160</sup> Hilda was a friend of mum's from St Peter's Park Lane Methodist Church, see [Chapter 124](#). Her husband, Peter, ran a secondhand bookshop in Upper St Giles Street.

<sup>161</sup> Perhaps the implication is that it hadn't previously but I am not sure what this is referring to.

<sup>162</sup> Mum asked to speak to Dr Watkins sometime. I am not sure if it related to the holiday issue specifically.

<sup>163</sup> See [Chapter 122](#).

In December 1977, after mum had been there for under two months, Dr Brittain asked her if she would be willing to work full-time for them when Margaret left. He told her that they were “*thrilled*” with her. However, mum declined on the basis that she could not leave Mr Ashken and Mr Stephens. I think she may have been in two minds though as later she noted that she had forgotten to ask about salary. So, the next month, in January 1978, mum spoke to Dr Brittain about changing her hours. He phoned her at night to say that they would be pleased if she would. I am not exactly sure what the changes were in terms of hours but she may have started working all day on Mondays and more Friday mornings. Two months later, in March 1978, Dr Watkins came to see mum to talk to her about a pension.<sup>164</sup> He also asked her to be in charge of the surgery on a salary of £1.25 per hour. He said he wanted her to be full-time eventually. By mid-March, mum noted that Margaret had now left and she was now “*in charge*”.



Mum appeared to enjoy the new role with greater responsibility and authority. In October 1978, mum went to see Dr Watkins to talk about the surgery's problems. He talked to her openly about finances. He said all that they wanted was for her to come and work full-time for them. At the beginning of November, Dr Watkins told mum that she could do what she liked in the surgery. Later that month, she moved desks around. The following year, in January, mum had another conversation about the surgery's problems, this time with both Dr Brittain and Dr Watkins, and the next day, she spoke to Dr Watkins about Dr Leach. In April 1979, mum noted that there was a meeting at night for all staff and the doctors. Mum described it as a nice meeting. Two days later, Dr Watkins came in and he and mum discussed salaries. Shortly after this was when Doreen decided to leave. This upset mum a lot. While I don't really know why, I wonder if mum was unhappy that Doreen had not come to her. In addition, as practice manager, she may have felt criticised by Doreen. She spoke about this to Dr Watkins and he said again that he wanted her to come and work full-time for them. Mum wrote a letter to Dr Brittain and he told her that she was the best person they had ever had. A few days later, mum told Dr Watkins that she would go full-time if they paid her enough. Dr Watkins said he was delighted and would talk to Dr Brittain. The following day, mum met Drs Brittain and Watkins after surgery. They agreed hours and salary subject to FPC<sup>165</sup> approval. A couple of days later, Dr Watkins told mum that FPC had approved her salary which she thought was £3,896.

In June 1979, mum had another long chat with Dr Watkins about the office. Two months later, when mum was back from holiday, Dr Watkins said “*it will be good when you are here full-time*”<sup>166</sup>. That same month, mum told Dr Brittain that Dr Welch had said they wished they could get someone good at the Mile End Surgery. Apparently, Dr Brittain told her that she should “*stay put here!!!*”<sup>167</sup> Again that month, Dr Watkins told mum that he was glad they had her full-time.

<sup>164</sup> Two days later, on a Sunday, Dr Watkins phoned to ask mum if she could get the papers concerning a pension to Lowestoft for 11.30am. She and I went.

<sup>165</sup> [Family Practitioner Committees](#) operated from 1973 to 1990. They replaced local executive councils and were themselves replaced by family health services authorities.

<sup>166</sup> Or possibly “*I'll be glad when you're here full-time*”.

<sup>167</sup> I am not sure mum was thinking seriously of working at Mile End Surgery. I can see it would have been very difficult for her to work with doctors and other staff where she was a patient.

Mum started working full-time at the surgery on 3 September 1979. This contradicts mum's CV which only has her starting there full-time from 1980. The following month, she asked to speak to Dr Watkins and they talked for an hour a few days later. Dr Watkins said she must discuss things if she was worried. He also noted that he was very satisfied with her. I am not sure if it was part of her new role or an effect of Doreen leaving but mum increasingly did the doctors' letters for them. Probably because of this, mum sometimes did surgery work at home, including doing salaries and typing letters.

In general, while mum was working at both 7 and 41 Newmarket Road, this worked well although occasionally one job impinged on the other. For example, on at least one occasion, in May 1978, Mr Ashken phoned mum in the afternoon when she was at No 7. Usually, on the days when mum was at both places, she was able to go home for lunch between them. I am not sure if she needed to go to the hospital for her job but she sometimes went there before or after work. I am also not sure if she needed a uniform for work. However, at the end of December 1977, she bought a blue overall for work from Butcher's sale.<sup>168</sup> In general, mum had few comments about the working environment at No 7 but she did sometimes complain of being cold. The practice sometimes had Christmas celebrations. For example, in 1977, mum went to the practice for coffee and sherry.



*Above - advert for the draper G F Butcher in Swan Lane. Mum got a blue overall for work in their sale there in December 1977. I am not sure if she had to have this for work. While the doctors paid something towards it, mum paid most of it*  
*Below left - I think this is the place mum referred to as "over the car park". It was a Chinese restaurant but is now an Asian Market*



In January 1979, mum went to a Chinese Dinner Dance over the car park<sup>169</sup> as guests of Mr Ng, a patient at No 7. Dr & Mrs Brittain picked mum up. Mum sat next to Dr Watkins and Janet. Dr Watkins offered to bring mum home but Dr Brittain insisted. Mum noted "what a pity!"<sup>170</sup>

Mum did sometimes take time off work at the surgery. Reasons for this included holiday, volunteering for the Coeliac Society, Christmas shopping and illness. She also recorded various incidents which happened at work. Some were relatively minor. For example, in May 1978, mum found she was locked out as she had left her keys in the surgery. The waiting room window was open so she climbed in! In August 1978, Dr Watkins asked mum or "sister" to wait as he had a difficult female patient he was dealing with. Mum stayed as she wanted to discuss some finances with him. Other incidents were much more serious. In February

<sup>168</sup> It was reduced from £5.70 to £5.18. She noted that the doctors were paying £2 towards it. For details of Butcher's, see [Chapter 108](#).

<sup>169</sup> I think this is a reference to the [Lucky Star Chinese restaurant](#) that was on the first floor of St Stephen's car park on Queen's Road. This closed, possibly in 2016, and is now the [Lucky Fortune Asia Market](#).

<sup>170</sup> See [Chapter 114](#).

1978, she was working with Dr Brittain. A man's son phoned at 10am asking for a visit as his father was having difficulty breathing. Twenty minutes later, the wife phoned back to say "he's gone".

As with her other jobs, I think mum usually drove to work although she did sometimes walk, particularly when there were problems with the car or the weather was bad. Occasionally, people gave her lifts to or from home including me, Dr Watkin and Dr Brittain. Sometimes, when mum was going to London for the Coeliac Society, she would have a taxi to or from work. For some reason<sup>171</sup>, in December 1978, mum noted that she got a pass for the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital car park.

In September 1977, when mum saw Mr Carron Brown, he asked her if she would be interested in doing a few hours research for him later in the year. I don't think this enquiry came to anything though.

During this period, mum was actively involved in the Association of Medical Secretaries (AMS).<sup>172</sup> She attended a number of AMS study days<sup>173</sup> and AGMs<sup>174</sup> at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.<sup>175</sup> In September 1976, in order to support her studies, mum ordered the Medical Secretary Handbook from Jarrolds<sup>176</sup> and she also bought a book on urology.



Lapel badge for the Association of Medical Secretaries

In November 1976, mum went to see Mr Tomlinson<sup>177</sup> at the City College about "AMS". I wonder if this was about exams and/or professional qualifications.<sup>178</sup> She commented that it was not too helpful. I am not sure why. The following year, in March 1977, Mr Ashken gave mum back her application for AMS.<sup>179</sup> He "sponsored" her. A couple of days later, she had the AMS form photocopied in Norwich.

<sup>171</sup> I am not sure why as she did not work there!

<sup>172</sup> Now the [Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Managers, Administrators and Receptionists \(AMSPAR\)](#). AMS was [founded in 1964](#). The name was changed to the Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Administrators and Receptionists in 1979 reflecting that the association promoted the interests of a wide range of administrative staff. The name was changed again in 1996 when the new role of Practice Manager was added to the title.

<sup>173</sup> In June 1976, she attended a study day and noted meeting some people she knew from "the Ipswich course" there but I am not sure what course that was referring to. Mum did attend a day-release course at Suffolk College in Ipswich but not until 1981. Mr Stephens spoke on breast cancer at that study day. Mum said it was very very good. The following year, in June 1977, mum attended another AMS study day. She noted that Christine Carter was there. At the beginning of October 1977, mum attended another AMS meeting in the afternoon. In May 1978, mum attended another AMS study day at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. She noted that there were good speakers on oil rigs and ambulance services. In September 1978, she attended another such meeting. It was on acupuncture. Mum noted that this could be used as an anaesthetic. In December 1978, mum had lunch at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and then attended an AMS meeting which she described as nice. In March 1979, mum again had lunch at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, this time with Rosemary Davey, and then went to an AMS meeting. In May 1979, mum went to an AMS study day. Mark Mehta spoke on pain relief in the morning then there were talks on blood transfusion and "spastics". All the speeches were good but mum considered Dr Mehta the best.

<sup>174</sup> On 12 March 1977, mum went to the AMS AGM at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. Mum described it as very interesting.

<sup>175</sup> In addition, mum attended a number of other AMS meetings without specifying where they were. In March 1978, mum gave the vote of thanks at an AMS meeting. In December 1979, mum went to an AMS meeting in the afternoon. It was about autistic children and mum thought it was good.

<sup>176</sup> She got this in October for a cost of £4.

<sup>177</sup> I am not sure who this was.

<sup>178</sup> [AMSPAR](#) now offers a number of professional qualifications.

<sup>179</sup> I am not sure if this was a specific exam or some kind of membership.

THE MEDICAL  
SECRETARY'S HANDBOOK

Michael Drury

FOREWORD BY JOHN FRY



BAILLIÈRE, TINDALL AND CASSELL

*"The Medical Secretary's Handbook" by Michael Drury. This edition is from 1965 and cost 30s. I am not certain that this is the book mum bought and I am doubtful that it was this edition but she did buy a book by this title in October 1976*

Mum sometimes travelled to attend AMS conferences outside Norwich. For example, she attended such a conference in Liverpool from 14-18 September 1977. I noted on the 14<sup>th</sup> that mum went to Liverpool for a medical secretaries' conference and that she was still there the next day.<sup>180</sup> Mum confirmed this saying that she left at 9.50am for Liverpool for an AMS Symposium at Christ's College.<sup>181</sup> Mum went with Christine Carter, Margaret Prime and Lilian Hipwell<sup>182</sup>. They met Muriel<sup>183</sup> (FPA), Rosemary Davey (Dr Goodwille's sec) and Margaret Self<sup>184</sup> and Clarissa<sup>184</sup> from Beccles. Mum got there at 3.30pm. She noted that there was excellent food and an excellent speaker in the evening on "Seven Ages of Woman". She thought this was very funny. She noted they had single rooms. The next day, she commented on the excellent meals with a four-course lunch and a five-course dinner. At night, they had the folk singers Jacqui & Bridie<sup>185</sup> who mum thought were excellent. The talks were good too. Mum noted that the next day was another good day and that there was a civic reception at night with the Lord Mayor<sup>186</sup> in a lovely [town hall](#).



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*Above – Jacqui and Bridie performed at the AMS symposium that mum attended in Liverpool in September 1977. This photo of Jacqui and Bridie is from their record "Next Time Round"*

*Left – Liverpool town hall in 2016. Mum attended a civic reception here in September 1977 when attending an AMS symposium in Liverpool*

<sup>180</sup> In fact, it was a four-day conference.

<sup>181</sup> Christ's College was a Catholic teacher training college established in 1964. It is now part of [Liverpool Hope University](#).

<sup>182</sup> I am not exactly sure who she was but presumably a medical secretary mum knew. She also attended an AMS study day in Cambridge in October 1977.

<sup>183</sup> Mum appears to have known two medical secretaries called Muriel during the late seventies. One was called Muriel Yarnell and the other was called Muriel West. Muriel West appears to have worked at the Occupational Therapy Department of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital where mum worked in 1977. Muriel Yarnell worked for "FPA". This could refer to the Family Planning Association or it could refer to some form of governance of family practitioners but I think these were known as Family Practitioner Committees (FPCs) at that time. Mum knew Muriel Yarnell through involvement in Association of Medical Secretaries (AMS) activities and this is the Muriel referred to here.

<sup>184</sup> I am not entirely sure who she was. As far as I can see, this is the only reference to her in the diaries.

<sup>185</sup> [Jacqui and Bridie](#) were a fairly well-known folk singing duo composed of Jacqueline McDonald and Bridie O'Donnell. The duo formed in 1964. There is a video of Jacqueline McDonald singing in 2011 [here](#). YouTube also has a [short film](#) about Jacqui and Bridie. Their recording of "A Child of Merseyside" can be heard [here](#).

<sup>186</sup> The Lord Mayor of Liverpool at that time was [Paul Orr](#).



*I found this image in one of mum's photo albums. Surprisingly for mum, it is not labelled. However, the back is dated September 1977 and I wondered if it was a photo of mum at the civic reception with then Lord Mayor of Liverpool Paul Orr. I am grateful to contributors on [Liverpool Memories and History Facebook Group](#) for confirming his identity. Paul Orr served as a Labour councillor for many years but resigned from the Labour party in 1999 accusing Tony Blair of out-Thatchering Thatcher. He [died](#) aged 88 in 2005 having been born in August 1916*

On the next day, the AMS held their AGM in the morning. Mum talked to Mr Dawe<sup>187</sup> about membership and the diploma. There was an AMS dinner at night at St George's Hotel<sup>188</sup>. Mum rated it excellent. Mum left Liverpool at 8.15 am<sup>189</sup> and got back to Norwich at 6.10pm.<sup>190</sup> I found news articles about the symposium including [one](#) which gave the title as "The Medical Secretary in the Social Environment of Today" and which featured a detailed interview with Dr C W Warner, the President of the Merseyside branch of AMS. One [speaker](#) was the Rev Canon Gordon Bates who criticised modern housing units.

Mum attended at least two AMS study days in Cambridge. In October 1977, she went to an AMS study day at [New Addenbrookes](#). She noted that the speakers were very good. She took Margaret Prime, Lilian Hipwell and Janet Hastings<sup>191</sup>. In April 1978, she attended another AMS study day in Cambridge. They went in Muriel's car and picked up Rosemary Davey in Attleborough. Mum noted it was good and that twelve went from Norwich. In April 1979, after lunch at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, Mum went with AMS to Cromer<sup>192</sup> and Mundesley<sup>193</sup> Hospitals. They had tea in Cromer. Mum went with Rosemary Davey in Muriel's car.



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*[Left](#) – Cromer Hospital in 2008 [Right](#) – Mundesley Hospital in 2012. Mum visited both these facilities with AMS in April 1979*

Mum also attended an AMS conference in Aberdeen from 19-23 September 1979. She packed on the 18<sup>th</sup> and travelled by train the next day. Margaret Prime picked her up. My younger brother Alan travelled with them to Peterborough as he was going to Hull to see the university.<sup>194</sup> Mum got to Aberdeen at 5.45pm. Rosemary Davey joined them in Thetford. They changed at Peterborough and Edinburgh. They stayed in Crombie Hall<sup>195</sup> of Aberdeen University. There was a Scottish Dance in the evening. Mum described this as display and join in. Mum thought this was very good. Janet Sharp<sup>196</sup>

<sup>187</sup> I am not entirely sure who he was.

<sup>188</sup> Initially, I struggled to find details of this hotel but it seems from newspaper adverts that it operated from at least 1972 to 1991. It was located in St John's Precinct, Lime Street. It seems it [opened in 1972](#) and, at that time, was a Trust Houses Forte Hotel. In 1999, it [closed for refurbishment](#) and reopened as a Holiday Inn, possibly in 2001.

<sup>189</sup> Christine Carter went to her parents in Manchester.

<sup>190</sup> This involved a one hour wait in Birmingham and a bus journey for at least part of the way from Ely.

<sup>191</sup> I am not sure who this was. As far as I can see, this is the only time she is mentioned in the diaries.

<sup>192</sup> The [hospital Mum visited](#) had opened in 1932 although there had been at least two previous hospitals before that. A [new hospital opened in 2012](#) and the old building was demolished.

<sup>193</sup> This was a [sanatorium](#) opened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1960, it became a rehabilitation and convalescence facility. The building fell into disrepair in the nineties and was reopened as a drug and alcohol treatment centre. In 2008, the clinic went into administration closing the next year. The building remains standing as a grade 2 listed building. As of 2018, it was functioning as a [mental health facility](#).

<sup>194</sup> See Chapter 120.

<sup>195</sup> [Built](#) in the fifties/sixties, it closed in 2017 because of a decline in demand for catered accommodation. As of 2024, there were [plans](#) to repurpose the mothballed buildings.

<sup>196</sup> I am not sure who she was. She only seems to be mentioned in the diaries in relation to this conference.

and Muriel Yarnell joined them that evening. They had flown there. The next day, there were lectures all day. While they were good, mum considered that they were not that relevant. Professor Richardson<sup>197</sup>, the first lecturer and chairman, was very good. There was a reception in the [art gallery](#) in the evening. Mum thought it was quite nice but very cold<sup>198</sup>. The next day, there were lectures in the morning. The last lecture was given by Dr David Alexander<sup>199</sup> under the title “*What’s Up Doc?*” which mum rated excellent. There was then a tour in a coach in the afternoon which mum rated quite good. It was very cold. There was then a sherry reception at the university which mum considered boring. On the final day, there was the AMS AGM. Mum and Janet Sharp argued with Mrs Plumley<sup>200</sup> about affiliate membership.<sup>201</sup> Mum noted that there was a nice dinner at the university in the evening. On 23 September 1979, mum left Aberdeen at 10.15am and got to Norwich at 9.15pm. She changed in Edinburgh and Peterborough and described it as a good journey.



*Crombie Halls of Residence  
Aberdeen University in 2012.  
Mum stayed in these halls for  
an AMS meeting in September  
1979*

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*Art Gallery in Aberdeen.  
This façade was changed  
dramatically in 2019 with  
the addition of a copper  
rooftop extension. Mum  
attended a reception here  
while attending an AMS  
meeting in September  
1979*



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<sup>197</sup> Possibly [Professor Ian Richardson](#). Born in 1922, he became Professor of General Practice in Aberdeen in 1970. He retired in 1984 and died in 2010. Apparently, the Richardson Prize in General Practice at Aberdeen is named in his honour.

<sup>198</sup> This could be a general comment on the weather.

<sup>199</sup> [David Alan Alexander](#) was an expert in mental health management and policy following major disasters. Born in 1943, he graduated in Psychology and Philosophy from St Andrews in 1966 and became a lecturer in Aberdeen’s Department of Mental Health in 1970. He became a Senior Lecturer in 1980 and a Professor in 1994. He retired in 2011. He died in 2020 aged 76. In 1981, he [published](#) a survey of the views and attitudes of 85 medical secretaries/ receptionists which formed part of the address to the conference mum attended.

<sup>200</sup> At this time, [Anne Plumley](#) was AMS General Secretary, a [role](#) she held from 1965 to 1986.

<sup>201</sup> I am not sure what the argument was about exactly but this was the year that the association changed its name, adding practice administrators and receptionists, to reflect changes in membership which had taken place. I don’t know for sure but I suspect mum may have been against such changes. AMSPAR now has [two main levels of membership](#). General membership is available to anyone working in a health organisation while certified membership requires the person to hold an AMSPAR qualification. General membership is divided into four levels based on experience – affiliate (<5 years), associate (5-10 years), member (10-15 years) and fellow (>15 years). Once a person reaches the age of 65, they are classed as retired and they retain their level of membership.

Mum also attended lectures and training at City College which were relevant to her work as a medical secretary. For example, in February 1978, she went to a lecture on communications there. Mum thought this was good. In September 1977, mum started an advanced typing course at City College.<sup>202</sup> Daphne Francis went too. Mum attended this course regularly from October 1977 to March 1978. She took some exams in January 1978 and then again in June 1978.

Norwich City College in 2005



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I found two certificates from 1978. Both were issued by the Royal Society of Arts Examination Board.<sup>203</sup> One was a stage III advanced certificate in typewriting, with a speed test at 65 words per minute, and the other was a stage II intermediate certificate in medical audio-typewriting.



Mum's certificates from the Royal Society of Arts Examinations Board from 1978 for courses she studied at City College

<sup>202</sup> The course cost £15.20 plus £2.25 for the book. Mum enjoyed it.

<sup>203</sup> The Royal Society of Arts instituted exams in 1856 becoming a major examinations board focused principally on commercial/ office skills and English as a foreign language. The Examinations Board became a separate company in 1987 and, in 1997, was sold and merged with the Oxford and Cambridge Examination Boards forming OCR.

There is very little in the diaries for this period about dad's work. Mum did note that, when she went to dad's on the way back from Eastbourne on 1 April 1975, he was at work. There were issues over tax because mum discovered that any tax rebate she earned went to dad.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> This matter is covered in [Chapter 114](#).