

[Page 19 - With Mabel Louise Dubbin, V.O.N](#)ISSUE : [Issue 30](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1981/12/1

With Mabel Louise Djbbin, V O. N. Mabel Louise Dubbin: I was born in England in 1884. At 19 I left home to start chil? dren's training at Dr. Bamardo's Home. I went in one of those homes for three years. He was a wonderful man. He took all these homeless children and he sent a lot out to Canada, New Zealand, and all these differ? ent countries where these emigrants would go. From there, I went in for my general training in Middlesex, that's near London. I took my midwifery course--I didn't like surgery so I said I would go in for mid? wifery- -and from there I started private nursing for the aristocracy near Windsor. I went into some beautiful homes all a- round surrounding Windsor. I did private nursing for awhile. But then the training was so strict, I felt that I wasn't doing enough with the strict, strict training that I had. And the English poor people, you couldn't seem to train them. If you went into a home and saw a lot of washing hanging up in the kitchen and they had children in there, I'd say, "That shouldn't be. You should put your wet clothes out? side on a line, not in the house where your children are sleeping. The dampness-- liable to give those children bronchitis." But you couldn't seem to teach them. So I saw in a medical journal they wanted nurses in Canada. My mother had died dur? ing my first year of training, and my fa? ther had married again--so I had nothing to keep me in England. Well, I said, I'm .going to apply for that. So I did. I came to Canada in April, 1914. I went to Ottawa for 4 months to see how they did their District Training. While I was there, war broke out in August, 1914. Miss MacKen? zie sent for me and she said, "Now, I'm sending you to Sydney." And I said, "Well, Where's Sydney?" And she said, "Extreme east." "Well," I said, "I don't want to go east"--I was very much upset. Because, be? fore I came out to Canada, I said I wished I had a western district; I had two broth? ers out in Saskatchewan--I said, "I want to go west." "Well," she said, "Miss Dub? bin, the war's been declared. There's go? ing to be a shortage of nurses and Sydney is a very busy district and they've got to have a nurse." So that's how I came to Syd? ney. I was very disappointed. And on the train, there were two nuns. They saw me crying and they came over and asked me what was the matter. They were from Holy Redeemer Convent at Whitney Pier. And they assured me that when I went to Whitney Pier I would be very happy. And I soon found out that I loved the district work. I enjoyed going into the homes of the people, and es? pecially for home confinements. I spent 32 years very happy in the Pier district. When I first went, there were, I think, two nurses in Sydney; and I was the only one at Whitney Pier. It was a busy, a hard district. There was very little time off duty. And I remember my first Christ? mas there, that I was simply working all the time. There was no off-duty time at all, not even to open gifts and cards that I'd received from the Old Country. There was a white hearse and a pair of white horses used to go around the dis? trict. And i said, "What on earth is that white hearse and those horses doing, going around the Pier?" Somebody answered, "Gath? ering up dead babies." I said, "What?" "Oh, the babies here are dying like flies." And it was true, they were. And you know in those days--you remember the flycatchers hanging from the ceiling?--that showed how many flies there were. Later



on, people got the windows screened and screens for the doors, and that did away with all those awful flies. Most of the homes, they were fairly clean, tidy, with no luxuries or anything like that. But that was awful, all those flies around. What I did condemn--would you remember the cradles with rockers? Well, I soon con? demned those, because so many of those ba? bies used to get bronchitis--they were too close to the floor, it was too cold--a ba? by in a low cradle like that. I felt that that was the cause of so much sickness. There was a terrible lot of sickness--bron- chial pneumonia with the children. And I think if they get that during the first year, they're never as healthy as if they have one complete year free from sickness. So after awhile, I got the men to take off the rockers and put that cradle up on chairs. Then as time went on, the people bought the babies a crib. So that's how the conditions improved. Another thing, instead of nursing the ba? bies, even if it was only for 3 months, they put the babies on the bottle. There (19)