

Faith Rosalie Paul née Davis

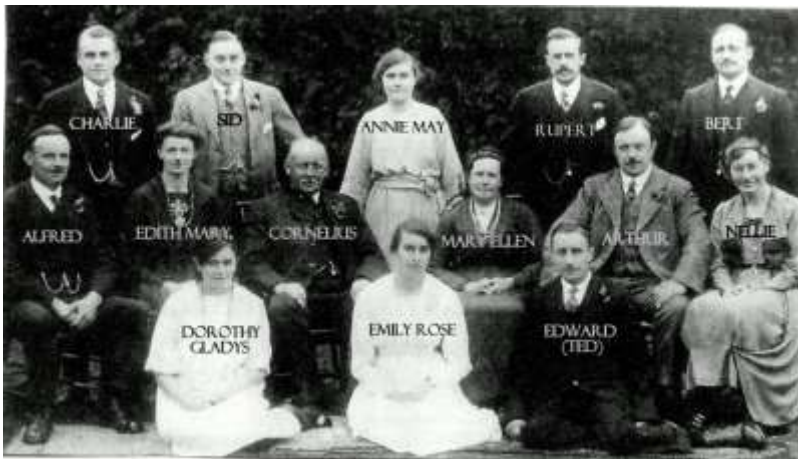


I was born at Collings Hanger Farm in Prestwood on 2nd April, 1934, to Arthur Wren Davis and Emily Rose Davis (née Stevens). I had two older brothers: David Wren, born in January 1926, and Rex Arthur, born September 1928, and later a sister, June Valerie, who was born in June 1937. We did have a sister, Joy, born in 1939, but she died of whooping cough, aged three months (I can just remember sitting in a chair and being allowed to have her in my arms for just a few minutes. I was only five so can't remember much about her). I've been wondering why Mother called me Faith. It could have been that she had faith she would have a girl after having two boys – and then a five-year gap. I never thought to ask her.

Father had three siblings: Edith Maud (Dolly), Dudley and Guy. Their father, Arthur, was a JP. They lived at Denner Hill Farm (which Dudley later farmed, and his son Derek is still there – though the lovely old farmhouse, made of local stone, has been sold). Aunty Dolly married Cyril Morris from Handy Cross Farm. Guy became a Weights and Measures Inspector in Aylesbury. Father moved to Collings Hanger Farm when he married, in 1923. They had to wait to get married and live in it because the other people who were in the house, the Grovers, hadn't got out – they were building a house next door. (And Dad said how they did it he didn't know because they built it with the bricks sideways!)

Mother's family were all butchers. She lived at Square Farm, a tiny house, next to the shop in Prestwood, until

they moved to The Limes (the big house Cornelius Stevens had built), near where there was also a blacksmith, Mr Hildreth (Hildreths Garden Centre now stands on the site – and The Limes Coffee Shop). It was a large Stevens family. My grandmother gave birth to thirteen children, but little May died at about three years old (and is buried in Prestwood churchyard). I didn't know my Stevens' grandparents, as Grandfather Cornelius died before I was born and Grandmother Mary Ellen when I was six weeks old.



The Stevens family

Mother had four sisters (Edie, Nellie, Annie, and Dorothy) and seven brothers (Arthur, Alfred, Rupert, Charlie, Bert, Sidney and Ted), who had butcher's shops all over, from Reading to Chesham and Denham to Wendover, with four at one time in High Wycombe (C. Stevens & Sons).



One of the C. Stevens butcher shops

The uncles were very generous to us – when they came to visit Mother we'd always be given a half crown or a florin.



L to R: Mother and her sisters – Nellie, Dorothy, Edie, Annie

Uncle Sid bought The Limes back, after it had been sold, and they had extensions put on the downstairs. They tended to live downstairs but there was a floor with small bedrooms right at the very top. One was Cousin Joan's bedroom and playroom. She had a row of little Beatrix Potter books, I remember, and they did look nice. Joan was my sister's age, so we used to go there for tea parties and things, to the "big house", where Uncle Sid lived.

And the house next door to The Limes, opposite The Polecat, called Cornella, was Auntie Nellie's house and she and her sister Annie lived there. After the war there weren't many men left to marry women, so they were spinsters. Because there were two of them there were two lovely big bedrooms – and the maid's room, which

you had in those days. The house had bells which rang in the kitchen, to summon the maids.

When we were having breakfast, we used to see Auntie Annie cycling up the road to go to work in the butcher's shop – 8 o'clock every morning. She was in the little box office, glassed off, to take the money in the shop – C. Stevens and Sons. And Auntie Nellie, the other sister not married, was the housekeeper for her but she was also in the Church Army during the First World War, working as a nurse.

Father died on 11th July, 1967. I always remember coming back from Gt Hampden church, where we had the service (and I remember some of the milkmen sitting outside on the grass there), and they stopped the hearse just outside the farm, before they went on to the crematorium, which I thought was a lovely touch.

Dad smoked and smoked and smoked – not indoors, Mother didn't like that – so he died when he was only 67. David said he "used to sit on the floor of Dad's office, to be below the smoke". Four children and we never wanted to smoke. It put us off.

Mother died on 9th April 1987, so she was a widow for 20 years. My mother said she and Dad didn't want anyone to have to come and put flowers on their grave, so their ashes are scattered somewhere at the Crematorium (which I feel is a shame).

Mother was always “subservient”, allowing Dad to have the upper hand, as was the norm in those days. He was the one that organised, decided everything. So Mother had to come to make her own decisions after he died. She still had her four sisters quite close.

Education



First day walking to school with Mary Evison

I walked to school at Miss Beeson’s (Mary Evison, who lived just up the road, took me to school on my first day) - there were seventeen of us - a little school in Sixty Acres Road, run by two maiden ladies, who wore very long

dresses down to their ankles. You might call it a “Dame” school. Miss Beeson (Myrtle) was the teacher and her sister, Miss Ella, did the housekeeping and cooking. David and Rex had gone to Miss Beeson’s too, before they went to the Royal Grammar School. At that time, it was at Andlows Farm. There was a lovely green space to play games like “Sheep, sheep come home” – one person there and calling the sheep, so we all had to run and see if we could get past this person (the Wolf) to get to the other end of the garden, to the fence – “The sheep has gone to Devonshire and won’t be home for seven years, so sheep, sheep come home!”. We played hopscotch too and skipping.

When I was thinking about it, I imagined her floor and I could still see the pattern – this brown and black and tan squared lino. When I was leaving – and June wasn’t coming to that school – Mother said, “Tell Miss Beeson we hope we’ll still see her sometimes”. I can picture that because I was standing waiting – being polite – when she was tying up a little boy’s shoelaces and she looked up at me: “Be off with you Faith!” – so I went. That is absolutely printed in my mind because I was very wary when I did see her out after that because she felt wrong to me – strange, foreign. I was the fourth girl leaving in 6 months!

When war began, in 1939, most of The Old Vicarage School in Richmond was evacuated, to the Prestwood Lodge School site (now the Chiltern Way Academy). It

was an all-girls school for daygirls and boarders. Dad thought it better for me to go to that school. We waited till June was five and both went there in September 1942. Mother took June and I and we met two friends from down the road, who'd been to Miss Beeson's - they'd gone a term before me and so had Mary Evison (her father worked for Cable and Wireless and he always used to be in South America working - Brazil I think it was - and come wartime he worked for us, as bookkeeper, writing down everything customers had - they don't do that now!). We walked across Uncle Alf Stevens' fields (where he kept his animals to get fat) to get to school - where it's now Lodge Lane - we walked across two fields and then we were in school. Cousin Bill Stevens (his son) put all the entrails from the butcher's shop in there somewhere - so there was quite a smell around that field!

At the Old Vicarage School at Prestwood Lodge, June didn't come as early as me, when she started there, as we used that big room that they had for the nursery class for assembly. I think it was 10 till 12, so Mother had two walks across the field to take her and fetch her. Luckily, we had Gladys helping out at the farm and in the house.

Then the school moved to a new location in a former maternity home in Great Kingshill, where it became Piper's Corner School - a lovely big old house. I cycled there. For my last year at the school I was a boarder, so

as to be able to concentrate on work, away from all the distractions of farm life, where there was always something going on in the yard. I spent eight happy years there and made lifelong friends.

Amongst my fellow pupils and friends, all of whose names I remember, many I still keep in touch with, such



as cousins Molly and Joan Stevens, Brenda Morrison, Alison Mayhew and Christine Morris and her sister Elizabeth (they lived just down the road past the King's Head, which is now a nursery), Gisela Bader (the German au pair, two years older than me, part of the staff – she came to stay with us afterwards, and her daughter and niece came to stay with us in 1982, and Rex took us, in his caravan, towed by the Range Rover, to see her in Germany), Susan Robinson (her father was the doctor in Gt Missenden), Jane Crookall from Isle of Man, Gillian Hills, another boarder (I've still got her address). And

Inge Ambor (now Zoells), an Austrian Jew, whose father was a war photographer and she came to England in 1939 ("on a trainload of screaming children", she always used to say). We both started the same day in 1942 and we share the same birthday, 2nd April, but she's a year younger – and clever. We still write to each other.



Faith, back right, in class with Miss Olsson

I enjoyed maths and I got on well with Miss Lowings, the maths teacher. Before, when I was in the lower classes, I had Miss Pattinson, who taught us for everything.

It cost a lot in school fees – I think it was about £100 a term for boarders! And because they fitted me in, as a boarder, for my last year, I had the attic and from there I took photos looking down to the pond. Nowadays, I wonder if they've got the pond fenced in, for safety? They didn't think of those things then.

Piper's Corner was recognised by the Ministry of Education and Miss Cross, the headmistress, was so pleased that she took us all in a coach to Whipsnade. It was after that I got the German measles. Did I catch it there?

I couldn't read till I was eight and since then I've read and read. I read so much that I shouldn't have done and a few years after that I couldn't read the numbers on the hymn board in church. At school I didn't want to sit at the front and so I got the girl next to me in trouble when I spoke to her (asking her to read what was on the board for me). When I was with my family, walking along the promenade at Newhaven, David said something about this big boat and I said "what's the ship's name?" – it was great big black letters – and Mother said "That settles it, we're going to the doctor when we get back" and Dr Ellis picked up his card with A at the top and all the letters down and went to the end of this long narrow room and I couldn't even read the A on the top! It came on so suddenly after I had German measles, when I was twelve, that it must have been that that caused the deterioration in eyesight.

I left school in 1950 and was at the Eastbourne School of Domestic Science for a year. I had a weak chest and Dad thought the sea air would be good for me. I was looking forward to swimming but I walked on the Downs when Mother and Rex came down to see me and I put my foot

in a rabbit hole and I had my foot in plaster for most of that term – so I didn't do much swimming!

The director was Miss Randall, "Rannie". She was a dear little lady. If anyone was in trouble, they'd go to her, she was lovely. Sewing was on the syllabus, but I wasn't good at it. Also housewifery – and, of course, cookery.

I started off, in summer, in a four-bed room, together with my friend Mary Baker (who had trouble with her hips and later had to be in a wheelchair. She died aged 70. Mary married an Indian man, Zillie, whom she had met when travelling around. He went back to India to be helped by his family, leaving his two daughters in Australia, and died on Christmas Eve, 2019).

Home on the farm

There was a "playground" at the front door – a little triangular grass enclosure with a wall along beside the yard and path and, when I arrived, they pushed it back to the edge of the cowsheds so there was room for me to play in. I suppose there weren't so many vehicles outside when David and Rex were born, so they could have played anywhere.

When I had a goose – George – he went in there and stood on the big sandstone in the porch. “Goosey, goosey”, I used to say to him, and he used to cackle back.

Faith with George the goose



The family (customers of ours) that had him had grown fond of this pure white goose with very blue eyes and couldn't bring themselves to eat him for Christmas, so I had him as a pet. I used to have him inside and he loved having his neck stroked. He used to rattle his beak against the door “tap tap tap” to say “Come on, I want to come in!” He was a good pet. And Dad thought he was lovely. Dad used to bring George indoors when we were

having guests and stand him on the wooden kitchen chair and put some bread on the table for him to eat and a tin mug with water in it for him – so he could join us! And we were lucky we'd only got lino on the floor in those days and Dad could bring him in with no fear of having to clean a carpet.

But when I got a puppy, the puppy had to take the place (in the playground) and George had to go down the bottom of the yard. We went to my uncle at Denner Hill and got a female goose, mostly white, that they might have bought or were given, and I called her Grace. Then I think George was quite happy down there with Grace. All the geese walked round everywhere in the yard, the front garden too. It's lucky they didn't go out on the road – I suppose it wasn't grass there, so it wouldn't be nice for them to go out.

I had fun one spring setting the (goose) eggs under the broody chickens, taking them off for five minutes each morning (before I went to school) – you tied this string round their legs so that they couldn't go away, gave them some corn and hoped they'd make a mess not in the nest – till the eggs hatched (in four weeks). The chickens could only manage about five goose eggs, so I had about four chickens sitting and then I had a nice lot of goslings. I wanted the geese to go on laying, so I took the eggs away from them to be hatched.

And then Dad said "they're making a mess" or for some reason they'd got to go. The geese and goslings were

eventually taken away in a large cattle truck to go off to Aylesbury Market. I couldn't watch. I don't want to think what happened to them.

And Paddy was my little dog – a cross between a Pekinese and a terrier. Our cowman brought him back from Towersey where he came from – he used to cycle down to see his family. He brought him back, tucked in his jacket – on his bicycle! I don't think he could read, poor old Bill Neighbour. They got a barrel for Paddy and put a tarpaulin over the top for his kennel and one day, I shall always remember, Paddy was crying at the front door to come in, early morning, and we found that the cat we called "Paddy's kitten", who used to go and sleep with him in there, had had kittens and pushed him out.

My little dog Paddy – I didn't have him on the lead and I didn't keep him close to me when I crossed the road to my friend Mary Anne's and he got run over. Crying on my bed, I heard the shot when my dad killed him, because Paddy was so badly injured in his back legs. I still find it upsetting to think about it. It was all my fault for not looking after my dog properly.

Then there was Tinker, the evacuee dog. Uncle Guy's girlfriend came from somewhere on the East coast. The dog was barking - he worried about the bombs at Margate. He got hysterical. I think they'd have had to put him down if they'd left him there. Even so, he would still have a session running round in circles.

I had my own donkey when I was 5. Rex always looked after it for me. He continued always to have a donkey and the last one died only recently. Uncle Cyril from Handy Cross got a donkey for his family, but they didn't want it, so we had it. And a year and a day afterwards, there was a baby donkey! Because the farmhouse is next to the farm, I always remember the cowman, Bill, calling up to June and I in our bedroom and we hurriedly put a dressing gown over a nightdress and ran out – on June's tenth birthday, 1st June 1947 - to see this baby donkey, still wet.

One day I took the young donkey down to the blacksmith by 7 o'clock to have him shod, to have his feet trimmed, because otherwise the hooves get like rockers, they get longer and longer. And when I was coming back up the road, a motorbike came by "pop pop pop" and the donkey took off – he wasn't trained well enough – and I was dragged along the road and I had to let go of the halter.

We had a tub cart, pulled by the donkey, with a seat either side, that at least four children could ride in and Rex would take them to fairs and offer rides. They would occasionally be used to transport hay, but the tractors could pull larger loads.



Mother with Faith and June in the tub cart, pulled by Daisy and led by Rex 1940

Grandpa Davis got three pull-along trucks (for all the families) and I've still got mine out in the shed. He had lovely swings up for us too (at Denner Hill) and we played on them a lot. Father got three pairs of stilts for us - one pair was so high you had to stand on steps to get at them. I was going along on them and next minute I was on the ground. Did I yell! I still have the scar.

We had a pig at the farm for bacon and ham. So, I used to scratch its back – with sulphur. They like sulphur on their backs, rub it in, they like that a lot.

I had a lamb, but I was only five, so Rex was looking after it for me. But Rex got meningitis and the cause could have been that the lamb got a little cold, so the lamb was dispatched. It came indoors – I remember putting down newspapers to mop up its puddles. That's a long time ago! It used to be stone floors in those days – not even the lino we have now. Rex was only ten. I think he went to the hospital sitting in the front of the doctor's car. Certainly he was promised a ride in the car afterwards. He was very special, Dr Ellis. They were doing up the road, Amersham Hill, outside the hospital, so it was very noisy and that made Rex worse, so he came home, with the nurse. I can picture now seeing Rex carried on a stretcher, past the kitchen window – because I was kept in the kitchen, out of the way – round to the front door so he could come straight up the stairs when he came in, not in the back door which was twisting round so you wouldn't get the stretcher in that way. Then we had a nurse in the boys' bedroom and Rex in the girls' bedroom because there was only one bathroom, upstairs. So Mother, June and I slept upstairs in our parents' bedroom and the double bed went downstairs and David and Dad slept in it, in the drawing room. When someone's ill you have to do it.

I can picture Mother going down to the hospital to sit beside him and taking a little silk dress she was making for the baby – and I think the baby died at the same time, from whooping cough. There were no more children for them after that.

Mother had a monthly nurse for David and Rex (Nurse Rickard) and my birth (Nurse Benskin) but not for June as by that time there wasn't a spare room left for the nurse to have, so Mother went to a nursing home. [David remembers walking down Amersham Hill, from the Grammar School, to see his mother in the nursing home after Joy had been born, in 1939]. I can just remember sitting on the big commode chair in the bathroom and holding June and marvelling at her little tiny fingers.

We used to have Izal toilet paper and there were rhymes printed on each sheet. It had green writing.

David has always had traction engines. We had an Allis Chalmers tractor, registration number LBH 311. The family still have it. It was lovely to drive.

I learned to drive by riding round the fields and took my test when I was 18. There were no driving tests during the war so David, born 1926, didn't have to take one. I remember June and I putting the old Morris 12 away in the shed which was being built and there was a whole stack of corrugated asbestos roofing and she was nearly going to back onto it.

Milk delivery began with Dad riding a bicycle with a crate on the front. Then they had the Morris 12 (all six of us used to fit in it) – FYL 438 – and later a Ford 8, which had the windows taken out and replaced with metal to make a van.



Picture of the Ford 8 made into a van

The man beside it is Victor "Fattie" Few, one of the four roundsman during the war. He came by motorbike, which I used to think was fascinating, and sometimes he'd let me sit on the back and have a ride up the road as he was going home. Sidney Gough lived across the road (and I still sometimes see his daughter at church on a Sunday) – he did the round at Prestwood. Then there was Reg Franklin – a proper Cockney. Some of the men lived in the farm "cottages" down the road – but they were quite big houses!

I remember watching men working when there was a new milking machine and I pushed a milk churn on a

wheeler back to the dairy but, what did I do? At the bottom of the yard I managed to slip and tip the churn over and I didn't go back there again as I'd lost half a churn of milk!

When I was small there was the TT (tuberculin test) cattle tester coming and the yard was somehow divided in half and I used to think that if they're TT tested and the others aren't, how can they be segregated when it was just a piece of wood, a wooden fence between? And then of course they got all the cattle TT tested which was a great thing. You can't say "TT tested" anymore because everything is. You can't have any milk without it anymore.

We had little calves in the middle of the yard then but now the fence has gone and the barn's not used for cattle any more but for functions and events. I used to love going into the barn but I was allergic to cattle and horses and I sneezed! My daughter, Sarah, has inherited the hay fever allergy.

We used to see quite a lot of things happening at Prestwood, where the Stevenses had an abattoir (and they also made pork pies there). One day the Morrises (who went the same time as us to Piper's and used to catch the bus up from the Kings Head to the top of Sixty Acres), just before they could get off the bus, a bullock, destined for the abattoir, but escaping, got up its front feet on the bus! Then they couldn't get off the bus. I shall

always remember watching from the other side of the road.

We all ate together, particularly at dinner time – David, Dad, me, round this side, June and Rex. Mother always had grace first before we started and afterwards Dad would go and have a sleep in his armchair and Mother would go and sit on the sofa with her feet up and do the mending (because she had bad varicose veins, after five pregnancies). You came in the dining room and there was Mother's old sofa there and the table we sat round and the fireplace here. And apparently one time Rex had been naughty and they'd shut him in the dining room and there was a lot of smoke – he'd thrown the hearth rug on the fire! He was such a good boy you wouldn't have imagined him doing that.

About twice I had the cane. One time I was playing outside with the cats and it was dinner time and I wouldn't come in and I deserved Dad's cane that time. So instead of going into dinner I went up to my bed and yelled and yelled loudly, crying. I was perhaps ten at the time. I can't remember what the other time was for.



Summer 1949 From top L to R: Tony Collins, June Davis, Margaret Daniel, Sally Hunt, Michael Daniel, Francis Daniel, Mary Ann Collins and Paddy

With Mother we played cards. And we'd got Tony and Mary Ann Collins across the road and the house next door belonged to the Fells. He was a Navy captain and, when he was off somewhere for a year, we had the Daniels, an Army family, there – I still keep up with them, they're lovely, a really nice Army family – and



Gladys Smith

Margaret married an Army person of course. There were three boys and they were twins and a younger one. They were only there for about a year, but it made a big impact on us.

We'd be playing games over the dining room table. And Mother and Gladys would be busy in the kitchen – Mother making pastry perhaps and Gladys washing up (Mother made an awful lot of washing-up!). Gladys did cleaning and a lot of other jobs. She and mother were always busy. I suppose you'd call Gladys a "maid" now. She would answer the door to all the people always coming – because the doorbell of a farm, that's selling

milk, was always ringing. Gladys had to do some farm work during the war otherwise she wouldn't have been allowed to stay with us as a housemaid. She got on well with Bill Neighbour and his wife. They lived in a farm cottage near the church.

Gladys worked for the family for about fifty years, until she retired. She came when I was 5 and she was 15, having been at the great house at Gt Hampden, "the gentry" – a come down to come to a farm! We were not in the same category! Her grandfather had worked for my grandfather, Arthur Davis, at Denner Hill. Owen Smith, Gladys's father, lived in the cottage that the old man and his wife had lived in (and Gladys lived there too). He worked in a furniture factory. How he went in there I can't remember. Perhaps he cycled - people used to cycle an awful lot more then.

There was one old bus - a Farmers' bus – that went round all the cottages in the unusual villages, like Bryants Bottom, to pick up the people. It probably turned round at Speen. Any of the family who wanted to go into Wycombe for any shopping would go on that bus. I don't remember if it went every day or just at weekends.

Dad said he wasn't going to be like his father and leave the cottages full of old men who couldn't work anymore! Of course, then there were council houses afterwards for people so they could be more mobile (*and not dependent on tied cottages*).

After Grandpa died – or perhaps before – my mother would walk over to Denner Hill, after she'd done the washing and I don't know if she helped Granny or what but she was there and they talked together every Monday afternoon and then Dad would go over there in the car, take their milk and bring Mother back. She walked down to Stoney Green, where David lives now, along the road at the bottom and all the way up the other side. You could go along the field, Long Markings – it's a very long field.

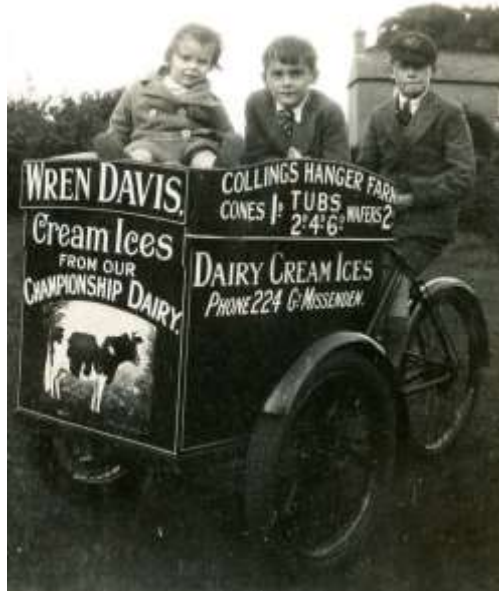
Dad used to take milk to Granny almost every day and go and see that she was all right. I remember him crying when he heard that Granny had died. He was very upset then. She had been staying with Uncle Guy at Whitchurch, which is not close, and he wished she had been at home.

We used to have a lot of milk rounds – there were four rounds during the war and then it went up to forty. Then supermarkets came into being and things changed. When I did the milk round, we started about 6 in the morning and it was lovely going to meet people, seeing the little children at home and of course there were more people at home in those days too. I used to enjoy doing that. Now they start at 2am, I'm told.

I liked to do the milk round out at Bryants Bottom, North Dean, Lacey Green – you saw all the little cottages and the back roads too. There's a road called Highwood

Bottom and there was a composer Edmund Rubbra down there, his wife a violinist, with two sons – musicians – wearing a lot of hair round their faces. But that's a long time ago. I stopped doing that when I married in 1959. And of course there's Flowers Bottom down there – Turnip End. There were artists and all sorts of unusual people there. Coming up Hughenden Valley to North Dean, turning off at The Harrow, there was a track along there to an isolated place called Piggotts at the top – it's said people used to walk round there naked. I know the little children did so. If they knew people were delivering, they wouldn't have been around naked! You could see across to Granny's at Denner Hill from there.

As part of this small milk round, I used to go to the RAF in Naphill. One time they had a parade on and I nearly touched the back of this parade. I'd gone up there where I shouldn't have done. Having got up there I wasn't allowed to come out and get back again. I said to the RAF policeman (red cap) on the gate "I have to take the milk" – so he let me in.



Faith, Rex and David in the ice cream cart in 1936

Before the war, we sold ice cream, which we made at the farm. Coming out of the house there was the garage and what used to be the dairy and that was where Mrs Dell made the ice cream. I remember when I was five years old Dad putting a ladder up to the bathroom window and passing me some ice cream before he went on the second milk round!

Great Hampden common – we used to go out there from Granny's at Denner Hill with our bikes and go round to the common and back again somehow. And the Tegetmeiers were at the next farm on the common. Rex

would pick Granny up in his nice new Land Rover and we'd go across the common for church. One Sunday morning on our way to church, there under a little bit of tarpaulin were two gypsies. It was only a little bit of tarpaulin – how they kept themselves dry, I don't know. I think they'd got a tinker's cart to sharpen knives.

When the grandparents were alive at Denner Hill we always used to go over there...when I was seven I could have dinner with them - I was old enough to go back there after Hampden Church, to have a ride in their big old red Rover car (AKX88g), going up the road to Denner Hill, "brmm brmm", oh it did make a noise! And the noise got inside. But that was Grandpa's car – and he was an alderman and a JP, so he was an important man. When he died, his son Dudley at Denner Hill had the car and it was stolen at one point and police in Slough recognised it because Grandpa used to go to lots of different courts.

My sister June always wanted to be a nurse and had done Red Cross classes. She trained at St Thomas's Hospital and then worked there for a while, before going to Taplow to work as a midwife. Then she did district nursing, where she would be working on her own, in the Wycombe area, and lived at the farm sometimes. She now lives in Denham Garden Village. She's got open French windows and a balcony and flowers out there, so many pots.

She was very good to my daughters when they were children and took them on holidays to the seaside (with

a friend of hers and her twins). Once Rosemary got lost on the sea front, when she was five at most, and they had to have a search party. I didn't hear till afterwards! If June had married and had children, we'd have been on the same level, but our lives became separated and now we have little in common.

June saved up money to buy a horse but then went off to nursing college. So I took over looking after the horse. It came from Mr Merivale at Wendover and she rode the horse home and Dad followed in the car to see she was safe. It was a cob – it went “clip clop”, with its heavy feet. My friend Mary Anne's pony went “trit trot”! We used to ride together sometimes but I don't think she ever did long ones like I did. I measured once with David's cartographer's pen, on a map, and I'd gone ten miles – down the road, straight along to the top of Four Ashes, down the footpath to come out by Hughenden Church, up the other side, across Naphill Common, to Downley and then back down to Stoney Green to come back that way. One day I was coming back from a nice long ride. Sally the horse knew we were getting near home and she got faster, coming up by Friars Field, on the grassy bit, and I had to hang on with my arms round her neck.



**Grandpa Davis, Faith, June, Rosemary, David, Geoffrey,
Granny, Mother, Dad, Rex 1943**

Cousins

We had cousins at Manor Farm, Weston Turville, - a beautiful old stone house - which has been in the family for years. Only one of the three sisters (Rosemary) is left and it's too much for her, so it's been sold. It had a lovely garden next to it, with a vegetable garden up a bit further, not near the flowers. And they had a lovely summerhouse in the garden too. My paternal grandmother and her grandmother were sisters (Pursell). There were twins in that family too. Rosemary and Margaret were twins. We used to go and see them once a year for a meal (but I don't think they came for a meal with us. I don't know why). We went by bus to Great Missenden then by train to Stoke Mandeville and

then walked a long way for little legs, Mother, June and I, to Weston Turville. The twins were brought up by their grandmother as well as their parents. Their father, Bert Cox, was very correct and "punctilious". We went there once, unexpected, when I was driving, and we discovered afterwards that he was in the middle of hand milking his cows! So he'd left one cow (in order to be polite) and must have lost a lot of milk, because it would have kept on pouring out.

We used to walk every week to my Granny's at Denner Hill – Mother, June and I – where June and I played with Rosemary and Geoffrey (from Handy Cross Farm), who were similar ages to us. One time we all went and as we were all walking up Mount Chilly, the steep hill up to Denner Hill, we were in a long row – "Stone the pigeons and kill the crow" – and the end person is swung round and goes to the other end. I seem to remember the whole family was there, six of us, with Mother in the middle.

Auntie Dolly, being the only daughter, would often be at Denner Hill to see her mother. Granny didn't like to go to lots of official occasions, so Dolly used to go with her father. Whether she did after she was married, I don't know.

Handy Cross Farm, at the junction of Handy Cross, is a very old building. When they had radiators put in, they discovered some hollow places that might have been hiding places. Cousin Roger was there after his parents

and now his son is there. Roger lives in Marlow but, aged 87, still likes to come and help on the farm.



At Denner Hill Farm in the snow 1946: Faith, Roger, Derek, June, Elisabeth, Rosemary, Geoffrey

One Christmas, in 1947, we went to Denner Hill and cousin Roger (two years older than me) and Derek Davis (one year younger) had built this lovely igloo – there was even a tunnel to go in and a bench for about two people to sit on inside.

June and I were the only ones wearing skirts. We didn't wear trousers till we were grown up. I remember Dad taking me to Drings to buy a pair of trousers "Now squat in it to see if you can still move all right"! Mother never wore trousers (but always wore a hat). It wasn't the thing

for Victorian girls. But doing the milk round you wanted to be free to run round.

Great Aunt Emily, Grandpa Davis's sister, when she came to dinner (which happened maybe once a year, the cutlery was all polished and the white starched damask tablecloths were brought out, so that everything was very special for her. She acted like a dowager – she had a shawl over her shoulder – and when she'd had a meal with us and was leaving, she'd go out to the kitchen and leave a tip for Gladys – it was all very regal. We did occasionally go to where she lived in north London and June and I had to be on our best behaviour.

At Stoney Green there are two cottages, one belonging to us and one to Stoney Green House. We've got farm buildings there – a Dutch barn. I don't know who lives at the big house now – it used to be Debenhams, from the store.

One aunt lived at Whitchurch and her two sons now have the house. Uncle Guy – he was the weights and measures inspector in Bucks. Neither of the sons married, so their line of the family hasn't continued.

Handy Cross Farm is still in the Morris family and has been for generations – Dad's sister's children are the tenants there (it's actually owned by Lord Carrington); cousins are at Ninneywood Farm. Grandpa Davis had a whole lot (of farms) and when he died one side of the

road came to us and one side, the Denner Hill side, to Uncle Dudley. Nanfans Farm is ours – I think my dad bought that – and one of the old milkmen lives there now.

My cousin Derek Davis was my age, one year younger. They've lost a girl (Anne) in that family – she had lots of x-rays and she got leukaemia and she died aged 10. So Derek was left by himself. In 1943 Arthur was born and in another five years Richard arrived - so they didn't have another girl!

Grandpa was always at the farmhouse at Denner Hill, so when Uncle Dudley married he had the house up the road, previously called The Weathercock, and they've got new houses up there now - Derek's in one and Richard in the other (he and his wife Sue have two sons – one lives in Australia and one in the USA). Arthur, who didn't stay on in farming but became an engineer, now lives in Gt Kingshill, and comes to my church. Arthur's son lives in Maidenhead and his daughter Rachel lives in Australia. So Arthur's family are not involved in farming at all.

Cousin Joyce Bennett (daughter of Frank Bennett and Edie Stevens) was 34 years as a missionary in Hong Kong and the first woman to be ordained (1971) as a priest in the Anglican communion, many years before the Church of England allowed women to officiate in 1994.

Cousin John, son of Rupert Stevens, was about two weeks older than me so I used to get invited to his birthday parties when we were young.

One thing I remember about Cousin Molly Stevens (Uncle Sid's daughter, 2 or 3 years older than me and also at Piper's Corner) that I didn't like - she tried to arrange some amusements when we had birthday parties or Christmas parties. She had a stool that you had to step on and you were blindfolded and you had to jump off and you didn't know how high she'd got it. There was also something about taking water from a bowl that I also didn't like.

I remember a game with two circles of people standing round and one behind has to run round the outside and find the place where there was a gap and then the front person had to run off. There were quite a lot of us – at least a dozen playing. I can't remember what we called it. I'll have to ask my sister.

It was wartime so we probably couldn't get many jellies. I'm sure we had birthday parties for all the children – all family parties. Mostly the Handy Cross cousins – Rosemary and Geoffrey. The older boys didn't want to integrate with the girls. But little Geoffrey had to play with us and I played with him quite a bit. And Rosemary and June played together. We used to go over there and stay and I always stayed in the room with Geoffrey and I had a bath in the bath and he had a bath in a big tub on the floor.

That day (and others) we went in the car – at least four of us squashed in the back – to the river at Marlow for a picnic, to a bit we called Sandy Bay. We paddled in the water. You had to be careful because there were deeper holes there. We were by the bridge on the Bucks side, opposite Bisham Abbey.

Churchgoing

We went to Sunday School every week at Prestwood, until we stopped going to Holy Trinity Prestwood (where Mother had been all her life – and Dad too) because we didn't get on with the vicar, Mr Fallows. He became unpopular, striding around in his black cassock and with a biretta on his head. He was wont to criticise parishioners. It was said that years later he did apologise.

We went to Great Hampden church instead, which in those days was very different from Prestwood. I remember driving there in the snow – Dad and David in the front of the car and Mother in the back with me and June on Rex's knee. Dad couldn't always go to church because he was on the milk round and in those days it was seven days a week!

We had a dear old vicar – I think he was connected to some gentry – Lionel Bramford. Because he lived in Gt Hampden, in a little tiny cottage, when he walked

around the village he would give us florins or half crowns, whatever he'd got in his pocket, to children he knew. He was a very caring old man. And he came to a party that Dad had for Rex's 21st birthday. They were having a whist drive and the vicar didn't join in. I was very proud to tell him I knew how to play whist and June and I showed him how to play and I don't think he appreciated that. I was naughty to do that!

For the whist drive, they pushed the big armchairs and the dining room table upstairs into the bedrooms and they had these little card tables – they must have hired them I suppose – at least seven tables, perhaps four in each front room. I think tempers got a little frayed getting everything set up.

Brother Rex is buried in the graveyard at Great Hampden church. He died in 2009, almost 81, of prostate cancer. He was churchwarden and keeper of the tower for the bells. He rang the bells for many years, so Gt Hampden was special to him. When he retired, he was given a handbell as a thank you. Rex bought a new organ for the church in 1988. The big old organ had stopped working so Uncle Rex bought a smaller organ and it was installed in July 1988 and is still there and working alright.

From Piper's Corner, in those days we boarders walked every Sunday down Boss Lane to Hughenden Church, where there were a lot of RAF servicemen.

I hadn't been put on the electoral roll to be married from Gt Hampden. By this time it was Mr Smith who was the vicar at Prestwood and he married us.

When this new church was built down the road (Church of the Good Shepherd), I went there for its inaugural service and I've been there ever since. But the children were all christened at Prestwood church.

Wartime

I was given the chance to drive in a Churchill tank (with June) during the war when it was being test driven from repair in the rickyard over a weekend. Mother was cooking their rashers for breakfast. Just back from Sunday School, we were asked "Would you like a ride...."! I would have been 7 or 8. We sat on tiny seats inside the turret and could look out through the periscope – because we couldn't be seen. That was a great highlight – up the road at Prestwood, round The Chequers and back again.

On VE day father took us round to see the bonfires, all round the Vale of Aylesbury in the villages. We were lucky to have petrol because of the milk round. Most other people didn't. You could only use petrol for specific purposes and not waste it. We got to have a ride when Dad was going somewhere, like collecting money from someone who hadn't paid.

Once, going to High Wycombe, Dad was trying to go a bit fast, because he was trying to get to the Bank to pay the money in, and he overturned the car with us all in it, opposite Hughenden Manor (because there's a slope and a bank). June was walking on the window! We were all unhurt, except that Mother had a bad thumb afterwards. She was trying not to have her weight be on the others, as she was on the left-hand side.

We went to some big farm rallies in wartime. I think it was Lord Woolton, the Minister of Food, trying to get everyone to think of better things to do. He spoke at one of them. And of course there were all the Land Girls, to give extra help on the farms, to produce food in wartime. We had one called Joan Field (she sat me on the wall and June down there and took a photo of us both – that's a wartime picture). A girl who worked in the dairy put her rubber apron on the wall for us to sit on, so we weren't sitting on the rough wall in our short skirts.



June and Faith at Collings Hanger Farm

Grandpa Arthur Davis was one who instigated quite a lot of things to help with the War Ag (the War Agricultural Committee used to go round all the farms to make sure they were using the farms properly. People could be taken off the land – there was a man in Holmer Green who was taken off his farm because he wasn't farming efficiently)

There were two bombers that collided over Prestwood, with much of the wreckage falling over Nanfans. Only one member of the two crews survived. I can't remember that bit of it but I do remember that years afterwards they found the remains of a person hanging from a tree somewhere down by the Glade, looking up to Hampden House.

I was remembering all these convoys of army vehicles, tanks and things, big and small, going by in the wartime. They all seemed to come through Prestwood, from The Chequers, and I used to stand up between the hedge and the wall and watch all this going by.

We were perhaps less affected by rationing than other people but it was the lack of petrol that was the problem. Dad used a rotavator to dig up the garden to grow vegetables.

We had evacuees in Prestwood – my friend Mary Evison's family had one called June. Maybe she was the one where Mr Evison saw this pile of clothes that had come with her and they had bugs in, so he put them straight on the fire and the clothes burned. He wasn't going to have anything like that in the house. So he bought clothes for that girl.

I can remember coming back up the road, after Sunday school in the afternoon, and seeing smoke because evacuee boys had set fire to the hay rick just down the driveway, on the way to Stoney Green Hall, and they

came up the drive to Mr Evison's house and asked for a bucket of water. And he hadn't got a phone, so I don't know how they called the fire brigade. He knew Dad would be out there - we had long sticks, thick sticks, with sacks on the end, to bash things out. Though what good that would do with a whole rick I don't know. I imagine the boys thought they were lighting a little fire and it was too close to the rick and the rick went up.

Marriage and children

I met my husband, Alban Paul, at Young Farmers. He was an agricultural contractor. His sister, Jean, was married to my elder brother David. They now live at Stoney Green Farm and had four children.

We were married on February 10th 1959, in Prestwood Church, and moved to Widmer End, where I bought the house called Primrose from the Saunders family. I've lived there ever since. Alban's parents came to live in the house next door (where my daughter Annette now lives). Houses have all been built opposite since then. I remember one early morning a vixen playing with her four cubs in a hollow there – we should have taken a photograph!



Faith and Alban outside Primrose

Rosemary was born in 1960, the twins, Sarah and Katherine, in 1962 and Annette in 1964. I had four under 4. The twins together weighed 12 lbs 5 oz, so it's a good thing they weren't triplets! Sarah arrived first, which was useful, because she had a smaller head and Katherine's was quite a lot wider. And Katherine's got one mole – so good not to muddle them up. I remember my dad sitting in his big armchair and holding them both – he enjoyed the little ones. My stairs are very steep with narrow

treads and my dad used to be horrified at the thought that I'd carried them both down at the same time.

My Sarah fell down the stairs once – I think that was the worst thing that happened. But they were all playing outside one day – all four girls – and Rosemary wanted to put Annette on her back, so she stood her on some old tin can and apparently Alban had cut down one side and turned it to the wall, and Annette had a slit in her thigh when she slipped off at the back. I called my sister June, because I knew she was at the farm, and she said she'd take her to hospital, and she said Annette was very good (having stitches) – it was unusual for June to bring sweets!

We were all so lucky to have so many things given to us – I had a big twin pram from people up the village (Sarah one end and Katherine the other) and someone made a nice wooden seat to put across the middle and Rosemary sat in the middle. The babies were facing each other. When the hoods were up, they couldn't see out well and didn't like it. Once or twice I walked up to Prestwood with that pram – not quite three miles – and we used to push the pram into the front of the house, into the little grass enclosure called "the playground".

I tried to still do some office work. I used to do some counting up of the milk tokens for children, when I had Rosemary in the chair that you hooked over the ordinary chair. One day in the office she fell somehow, it tipped over sideways – I should have tied it at the bottom – onto

the hard floor and she yelled and yelled (she was maybe nine months old?). That stopped me doing anything more that day.

Those little chairs that hooked onto things were very useful in the Dormobile – I'd got Rosemary in the middle and one twin each side. Alban found a door that could be used as a ramp to wheel the pram up into it and when I got to the farm Dad would be there to take one side and me the other to lift it out.

By the time I'd got three, it wasn't possible any more to do the office work. I remember Dad saying – perhaps at Christmas or at a birthday party – “you're not looking very well” “Well I'm expecting again” “You're NOT expecting again!” Oh dear. Things changed.

Alban did look after the children for two hours when I was helping with the Brownies. I can picture him sitting in the chair here with little Rosemary toddling around – but I don't think he was so keen after a bit. He left the marriage after 15 years and went to live in High Wycombe. He'd not been happy, he was grumbling at this that and the other, and he was very keen on going out to the local pub – and there were local pubs in those days. There was one at Widmer End – it's gone now. There was less and less of agricultural things for him to do round here. If we'd had a boy would it have made a difference? I don't know. But I'm very glad I've got girls now. They're all very good to me and help a lot.

It was hard work on my own, but Dad used to pay for me to have someone come to do some housecleaning. So...life goes on...and you do different things. We'd go and have dinner with my mother once a week. And I tried to still do some office work.

My daughter Rosemary wanted to attend Brownies, but there was no space. Mrs Tooby, the district Commissioner, said I could bring Rosemary – as long as I helped! This led to me being Brown Owl for the 2nd Holmer Green pack for 18 years (1967-1985). I took Brownies on 13 pack holidays - some at Ellesborough Pack Holiday House and I found several different places. Cousin Joan Stevens married a Matthews (brickmakers) and we had a pack holiday in the Village Hall in Bellingdon. The Brownies were taken round the brickworks so they could see a bit about it because there were brickworks round Prestwood too.

I left the Brownies when Rosemary had her first child and when mother was ill and declining. I didn't do a lot for mother but there still wasn't enough time for me to do other things like Brownies. She'd still got Gladys working in the house.

I used to enjoy myself with the Brownies, doing lots of different things. Now I'm in the Trefoil Guild – for older guides – and we meet once a month.

Social Life

I joined the Young Farmers Club when I was 18, when a club started in Great Missenden. I could drive then so I went down in the Dormobile and could give lifts to others.

Miss Batchelor the county organiser came and started us off, together with Mr Kyle from Sedges Farm, Gt Missenden, and his family (3 girls – who were at Pipers – and a son) and Mr Sowcester, the gardener from Missenden Abbey. At one time I was the Secretary.

We met in the old Court House in Gt Missenden (now a listed building). You're not allowed to go up the staircase now. It used to sway with all the Young Farmers going up it and jumping about and the floor bounced. I took a gas heater because it was cold but now I think how dangerous it was.

My children all joined Young Farmers. There used to be farming things – it would start with information about what's going on and then there'd be a talk or a visit. There were competitions – public speaking, drama – and country dancing. There are Young Farmers' rallies each year that the family all still go to. You see people you've known for years. It's a great social gathering place and helps to keep farming families in touch with each other.

In 1978 I helped Dorothy Chambers to set up the Tuesday Centre, a social club, at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Widmer End. There were young people as well at the beginning, from the new village, the new

housing estate built in the late 60s. Dorothy and Don moved back up to the Wirral so then I was left to run the Centre. We had sausages and cheese and bread and butter and I made three cakes each week in those days, so we had quite a lot of people. But it's evolved now so that we have somebody who's a church cook who makes a good meal for us every Tuesday. So it's out of my hands – but I still go every week if I can.

Holidays and travel



Faith with Grandpa
Davis on the beach at
Hastings

Twice Mother, June and I went to Camber Sands on holiday with Aunty Dolly (from Handy Cross) and her family. She took a

bungalow, The Jolly Roger, that was built on the sea front wall. It was great fun for June and I being there with Aunt Dolly's four – Derek Davis from Denner Hill came as company for Roger, who was an older boy – a whole lot of us children, made it very good going. The first time we stopped at a pub called The Green Dragon (I can't imagine Mother ever going in a pub!) The next time, Mother and June and I stayed in the bit underneath the wall and Aunt Dolly's family had the upstairs bit.

Mother would never swim because she'd got crooked toes – she'd had to wear shoes handed down in their big family and it had misshapen her feet. (Mother also always wore a hat. One day at the farm her hat blew off. Well she couldn't be outside without a hat, so she went in and got it and when she came out she said to Johnny, who always worked with us on the farm as his family had before: "Johnny have you seen my hat?" and he looked at her and he said "It's on yer'ead ma'am". We've laughed about that!)

Other cousins, the Pitchers, from Small Dean Farm, owned a bungalow further along (The Pilot) – four daughters, including one pair of twins. Their mother was a Pursell, like my Granny was. Distant cousins.

If Dad came on holiday, Dudley (before he was married) would come and stay at the farm to keep it safe and the cowman would do the milking.

My parents used to go to Hastings, to the Roberts Hotel, every year before the war. Sometimes we would have day trips to Littlehampton, in the Morris 12. There was one holiday in Paignton and I remember going to Swanage with cousins. We went to Boscombe together with Auntie Dolly. Geoffrey was having ear trouble – mastoids or something – and we all went down by train. I know it was the Easter holidays and I took a birthday cake, in a biscuit tin, slung over my shoulder – Dad fixed it on me with string on four sides and fixed it round my shoulders! We all stopped in the same boarding house.

I had Rex's old box camera. Uncle Guy was the great photographer and he took photos of all us grandchildren – nephews and nieces – because at that time he wasn't married to have any of his own children. Uncle Guy married later than his brothers, so his sons are younger than our other cousins. The younger one was born in 1959 – 5 o'clock on the fifth day of '59 – Martin was a few years older.

Then there were the holiday camps: the Christian camp for girls at Highcliff, near Bournemouth, and the British and Foreign Bible Society house camp in Chard – after I left school. We had someone who arrived from China, with a Chinese girl who'd been rescued, dressed up in the clothes she'd brought. We stopped at a school (Chard Grammar school), where the blankets were dusty and we got bites from them! That was not a very nice clean place.



Young Farmers setting out on their trip to Ireland. Faith and June in centre of back row.

One Easter I went to Ireland with the Young Farmers Club (and June came too, after Father asked) – we visited different farms up the East coast. We had a coach from Aylesbury.

I remember the most luxurious was when we stopped for a very smart lunch by the Mountains of Mourne. There was a lovely starched tablecloth – everything was just so. But the others weren't as fancy as that.

With my friend, Mary Baker, whom I met at Eastbourne, I had several holidays that she instigated. Her dad was a bank manager and I used to go up and stay with them in Lincoln. We went to Blankenburg, Belgium, the first time. We went by train – Poly Tours was one of them.

Mostly Mary decided. She'd been with her parents once to Switzerland. We saw some different places! I remember in Austria going down in a cable car. The furthest one was to Spain (Barcelona) and my sister June came with us. It did seem a long way because it took two days – train + ferry + train (and across Paris to change trains).



Mary Baker and Faith

One time I remember we crossed the Channel by boat and I'd worn a warm suit and it got so hot. We were travelling to a hotter country and I had to unlock my case

and get out something thinner – I was absolutely boiling! But it's always cold on the Channel! And we went to Venice and to the east coast of Italy – Rimini and Cattolica. My dad let us go so he can't have thought it was too bad.

In the early 50s, Mary Baker and I went to Scotland with two young men from the Young Farmers and I drove us round in the Dormobile.

Uncle Cyril from Handy Cross Farm had always wanted to go and live by the sea and he bought this farm at Llangrannog, in West Wales, and had a tenant there and we went to stay with the family. Rex took us. When Elisabeth got married, she took over from the tenant and still lives there. (I remember Aunty Dolly asking her grandfather was it all right to call her daughter Elisabeth: "So long as you don't have a Z" – he didn't want her called Lizzie – but I think they did in the end!)

Rex got the caravan after that and he took us to places like France and Germany. He twice took us to see my friend Inge in Switzerland (first time in 1973 and Wendy Davis came too) and in 1977 he took us to see her in Austria, where her husband was head of Nestle – I remember having awful asthma going through some woods – and I think once to Italy. The girls said recently that Uncle Rex had been like a father to them.

I went several times on my own to Australia – 1985 was the first time, to visit my friend Mary Baker. Then in 1988

Mary asked me, since one of the daughters, Mariam, was getting married and Mary had become disabled, would I go to help and I helped make the wedding cake and everything. Then the next time was when the younger daughter, Azra, got married. 2008 was the last time, when I was 74.



**Mary with her children, Mariam and Azra, in the "playground"
at the farm**



Sarah and Katherine's third birthday L to R: Faith, Rosemary, Emily, Annette, Sarah, Katherine, Wren



Annette, Sarah, Faith, Rosemary and Katherine in 2016

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I send 300 Christmas cards every year to family and friends. The family has always been extensive. I've kept my schoolfriends too and their families and I've also collected people along the way – from the Young Farmers Club, the Tuesday Centre, the WI. Their addresses are all in my old Dairy Diary.

I've always been very thankful for a good family behind me and all living locally.

I'm lucky to have my girls who care for me and lucky that they haven't gone off to the ends of the earth like some of their cousins!

I remember many details about my 85 years of life – but I'm sure I've left some out!

Update May 2022, Faith recently passed away.

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Faith with her grand-daughter Alison in 2019