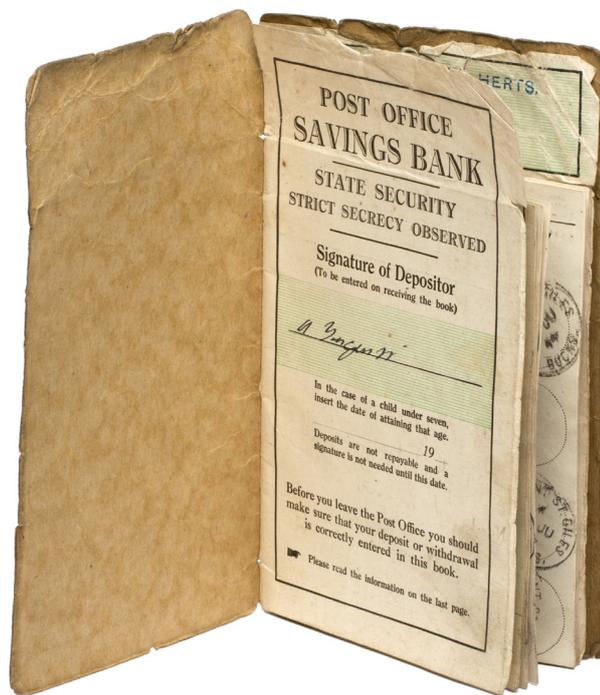


# The Tale of Mr Ferguson and Dorothea: A Walking Tour



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Opening times:  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday  
12:00 - 17:00

The extracts in this booklet are taken from the collection of a wartime enthusiast and collator, through the use of her diary the project traces moments from the life of Dorothea and her meetings with Mr Ferguson. We have taken five extracts from the diary and connected them to objects that relate to each part. These objects have been placed around Hastings, which forms the basis of our tour.

To take part in the tour simply read the story and follow the instructions to the next location.

(The extracts have been edited for the purposes of this project)



telling  
stories:  
hastings

### Part 1:

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

My heartbeat was elevated. He ran into the fire.

Date: 8th December 1943

**Directions** to Part 2: Leave the Museum. Walk down the hill on Bohemia Rd. Continue straight ahead on to White Rock Rd. At the end turn right. Walk along White Rock Rd. Take first left onto Schwert Way. Head straight for the Pier. Go down onto the beach using the wooden staircase.

**Activity:** Skim a stone. Pick a stone, which is thin and light. Throw it with as much force as possible and as horizontal as possible and from as low to the ground as you can.

### Part 2:

The Pier

There he was sitting on the sea wall, I was sure in a glimpse. Him sitting on the wall and of all the things he could have been doing, all the things in the world, he was eating a banana. I felt all of a sudden giddy. This was the first time I would get to go up to him; I had some control over the situation and never had I not wanted something so badly.

I started poorly ‘Hello’.

His eyes stared fixedly out to sea, without looking up, “Hello Dorothea”. He smiled. He was toying with me, he sensed my unsteadiness. He took a bite of the banana. And with his mouth full he spoke using fewer letters than were needed.

“Ow re oo?”

It took me a moment to get to grips with the absurdity of what was happening.

“I’m good. I mean, I’m as good as one can be given the situation.”

Sarcastically, “And what situation is that?”

With a rush of naïve surprise I spoke, “The war”. I regretted it as soon as the words left my mouth.

“Oh, of course, the war” And he grinned a little grin to himself.

“So you’ve heard of it? People do talk”

“People here do little else”.

Weirdly I thought of the letter I received that morning from my brother in which he said that he was ‘doubting what it meant to be British’. Obviously it had surprised me more than I had realised.

We sat there for a moment with nothing but the sound of the sea until I decided to change the subject.

“I’m going to be a mother”

“I can tell. Congratulations. So, you’ve decided to settle down?”

“Sure”. I stroked my bump, not having realised it was beginning to show.

“That doesn’t sound like the girl I knew.”

“That was a long time ago. That girl had to change.”

“Don’t we all. Maybe a bit of settling is what’s needed.”

He took another bite of the banana.

“Maybe you’re right.” I watch as he chewed away. “For now I’d settle for a bite of that”.

He handed it over. It had been years since I’d had a banana. I’d forgotten what they were like. The mushy consistency, the sweet, almost creamy taste was now so exotic that I imagined a place where they could be grown. A place outside the grey, where it all wasn’t so deep rooted. The grin now covered my face.

“So does this mean it is time for you to settle too?”

“I wasn’t including me.”

I felt a sudden need to scream but I didn’t. I guess I’m just too British.

Date: 11th July 1943

**Directions** to Part 3: Go back up to street level. Continue along white Rock. Cross the road at first set of lights. Take a left at Claremont St. On the right-hand side is a church.

**Activity:** Go Inside. Ask to see the suitcase.

### Part 3:

The Holy Trinity Church

So after everything I felt strangely the same. I was married, Mrs Dorothea Jacobs, a name that sounded far too serious for me. Just two days later and my husband had left for Africa.

This made me look to the calendar only for me to realise that it was two years today since that strange night out by the woods. To mark its anniversary I’ve decided to take a walk out there, see if there’s any evidence that it happened at all.

If nothing else I could do with the walk.

Date: 23rd May 1943

**Directions** to Part 4: Head back to the seafront, which is now Carlisle Parade. Continue walking. Carlisle Parade becomes Denmark place. Keep going...Past the roundabout. Keep walking straight ahead. You should now be on Pelham Place. You are heading for the Old Town. Take a left onto George St. Walking past Hastings shops and cafes turn left onto the High St. Walk straight ahead until you come to a shop called ‘Roberts Rummage’. It is on the Left-hand side.

**Activity:** Go Inside. Ask to see the tin.

### Part 4:

Roberts Rummage

Father was typing on the typewriter again. Tap, tap, tap. Endlessly typing, endlessly documenting those bloody things.

The noise became too much and I hit the side of my fist against the wall. I heard the scrape of the chair against the floor as he stood, then silence, and then the scrape as he sat. He’d lost resolution, as men who have lost hope tend to do.

His room was no better than his mind.

It was filled with tiny wooden boxes and each box, holding firmly to the current strangeness of my life, containing a different species of insect. Before the last war he was a coleopterologist but it had gotten worse since he'd returned with each now having to be numbered, labelled, and filed away. He'd become a collector of dead things. I wondered how much longer I could stand to live in this place before it got the better of me too.

I grabbed my torch and decided to read until I fell asleep.

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I woke with a start. The torch was still on and the blackout cover for the window had fallen loose. A crack of light was let out into the dark. As I got up to sort the cover I heard a noise, the sound of something ceramic breaking. I opened the window to a man dressed in British uniform attempting to re-plant a flowerpot.

"Hello"

"Err hello?"

"Sorry", he indicated to the flowerpot and I returned him a shrug.

"I need your torch. I saw the light and I need your torch."

"Why?"

"Something is happening out by the woods, I think a plane may have gone down. I want to go see what"

"That doesn't sound like something a decent person would do"

"What are you implying?" there was a twinge of indignation in his voice.

"What I'm implying is that I don't know you and you are asking for something that is mine"

"I give you my word that I'm not going to steal it if that is what you're worried about?"

"That's exactly what I'm worried about. The word of a stranger means little to me"

"Then come with me".

The speed with which we got to this question knocked me back. So brash. So arrogant. The little voice in my head told me to leave this, to tell him to leave, and to close the window.

I got my torch and crept downstairs.

Date: 23rd May 1941

### Part 5:

The Old Town Museum

(The following piece of text was taken from a postcard that was found at the back of the diary. It is from Dorothea's mother to her friend, Florence.)

Dearest Flo,

I hope this postcard finds you well. You must forgive me for not writing you sooner, Robert has taken ill and leaving the house has been troublesome. I would like to talk with you about it but that is a longer conversation than this postcard will allow. I write to tell you that we attended the annual sandcastle competition last weekend. It made me think of you. Can you believe that it was only four years ago since we were on Hastings beach? Happy times. It was good to be out again with Dorothea and William. They had a splendid time and I have to admit so did I. A young gentleman just back from Europe ended up winning. Deservedly so I say. It's time to get back to simpler things. I think that's advice I should take myself.

I have not heard from Alice recently, please give her my love.

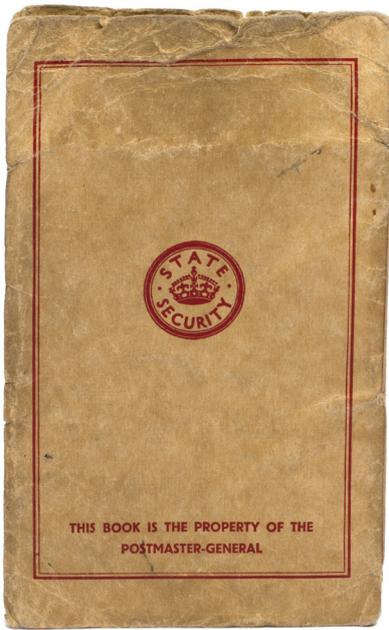
Best wishes,

Mary

Date: 2nd July 1919

**Directions** to Part 5: Next door to Roberts Rummage you shall find The Old Town Hall Museum. Go in!

**Activity:** Ask at the information desk for a postcard from the Mr Ferguson trail. Follow the instructions on the back.



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