

A Brush with Fame: Vivien Wilson

My sister was always very bossy. She was seven years older than me and would regularly test my loyalty.

My trial and brush with fame came when I was about seven, and on holiday with my family. We'd driven to Spain for a holiday and were returning via Paris where my father had some business clients. They invited us to dine at the Eiffel Tower. Usually, I was left with a babysitter on such occasions, but for the first time I was included in the invitation. It was all very grand - starched white tablecloths and silver cutlery and views out over the city. The food was amazing and I can still recall the white asparagus spears dripping with butter.

There was a small stage and a band was playing romantic music. The band leader, a violin-wielding Andre Rieu type, approached our table, 'Would the two young English ladies like me to play anything?' My sister requested something, *La Vie en Rose* I think. Then it was my turn. '*The Swedish Rhapsody*, please.' I was shy in those days and unused to attention. He returned to the stage and with a flourish, the band played my request. My sister kicked me under the table and whispered in my ear, 'You have to give him a kiss!' I turned crimson. It was unthinkable. But before I knew what I was doing, I stood up. Everyone stared at me. I boldly walked across to the stage. The violinist bent down, expecting another request, but instead was surprised when I kissed him on the cheek.

The whole room erupted in applause. I was famous, although somewhat mortified. He signed a menu for me and I have it to this day, seventy years later: '*A la plus jolie jeune fille du Royaume-Uni.*'