

arrived on the scene he said he preferred her as his assistant, as she would do as she was told without argument, which does not reflect too well on the midwives that he previously employed. He actually, in 1934, delivered me, much against his will, largely because doctors do not like taking on board the responsibility of their own family. My mother obviously won that one. Doc always said that the human body was the most marvellous and ingeniously contrived machine imaginable. It is easy to suppose that he brought his knowledge of how machines work, to bear in the delivery of babies. He used to tell how when walking or driving one day he saw quite a crowd around a little boy who had put his head through some railings, and couldn't get it out. The rest of the story is obvious, he used his knowledge and a successful delivery was achieved!

No 85 was a tenement house, narrow and tall as is the case with houses in England. I don't know if it was joined to its neighbouring houses or not. It was in Bayswater. My mother would later always refer to it as Kensington Gardens, which sounded much smarter, but was not its address. It was very near Kensington Gardens though, where I used to be taken. In fact we have a photo of me there. My mother used to take me for walks in a bathing suit because she said it was healthy for the body, and all the old ladies objected.

My recollections of those days are only those of a child under four years old. I remember talking to Mary who worked for us in the housecleaning department, on the stairs, I guess I sat and she worked. I remember once being unwell and lying on a couch by a fire, and being given a large teddy bear, and a music box. The music box I still have. Unfortunately it doesn't work any more, it did good service! My mother informed me that I had had a blocked tear duct unblocked - I think it must have been my left one, because it is blocked again now! It is quite difficult to know what one remembers, and what one has got to know about through being told a few times. I do think I remember being taken to a pantomime and being so terrified they had to take me home. This was probably because of the noise, I have always been sensitive to loud noise, and I have always found that very small children find the clowning of clowns a bit much to cope with.

Another memory I have is being taken into my mother's bed in the mornings and being taught to sing? My mother said that unless a person was taught to sing in tune at a very early age, they may forever find this a problem. So I learned to sing 'one fine day' from Madame Butterfly, I suppose there were other songs; I only remember that one.

Then there was the white rabbit that was forever escaping from its hutch. Stories abound about him, or her. Doc's surgery and waiting room occupied all the downstairs level. Surgery would more properly be interpreted these days as consulting room - anyway they were downstairs. On one occasion, they afterwards told me, it had taken many visits to convince an old lady that it was OK to take your clothes off for a doctor to examine you. That in fact it was downright necessary at times, so, behind a screen this important disrobing event was taking place, when suddenly between this old ladies legs shot a large white rabbit. She took a lot of calming, and needless to say they never saw her again.

It was always difficult, it seems, to get a servant to work in a doctors house where there is more than the usual amount of work to be found; prospective employees would simply walk on by at the sight of the brass plates. Not so Hildegard, for this is where she enters the story.

Hildegard Wenger was an Austrian from Vienna. She always - so everyone had better do the same! - called herself Viennese. She was one of the many who fled ahead of Hitler's armies. She spoke little or no English when my mother took her on. She could, however, read English, so my mum wrote all instructions on the enamel top of a kitchen table. She had suffered from rickets as a child, but had since trained herself to be immensely strong. Despite the Viennese business she was totally Germanic except for having very dark eyes and hair. Anyway, that is the way I view her on looking back. The only London recollection I had of her was that she was a Catholic, she