

Susie and the Pearces



*Decorated at Buckingham Palace
Lieutenant J. L. H. Pearce, R.N.,
took his small daughter, Anne,
to the Palace with him, and she
carried her father's decoration when
leaving. Lieutenant Pearce received
the Distinguished Service Cross*

Susie's father JOHN LEWIS HENRY (Jan) PEARCE was born on May 8, 1913 in Penryn, Cornwall. He joined the Royal Navy as a boy artificer. He was commissioned in 1936 and trained as an engineer officer at R.N.E.C. Mannaden near Plymouth and the Royal Naval College at Greenwich. Jan married BRENDA AILEEN ABBOTT at Dulwich on May 26, 1939. In 1940 he transferred to the submarine service and served in "T" class submarines on the supply route during the siege of Malta and later in the Pacific. He was awarded the D.S.C. in 1942 for distinguished service in the submarine service. He retired from the Navy in 1978 and died in Rowlands Castle, Hampshire from Cancer of the Lung on June 27, 1984.

Jan came from a line of Cornishman. John Pearce, who was born in about 1776, was a wealthy farmer who owned extensive land known as Tredors between St Issey and Little Petherick, just off the road from Wadebridge to Padstow (O.S.185). He married a girl called Mariann, who was a year older than he was, and they had four children:

Sam was the eldest but was 'a bit of a tearaway' in his youth with a very robust personality and physique. He was a keen wrestler who appeared frequently in the county finals, although he was never the Cornish champion. His way of life did not meet with his father's approval and he was disinherited,

the estate passing to the youngest child William, who although he married, had no son and the name of Pearce has disappeared from the Tredors district. Sam was set up as a black smith in the village of St Issey by his father. He carried on wrestling and married Elizabeth Rowe, a serving wench. Later having given up the smithy they moved to Penryn where they had six children. Sam's wrestling career was cut short by a severe illness and he was said to have been saved by the ministrations of a gipsy woman. When he had recovered he gave up his old ways and became a

pillar of the local Wesleyan Chapel, a strict teetotaler and non smoker. The Pearce family pew in the chapel at Penryn bears his name to this day. He also became an ardent Rugby supporter. He was a huge rock of a man, over six feet tall and broad in proportion but was quietly spoken and of a polite disposition leading to him being described as a gentle giant. He died at the age of 92.

Charlie, the second youngest of Sam and Elizabeth's children, was in the Royal Navy during the First World



**Samuel Pearce and Elizabeth Rowe with their 6 children
- Harry is at the front**

War. There is a story about him losing his temper with a young officer who had been nagging him. He went up to the officer, saluted smartly and said "Sir, I have never struck an officer in my life" He then picked up the officer went to the ship's side and dropped him into Scapa Flow! He paid the appropriate penalty but ended up with the honourable rank of Petty Officer.

Harry, the youngest was nicknamed 'Pet' and was Susie's grandfather. He served his apprenticeship as a joiner at the local boatyard. After his apprenticeship, finding it difficult to find work in Cornwall, he walked to Chatham in Kent where he had been told there were opportunities for joiners. It was while watching a carnival at Gillingham, near Chatham, that he met Gwenthyllan Marie Louise Lewis, whom he married. Harry was a fanatical rugby player and played for the Cornish County team. On his wedding day he arranged for the service to take place after the day's match. He arrived at the church half an hour late with one ear stitched back and held in place with sticking plaster. Gwenthyllan was the daughter of a colourful lady called Polkinghorne, who was reputed to have been born aboard a windjammer in the days when officers took their wives with them and to be descended from a wealthy cotton family, however she ran off with the family groom, one John Lewis. They settled in Pembroke Dock and had a large family of whom Gwenthyllan was the eldest. They moved to Gillingham in Kent and Mrs Lewis trained as a midwife. When John Lewis died she married a hammer man, Richard Peacock. They had no children. As nurse Peacock she was a familiar sight on the roads around Gillingham on her old tricycle with her black bag on the handlebars. She had no respect for the rules of the road and would rush off to a call completely oblivious of the traffic, wheeled or pedestrian, but never had an accident.



Gwenthyllan Lewis



Harry Pearce

Having found work in Chatham Dockyard, Harry Pearce spent the rest of his working life there. Harry and Gwenthyllan had three children:

- (i) Male child died as an infant
- (ii) John (Jan) Lewis Henry PEARCE who was born 8 May 1913.
- (iii) Renee PEARCE



Jan and his sister Renee

After Harry's retirement they moved to Portsmouth where Jan and Brenda were living. Harry died on 28th January 1953 and Gwenthyllan on 17th February 1953 shortly after their arrival in Portsmouth.

Susie and the Abbotts

Suzie's mother, Brenda was born in Southsea on March 28, 1917 to REGINALD GEORGE ABBOTT and ETHEL MARY WHITE.. When she was one year old, Brenda's father was appointed to work at the Admiralty and her family moved to London. Brenda attended Balham High School. Her father was then appointed as civilian superintendent of the Naval Dockyard in Malta and Brenda went with her parents, attending The Convent of the Sacred Heart. Reg was a talented watercolour artist and also a violinist. In 1931 he played at a dinner where Leslie Brownfield was a guest. (see menu on page 342). Brenda met JOHN LEWIS HENRY (Jan) PEARCE in Malta where she was still living with her parents. They were married at Dulwich on May 26, 1939.

Jan and Brenda had two children:

- (i) Anne Suzette PEARCE born in Alverstoke in 1940
- (ii) Jan Rodney PEARCE born in Gillingham, Kent in 1944. Jan married Jennifer Black on November 4, 1965. They have three daughters Samantha (b. 1978), Sarah (b. 1980) and Lucy (b. 1984).

Brenda died in Southsea on June 2, 2006.

Ethel's Uncle Arthur had been lost on board the Titanic.

Portsmouth Passengers & Crew

Arthur White: assistant barber 3rd class

Arthur lived in Purbrook Road, Portsmouth, before joining the Titanic as a barber. He was married with four daughters, and died in the sinking. His body was recovered by the Mackay-Bennett, and he was buried in Fairview Cemetary in Halifax.

