

Match of the Day

I have already written at length of my distinctive dislike to sporting events, and how it was reinforced by the misfortune of a young committed fielder in a game of cricket on the front lawn at St Georges who, at the mercy of the demon bowler, received a sudden and unexpected blow to his frontal lobe that laid him out flat. And, as I have said, sport is a dangerous occupation, it can hurt.

Yet despite my fear and apprehension for joining in these mass group events, there have been occasions during my residency at the Heritage Craft Schools, St Georges, Chailey, Sussex, when participation was unavoidable. Believe me, it was not without much thought and many restless nights before the games, that I wracked my brains for some devious plan, some cunning scheme, some crafty plot, some wicked way that would keep me free from the danger zone. Needless to say, I never found one. What makes it so sickening though, was the time I was struck down with some mysterious infection, then to recover just in time to be picked to play for the House of Lloyds on sports day. This was years before the word coronavirus became part of our everyday usage. I wouldn't exactly call my contagion the black plague and I would hesitate to suggest that the place should be burnt down as a form of sanitisation, but my body erupted into a mass of blisters, head to toe.

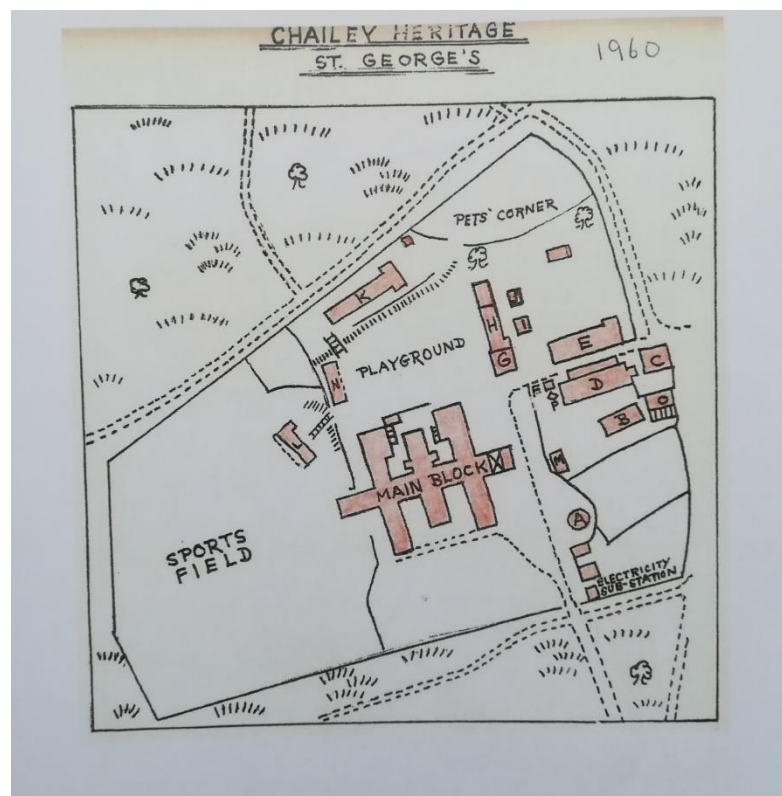
My call at the Dispensary for a chat with the kindly nurse proved slightly disconcerting and was met with a sharp intake of breath. I'm not saying she rushed for her PPE, or even for a face mask, there was none as it hadn't been invented then, but I had the feeling that my name would be spoken in hushed tones at the dinner table that day. There were no alarm bells ringing or daily broadcasts from the prime minister, who would have been Sir Winston Churchill in those days, but I could sense a feeling of panic as Matron appeared on the scene shortly followed by a doctor who had been called from St Martins Hospital across the common.

After much looking and peering at me with hand on chin, a discussion ensued in hushed tones and the decision was made to send me to the Sanatorium into isolation.

The Sanatorium 1994. Known to us in the late fifties as The Ward. The Boot Room left. Ed.



The Sanatorium (marked E on the Plan) at St Georges, was a long single-story building with big picture windows and was situated close to the entrance to Chailey common and separate from the main buildings. It had a lawn at the front and backed onto the road leading to the common. The ideal place for a sanatorium in case one should need to make a panicked getaway. It was here that I was to spend the next three weeks in isolation in bed and it was here that my pimples grew bigger and became itchier, and it was here too that I was dabbed all over two or three times a day with camomile lotion. I don't know what caused the pimples, it was the height of summer, but it was probably a blood issue. Happily, I was placed into the care of Nurse Buckley. She was my dedicated and caring nurse and would pop in now and again, plump my pillows, make my bed, wash me and bring me my meals, plus dab me all over again with camomile lotion. (Looking at things in these days of the pandemic, I wonder if things have been learnt from my isolation days at Chailey.)



<u>ST. GEORGE'S</u>	
A. Windmill	I. Scout Hut
B. Mill House	J. Pets Corner Store
C. Garage	K. Liberty
D. Staff Hut	L. Pavilion
E. Sanatorium	M. Workshop
F. Garden Hut	N. Playground Shed
G. Old Dispensary	O. Garage
H. Linen Room	P. Water Storage Tank

I remember being lonely and missing my mates. My bed was just inside the door of a long empty ward with lots of empty beds all made up with white sheets, pillows and grey woollen blankets, but I don't think they were often used. The nurses used to relax on the lawn doing whatever

chores they could do outside. It was war time and I know they used to darn blankets and repair sheets during quiet moments.

Being war time, Britain was operating double summer time, this meant it stayed daylight two hours longer up until 11 o'clock at night. We still had to be in bed at the normal time though, but of course we stayed wide awake with little inclination for sleeping while the sun streamed through the windows. It also meant that blackout was introduced, covering the windows which stopped lights from being seen by the enemy during air raids. Breakfast in bed saw me propped on my pillows ready for the daily routine. It was a relief with less scratching when my pimples went down and I returned to normal.

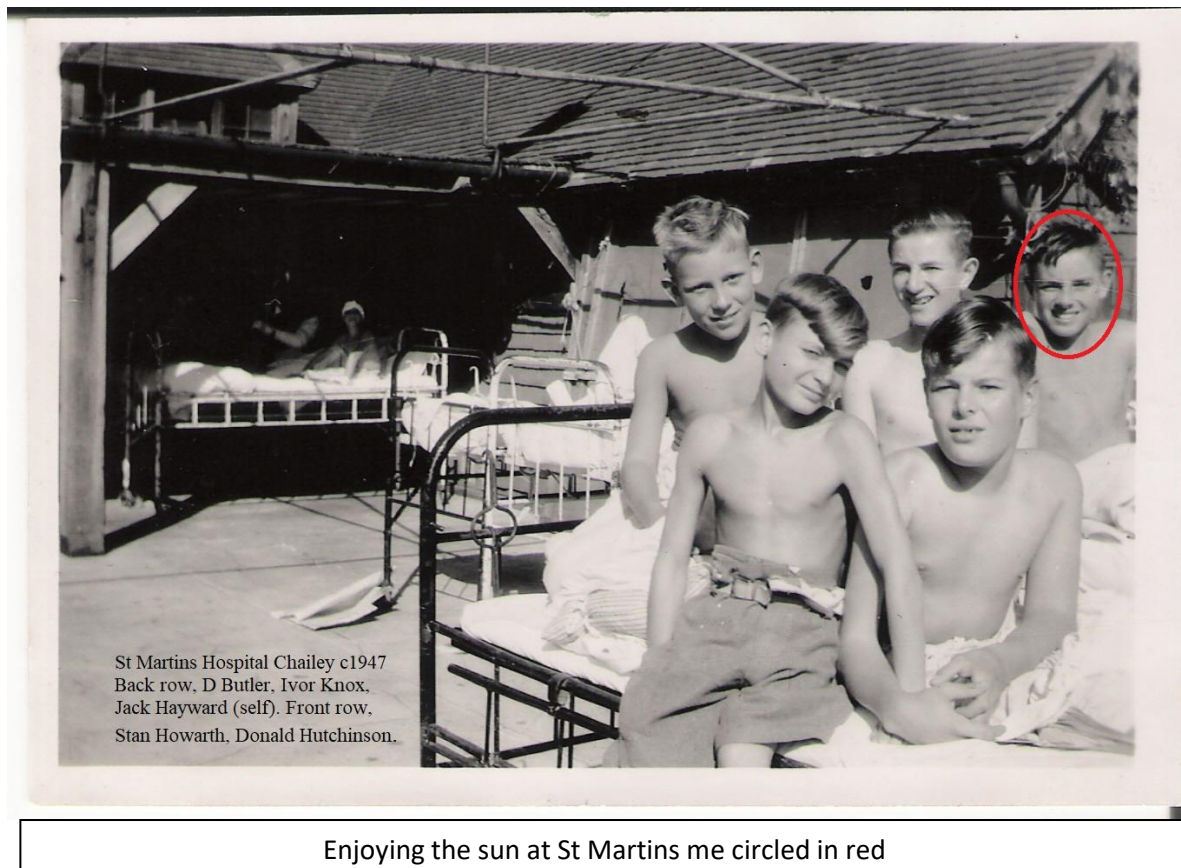


Nurse Trestrale and Nurse Vicarage in front of the St Georges Sanatorium darning blankets on a summer's day

I had no particular sporting skills so my absence from the playing field was hardly noticed and my return even less so. This particular Sports Day also came and went without any notoriety on my part. I remember the three-legged race had some kind of glitch while they searched to find a matching pair. I think walking sticks were somehow involved but my memory can't quite fight its way through the hippocampus clutter that clogs up that part of my ancient memory bank. I think the sack race had one or two people hopping about all over the place too. Results were duly produced in the school magazine under the guidance of Mr Warner of the Printing Class, and the winning house was eventually inscribed in gold lettering on the plaque in the entrance hall, job done.

It was shortly after this none-eventful day that I found myself once again sitting in Matron's office facing two or three very serious looking gentlemen with whom I was not acquainted. They turned out to be medical clinicians and it was to be a serious discussion. I received a physical examination there and then. I had recently returned from St Martins hospital where I had spent 18 months or so lying in bed for what was termed an 'Extension'. It meant the foot of the bed was raised on blocks with weights dangling over the end and attached to my leg. I won't go into details but the idea was to encourage it to grow, but it had a mind of its own and refused to co-operate, so now the medics had come up with plan B.

Plan B was to amputate, but first they needed to discuss it with me. When entering Matron's office, I had no idea what was in the air. It must have been a daunting situation for the doctor to have to break the news to me and explain the reasons and the alternatives. The end of my stay at Chailey was on the not-too-distant horizon, I was now fourteen, and decisions needed to be made. I said "yes". I was to be returned to St Martins Hospital forthwith. Looking on the positive side, I would not have to risk life and limb on the playing fields of Chailey for some time. However, when I did return it was minus a limb.



Enjoying the sun at St Martins me circled in red

My return to St Georges and the playing fields of Chailey followed quite a respectable period of recovery time. Several months passed, these were pleasant days. I have happy memories of languishing in the sunny uplands of St Martins, reclining in the sun, with my bed on the veranda surrounded by friends in a similar situation as myself but with different forms of disablement.

I was now back at St Georges on crutches. It was a new and challenging form of mobility for me, but one that I took to like a duck to water. I had soon developed my own skill in moving at speed. These were not elbow crutches that are so ubiquitous today, they hadn't been invented yet.

These were the traditional wooden under-the-arm type, so easy to use, inspiring confidence within my own ability at being active.



St Georges Scout Troop 1948. Raven Patrol.
Mr Warner Printing teacher. Jack Hayward
Raven Patrol leader. John Chapman. George
Pike. Robert Jones.

I had developed an aptitude to spin on one crutch with my foot raised and the other crutch off the ground. This inspired me further to move very fast at speed. The technique was to extend my right crutch forward as far as I could stretch, then launch myself forward with my left foot while simultaneously leapfrogging my left crutch in front of the right one. This was done alternately very rapidly, with maximum effort using my arms and shoulder to heave myself forward, constantly leapfrogging one crutch after the other. I could really move in great strides. We had a Chailey word for this, it was 'Changing Along' or 'Going Fast'. If anyone was spotted running, they were said to be 'changing along' or 'going fast'. Anyone could 'chang along'. Even for those with reduced mobility, could still 'chang along'. It wasn't just the speed, it could also relate to the perceived effort used to get somewhere in a hurry, such as boys wearing two callipers. They could 'chang along' in their own time.

Sports day was fast approaching, it must have been the height of summer, the sun always seemed to be shining on the day. I can never remember a Sports Day being rained off despite my prayers to the rain gods. I suppose that my ability to 'chang along' with great speed across

the playground had not gone unnoticed by the powers that be, who were looking for likely candidates for their house teams in the forthcoming events. My general dislike for contact sports, or any heavy physical exertion, under the general heading of sport has already been extrapolated from previous articles. I could get hurt and, as I am sure you will understand, it's not on the grounds of being anti-social, but purely on 'health and safety' grounds that fuelled my aversion, although these hadn't been invented then either.

And so it was decreed that, after returning to St Georges minus a leg, my substantive skills on crutches were to be tested on the playing fields of Chailey. It was these mobility skills that I had rightly assumed were the reason why I had been chosen to play as centre forward, for the house of Lloyd in the annual football challenge shield. Eventually the day arrived. I had put away my prayer mat. I think the rains gods were out watching cricket, at any rate it didn't rain. Finally there was no way of avoiding the coming clash between myself and the more enthusiastic aficionados of what I considered to be a masochistic form of combat under the guise of sport. Some would have said I was a big lad for twelve...but I was fourteen, Nature had not yet filled out my frame from recent medical interventions, but I was growing fast. We lined up for the kick-off. We were all shapes and sizes, some lads without walking aids, I and a couple of others were on crutches, others were on one or two sticks, it was an impressive line-up.

The pitch was a patch of mown grass on Chailey North Common. The size looked daunting, there was a lot of ground to cover. The whistle blew for kick-off. Soon it was complete chaos, the sound of crutch against crutch and wood on wood could be heard rattling in the distance, while above the melee came the odd human cry as wood met shin bone or the odd ankle or two. I spun, pirouetted, twisted and turned on my crutches. Occasionally I would attempt to 'chang' up the field, but a skilfully aimed stick would impede the forward thrust of my crutch and on this occasion send me crashing to the ground. A mouthful of grass and a quick glance around showed me that the field of play had moved on, I was toast. I have no memory of the final score. This live event took place in 1948, seventy-two years ago. The war had been over three years, yet we could still see unarmed combat on the Playing Fields of Chailey. This was indeed a football match to be remembered while at times it resembled a display of Karate on crutches but I don't think that had been invented then either. Yet it was more than just another the match of the day; I don't understand why Chailey's name is not engraved on the F.A. Cup.!

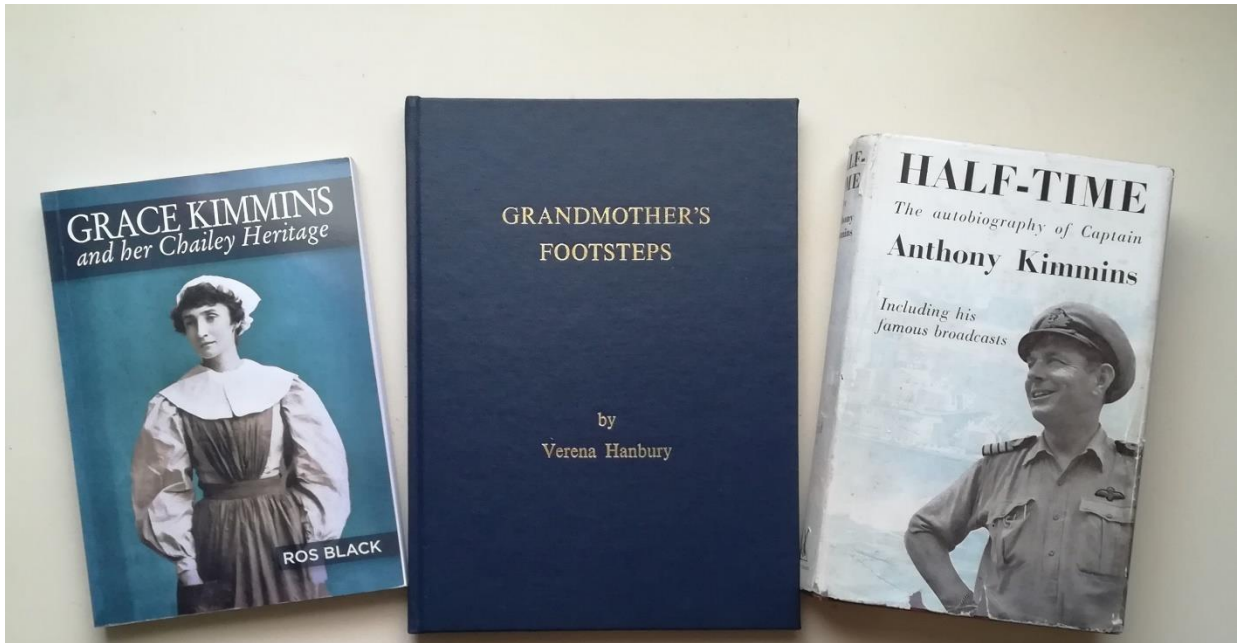
Turning away from the Playing Fields of Chailey on to more earnest matters, in my last sporting piece on cricket I referred to the extraordinary lives of Dame Grace Kimmins's two boys, Brian and Anthony. Writing in that piece I failed to mention my sources of information and where you might find details of their remarkable lives if you are so inclined.

Details of Anthony Kimmins can be found in 'An Appreciation' in The New York Times Archives, May 20, 1964, Page 43. He correspondingly wrote an autobiography 'Half-Time' which tells of his WW2 exploits, which is well worth reading. You can also find full details of Anthony Martin Kimmins, OBE, English director, playwright, screenwriter, producer and actor in [Wikipedia](#). Between 1933 and 1962, interrupted only by 5 years of WW2, he wrote, produced or directed 42 plays and films, while he also appeared in 'This is Your Life' with Eamonn Andrews on the BBC in 1961.

There is a full account of Lieutenant General Sir Brian Charles Hannam Kimmins KBE CB DL, British military commander, which, likewise can be found in [Wikipedia](#). He served in both world wars, being commissioned into the Royal Artillery in WW1. At the outbreak of WW2, he served initially as a General Staff Officer in France. This was followed by his promotion to General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland District.

I found it absolutely absorbing to read of the extraordinary lives of the these two very talented men, and the fact that both of them had such close links to the Heritage, now the Chailey Heritage Foundation. I felt that their choice of careers was no doubt influenced by the threat of war, but that they should have followed such different paths to that of their parents is indeed most striking.

There have been several books written about the history and achievements of the Heritage, in fact my parting gift when leaving Chailey was such a book with the unwieldy title on its dust jacket 'HERITAGE Craft Schools and Hospitals CHAILEY 1903-1948'. I don't think it claimed an author but I got the impression it was Dame Grace's way of saying 'thank you' to her many friends and fellow humanitarians, before she bowed out after rescuing disabled children living in dire straits, when there was nobody else around to do it. Someone who raised huge amounts of money for providing care at the Heritage Chailey, to give them an improved chance in life, again, when there was no one else to do it.



The other two books that give a deeper understanding of the passion behind the creation of the Heritage Craft Schools and the inspirational founder come from two authors, 'Grace Kimmins and her Chailey Heritage', by Ros Black. 'In Grandmother's Footsteps', by Verena Hanbury. The other book is written by Anthony Kimmins, younger son of Grace, 'Half-Time' about his WW2 experiences,

Jack Hayward 29/01/2021.

The Heritage Craft Schools, St Georges, Chailey 1939-50.