

Chapter 2. Edward James, Dali, Magritte, the Prince of Wales and King George the Fifth.

Edward James relatives from Florida, USA would come and stay at the Main House during the 1930s. One of these was a Miss Bond who was about thirty years old, who, I understood was a cousin of James. Surprisingly she would bring her favourite riding horse with her on the ocean liner. It travelled up from Southampton docks and it was kept in a racehorse stable on the farm. My Dad was charged with taking care of this horse and he willingly and assiduously washed, curry combed and brushed it and also kept the saddle and harness in order, seeing to it that the Farrier attended to the shoes of the horse. It was a very pretty chestnut brown and white 'Pintado' colour with a long white mane and tail. We called it Paint, this being our literal translation from the Spanish word. Miss Bond used an English saddle and rode daily around the confines of the Park.

There was good grazing in the Walnut Field and my Dad would lead it over there and bring it back. I know he enjoyed looking after this horse very much, more particularly because it belonged to a pretty lady. She was small but well endowed and attractive, about thirty year's old, with round freckled face, blue eyes and auburn hair. She was always immaculately dressed for riding, wearing riding breeches, small tweed jacket and a black hard riding hat. Miss. Bond undoubtedly adored her horse; it would whinny to her as she approached and then she would hug its head and kiss it on the top of its nose. My Dad said: "She always enjoys the excitement of riding!"

My Dad was about six feet tall with upright military bearing, presumably gained from years of service in The Royal Horse Artillery regiment. Whatever the weather, he was always dressed in a 'Trilby' brimmed felt hat, collar and tie, a waistcoat with silver watch suspended by a silver chain across the waistcoat front. Trousers were either enclosed below the knee in leather gaiters over boots or he wore Wellington rubber boots for wet jobs, dairy work, inclement weather and muddy conditions.

James usually preferred to stay at Monkton Hall when he visited his Estate and he probably quietly stayed there on his Estate, for longer periods than I was aware of. I was mostly familiar with the activities at West Dean House.

The Bachelors's Wing, so called, reserved for unmarried men, attracted me as a young boy and early teenager. Manet's circle of hands drawn in black and white was always hanging outside the entrance to the passage leading into the wing. There was a bathroom in there with mirrors on the walls and the ceiling! Naturally, I really used to wonder about this and the bathtub, with its see through glass panels around the

interior and mirrors behind and lighting between the two? An explicit engraving hung on the wall depicting the Rape of Lucretia; this was also intriguing to a young lad. I was told by the housekeeper that Salvador Dali had stayed in this wing of the house.

Whilst on the subject of Dali; sometime in the late 1930's, there is an interesting decoration story about the kitchen dining area; there were 'early' 'Impressionistic' paintings on the walls around the pine wood staff dining table. There were about six of them. They were light and bright pastel coloured landscapes about 9" high X 15" long. These were clearly early works by this artist, quite unlike his later Surrealism subjects. I was informed that they were painted by someone called Salvador Dali. In fact they were signed with one name: Dali. I was also told that Mr. Dali had lived with Mr. James for about two years recently but some difference had occurred between them ,so, with jocularly, the staff told me the paintings had been relegated by Mr. James to the staff dining area next to the kitchen, solely for their appreciation.

Almost every year in the summers of the 1930's, the artisan father and son partnership of David and Donald English would come and stay at West Dean House. They were wood craftsmen from the east end of London. When they were working at West Dean House, they stayed in the mews above their workshop on the north side of the coach quadrangle and ate with the servants in the main house. During their time off in the evenings, they would go through the gate in the wall to the churchyard and walk to the Selsey Arms public house. My Dad was very friendly with them and would frequently meet them there for convivial assemblies. Mr. English senior, drew very good caricatures of local people including my Dad. They were employed to carry out repairs and restoration works to the antiques and furnishings at the main house and Monkton Hall. I saw that, The King George the Second furniture in the Drawing room of West Dean House, was given special attention by them. From the time I could walk around the estate by myself, probably four years old, I would wander down to their workshop in the old stables of West Dean House and watch them at work.

I was sometimes given the privilege of holding something or asked to sweep the floor. I did these things willingly because I loved to be there with them; as I recall, they were very nice to me. Their wood carving was amazing; some of the important artistic things I watched them design and carve in wood from Mr. James's concepts were ivy leaves and berries in long linkages from solid walnut wood and then naturally painted, these were to cover the flexible electrical cords across the floor to electric lamps in the drawing room. And they carved and polished by hand rubbing, with oil and wax, a pair of life size praying hands in walnut to Mr. James's order. They carved the plugs for the molds which made the two tone painted cement facsimiles of bed linen hanging from the windows of Monkton Hall (that is what the locals called this 'hunting lodge' at that

time) and other similar decorations. I did not see these being carved but the original hand carved wood plugs were hanging up in the estate yard building, where I believe the final cement pieces were made. Also for Monkton Hall, they carved and painted the full size imitation palm trees made of wood that flanked the outside of the front door. I remember quite clearly the construction of these trees, as it was during the summer holidays and I was in their workshop much of the time. The tree trunks were made from beech wood, 'barrelled' in sections, each exterior was hand carved with imitation serrated bark. The 'barrels' were supported with large steel pipes inside their hollow centres. The palm fronds were also hand carved from beech wood and painted green. They were supported with curved wrought iron armatures, made by Mr. Warner, the village blacksmith.

This might be a moment to talk about Monkton Hall; it was, built by James's father William in 1902 and designed by the famous architect: Edwin Landseer Lutyens in 'Trianon' form, but James decided to re-model it into a Surrealist mansion. It could hardly be called an hunting lodge, after all it had six bedrooms and four or five bathrooms. There was a man entry hall, sitting room and drawing room, dining area, an office, breakfast room and sundry other ground floor rooms and kitchen facilities. Outside there were garages, stables and a cottage for the caretakers. Outside of the house, apart from the fake palm trees and the bed linens hanging from the windows, there were lavender colour exterior walls and purple tone shiny roof tiles. The oversize rainwater downspouts were made from lead and shaped like large bamboo poles. The three exterior chimneys stacks were each of irregular shapes.

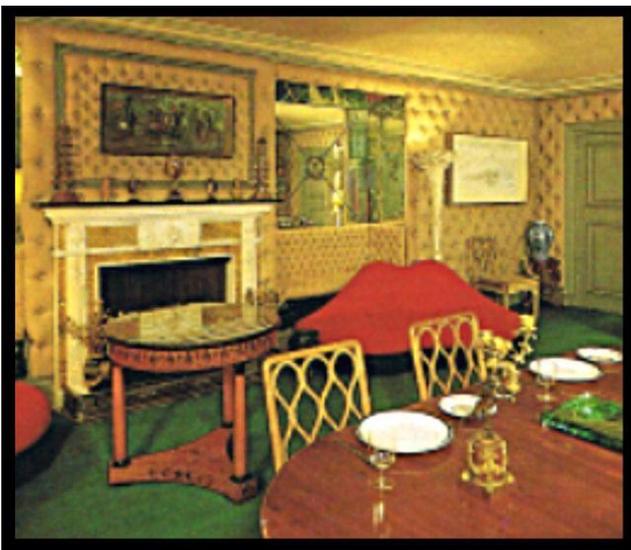
Inside the house the walls were padded for sound proofing; in this isolated and deadly quiet woodland spot, James did not like to hear the sounds of the deer baying, the vixen calling her mate or the pheasants making their roosting calls etc.

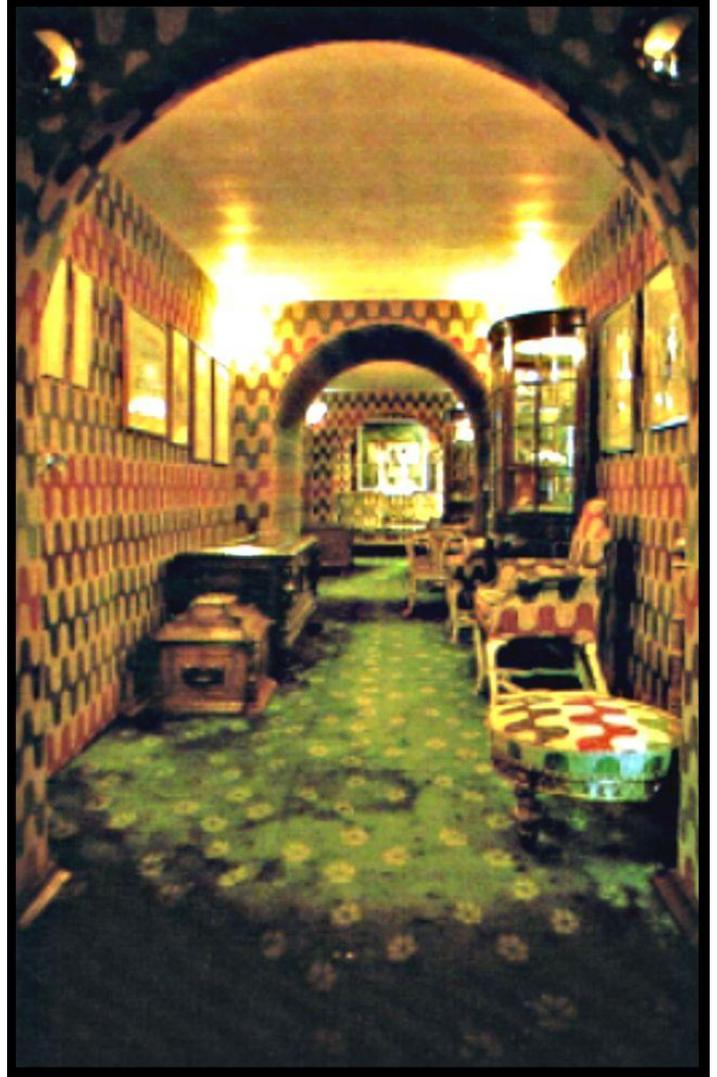
The wall padding in the entry way was made of fabric and in the form of interlocking small S shaped panels in red, blue, cream and brown colours. This design was repeated in the upholstery of the large oval ottomans and the Louis XV style chairs in the hallway. A large English 17<sup>th</sup> century trunk and a corner display cabinet with glass doors were there as well.

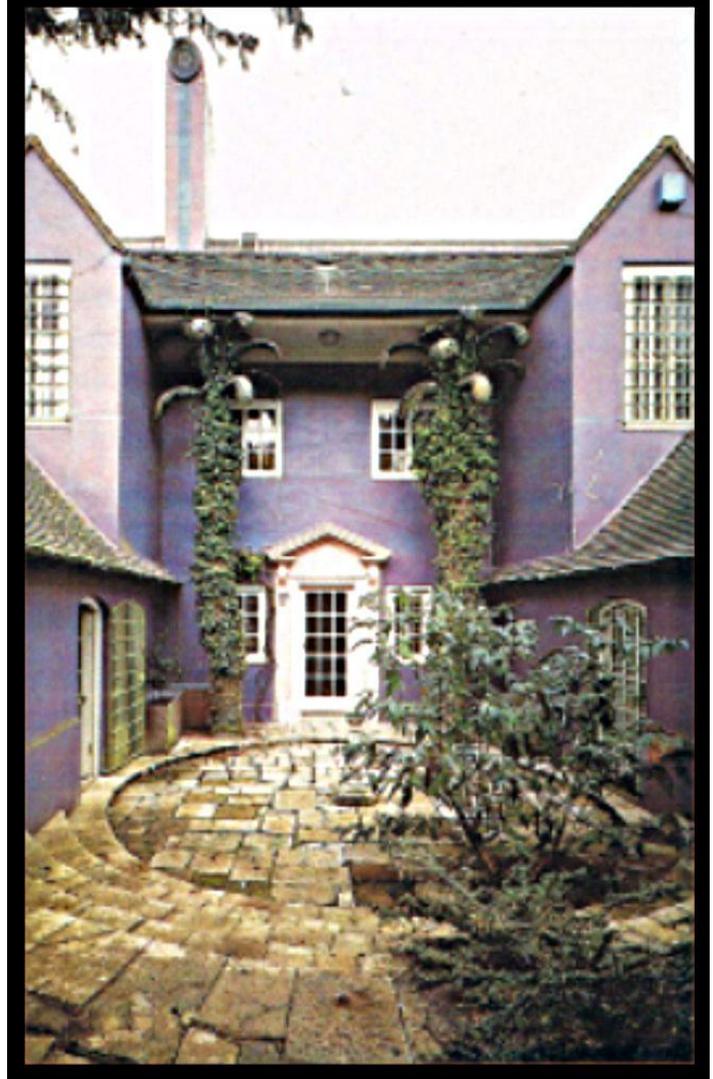
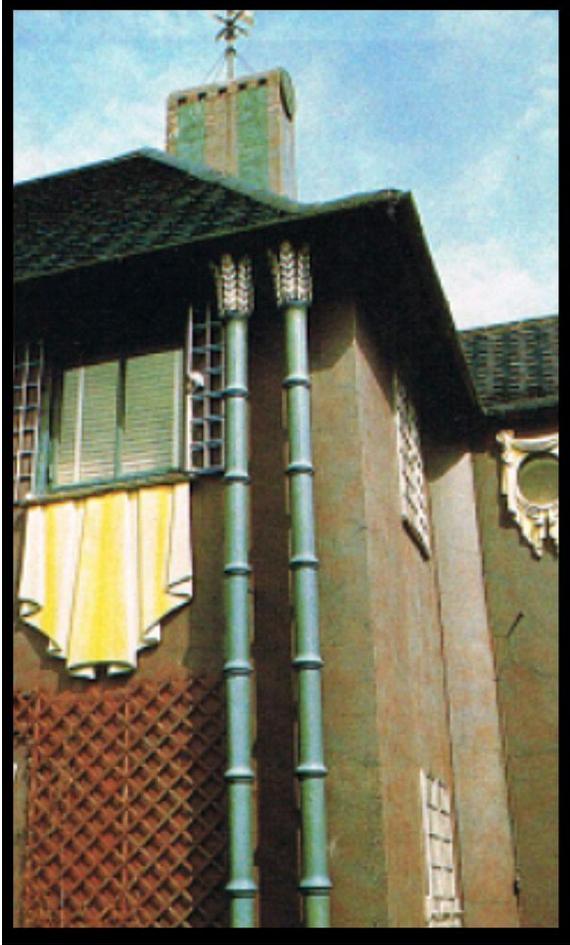
In the living areas all the walls were covered in diamond shape panels about 5"X 9" each of velvet with one tufted button in each centre and a variety of colours, including black, in the breakfast room or office, I am not sure which now, that had no window, I seem to remember. The hand woven and fitted Wilton carpet covering all of the ground floor rooms, was especially ordered by James and depicted all over, the life size paw marks of his recently deceased large dog in mustard color on a sage green ground color.

The staircase had a hand woven carpet depicting the full size bare feet of Tilly Losch; the one time wife of Edward James. There was an aquarium housing exotic fish, built into the wall of a staircase, in those days, a remarkable form of decoration. The drawing-room, had two Chinese Chippendale style chairs which were painted bright yellow. Genuine antique furniture were scattered around the rooms, including a Biedemeier center table, an English Regency mahogany dining table and chairs and a girandole mirror was over a fireplace. However, the most striking piece of furniture of all, for me, was the Mae West inspired bright red 'lips' sofa, designed by James's friend Dali. The Rolling Stones rock and roll music group used a picture of a sofa like this on the cover of a record album in the 1960s Dali reputedly designed the pair of bright-yellow fabric love seats, which were all over tufted and hand-pleated with buttons. Another intriguing artifact for a young boy was the working telephone shaped and coloured like a large red lobster. The other designer-painter who worked on conceptual design for Monkton Hall was Rene Magritte, the famous Belgium artist. He also painted portraits of James in some weird surrealist depictions. Not only the large number of original paintings reputed to be up stairs, the ground floor walls were covered by valuable surrealist paintings by several famous artists. The study-library had an antique English mahogany partner's desk. I was never allowed to go upstairs to the bedroom area, no one was allowed this privilege, the caretakers were adamant: having been firmly instructed on this by James himself. My father coached me never to say anything about what I witnessed or describe these treasures to anyone.

**THE PICTURES BELOW OF MONKTON HALL WERE TAKEN SOMETIME IN THE EARLY 1980s, BEFORE THE HOUSE AND CONTENTS WERE SOLD.**







It is intriguing that three of James's names are after English kings; Edward, William; after his father and the family name James. He was basically the last of the male line (see later paragraph) he had several older sisters but he was the 'primo genitore' and he inherited all the family's immense wealth on his 21<sup>st</sup>. birthday in 1928. Even before that golden event his allowance was unlimited. The succession of his ancestry as far back as village rumour went was; that his Grandfather had emigrated from Britain to The United States, with money to invest, early in the 19<sup>th</sup>. century. There he married into the Dodge family of Florida, U.S.A., there they were major land and property owners. With his money he invested in railways, timber and mining. His son William married a Scottish aristocrat named Evelyn Forbes. William, moved his family to West Dean Estate after the American Civil War. He reputedly paid 250,000 pounds sterling for West Dean House and the over 6000 acre estate and almost two hundred houses. This was split up into a number of tenanted farms and forests.

By all accounts William James the father, left a lot of his prodigious wealth invested in property in the City of New York and other places across America. He died just before the outbreak of World War One. An uncle bequeathed an amount of one million pounds to his nephew (not son) Edward when he became seven year's old.

After Edward James fled the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War in 1939 (Mentioned elsewhere) he is said to have spent time with his relative, a descendent of the Dodge family, in Taos, New Mexico, USA.

In the 1930's Edward James was of short dapper build with a well fed but not obese physique, having dark brown wavy hair, clean shaven and a pale complexion; looking very much like the old Edward the Seventh; to whom, by the locals, he was allegedly related. When I saw him, always outside of West Dean House, walking around his property, he usually wore a Harris tweed jacket and tie, heavy worsted cream coloured trousers and highly polished brown coloured shoes.

Edward James, the owner of West Dean Estate only stayed in West Dean House for two or three weeks each year. More frequently he preferred to stay in Monkton Hall, his surrealist decorated hunting lodge, which was five miles away to the west and isolated at the top of West Dean forest. This large house was originally designed by Lutyens and re-designed by Nicholson and Casson during the 1920s.

For a couple of years after his divorce from Tilly Losch, the Austrian ballet dancer, he was rather paranoid. They were only married for three years from 1930 to 1933 then, they had an acrimonious divorce; he accused her of adultery with a Prince and she accused him of homosexuality. James managed to make the adultery stick but she did not prevail in court with the other accusation. By some accounts she had some unpleasant friends who threatened James, and after the divorce was over, he became more than usually paranoid and had the Head Gamekeeper organize his assistants with him to stand guard at night with their double barreled twelve gauge shotguns, in the surrounding grounds of the main house or Monkton Hall, depending which location James chose to stay the night. There were five master bedroom suites on the east facing side of the main house and they were each decorated with a different pastel color. It was told to me by the indoor house staff at the time, it was only after James's evening meal that he would decide which bedroom suite he would prefer to occupy for the night. Then his "Man" (Valet) would quickly have to move all of his clothes and make the chosen bedroom acceptable.

I was always banned from visiting West Dean House and the staff there during James's residence. When he was not in residence, I could wander anywhere I pleased including inside the Main House. The cook-

housekeeper liked me and would sometimes give me lunch at the pine kitchen table. The kitchen maids and the house maids would join us and sometimes the permanent chauffeur-driver Mr. Glaister. Whether or not local stories about Edward James, his true father and the James's family associations with British royalty are scuttlebutt, gossip talk of the estate workers and village people, I know not for absolute facts or certainty. I can only present the hearsay elements of my own memories of listening to adult conversations. King Edward the Seventh and his family were said to have stayed at West Dean House many times with Edward James's father William and his mother.

It is not disputed by all historical account that King Edward the Seventh, when Prince of Wales and after he became King was very prolific in his sexual proclivity and had many mistresses over time. It has even been reported, that it was not unusual for him to be granted the sexual pleasures of his host's wife. At the time I was living at Home Farm, West Dean Park it was generally alleged that Edward James was the bastard son of King Edward. I realize this has been disputed by members of the royal family and others but proving the story either way probably not possible. They could have all been protecting the family's names. The James's family was certainly very familiar with the British royal family from the late 19th. Century. Edward the Seventh certainly stayed at the house The son of King Edward, King George the Fifth and his family was particularly fond of the place and more especially for the extraordinary pheasant shooting provided. They were frequent visitors to West Dean House and Park. King George was reputed to be an excellent shot and regularly came with his family for the pheasant shooting season in the autumn. His children would have undoubtedly known Edward James intimately. They were about the same ages. Both of George Fifth's sons became kings of England. Edward's reign was short lived because of his determination to marry Mrs. Simpson, resulting in his abdication from the throne. I believe James was particularly friendly and close to Edward Prince of Wales before he became king. Like Edward, he was also a young 'man about town' then, both mingling with other socialites, artists and beautiful girls during the 1920's and 1930's. That is probably why Edward Prince of Wales was able to handily choose West Dean House with confidence for some of his liaisons with Mrs. Simpson. It was quite natural for The Prince to be comfortable about staying there with her. Of course I was totally barred during these periods from visiting the main house or traversing the park grounds and sworn to secrecy by my father. I was not permitted to talk to anyone outside in the village or at school, about what I might perchance see or hear.

On one occasion, when I was about five to six year's old (probably 1935) during the summer school holidays, when I was walking down the gravel path by the Lavant river; intending to visit my woodworking friends, Donald and David English; I observed an imposing figure briskly walking towards me. He had neat

auburn hair flecked with white and a corresponding well groomed moustache and a pointed beard. He wore a multi-pocketed, greenish-brown tweed, belted shooting jacket, Plus Fours tweed trousers, Fairisle-knit knee length stockings and polished brown-Brogue lace up shoes. He did not look left or right, only straight ahead and appeared deep in thought. I had to step aside into the tall grass and let him stride by. He did not glance at me or speak to me, for him I might not exist. My father told me after, not to go down to the 'big house' for the time being. It was year's later when I reflected upon the foregoing incident, that I realized the person I almost met on the path, was most likely King George the Fifth, the King of England! His seaside home was nearby at Aldwick, Bognor Regis (the latter town was granted the name of Regis (King) because he chose to live there.) He was very familiar with West Dean House, Park and Estate and a long time friend of the James's family. He had stayed in West Dean House many times for the annual pheasant shooting, with his family and his Sons. They were Edward and George, future Kings of England. As I said in a prior paragraph, they had been playmate's of Edward James, grew up together and joined the London party set later, as they were contemporaries about the same age.

During the early 1930's, when I walked to school I passed the garage at the Estate building yard. Mr. Glaister the chauffeur, would be thoroughly cleaning and polishing the Wolsey saloon car until it gleamed. He and I often chatted and I gathered he was picking up someone important from Singleton railway station; only half of a mile away. This railway Halt was especially arranged to be built by Edward James's father, William.

One has to remember that the James family and finally Edward James himself owned almost all of the homes and farmhouses in West Dean village. Also the 6000 acre's of estate land. Our home, Home Farm House was number 126, so, presumably there were almost 200 houses owned by the family James. Since we and all the rest of the working families in the Park and the village were 'feudal' tenants it was prudent that they kept their mouths tightly closed regarding affairs at the main house and park grounds. Thus it was a super place to be if one wanted very secret liaisons, located as it was, in very isolated circumstances.

Some of the other artists James purchased from were: Magritte, Picasso, Klee, Dali, Bosch, De Chirico, Carrington, Tchelitchev, Giacometti, Ernst, Delvaux and I believe there were others.

Imagine all that valuable stuff worth millions of pounds, just staying safely in that isolated house, never to be touched by nefarious individuals before or during all the Second World War years and many years of peace time afterwards, without being generally known, except to a few like myself and my father, who were exposed there. James incredible, astutely selected with aforethought, as to importance and well balanced

surrealist private art collection was one of the superlative representations of this art form. It was unfortunate that the collection was auctioned off about 1975 and distributed all over the world. Kept together, it would have been James's principal legacy.

Dali was reputed to have lived with James for about two years and then for a while Magritte lived with him; these episodes were usually at Monkton Hall and James's London house. Undoubtedly James spent a lot of time closely associated with these artists, he was after all their patron and as described in a prior paragraph, both assisted him with ideas for Monkton Hall.

*Stickland family photograph: 1899.*



The Stickland family in 1899 at the front of their farmhouse  
at Stoney Cross, in the county of Dorset.

*Stickland family photograph: 1914.*



The Stickland family in 1914, at the front of Home Farm House, #126, in West Dean Park. They resided there from 1899 to 1922. Back row: L to R: Arthur, Harold ( Killed at Ypres, France, shortly after enlistment) and Ralph. Middle row: L to R: May, Jesse Stickland, Parent, (Born in Dorset, England). Frank, Jane Stickland, Parent (Nee Guy. Born on Normandy-Breton border, Northern France) and Ada Florence Jane (Author's mother who made all the pictured lady's clothes). Front row: seated on Persian rug: L to R: Doris and May.

Photo credit:

1914: Russell's, Under Royal Patronage, The Studio, Southgate, Chichester, West Sussex.