

MEMORIES OF LEINSTER HOUSE

Recalling time spent at 128 High Street brought back many happy memories of weeks spent with our Aunt in the Summer during our childhood.

From the trip from Southampton by steam train to the much anticipated arrival at High Street my sister and me were kept in a high state of excitement.

At night we would snuggle down in our feather bed at the top of the house in the front bedroom. From there we would listen out for the sound of the marching steps of the sailors on their way to the many public houses along the waterfront. Later we would hear returning footsteps, and singing, but never any shouting or other noise.

Most of our days were spent either in the main drawing room or the room adjoining the kitchen where there was a large circular table. Sitting at the table we could look out on the back yard which had a high (at least 8 feet) stone wall on all three sides. Against the back wall was a small outbuilding which contained a flush toilet and storage space for bicycles etc.

In the main room we enjoyed acting out plays behind curtains which stretched across the room, isolating the balcony which was our stage. The room was full of beautiful Victorian furniture, now, of course, completely out of fashion. From this window we looked out to the house opposite and its blue plaque denoting it as the place where the Duke of Buckingham was murdered.

A corridor stretched the length of the side of the house, panelled with wood, both on the ground and first floors. On the first floor the corridor had a small step going down towards the back of the house, probably reflecting where the two houses joined. At the end of this corridor was the only inside toilet, a large Victorian affair with the wooden seat stretching to the wall at each side.

There were many paintings in the house, but the only one I can recall is the 'Stag at Bay' on the top floor stairwell. I hated it!

When my mother phoned from Southampton to see how we were getting on, the phone call went to the telephone next door at no. (?)127. This was a

typewriter shop and the family lived over the shop. I can't recall their name. (? Squires).

Beyond the back yard there was a power station with one very tall chimney. During the time my sister and I spent at High Street a second chimney was built and we marvelled not only at the speed it went up and the height, but also how clean it looked compared to the other chimney. All now demolished, of course.