The Tablecloth

Given in memory of Anne Holder Williamson 1889 - 1976

dedicated and skilful midwife and maternity nurse of Wheatiey, Oxon

When Anne Williamson died in 1976 the tablecloth came to me. We believe it was her aunt who made the tablecloth for her sister, Kate, Anne's mother. Kate said that Anne was to have it for her lifetime, but then it was to go to 'the Groves baby', and that baby was me, born 1932. My father was vicar of Wheatley, Oxon, from 1927 until 1932, and three of his children were born there, with a fourth born in Sunningdale, Berks, in 1934. All four healthy babies were safely delivered by Anne Williamson and she was godmother to the youngest.

When they married in 1924 my parents went to Wellington, New Zealand, with the intention of settling there permanently. They were happy there, but my mother had three miscarriages and a still-born baby, and at that point it was decided that they must return home. So the subsequent delivery of four healthy babies by Anne Williamson is a testament to her skill.

We understood that the tablecloth had been made by Anne's aunt. Using the census records we discovered that her mother's sister had been a milliner and dressmaker who had always lived in Coventry: Annie Mary Jephcott (nee Clarke) who died in 1922. She must have given the tablecloth to her sister, Kate. She apparently did not work after her marriage in 1883 so this would perhaps have been when she made the tablecloth.

After I received the tablecloth, soon after Anne's death in 1976,1 used it once or twice. I even used it to cover a fridge during a party! Then I suddenly realized what a risk I was taking. There had even been people walking past it with red wine. From that time it was kept rolled up in a cupboard and very[7] few people have seen it. I am therefore delighted that the Royal School of Needlework have accepted it and are planning to exhibit it. My family are glad to know that it is now in safe hands as they did not want the responsibility.

Margaret Miriam Scott (nee Groves)