Mr Stubbins - North Northlands

As told to Jill Rolfe by Hylda Rawlings

Mr Stubbins was a farmer working for Mrs Hammond.

Mrs Holt had been visiting Church Lane looking at the old houses there and taking photographs. She had been invited in to see several of the properties and she wanted to get into Mr Stubbins' house. His house would be one of the last properties to be viewed.

Mr Stubbins had a lovely garden and grew cauliflowers and all sorts of vegetables and it was possible to buy these from him. Hylda was one of his regular customers as the vegetables and fruit were always so fresh.

Mrs Holt put Hylda in charge of getting her into Mr Stubbins' property and Hylda at an appropriate time, duly made the enquiry.

"Oh no, Mrs Rawlings" said Mr Stubbins "it's not possible, she's a great lady - she lives in Cuckfield Place."

What Mr Stubbins didn't know was that Cuckfield Place was in a terrible condition and Mrs Holts's boys hated living there.

"She would like to come and look at your house, that's all she wants to do. Just to see the architecture." Hylda persevered.

Mr Stubbins counter-acted "Oh no, no, I couldn't do that."

Hylda asked if Mrs Holt could at least come and have a look at the outside of the house. "Well" said Mr Stubbins "I suppose so."

They agreed a date and Hylda and Mrs Holt went there together in one car. As they went up the drive Hylda saw Mr Stubbins come out of his front door and shut it decisively behind him and lock up. He came forward to meet Hylda and Mrs Holt.

"Mr Stubbins" said Mrs Holt "how do you get your tomatoes looking like that, we could see them as we came up the drive. They are beautiful, my tomatoes don't look anything like that." At that the two of them went off and left Hylda in the car.

The next thing Hylda sees is Mrs Holt coming out of the greenhouse with a large bag of tomatoes.

Mr Stubbins says "I'll go and get a ladder". At that point he opened up the front door and they all went inside.

"Mrs Holt" said Hylda, "could charm the birds off the tree."