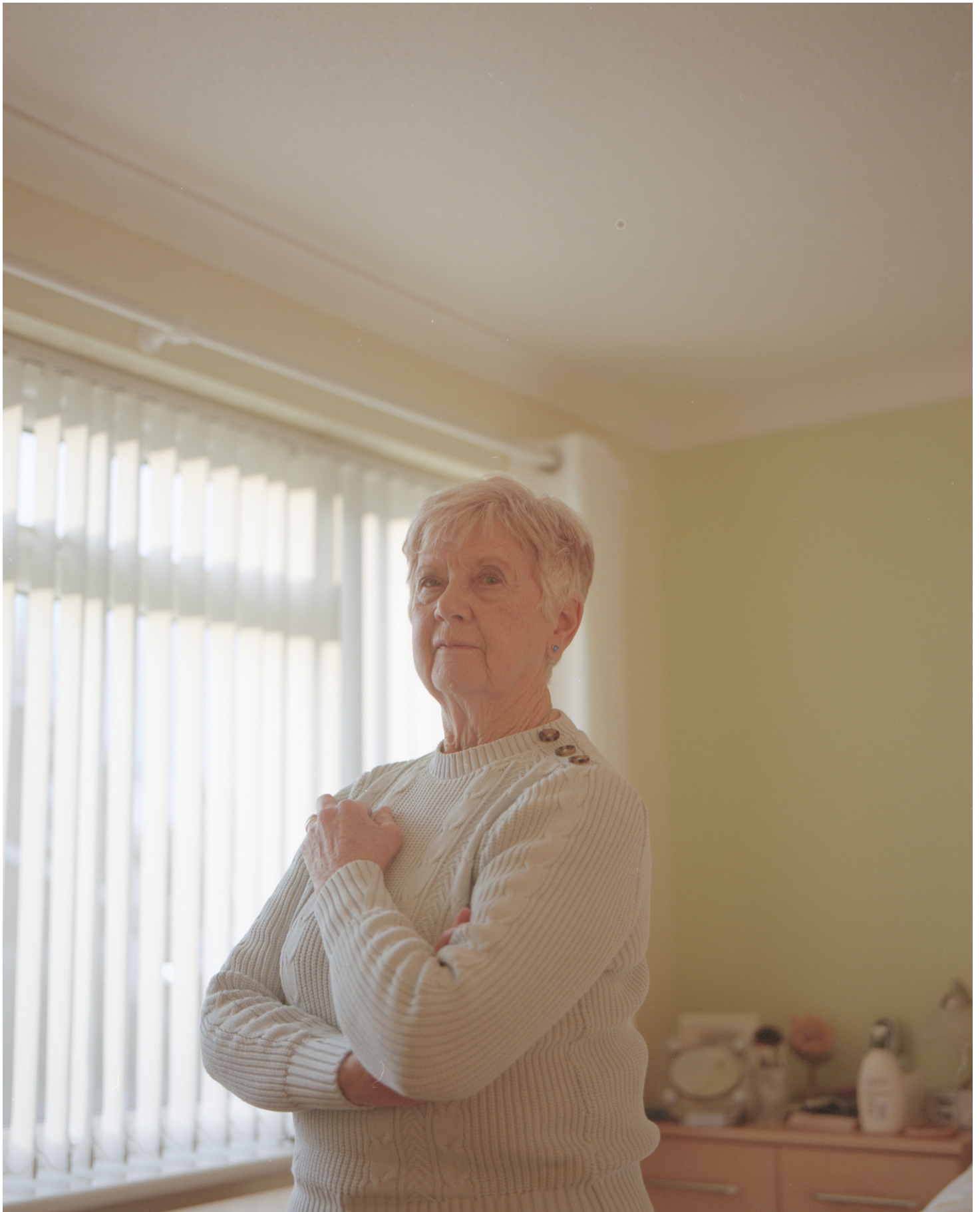


Fait Accompli

The Violation of Family Life

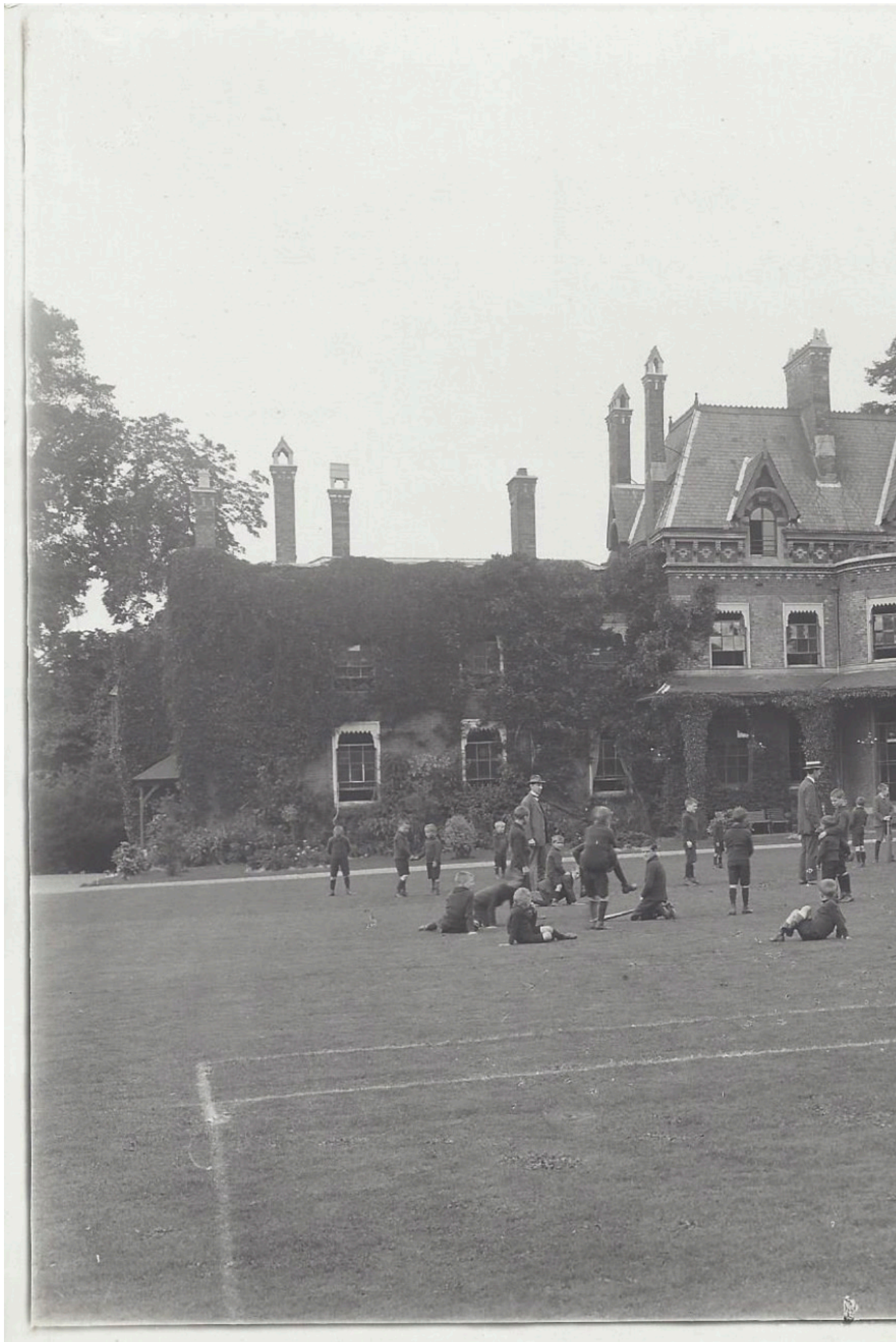


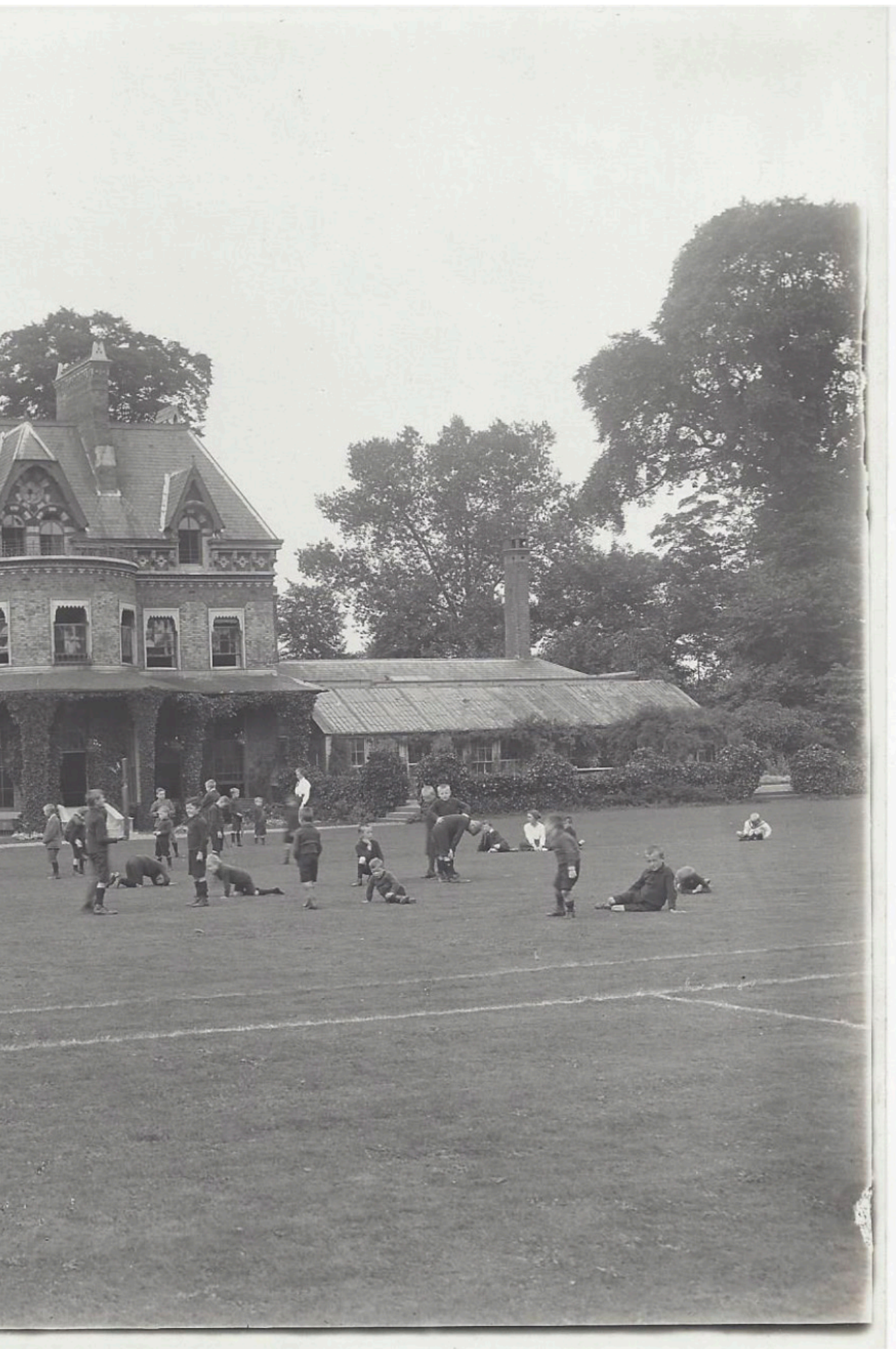
This is the Story of Patricia Van Hoen

Patricia fell pregnant outside of marriage at the age of 20. Her Mother spoke to their vicar, and their vicar advised her to speak to a welfare care worker. Through this, her mother then arranged for her to live and give birth in a unwed-mother and child home. This home was in Croydon, called Birdhurst Lodge, three long hours away from her home in Smethwick. She was to move into the home in her final three months, 'before anyone realised I was pregnant', in this her Mother said she could hide her 'shame' and have the child adopted out of the home. To Pat, there wasn't a shame, and she knew that she had every intention of keeping her son.

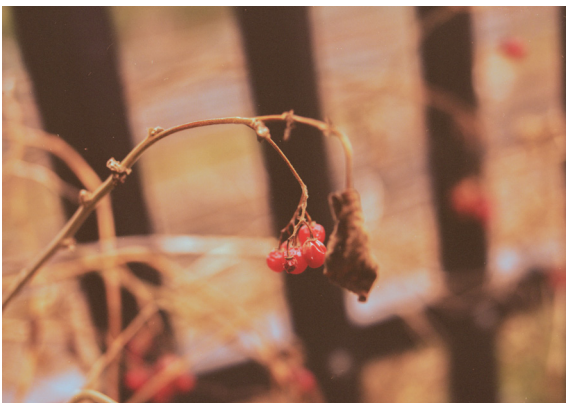
Patricia and Mark Van Hoen







Birdhurst Lodge, Croydon, a refuge for unwed mothers and the babies they would put up for adoption 1950





The site of Birdhurst Lodge

I traveled to the address given for the home in the South Croydon archives.

Birdhurst Lodge, South Park Hill Road, South Croydon, CR2.

The walk from the station was just a minute long. I thought of all the unwed mothers who had been told to come to this address. I thought of my Grandmother walking along this same path some fifty-eight years prior. I thought how she walked with the uncertainty of leaving with her child.





Property owned by Christian Family Concern
on the old site of Birdhurst Lodge.



Forgotten

Birdhurst Lodge no longer exists, it was demolished in 1985. The building was an Edwardian house acquired in 1914 by a religious evangelical organisation called 'Mission of Hope'. After the demolition and the end of unwed Mother Homes, the organisation still exists, renamed Christian Family Concern, the Mission of Hope continues its welfare work with mothers and babies. They dropped the adoption service in 1990 to reflect the modern emphasis on keeping the birth family together with the help of the public purse, if necessary.

The turnover at Birdhurst Lodge was swift, with each woman's residency limited to three months: six weeks prior to childbirth and six weeks thereafter. This timeframe served both to allow mothers a period to bond with their infants before deciding on adoption and as a strategic measure to ensure the babies' developmental health, as prospective adoptive parents preferred healthy infants.

The prevailing societal stigma surrounding illegitimacy, coupled with high demand from childless couples seeking adoption before the advent of fertility treatments, meant that mother-and-baby homes, established by various religious organisations such as the main churches and the Salvation Army, were perceived as efficiently addressing two social issues simultaneously. Essentially functioning as "baby farms", these homes also operated as economically viable entities, as adoptive parents would often contribute financially to the religious charities overseeing their operation

My dad at home in Smethwick





Childrens paintings on the wall of the site of Birdhurst Lodge

"Being an unmarried mother was frowned upon and you know, you were made to feel promiscuous I suppose.

Because of my mum more than anybody, because she made me feel so uncomfortable. In those days I think they were more worried about what the people would think than, you know, than how I felt.

I mean, my dad was really angry with my mum and said, you know, she needs your support. She doesn't need your anger, because she was shouting at me and when she first found out and that made me feel very unhappy and lost, I guess.

I did, like in time, did she begin to understand more or was it that she, that throughout the, well not really, because, I mean, she made me go, well she took me to the doctors and you know, when it was confirmed she immediately started, I think, through the church because we were church goers.

She spoke to the vicar and the vicar advised her to see someone like, you know, in welfare care and it was through that I was sent to this home.

I didn't have any choice, none whatsoever, I was just told I was going.

It was in South Croydon, it was a very long way away, but to be fair they did visit me four or five times during my stay there and she was still hoping that I would have the baby adopted, which I was adamant I was not going to do. It was a church home so we had to have prayers every morning and in the evening and you had to work in the mornings.

There weren't that many women there so there was a limit to what you could do, There were, there were five in the room and there was a separate nursery for the babies. I made a friend in the bed next to me, Anne, she kept her son too. It made a lot of difference that, you know, you got somebody else too.

When my Mother came to pick me up she told me I had to leave Mark, until I actually put the baby in her arms. Then she, you know, she accepted it and loved him very much. I don't know what I would've done if she hadn't, I often think about what I could've lost that day, and what so many others did lose."





01215556064

Date of adoption order
07/11/2008



THE ADOPTION (JUVENILE COURT) RULES, 1969
Rule 21

Adoption Order

In the COUNTY BOROUGH OF WARLEY

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Before the JUVENILE COURT sitting at **Smethwick**

WHEREAS an application has been made by **JAN VAN HOEN**
of **16 St. Albans Road,**

Smethwick, Warley

[and **PATRICIA ANN VAN HOEN** his wife]
(hereinafter called the applicant*) for an adoption order in respect of
• **Mark Adrian Higginbotham** (hereinafter
called the infant);

IT IS ORDERED that the applicants be authorised to adopt the infant;

AND IT IS DIRECTED that the Registrar General shall make in the Adopted
Children Register an entry recording the particulars set out in the Schedule to
this Order.

DATED the **14th** day of **April**, 19**69**.

(Signature) *Helen Carter*

Justice of the Peace for the **County Borough** first above mentioned.

SCHEDULE

Date and country of birth	Registration district and sub-district	Names and surname of infant	Sex of infant	Name and surname, address and occupation of adopter or adopters	Date of adoption order and description of court by which made
26th September 1966. England.	District Croydon Sub-district Croydon Second	MARK ADRIAN VAN HOEN	boy	JAN VAN HOEN of 16 St. Albans Road, Smethwick, Warley. Electrical Engineer, and PATRICIA ANN VAN HOEN	14th April 1969. Warley Juvenile Court.

Adoption papers from when she married three years after his birth.



Mark found out about Birdhurst, and his estranged Father through adoption papers. Like so many others, the word adopted on a little sheet of paper changed his life, permanently affecting his relationship with his Mother and bearing open the lies she had told him over the years about who his Father was. This is the legacy of the violation of family life, and the stigma created for unmarried mothers. This practice of hiding Birth and adoption, is still affecting lives and families. A Fait Accompli.





Errol Subratie, Caymanas Race



e Park, Portmore Jamaica, 1975.

My dad didn't know about his father until he was 42. He had grown up unaware of the story of birth at Birdhurst lodge, unaware of his 11 brothers and sisters.

Patrica didnt tell him for fear of the stigma that surrounded being an unwed mother, and the pain it would cause to talk about it. Instead she choose to marry a man her mother found for her. My dad grew up believing this man was his father, until 2008. He lost his Birth certificate and order a new one. The replacement said adoped.

After all of those years, he contacted his real Father, Errol Subratie. He was able to travel to his home in Jamaica and meet him twice before he passed away in 2015.

A life without a relationship with his father, due to historic British views on unmarried motherhood.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH



REGISTRATION DISTRICT				
1966	BIRTH in the Sub-district of Croydon Second			Cro
in the				

Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother

215	Twenty-sixth September 1966 14 South Park Hill Road Croydon	Mark Adrian	Boy	—————	Patricia Anne HIGGINBOTHAM Dental Nurse of 10 St. Albans Road Southwick
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CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the

BXCD 363947

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH
WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT VALID UNLESS IT IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE ORIGINAL

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 759467

Croydon
London Borough of Croydon

6 Occupation of father	7 Signature, description and residence of informant	8 When registered	9 Signature of registrar	10 Name entered after registration
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	P.A.Higginbotham Mother 18 St.Albans Road Skeethwick Staffs.	Eleventh October 1966	J.H.Davies Registrar.	/
--	--	-----------------------------	--------------------------	---

Adopted.
J.H. Davies
Superintendent
Registrar.

District above mentioned.

4th day of December 2008

REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE ISSUING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE
OF BIRTH. CROWN COPYRIGHT
REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS.
EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.



AKO

Birth papers missing the Fathers name.



Scene outside Birdhurst Lodge, 1950.



My Grandmother's favourite photograph, 'you can see it has been well loved'.

“There was little support in place to help unmarried mothers, and any support that was available was rare. Living with their parents, and terrified of the consequences in the picture, and even fewer provided any kind of pregnancy the lives of these would-be mothers was not emotional, physical and social turmoil where their lives continued to carry the grief, pain and loss.”



women to keep and raise their children as single
ly shared with these women. Many were young, still
ces of their pregnancy. The fathers seldom remained
support. From the moment they discovered their
ever the same again. Their pregnancy was a time of
were turned upside down, and life after the adoption
s associated with giving up their child."



VOICES FROM

“In a way it was a relief, because there was a comfort in being with other girls in the same boat, and there was a lovely, sweet, kind woman called Nurse Beach,” recalls Gwen. “But although we handed over the government maternity allowance to pay for our keep, we still had to work very hard at keeping the floors clean, scrubbing the huge staircase and doing all the washing; and they would make us get down on our knees in a group to repent. There must have been 20 of us girls and we slept in dormitories.”- Gwen Bishop gave birth in Birdhurst in 1950.

“I was born at Birdhurst Lodge in October 1949. My mother had been obliged by her own mother to give up her baby (me) for adoption. My mother always maintained that the regime was harsh, the staff hard-hearted and the heavy laundry work the girls were required to do was to make them have still births or late abortions. My adoptive parents were told the girls were well-looked after and the babies healthy. In fact, after my mother left me at six weeks, I stayed at Birdhurst until April 1950 by which time I was grossly undernourished. Not such a nice place, I think”. - Anonymous born in Birdhurst 1950.

“...the majority of women gave their babies up for adoption, because they felt they had no choice. Fear of being judged meant that most never felt free to explore their options.” Joyce Gautrey, former Birdhurst employee

“I had my daughter in March 1969 and was told I would stay in hospital for two weeks and have to feed and care for the baby. Obviously an emotional bonding took place. Eventually, the sister came to my bed and said it was time to hand over the baby to the social worker. This was an awful experience with me and the baby screaming. they pulled her out of my arms and I asked for a photo which they promised me, but it never came.” Anonymous gave birth in Birdhurst in 1969.

“I have been following the reports about birth mothers who were forced to give up their babies in the years between 1949-1976. I am such a birth mother, who had to give up her baby in 1966. Although my son and I are reunited, he lives in x , where his parents took him to get away from any possible contact, at the age of 3. I consider myself so lucky that he wanted to know his birth mother and he has now been over here on 3 occasions, but I have never yet been able to visit him and my 2 beautiful grandchildren. He has 2 brothers by me and they get on so well together, it's been an absolute joy to witness the love between us all.

However, it is not so much the government of the day that was to blame, they placed the responsibility and power in the hands of many religious groups and others, who on many many occasions made a lot of money from us poor mothers and our babies. These are the people we should be demanding the apology from.” - Anonymous gave Birth in Birdhurst in 1966.

BIRDHURST.



Scene outside Birdhurst, 1956.

Mark home after he was taken home to Smethwick, in his Grandmothers garden with his uncle.





Nico Van Hoen.

FMP 1 E2

2024