

Chapter 4 Part 4 The 1910s

The Army College, Rowhills, Heath End

My name is Emily Gunner. I am assistant matron at the Army College in Heath End. Now that the terrible war is over, I thought I would go through my diary for the past ten years. Let me start at the beginning.

I was born in 1876 in the village of Herriard near Basingstoke in Hampshire. My father was a wheelwright. In 1881 our family was living at Chawton where once the famous Jane Austin lived and wrote her books. My teacher was so impressed with my reading and writing at school, she encouraged me to keep a diary, which I did.

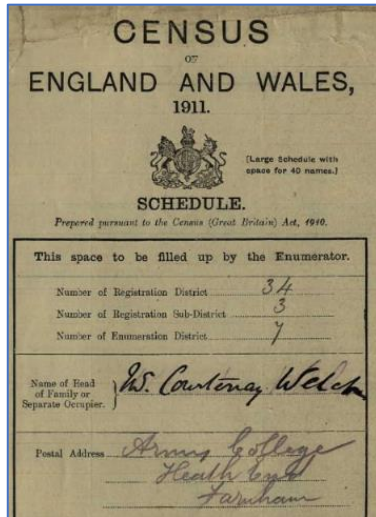
When I was 15, I took employment as a domestic servant at a manor farm in Twyford, near Winchester in Hampshire, twenty miles from my family. I once made an overnight visit with my parents to Mattingley near Hartley Wintney. This was 1901 and I was still a housemaid but I had worked my way up in the world. By the time I was 34, I gained a very important job as a housemaid at the Army College in Heath End, between Aldershot and Farnham. Mr Welch, the Principal was impressed with my desire to keep learning and he could see my eyes light up when I was shown into the student tutoring rooms. All those wall maps! He gave me the cleaning of his study, the library and the lecture rooms because he knew once my cleaning was over, I would linger with the text books. Cook told me Mr Reginald Welch was nearly 60 because she had made plans for a birthday cake.

I got to hear a lot of what went on at the College, due to keeping quiet and being a good listener. There were 8 of us in the Servants' Hall in 1911. Phoebe Mason was the most junior. She was the scullery maid. There was a kitchen maid Ada Leaver helping the cook Mrs Jeacock. Mrs Jeacock was not really married but we showed her respect. Her background was that of a governess, then barmaid, to restaurant manageress then Cook. Herr Arthur Kurt Peschke from Berlin, Germany was the footman. He answered to the butler, Herr Franz Josef Koch from Switzerland. I shared the duties as Housemaid with Emily Walliker and her sister Alice Walliker. Even though there were 39 rooms to clean and keep tidy, it's been a good life and I like the local countryside. I hope my sister can get employment here if the opportunity arises.

I do remember 1911 when Mr Welch called us all to his study and said we had to give our names for the 1911 census and we had to say where we were born. Later I saw all the papers on his desk.

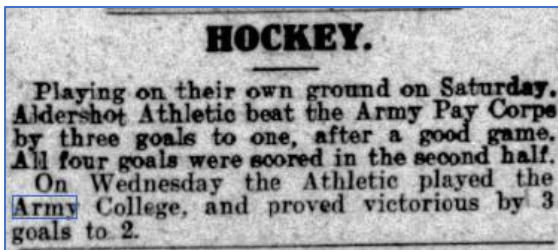
(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this Dwelling.)	
<p>Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.</p>	<p>I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.</p>
<p>X <u>39</u></p>	<p>Signature <u>J. Cantor Welch</u> Postal Address <u>Army College, Heath End, Farnham, Surrey.</u></p>

It was a quiet time. A lot of the boarders were away on their Easter holidays so I got to know the five young gentlemen and two tutors who were still in residence.



1911 England Census									
Surrey > Farnham > ALL > 07									
Years Married	Live Births	Children Deceased	Occupation	Industry	Employer Status	Works at Home	Birthplace	Nationality	
7			Principal of the Army	Army	Employer	at home	Readington London		800
7			Tutor (Readington)	Army	Worker		Readington London		800
			Tutor (Readington)	Army	Worker		Brome Norfolk		170
			Student (Army)	Army	Worker		Sydney N.S.W.		925
			Butler (domestic)				Switzerland	811	Swiss
			Butler				Germany	808	German
			Cook				Longditchton	100	
			Housemaid				Warminster		160
			Housemaid				Warminster		160
			Housemaid				Dublin Ireland		601
			Housemaid				Aldershot, Hants		160
			Housemaid				Aldershot, Hants		160
			Scullery maid				Brace, Cambridgeshire		240
			Student (Army)				Sydney N.S.W.		925
			Student (Army)				London Westminster		800
			Student (Army)				Reading Nova Scotia		975
			Student (Army)				Westport, New		168
			Student (Army)				Portsmouth, Army		800

There was young Master Donald Macintyre and his brother Master Francis Macintyre, from New South Wales, all the way from Australia. Master William Martin from Westminster, London made me laugh. He used to describe all the wonderful sights in London, mimicking the grand people there. Master Claude Wood said he was from Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The map in the library shows that Canada is a long way away. The scholar with the gentle Welsh accent was Master Herbert Philips. He had a beautiful voice when we had Sunday prayers and hymns.

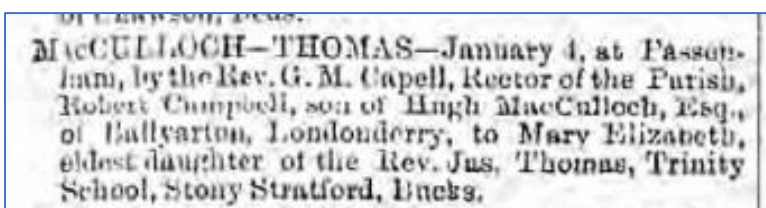


One boarder was the 17-year-old Irish Master John Hamilton Robb. He said he came from Portadown, County Armagh in Ireland and he missed his family dreadfully. All he had to look on from his room was a cricket field; not even a hockey field. Master Robb had to play his game of hockey in Aldershot.

I think the butler was kind to these gentlemen boarders because they sometimes wrote to him. Of course, we had the weekly Sheldrake's Military Gazette delivered to the college and once that was thrown in the wastepaper basket in the drawing room, the papers made their way to the servants' quarters for reading. Actually, the newspaper changed its name by 1911 to Aldershot Gazette but old habits die hard and we called the paper Sheldrake's.



There were two tutors in residence that Easter. One tutor was from Londonderry in Ireland. He was Mr MacCulloch. I used to post his letters to his wife and eight children in Bedford.



Mr MacCulloch once showed me a copy of the Belfast Newsletter from 7th January 1882 from his marriage announcement.

One day I heard Mr MacCulloch describe to Master John Hamilton what happened when he had to appear in court as a witness.

It was a true story. Once two homesick Irish gentlemen get together, there were howls of laughter. In 1888 at Mullaghmonaghan, Catherine Hughes from Monaghan had stolen from our Mr MacCulloch a straw hat, a quantity of room paper and three boots to the value of four shillings. Poor woman. She was tried by the Justices for larceny. She had to pay back £5 in money, keep the peace and be of good behaviour. **Three** boots, they kept laughing, as the tale went on. Why **three** boots? Why not **four**?

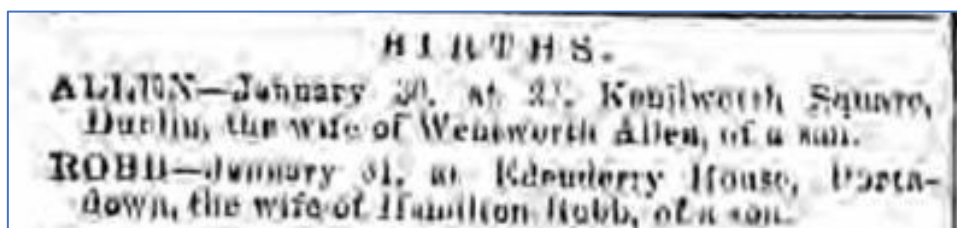
CAUSE OF COMPLAINT, as set forth in Summons.	PARTICULARS OF ORDER OR DISMISSAL. If Dismiss, whether with or without prejudice, and whether with or without Costs, &c. In Ejectment, when to be evicted, and from what and whose Premises, &c. If to be Whipped, whether in or out of Prison, &c., &c. (Where Money ordered to be paid by or to any Person, the amount to be written in words a full length in this Column, as well as to be entered in Figures in the Money Columns.)
<p><i>That she the said Catherine Hughes did on the 17th day of July 1888, at Mullaghmonaghan in said County, steal a Straw Hat, a quantity of Room Paper and three Boots, value in all for about four shillings, the property of Robert Campbell MacCulloch,</i></p>	<p><i>Defendant consents to be tried by the Justices Defendant is convicted of the Larceny Defendant to be released on his entering into Recognizance in £5 and two sureties in £2.10.0 each to appear within twelve months when called on to receive judgment and in the meantime to keep the peace and be of good behaviour</i></p>

Funny how sometimes when residents were lonely, they would talk to me once I became Assistant Matron. Mr MacCulloch said he had become a Freemason in Ireland and how he kept very quiet about this in Heath End.



Mr MacCulloch left us during the war and it was a terrible shock when we learnt that he had died in 1918. There was no laughter then in the Servants Hall. Thinking about this, brings real tears to my eyes.

In 1914, we received some awful news from Ireland. Master John Robb had worked very hard when he was with us at the Army College. I do remember his birthday of January 31st because he had kept the newspaper cutting from the Belfast Newsletter of when he was born. His parents lived at Edenderry House, Portadown and his father was a linen manufacturer.



John Robb passed his Naval examinations the next year after leaving us and was commissioned in January 1912 as a probationary 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Marine Light Infantry.

Then in September 1914 John was made a Temporary Lieutenant and joined HMS Suttlej. Wonderful, I thought. This was what he wanted to do - serve his country and sail.

Mr Welch the Principal, explained to us that HMS Suttlej was named after a river in India. He said she was an armoured cruiser and in August 1914, she was placed on reserve ready for escorting convoys. However, in November there had been a boating accident with the swamping of a Shore boat at Queenstown, Ireland in Queenstown harbour and the papers said John drowned trying to save another. How we wept when we were told the news. That poor boy.

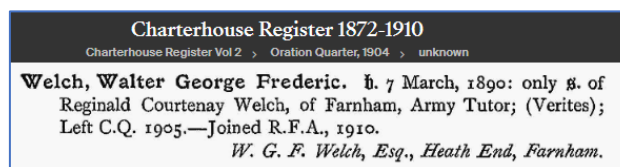


ROBB, JOHN HAMILTON. Rank, Lieutenant, Royal Marine Light Infantry, H.M.S. Suttlej; killed in boating accident, Queenstown Harbour, November 11, 1914; age 20.



Look, here in my diary. The cheeky John Robb knew that I used to read Cook's copy of "Mrs Beeton's" recipes which had chapters on "Ailments" at the back. Cook knew I was trying to better myself and improve my employment prospects. Before St Patrick's Day in March, John Robb had persuaded me to borrow "Mrs Beeton's" so he could hunt out Irish Stew, colcannon and soda bread and all the other traditional Irish delights made with Irish whiskey. Cook received a bunch of flowers from John and we joined him on the 17th with an Irish meal. I feel better now thinking of that happy memory.

War is such a waste of our talented young gentlemen and I haven't told you of even worse news that autumn in 1914. The son of our Principal was Walter George Frederick Welch. He had done well at Charterhouse, his school near Godalming and his name was written in a book.



After studying here in the Army College and later at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, Master Walter became a Lieutenant with the Royal Field Artillery. We knew he was stationed in the Louisberg Barracks at Bordon Camp where he was serving in the 127th Battery, Royal Engineers but we kept his bedroom on the first floor, spick and span.



Of course, when war was declared, the country recognised that our troops would be fighting abroad but we did not know where. Mr Welch even put his son's room up for rent in case there were men needing lodgings.

Welch, Walter George Frederic	Bedroom on first floor, furnished	Army college, College road, Heath end	10s. per week	R. Courtenay Welch, The Army college
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Then we started to read terrible newspaper reports from a place called Ypres in Flanders.

THE BATTLE OF YPRES.
 The Battle of Ypres has now reached its most intense stage, the fighting of the past forty-eight hours being of the most stubborn description. Irish troops from North and South are amongst those participating in the struggle which is taking place over ground which was drenched in blood during the operations of October and November, 1914. The

"The battle round Ypres," he says, "is very stubborn, especially at Passchendaele, West Roosebeke, and Becelaere. The German soldiers admit that the trenches and fortifications of the Allies are impregnable, and that the German losses have been terrible.

We had no idea exactly where Master Walter was fighting but one day a letter arrived for Mr Welch and we later learnt it was from a Commanding Officer in Flanders. Terrible news. Word spread quickly around the Army College that Lieutenant Welch had died in action.

WELCH, WALTER GEORGE FREDERIC, Lieut., 117th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, only s. of Reginald Courtenay Welch, for twenty years Principal of the Army College, Heath End, Farnham, near Aldershot, by his wife, Adeline Charlotte, dau. of the late Abingdon Compton; b. Hyde Park, London, 7 March, 1890; educ. Charterhouse; The Army College, Farnham, and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich (passed in 25th on list, Jan. 1909); gazetted 2nd Lieut. R.F.A., 23 July, 1910, and posted to 127th Battery at Bordon; went to Depot at Preston, Jan. 1913, and was promoted Lieut. 23 July following. On mobilization he was attached to the 44th Brigade Ammunition Column; went to France 21 Aug. 1914, where he was, shortly after his arrival, posted to the 117th Battery, 26th Brigade, R.F.A. (1st Division), and took part in the fighting on the Aisne and in Flanders. He was killed in action while fighting his guns about 1,000 yards south of Veldhock, E.S.E. of Ypres, on the evening of 30 Oct. 1914; *unn.* His Commanding Officer wrote of him: "He was the life and soul of our little mess: a keen and a good soldier. We buried him alongside the guns he had fought"; and one of those who served under him wrote: "Mr. Welch was always very popular with the men, especially so in action." Lieut. Welch was a keen football player and on one occasion at the Front took part in a match played behind the firing line, which was interrupted by a German bombardment and resumed when the fire died down.



Walter George F. Welch.

What could be said when we saw Mr Reginald Welch looking heartbroken. The College became very quiet for a long time. Much later in 1919 we read in the Aldershot News how involved Mr Welch was with a war shrine at Hale.

WAR SHRINE.
 Mr. Courtenay Welch, of the Army College, who, early in 1917, presented a war shrine to the village in memory of his son, who was killed in action in 1914, has now offered the shrine, with a view to its being placed in the Parish Church, as a permanent memorial.
 A meeting will be called shortly, to receive the offer, and, if it is agreed, to make application for the granting of a faculty.

CONSERVATIVE MEETING

AT HALE.

On Tuesday evening a successful meeting in support of Mr. Horne was held in the Infants' School at Hale, when Sir William Treacher presided over a crowded attendance. The chairman was supported on the platform by Miss Treacher, Miss Boyle, General and Mrs. Baldock, Colonel and Miss Bowhill, Miss Bacon, Colonel Macdonnell, Mr. R. Courtenay Welch, and Mr. de Mornay.

Mr. Courtenay Welch then gave an address on Tariff Reform, and referred to the curious letter received by the electors that morning from Mr. Methuen. He called attention to two questions which it contained. One was "Are free Britons to be the servants of the Peers?" Mr. Welch said that was all nonsense and Mr. Methuen knew quite well that it was. The people had now been given the opportunity of having their say, and they had pronounced overwhelmingly against the Budget. (Applause.) With regard to the second question, "Is the bread of the poor to be taxed?" Mr. Welch denied that it would be. The first effect of Tariff Reform would be to reduce the grocer's bill, and it would not increase the cost of living. (Applause.)

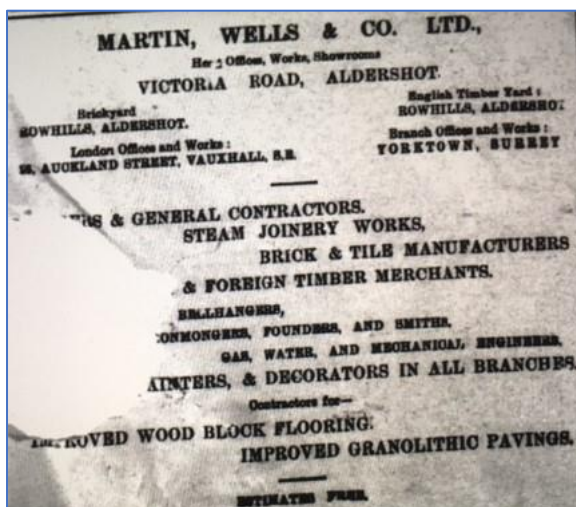
By 1919, Mr Welch had been in the newspapers nearly every week. He was the Treasurer of the Conservative Party in Hale and a forthright speaker.

We had had the "People's Budget" reform in 1909 which was unpopular and then a General Election in January 1910. I tried to understand the Tarriff Reform which related to trading within our Empire and trading outside. Should there be a tax on corn coming in from India, which might affect the poor? There was also considerable fear about Germany and the United States building up their financial resources.

In 1910 Sir William Treacher went from Hale to all about the local villages. People like Mr Welch had their say. Column after column in the newspapers over Tarriff Reform. We needed more votes for women then we too could get involved.

I have forgotten to tell you about another tutor Mr Cyril Scudamore. He was a Classics tutor. We didn't have such a thing at my village school. Mr Scudamore was kind and showed me Latin books and strange writing in Greek. He was the son of a clergyman and had been sent away to boarding school for his education. He gained a Bachelor of Arts degree and I know he taught at Kings School in Canterbury. My married sister in Kent told me that Kings, Canterbury was a highly prestigious academic school so we did well to attract Mr Scudamore here.

This old advertisement has fallen out of my diary. I must have picked it up when I went through old Mr Wells Copse to stay with Mrs Compton in York Crescent.



Martin, Wells and Co. was such a large company. The timber yard and brickyards were just off Cranmore Lane in Aldershot, always very busy. They had very large yards in Victoria Road in Aldershot too.

I need to throw this old advertisement away but it reminds me of a long tale to tell. In 1911 something very odd happened. Mr Reginald Welch, Principal of the Army College asked me if I would stay caring for his mother-in-law Mrs Compton for a few days??

Why would he ask that, I thought to myself? Strange?

Time for a brew of tea and put my feet up by the fireside while I think of how to explain that complicated story.