

# Doctor “bullied” Kate Masters into writing about Christchurch

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MISS Kate Masters fascinated her doctor when he visited the sprightly 82-year-old lady, with tales about Mudeford and Christchurch in her young days. So he "bullied her" into writing it all down, and now much of her spare time is spent at her present home in Woodside Road, Pokesdown, dictating the story to her niece, who lives on the upper floor. Silver-haired Kate is capturing a fascinating past for posterity—an autobiography with intriguing glimpses into a Christchurch long forgotten by all but a few.

She says: "The doctor kept on about it so I'm doing it. I don't know about getting it published. I'll probably give it to the doctor."

## VIBRANT DAYS

Sitting in her carefully-tended garden, her still sharp eyes sparkled as she recalled the vibrant days of youth.

"Do you know, I remember Iford Bridge when my uncle — George Rogers — had the first-ever boat business there," she said. "At first he ran the Iford Inn there and afterwards he had a house built next to the old bridge. Auntie had some tea rooms there. As children we used to play in the boats Uncle hired." She added: "Uncle and Auntie first met at the Mont Dore Hotel in Bournemouth, which is now the Town Hall. She was the cook there and he was an odd-job man."

## ONLY SURVIVOR

Kate—the eighth child of 12 and now the only one surviving—lived at Purewell, Christchurch, the daughter of a coachbuilder.

She remembers as a girl buying two ounces of mixed sweets for a halfpenny and relishes the home - made candy made by her Granny Brewer in the front room of her cottage in Scotts Hill Lane. Christchurch.

Kate's manuscript reads: "Every Sunday in winter the room was packed with youths lounging in chairs or sitting round a circular table sucking sweets, drinking lemonade, playing dominoes or reading the Christchurch Times and other papers, Granny stirring a saucepan on the open fire or clawing sweets out of a jar with none . too - clean fingers, for customers who bought them for 16 a penny.

The sweets were made of pure cane sugar and butter, the air thick, with combined smells of lemon aniseed and peppermint. The youths were happy, warm, they had companionship, an occasional sharp word from Granny, but there was no rowdyism.

## UNHYGIENIC

"Today her front room would be classed unhygienic. Perhaps it was—but it didn't kill the lads. They lived to face dirtier places—the mud of Mons,' the stench of dead men and horses and so on."

In the autobiography — called Daughter Of Christchurch — Kate boldly recalls some of the less pleasant aspects of life then, such as the primitive sanitary arrangements and "Brewer the Scavenger" she often saw at Purewell.

She writes of "the sound of buckets being banged; against a cart plus a certain aroma which meant that Brewer the Scavenger was coming down Purewell the more liquid contents dripping through and laying the dust of the roadway. Brewer suffered no ill-effects from his job. He chewed garlic and smoked a pipe and lived to a ripe and wealthy old age."

## COUNTRY LIFE

Kate continues: "Many householders didn't avail themselves of the scavenger's services. They dug trenches in their gardens with truly outstanding results at the flower and vegetable shows."

Kate is as yet only halfway through recording her memories, but the words are coming thick and fast from this energetic old lady.

"They made 'em tough in those days," she said. "I rode a bike until two years ago, when somebody pinched it. I'm getting another one soon."