My Life & Welcome To It

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Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad

Dedicated to ~

Ian, Ruth, and Julie, my daughter in law.

Acknowledgements ~

My son Ian, without whom this book would never have been written

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Apologies ~

The book was never meant to be printed so, if anyone is offended - please may I be forgiven?

My Life & Welcome To It

Ray Garner

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CHAPTER 1: THE START

Creation's gift to the world, me, happened sometime on July 18 1927 in White lodge Hospital, Newmarket and whatever was in my mouth it was not a silver spoon, my Mother being an unmarried servant girl from Barton Mills, West Suffolk and my father an equally unmarried fellow servant Charles Marsh. He has no further part in my story. Mum tells me that when Grandfather Smith found that she was pregnant he was so angry that he pulled down and burnt the bedroom curtains!

When I was three years old, Mum married a railway worker, Peter Albert Garner whom, as far as I am concerned, was and is my only father. I don't know how they managed it but it was a church wedding. I can remember wanting to go but Granny Smith holding me and telling me that I couldn't, I wonder why? .What a lovely man was my step-father, to take on another man's child as his own. He was always ready to play with me, one of his tricks was to lie on his back, feet and hands held straight upright, and with me standing on them move them to give me the impression of riding a bike. Then there was his hoodwinking me by putting pieces of paper on his fingers and while reciting a daft piece about "Peter and Paul" making them appear and disappear alternately, Daft? Childish? Of course, but at least I was getting more attention from my father than many a child with no blank spaces on his Birth Certificate.

In my late sixties Mum told me that she had been visited before her marriage by someone from Dr. Barnardo's offering to take me into their care. It says a lot for my

Mother's strength of character that poor and wretched that she was she chose to keep me.

She came from a family of agricultural labourers, her father a shepherd working for the oddly named Squire Bumbry: Bumbry is a local name for earth closet. There is a story in which Grandad brings home a lamb, killed by accident, for granny to cook. Having been given some of the lamb by Granny, a neighbour thanks her by 'grassing' to the squire who, "acting out of kindness", turns Grandad and his family out of their cottage instead of telling the magistrates.

Granny Smith was a character in her own right. Villagers were allowed into the local woods to pick up fir cones and twigs for kindling. One day she runs into the gamekeeper who, telling her that she shouldn't be in there during the pheasant breeding season, tried to take the sack of kindling away from her. She punched him on the jaw hard enough to break it! Obviously then, I come from a family of vicious sheep rustlers. Some time after I had written this, Mum told me of a more tragic family story. Grandmother Smith had given birth to a girl who died within a few days. Mum and her younger sister Win carried the dead child for burial but were stopped at the church gate by the Vicar who said that the baby, because unbaptised, could not be buried in the church graveyard. He changed his mind when Win thumped him. The Krays? Wimps in comparison with us Smiths!

When Mum and the man I regard as my Dad married, they set up home in the living quarters of a butcher's shop in Soham, just over the border in Cambridgeshire. It overlooked a piece of ground on which stood a field gun from the Great War: a cousin visiting us spent all the time terrified that it was going off.

At the age of four or five I started school at the local infants' and in my memory I can still see as we got near the school on the first day, a lad running the other way shouting, "I'm not going, I'm not bloody going ". One of the girls in my class was a tubby little thing who had what we now must call learning difficulties and who squeaked when we pinched her. We had great fun cornering her in the cloakroom. Yes. I'm still ashamed, but I was only six! It was during my time at this school that I achieved my one and only academic distinction - and my first bit of sexual harassment, the distinction was getting to be top reader each week, the harassment came from Peg Read the girl sitting next to me, who always insisted on draping her leg over mine! Peg. Where, I wonder, are you now? Odd little things pop into my mind, when Miss Lily Doe read us a story she pronounced the word poor in a way that was new to me and the headmistress Miss Robinson, although a nice gentle lady, made such an impression on me that for years afterwards on hearing the word 'God' her face would spring into my mind! How very odd!

Another memory from this period, the first of many good hidings at the very hard hands of my dear Mother. The way to school included a walk through the churchyard: running round the church was a stone channel with a bridge to the north door forming a short tunnel. Dick, a neighbour's son, crawled through easily but trying to follow him, and being less agile, I stuck fast. After a lot of heaving and shoving I got clear but by now I was so dirty that I had to return to home. Trying to clean myself up, I filled a bowl with cold water and set to work, joined shortly by Dick's infant sister Mary - and then by Mother! Doctor Spock, why had your book not then been written?

After infants' school came 'Shade' School or Soham Boys' Council School as it was properly known: only Army

initial training gives me worse memories. You have to remember that teaching at that time was largely a middle class occupation and the majority of us were any thing other than middle class, being sons of agricultural and building labourers. The sons of shopkeepers and other petit bourgeoisie were creamed off at 10+ to the Grammar School. With two creditable exceptions, our teachers despised us as much as we loathed them. If they did have an educational policy it would have been: hit them hard and hit them often. Two examples of this, both during my first year Bill Fleet, called Nana, because of the yellow tinge of his skin, sat next to me merrily masturbating under cover of his desk. The class teacher, a Miss Hayes, catching him at it, brought her ruler hard down upon his John Thomas, and not content with this hauled him from his seat slapping him all the way up and down the class room.

This was the same teacher who later gave me a brutal caning with a heavy blackboard pointer and for no reason other than my having an untidy book. She brought it down hard on to my hands and then, ordering me to turn them over, brought it down on to my knuckles. The exceptions were Tom Graves and Bill (Bollocky Bill) Beynon. Tom was supposed by us to be having an affair with Miss Maisy Rouse, in fact there was a rude but quite clever joke going the rounds. "If you put your head on my chest Tom you can hear my wireless." He does so. "I can't hear anything." he says. "That's because it isn't plugged in!" Tom kept us interested and amused. He gave me my nickname 'Guinness', standing at his desk getting my book marked I noticed a wasp and went to hit it with a ruler. "Don't break the desk Garner: my goodness My Guinness!"

Often during my own teaching days, I would hear echoes of Tom in my own manner of talking. Bill was the only one ever to take an interest in me as an individual. It was

through him that I first came into contact with politics. He was involved in the Popular Front - he and another teacher were raided by the police and he came to my home and asked my parents to let him take me to a left wing film show in support of the Spanish Republican Government. I didn't understand anything but I'm sure that show was the beginning of my leftwards leanings. Miss Rouse caused me some more pain, this time by a caning from Percy Lovering the Head. She had sent me to him for having an untidy box. Fortunately his cane had been snapped by the local police sergeant's son whom he had tried to cane the previous day and so he had to hold the stick half way down.

In September 1939 came the war which was to put an end to what was at best only a simple 'four rules' education. Firstly, the evacuees: poor little buggers with their luggage labels and their few possessions in cardboard suitcases.

They came in two lots: lads from the Jews' Free School in Hackney who would continue to be educated separately, and the others, a mixed bag from various LCC schools. We shared our school in two ways, the boys from the LCC schools were slotted in with us, in each double desk one 'native' and one Londoner. The Jewish boys mostly had their lessons in various halls but sometimes we had to swap so that they could use the school buildings. Even this part time schooling was interrupted by air raid warnings which meant that we had to leave the buildings and take cover in the ditches of adjoining fields. As if this wasn't enough the Head would sometimes come into the class room, shout "Gas!" and we would have to put on our gas masks and try to carry on. Dick and I lost even more lesson time, having to sit in the Head's room - a wooden hut and listen at the phone each time he went out. You see, this was after the fall of France and at any moment nuns

wearing big boots might come floating out from the sky and we had to wait for the signal!

There was of course more to my childhood than school. Soham is either the largest village or the smallest town in England and is surrounded by easily accessible pasture lands called 'commons' and it was possible for us to play and wander without ever having to play in the streets. Our favourite common, Angle Common, was divided by an embanked railway, the two parts connected by a road crossing and a tunnel. The tunnel, for cattle, had a raised walkway which we used as a bench and there we smoked our woodbines and swapped crude guesses at the mysteries of sex and the female anatomy. It was here that I suffered a great humiliation, there must have been a raid on nearby Mildenhall aerodrome for we could see tracer bullets and large 'flaming onions' hurtling upwards. Dick, me, and a couple of girls Rene Powson and Marie Riddle were enjoying watching the spectacle when from the road side I heard my name called. It was Mother worried sick. Oh god! Can't you just imagine my feelings as I rushed away under the others' contemptuous looks? Rene was gorgeous, way out of my reach although often she would ask me to walk her home from Youth Club and kissing me good night, I was the 'safe' one.

In the summer holidays I stayed in Barton Mills with my aunt Floss and her son Len, nicknamed Stiffy from his inability to climb up on a cart. Barton is a very small village just over the West Suffolk border set amongst acres of arable land and at harvest time Stiffy and I would work for Brian Last the farmer. There were very few tractors all the work being done with Suffolk Punch and Percheron horses. Being a small eight year, old my job at first was as a 'Ho gee' boy leading the horse to each of the corn shocks as the men pitch forked the sheaves into the cart. Ho gee was how you told the

horse to move. Later on I was promoted to leading away which meant taking the full cart to the stackyard and bringing back an empty one. Taking a full cart, you had to walk besides the horse but could ride the empty one on the return journey. A further promotion was to that of loader who stood in the cart and arranged the sheaves as they were pitched into it. This was a very skilled job which, if not done properly, could lead to the humiliation of having to have the load fastened on with ropes although the ultimate disgrace was to see the whole lot topple off on its way to the yard!

Behind the corn mill - no longer there - was a stretch of the River Lark on which boats could be hired and one day Stiffy took two shillings (10p) from his money box and truanting from school we bought five Woodbines, a box of matches, a bottle of Tizer, and an hour on the river. He later paid dearly for it with the skin of his backside whilst I, a year younger, got away with it.

Also living in the village was my Mother's sister Amelia and her husband Walter both of whom were very kind 'Melia' often giving me slices of bread spread thickly with butter and jam. Somewhere I have a photo of Walter standing by his cart outside the mill, this image was made of a photo of the mill and one of the cart both cleverly stitched together by someone. Walter drove carts for Parker's flour mill. There is a story that on a Friday he would get so drunk after delivering to Bury St Edmunds that he would be put into the cart, the reins tossed inside, and the horse would find the ten miles home its own way. On one occasion he fell out of the cart with the reins catching his shoulders dragging him along the road. Cousin George who was horseman for another farmer, Mr Browne, would take me over to see and help feed his horses: when he was in his eighties he could still remember all their names.

One of Barton's posher residents was Colonel Close, known to the village as 'the old Tup', a name earned I believe by his activities amongst the village girls, he seems to have been the provider of boots for the poorer ones, including Mum and her sisters. In exchange for what - I wonder? All this is, no doubt, just village talk and I am slandering the memory of an altruistic good hearted gentleman. One memory, Dad had taken me to see his Mother and the talk was of money. I, with a child's big mouth, came out with: "My Mum gets money from the old tup!" I was hoiked out, and plonked on the child's seat of Dad's bike. Off we went with Dad, fag in mouth, muttering into my ear, "Just you bloody wait till I tell your Mother! "Mercifully perhaps, I've no recollection of the sequel

One thing I do remember about my time at Floss's is that I was always hungry, all that fresh air and exercise perhaps - or an empty larder? What is for sure is that she, like Mum, was pitifully poor. However, she was a wonderful cook and her Yorkshire puddings were sublime, she would pour the batter into a dish on which she placed a flat iron trivet and on which in it's turn was put a piece of whatever meat she could afford. As the batter cooked, juice from the meat would drip into it. My mouth is watering even as I type this!

Then there were the fleas. There is a saying, "Anyone can have fleas but only dirty people keep them!" and neither aunt nor Mum intended to keep them. Each week our heads were bent over a sheet of newspaper, a steel comb pulled firmly through our hair, and the harvested insects squashed between thumb nail and table.

Sometimes I stayed at Barton after my own school had started and I would go to the village school. Barton school was as old fashioned as anyone could wish, two classes and two teachers, there was even a bell hanging in a small tower to call

us all in the morning - and the lord help you if you were not in school by the time it had stopped ringing! Children up to the age of seven were in one room and the rest in another. In the junior room all written work was done on slates. The seniors were all taught the same lesson at the same time. It was at this school that I had my first fist fight - and fell quite in love with the head girl. Oh lovely Mary Tilbrook, little did you know as you slapped my face that day for cheeking you what you were doing to an eight year old's heart. The fight was something that the other lad and I were pushed into by the bigger lads; we just struck blindly out at each other, the fight ending when my fist hit his iron hard head. Only the big lads got any pleasure out of the battle, we very unwilling gladiators were left nursing a sore head for him and a sore fist for me.

Looking back, these were the happiest part of my childhood. There was little of note about my earlier days, one odd incident, however, does stand out. Our cottage in Soham stood near a park, the "Rec." and occasionally fun fairs would arrive. As a boy I was quite a solitary and one night, long after I should have gone home, I was hanging about a coconut shy picking balls up for the young girl attendant. Leaving me to look after things she went up into her caravan coming down after a few minutes telling me, "My Mum wants to see you." Before I could reach the steps, the man on the next stall shouted, "No! Bugger off home!" So what did I miss? Seduction, kidnapping? Perhaps even the stew pot as per Toad? Whatever, I shall never know! As the man said, "The greatest regrets are not for what we did but for what we did not do."

When I was twelve I fell into very bad company, not criminal, not immoral but something more damaging - a pair of religious maniacs, Ernest and Margery Bulman. Life on Sundays, with everything shut up, was dreary and Sunday

School was at least somewhere to go. I had joined the Baptists and under the Palmers' influence had become very involved going not only to Sunday School but to adult services, even weekday prayer meetings. They were very kind and I spent a lot of time at their house mostly because of Mark and Gerald the two Jewish brothers who had been billeted on them as evacuees.

Ernie and Margery's faith was very firm but was just a catalogue of negatives, there was no happiness about it, this was a sin, that was a sin and the fear of hell became so fast in my consciousness that I drove poor Mum mad, so terrified was I that she was not "saved"! Although I soon left all this rubbish behind, what did not leave me was an overdeveloped sense of wrongness and I have always been torn apart between this Puritanism and the drive of a strongly amoral hedonism. Not Jekyll and Hyde but it did leave a cleft in my psyche that would lead to some bad bouts of conscience.

Soham had nothing that the Germans wanted to bomb so the only bombs that fell were those jettisoned by either side. We were not to escape completely: around midnight we were woken by an enormous explosion and looking up I could see the stars through holes in the bedroom ceiling. Dressing and going down stairs I met Mum, crying and with blood trickling down her nose, she wasn't hurt, she had scratched a pimple on getting out of bed. It was June 4th 1944, I was seventeen. Confused, and frightened by the flames coming from a gasholder, I walked down towards the railway station and found it no longer there! All I could see was a large hole, at the bottom of which, lay a steam engine on its side, the hiss of steam frightening me even further. Having no idea what to do, I went back to what was now an uninhabitable cottage. I'm glad that I didn't explore because had I have done, I would have stumbled on three shattered bodies. We spent the rest of

that night in someone's house, eventually going to live with a family on the far edge of town.

What had happened was the blowing up of an ammunition train not by the enemy but by a fire in an axle box of one of the wagons. The track curved round before the station and looking back the crew saw flames coming from the second wagon. Had the two men, Mr Gimball and Mr Nightall, stopped the train and fled, and who could have blamed them, forty four wagons each packed with 500lb bombs would have exploded completely destroying the town. Instead, they uncoupled the burning wagon and made to tow it to a siding. It blew up level with the station killing the fireman and badly wounding the driver, Mr Bridges the signalman was also killed. Both driver and fireman received the George Cross, the fireman posthumously. But for their bravery, we would all have been killed.

Leaving school in 1941 at the age of fourteen with no qualifications, I needed to take whatever job was available. No problem, Mother had already found one for me and I was to start the first Monday after leaving school, as an errand boy for George Taylor who kept a small grocer's shop at the bottom of Station Road. My first task was to take down the heavy wooden shutters from the two windows and then to sweep the shop: each day the dust had to be swept into a small space under the counter and on Mondays the accumulated dust shovelled up and disposed of. On this my first day I found a ten shilling note - worth perhaps £5 in today's money - which I handed to Mr Taylor. When the next week I found more money, Mum told me to tell him that I would be keeping any more money I found like this. Obviously, I didn't find any more: it had been a test of my honesty.

Another Monday chore was weighing out flour in three quarter pound bags: the flour was kept in large wooden

barrels covered with sackcloth and every time I took off the cover two large rats would jump out leaving me to clear out their droppings before I could use the flour. People get nostalgic about the old days of small shops not knowing the realities, knives for slicing bacon sharpened on the shop's door step for instance. It being wartime and every thing in short supply, there was very little actual erranding and most of my time was spent doing odd jobs and all for sixteen shillings (80p).

After eighteen months it was time to move on and I got a job in the local 'flea pit' as a projectionist having already worked there part time, as a rewind boy. The light which projects the picture on to the screen was an arc light powered by direct current. In our cinema this was generated by a Petters' diesel engine, started by lighting and screwing the cylinder into a device not unlike a Roman Candle and then vigorously turning the starting handle, sometimes the engine would stop during the performance and there would be a rush to restart it before the audience began to rip up the seats. The cinema had been built during the Great War and the wiring, switches, and lampholders in poor condition which led to many an electric shock.

I stuck with this job for only a few months, leaving to work on the land. This was a disastrous move. On my first day I was shown how to muck out the stables and straight away stuck the fork through my foot. Luckily the tine passed between my toes without damaging anything. Poor old Sam Howe, he must have rued the day I was born. One day he went off to market or something leaving me to chop up part of a tree. It was very hard wood and I was making little impression upon it, then seeing some soft looking wood I chopped up that. When Sam came back he was pleased at the amount chopped - until he saw that I had chopped up some

precious new wood that he needed to build a stall! It was a smallholding and apart from Sam I was the only one there. It was nice working with horses but I just was not strong enough so we parted. Years afterwards Sam came up to me in a pub. "You're a damn good lad Ray but you were no f-ing farmer!"

Something which still bothers is not speaking out against an anti Semitic outburst by a teacher at the local Grammar school after I had left school. There was an Air Training Corps squadron based on that school which I joined at sixteen, part of the training was academic and the incident came during an English lesson taken by Crouch, one of two brothers on the school staff. One of my class mates was Sammy Schuster, an evacuee from the Jews' Free School, Crouch was teaching the use of the apostrophe to indicate an abbreviation and asked for examples, getting 'phone from Sammy. This of course was a good example but the teacher laid into him verbally something rotten to the effect that it was a stupid reply. It was a totally uncalled for response and even at sixteen it was obvious to me that it was simply because Sammy was Jewish and I should have spoken out.

I wasn't always so amenable, when I was eleven I joined the church choir and played a part in a choirboys' strike. I'm not sure now what it was about but think it was connected to Mr Ward the choirmaster's irascibility and his habit of throwing hymn books at us in his frustration. Sitting next to me was Bob Parsons, a very weakly boy in spite of his size, and one who was always fainting at school. During the sermon one Matins Bob started to read a comic. Unfortunately for him he was spotted by the Lay Reader, Neal the Headmaster of the Grammar school, who picked up a book and brayed Bob's head against the back of the choir stall and all this while the Vicar the Reverend Peter Boughey (later to become a good friend to me) was preaching Christian love and tolerance.

A few years later I had a hand in another piece of bloody mindedness, at fourteen I had joined the 2nd Cambs and Suffolk Regiment's Cadet Force. We went to annual camp one year at Thetford Forest and came in contact with Sgt. Jagger the Permanent Staff Instructor, this man, a relic from the Great War, was obnoxious and what with him and generally being messed about by our 'leaders' some of us decided to refuse to follow any orders, that is we mutinied. I was given a direct order to do something and on my giving a direct refusal was promptly marched off under escort. It was all a farce and in the end all we mutineers walked off trudging the thirty or so miles home: I do remember being so tired that I slept the clock round. Two of my uncles, both ex soldiers went looking for Sgt. Jagger intending to thrash him but were unable to find him. This was very lucky for him because one of the uncles, George, had a ferocious temper, once throwing an American serviceman through a pub window merely for talking to George's wife, my Aunt Win. This poor lady, underwent a very traumatic experience at my hands. I would have been about ten, she was bending over laying the table while I stood behind her pretending that I was going to stick a fork up her backside, the other adults standing grinning. All grinning stopped when I decided to 'play for keeps' and plunge the fork deeply into her. I have no recollection of what happened afterwards but I bet she wasn't the only one hurt during that episode!

CHAPTER 2: SOLDIER BOY

Reaching seventeen in 1944 I decided to do my patriotic duty and join the army. By this time, I was working at Marshalls' aerodrome in Cambridge as an electrical fitter. When RAF planes had completed 240 hours flying time they came to us for servicing. The first type that I worked on were Airspeed Oxford advanced trainers, two engine 'kites': they had a ribbed structure covered by a wooden veneer and finished by a cloth skin covered by 'dope' and painted. My job was simply to fit exterior engine leads, aerials and check the bonding. When the Oxford contract finished we moved on to Albemarles and then, excitingly, to Mosquitoes.

It was while I was working here that I was involved in a strike. We electricians did not want to join in but finding myself surrounded by a group of menacing strikers whilst I was working alone I took the safe, cowardly way and walked off the job, it was the muttered threat of 'water tank' that fixed my mind! It was all something or nothing about getting paid builders' rates and not engineers' rates. I believe there was something like a farthing (0.14p) per hour at stake. All this with a World War going on…

When I went to enlist, they wanted me to get my parents' permission because at seventeen I was under age. I talked Mum into it but I knew my Dad, who was already in the army, would not be so easy, I got round this by lying, telling them that Dad was on a secret mission and could not be

contacted! They accepted this and after a medical I was given the King's shilling. Though I was now 14487206 Pte Garner R, I could not be 'called up' until I was 17 so had to wait until January 18th 1945. I was so impatient to get into uniform (I could have waited until conscripted at 18) but God was I to regret my haste?

My call up papers came at the end of 1944 ordering me to report to 9 Initial Training Corps at Maryhill Barracks, Glasgow. So here I was, seventeen & a half, never been out of the Cambs./West Suffolk area and with a head full of nonsense: look out Mr Hitler here I come!

War time trains were always packed full, and mainly with servicemen complete with kitbags and packs so guaranteeing an uncomfortable if companionable journey. The train arrived at Glasgow's Queen Street station at midnight. At this stage of the war the threat from German bombers had receded so that strict blackout precautions had eased but there was still no public lighting, blackout had become 'dim out'. All large stations had Railway Transport Officers RTO's and I duly reported to him. "Sorry chum, no transport you'll have to walk. It's two miles up the road, just follow the tramlines, you can't miss it". As you might guess, after a few yards the road branched off in several directions each taking the tramlines with it. Luckily for me, a dance hall was turning out and I asked two girls standing by the way, to direct me. They offered to walk the whole way with me, an example of the kindness with which I was to meet from Glaswegians everywhere. On arriving at the barracks and reporting to the guard room I was given two blankets and a pillow(no sheets or pillow cases) taken to a barrack room and shown my bed - a double bunk with straw filled palliasses. Welcome to the army. The next few days were awful, we were kitted out, documented, injected, vaccinated and given the run around by N.C.O's who

were probably scrapings from the Gorbals. This, of course, is completely unfair, all they were doing was their job and I was the dozy useless material with which they had to work.

A few days after this I did my first guard duty: forget about smart guardsmen pacing backwards and forwards before a gate. In my coarse, hand me down uniform, I just had to wander around the place, two hours on and four hours off. There was a relief from the boredom when the guard commander told me to help him raid the coal stores and the kitchen. "Yer want yer cocoa don't you lad?" Tragedy; going back to the guardroom condensed milk spilled from the already opened can I was carrying on to my great coat. I was glad of the stolen coal as it was a bitterly cold winter and I was 'frawn' up my arse (to use a fenland expression).

Soon I was to feel an emotion that up to then I did not know even existed, acute homesickness. So acute that I curled up on my bunk and cried my eyes out. What made it worse was the realisation that there could be no going back, even if miraculously they were to send me home things would never be the same as before. I had to soldier on and the days were filled with parades, marching, getting bawled at, and even at one point, woken from a day dream by being hurled across the barrack room. I only had myself to blame, if I had waited to be called up at eighteen the chances are that, like my friends, I would have been posted to Bury St Edmunds where the instructors would have been civilised East Anglians and not the ignorant barbarians of the Highland Light Infantry - and besides I would only be twenty two miles from home.

Initial training lasts six weeks but after two weeks orders came for me to be moved. Someone somewhere in the system had decided that I was too puny and needed building up and so I was posted to a Physical Development Centre based at Skegness in what in peace time had been the

Derbyshire Miners Rest home. Here military training took a back seat to intense physical training. Each day of the six weeks was to be spent running, jumping, and gym work. Of course I was just as useless at this as I had been at arms drill etc. Two incidents, we were doing forward rolls over the box while being watched by the C.O. I didn't make it the whole way, standing on my hands mid roll my arms collapsed and I landed on my head. "Haw haw," chortled the C.O., "come back that man and show us that trick again! Climbing a rope was taught me simply and directly, unable to bring up my feet high enough to grasp the rope between the sole of one foot and the arch of the other, I just stood there like a Wally. The problem was solved when an instructor lifted me up as far as he could and then smacked my backside with the end of the rope until I reached the top.

In spite of myself I did improve in fitness. In the first weekend they took us for a three mile route march, no rifle or equipment, and at the end I was breathless and beggared but after a few weeks I was able to do a fifteen mile march in battle order, steel helmet, and carrying a rifle with no problem. Progress was interrupted when I fell ill with what the MO called a febrile cold, I was laid out in the sick bay for over a week with a temperature well over a 100 degrees. Having missed time I was back coursed which meant another couple of weeks.

We were being trained for the final test in which dressed in battle order we each had to lay down our rifle, pick up someone of equal height, run a hundred yards, go over an obstacle course, go on a two mile run and walk, and then after a 15 minute rest do a twelve mile march. I never got that far although I could have easily done it, but it was not to be. I woke up one morning unable to walk as both my knees had seized up. Half walking half crawling I managed to get on sick

parade and was ordered into Casualty Reception Station and put to bed. No one told me anything or put a name to my illness, just, "Shut up and go to sleep!" After about a week, I was put on a stretcher, wrapped in a thick blanket and taken by ambulance to a military hospital in Lincoln and still no clue as to what was wrong with me.

Eventually I was told that I was suffering from 'sub acute rheumatism' and treated with a horrible tasting medicine, sodium salycilate, liquid aspirin to you and me.

I enjoyed my time there, even the medicine was sometimes sweetened by one of the Sisters who always gave me a sweet afterwards. She was the night sister who brought me cups of tea in the mornings which I earned by taking bowls of hot water to the bed ridden patients for their wash. She was very kind and very different to the day sister who was forever making me tidy up my bedside cabinet. "Young man. If you think I am going to take the place of your Mother, you have another think coming!"

Actually, I quite enjoyed being there, no parades, good food and my knees now loosened I could roam around the hospital at will. The draw back was no leave until I had finished my course at the PDC. I wrote out a letter pointing out that I had been in the army three months and had little hope of getting leave for the foreseeable future and went to see the medical officer and asked if I could have leave. He told me to go and write a letter and when I produced one he laughed, said I was well prepared and granted me a week's leave and off I went. Because I was a patient I had to wear hospital blues, bright blue jacket and trousers, white shirt and startlingly red tie. The old lady next door to my Mother, with memories presumably of the Great War, burst into tears at the sight!

During the seven days' leave my rheumatism returned so that my stay at the hospital had to be extended, more sodium salicylic acid - and more nagging from day sister! However, after three weeks I was discharged and sent to a Convalescent Home at Paston Hall Peterborough. It was 5 May 1945, the end of the war in Europe. We were taken by ambulance to be greeted by Matron. This splendid lady, garnished with a long row of medal ribbons, gave us each an orange, unattainable usually, and sent us to bed at half past nine.

The next day was V.E. day with everyone celebrating. We were wondering how we were going to celebrate because although we would be allowed out our Hospital Blues would keep us out of pubs or anywhere there was alcohol. We didn't have long to wonder because a crowd of local people came to the door and took us to their street party. Although I enjoyed myself I felt very embarrassed, here we were being feted and I had been in the services only three months, I hadn't even been posted to a unit. I was dreading being asked where and how I was wounded, however, no one did so I was safe.

The next three weeks passed very pleasantly with only the odd bit of potato peeling and the rest of the time getting better, we were allowed out in the afternoons to Peterborough (It seems funny to think that I might have seen your nine and a half year old Mum in my travels) but not of course to enter any licensed premises. People were very kind to us letting us into the pictures free not even having to queue and refusing to take our fares on the buses. I palled up with a Welsh lad who had had an appendectomy, a bit of a rogue but a good sort. Our military betters were represented by a Scottish sergeant from the Highland Light Infantry married to a Soham girl and who seemed to be miffed because I did not know either him or his wife.

Watch out! there's another cliché coming out, all good things come to an end and at the end of the three weeks I was posted to a Convalescent Depot at Kempston, on the edge of Bedford. These Depots were places where men who had been in hospital were eased back into Army life. We no longer wore the ludicrous Blues and so we could at last "whet our whistles". Life here, while not quite the bed of roses that Paston Hall had been, was still very pleasant compared to Skegness, no guard duties, few parades and only light duties in the kitchens along with some A.T.S. girls.

The normal time span in these Depots was four weeks but mine lasted twelve thanks to shadows on my lungs. The procedure was that before posting back to a unit you were interviewed by the Chief Medical Officer and asked after your health. Each time, I answered more or less truthfully that I had headaches and each time my posting was cancelled. I had no idea what was wrong with me and it was only many years later that anyone told me about the shadows. Long after I had left the Army a chest specialist here in Keighley showed me my X-rays and explained that at some time in my childhood I had probably been infected with T.B. but had not developed the disease.

One of the good things about being at this place was that it was fairly near home and I got home most weekends. Being able to go home - and having the money for the train fare were not always the same thing. However, there was a simple answer to this - travel each week on the one ticket and then dodging the ticket collector at Ely station. I managed to do this for several weeks but on one occasion didn't make it. Telling him that I had not had the time to buy a ticket at Cambridge station I opened my purse for the money, the bespectacled, denture chewing, nosy little bugger had the gall to peer in and take out the long out of date ticket that I had

been using to flash. After a lecture he took my fare and let me go.

There was another time when I almost came a cropper and this time it was not dishonesty but cockiness that led to hubris. In wartime - and the war against Japan was still going on - any serviceman on leave had to carry his leave pass with him and on some stations Military Policemen (Red Caps) kept watch. This particular week end Mum had come with me as far as Cambridge, having said goodbye to her and knowing that I had a pass I swaggered pass the two MP's and when they stopped me and demanded my pass I nonchalantly reached for it. O horror, I'd lost it and had to suffer the humiliation of being marched off under escort before the eyes of my poor old Mum! Luckily they believed my story and after looking at my AB64 (Service Identity Book)they let me go but warning me of what would happen if they found that I was lying. That they did check was proved a couple of days later when I was called to the guard room and told to thank my lucky stars that the camp had confirmed my story.

So the time went by. In August of that year (1945) the Japanese surrendered and Victory over Japan VJ day was announced. It passed over quietly, all the celebrations had been on VE Day. Two things I remember: we all went out of the camp and marched singing around the local streets; another was being given a pass and along with a Yank hitch hiking to Cambridge stopping at quite a few pubs.

Eventually they tired of me and sometime around September posted me to the G.S.C. Depot at what is now Bradford Boys' Grammar School: this building completed at the beginning of the war had been immediately commandeered. I should have explained at the beginning that when I joined recruits were not enrolled in any Regiment or Corps. Posting to one was done after initial training and a

battery of mental and physical tests which was supposed to ensure that round pegs went into round holes. So here I was, after eight months in the Army and still not finished my initial training, back in fact to where I had been in January!
One consolation, they were not sending me back to Skegness and its physical training drudgery. Having been absent from my unit (Glasgow) I had been "Y" listed.

There were other lads like me starting again: until the men already in training had completed we had to stay in HQ Company and there for three weeks we stayed, they had no idea what to do with us and so apart from a bit of potato peeling we did little or nothing. I did achieve one thing, a Welsh lad and I spent an afternoon throwing spuds into a peeling machine and then taking out the eyes of the peeled ones and to pass the time away he taught me how to pronounce:
Llanfairpwllgyngychgogerychwilllantisiliogogogoch!
The most unpleasant duty for which I 'clicked' was guarding prisoners awaiting courts martial. There were a number of men who had deserted or not even responded to their call up papers.
The guardroom was a windowless basement and the prisoners sat huddled up around a coke stove smoking tab ends which they passed from one to the other, it was tragi-comic to see them puffing away at a dog end one to about six of them. I felt no pity, they had 'made their beds' and we had to make sure that they kept lying on them.

Then at last, after three weeks, we were transferred to a training company stationed at Belle View Barracks just off Manningham lane and my initial training had begun. Life was hard but interesting; we drilled, learnt how to handle a rifle and even got to fire the things, one very exciting day we were taken to the Ranges at Hawksworth to throw live grenades.

Some memories: I needed to go sick one morning, something much discouraged. Sick parade involved turning up at the drill hall at 6.30am with all your kit laid out for the Orderly Sergeant's inspection, if he found a fault you were given a choice, if you would voluntarily withdraw from the parade nothing would happen to you but if you persisted in going sick you were charged with having the fault. He found no fault with me but ridiculed me about my steel helmet. Preparing my kit the night before, I'd had the bright idea of cleaning my tin hat with boot polish and when he saw it in all its polish he shouts, "O, lovely! We've got a bloody Air Raid Warden here! Sitting in the barrack room one day, a much older bloke comes up to me and puts a magazine into my hand telling me that I looked intelligent, it was the 'Anarchist', so that was my second contact with left wing politics. I had no idea what it was all about but I remember there was an article by Herbert Spencer. A third memory is of going to the Alhambra and seeing Troise and his Mandoliers.

After a fortnight in to the six weeks basic training there came another hiatus, good God! was I never to get out of basic training? It had been decided and nobody had asked me, that the whole lot of us were to leave Bradford and move to Whittington Barracks in Lichfield, at least they took us by train and we only had to march to the Midland Station. One thing I must say for myself is that at last I was getting a grip on soldiering even getting complemented for my efforts in arms drill (he had noticed the blood running down the back of my hand!)and at last my 'six weeks' initial training was finished eleven months late and I was posted to a Drivers' Training Company in Sutton Veney near Warminster Wiltshire. I was now T/14487206 Driver Garner, Royal Army Service Corps.

My first driving lesson would not have been out of place in a Carry On film. We were driven out into the country,

way away from any other traffic and took turns at the wheel being shown clutch and brake pedals and told, "Push each one of them when I tell yer." All went well until I came to a T junction. "Put yer foot on the brake." and of course I put it down on the accelerator, the louder he swore at me the harder went my foot down and we crossed the intersection and straight through a hedge. However, I did eventually get the hang of driving and even passed my test, this was made a little easier by cheating in the blind reversing test. We went out in a group with an instructor and took the test one by one, when the one on test had to reverse on his blind side the rest of us laid a trail of twigs for him to follow. So that was how I came to be a full licence holder for the pink ticket they gave us entitled us to a civilian licence. But my Carry On days were not yet over. After we had qualified, we then had to drive in convoy, accompanied by an instructor. I was at the head of the convoy going through a small town, meeting in the middle with an American convoy going in the opposite direction and unsure of what to do I stopped, causing both convoys to become log jammed. I couldn't say how things turned out because the instructor opened my door and flung me out into the road!

The time was now sometime before Christmas 1945, I had been in the army nearly a year and at last my training was all but complete, all I had to do now was a specialist driving course of some sort. However, the "buggering about" of 206 Driver Garner was not yet finished. A dozen or so of us were called to the Orderly Room and told, "You have been chosen as the most intelligent and you are being sent on a Clerks' course". So, after a week's Christmas leave I reported to 12 Supply Training Battalion, Cirencester.

The camp, which had once been an American military hospital, was sited in a large park part of the Bathurst estate

just outside the town. It had been decided that I was to be a Technical Motor Transport, TMT. clerk and so started twelve rather pleasant weeks in a rural setting with little or no military bullshit. One duty I did fall in for was gate security and made two mistakes, the first, when a woman civilian drew up in a sports car. "Name please Madam?", "Palmer", "Mrs or Miss?", “Actually, it's Lady Palmer.” The second could have landed me in trouble, another sports car, this time driven by a bloke in army uniform no stripes, pips. "What's your name chum?” "Chum? What do you think these are?" showing me the Warrant Officer II insignia on his cuffs. Had I have said, as I felt like saying, "Yes, On the top of a Fry's cocoa tin," who knows, perhaps he would have had me shot?

The course itself was interesting. A TMT clerk's job was to take charge of the ordering and supplying of every item needed for the servicing of a company's transport. As you would expect with the army, it involved paperwork upon paperwork and we had to learn the nomenclature and distribution of many forms. We were rather like bank clerks but dealing with vehicle stores rather than money. Learning to type was a bonus. Our instructor had literary pretensions chanting, "Gather ye, gather ye, hounds of hell, Bigotry, Famine, and Plague," each morning as we lined up at the front of the classroom but I don't remember anything else about him.

The only person I remember was the lad I went mates with, going to church with him on Sunday mornings and to the pictures. I do not remember his name but he was a likeable, grammar school type. Funnily, I do remember the two films we saw, State Fair and The Picture of Dorian Grey. Dorian Grey began with a quotation which began an enthusiasm in me for the Rubyiat of Omar Kyam which lasted

for years. The film also gave me a liking for the writings of Oscar Wilde. The quotation was:

> I sent my soul up to the invisible
> Some letter of the afterlife to spell
> But by and by, my soul returned to me
> And said, I myself
> Am both heaven and hell.

Oddly enough, I have never been able to find that verse in any copy.

In about March 1946 the twelve weeks were up, I passed all the written and practical tests and now after fifteen months having learnt to handle a rifle and a typewriter with equal unease was posted to my first working Company, don't remember its title but it was based at Long Eaton, Nottinghamshire. Not a very fruitful time of my life, I seemed to spend most of it being bollocked by an ancient Mechanist Sergeant Major but did get myself confirmed, by Rawlinson the Bishop of Derby. I also bought a gun, a 22 six chambered revolver + ammunition, God knows why! At this time I was still quite a religious kind of bloke who liked to go to church on Sundays but the church in Long Eaton was a revelation to me. Services at St. Andrew's Soham were wholly Low Church, little or no ritual, sugary hymns, and the church itself without any ornamentation other than a plain cross upon the altar whereas here there was elaborate ritual, candles, clouds of incense, and the beautiful vestments of the priests and it all fitted my temperament like a glove. It was my first encounter with Anglo Catholicism and it's hold on me was to last for a great many years, even now, when there is little left of my faith, I can be affected by the beauty of a Sung Eucharist following the order of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

I asked the priest in charge if I could be confirmed and for the next few weeks spent many evenings being instructed on a one to one basis, the classes for the next confirmation having already started. At first I found it difficult, having to do a lot of rethinking, it was all totally strange and I found it hard to let go of what I had grown up with. After a while I accepted what I was now being taught and agreed to be confirmed. They were very strict on protocol and before we were allowed to take our first communion we had to attend a rehearsal. As you know, in Catholic practice the Wafer is not put into your hand, but directed on to your tongue - all very weird! You were also expected to make your Confession.

CHAPTER 3: OVERSEAS

Fortunately I wasn't to stay long with the Company and was put on an overseas draft, given three weeks' embarkation leave and posted to a Transit Camp at Thetford, Norfolk, scene of our youthful Army Cadet Force mutiny, and here we stayed for three monotonous weeks. They had no idea what to do with us; it was Bradford Depot all over again. Every day we had to parade and be inspected by our unbeloved O.C. who, because of his Japanese looking face and steel rimmed glasses, was christened Tojo after the Japanese War Criminal but not of course to his Japanese face!

In the Services, if you left your unit without permission you were posted Absent Without Leave (AWOL) this was a relatively minor offence but if you went absent, having been warned for overseas you were immediately posted as a deserter, a much graver offence. This did not stop me slipping home at the weekend and getting back unseen. After getting away with it once, I went to see Tojo and explained that as I lived nearby and could get home and back in a day, could I please have a day's leave? I had a bad moment when he asked me how I knew I could do it so quickly but convinced him without giving the game away and he signed the chitty. One up to me but no doubt my portrait up in the

attic gained another mark? Mum's favourite phrase whenever I had hurt myself as a child was, "That's God's punishment." and so perhaps the theft of my Pay Book and money was punishment for my temporary desertion and subsequent lies?

After three weeks we were shipped off to Egypt ('Egg wiped' in the vernacular). It was six months after the final end of the war and shipping, with servicemen returning from all over the world, was in short supply and we had to go by "Medloc" a mixture of land and sea. We were taken by rail to Dover lodged overnight in barracks built by Hore-Belisha, he of the Belisha beacons, and ferried over to Calais. This of course was my first trip abroad and it was fascinating, though after German occupation, France was in a very poor way.

The next stage was a day and a half's journey in third class un-upholstered carriages sleeping the first night on the wooden seats and the second the luggage rack. Occasionally the train would stop at a station and we would be fed and watered, coming to rest at last at Hyeres, not far from Toulon. We were to stay here for a week or two and it was here that my bloody mindedness made itself known. One of the Privates was appointed our leader and this I would not tolerate, not because of jealousy but because I refused to take orders from some jumped up "prefect like" figure. When he gave me an order I went to the sergeant who told me to take no notice of him. Our temporary Grupenfuhrer was annoyed at this and vowed never to give me another order. So that was all right then!

The two or three weeks we spent here were very pleasant with lots of good food including the first white bread I had seen since the beginning of the war. We were able to go into town but with my money stolen in Thetford, I stayed in camp.

As someone from the lowlands of East Anglia I was fascinated by a mountain that could be seen in the distance and set out to climb it. It was Mt. Coudon and from the military refuse and a German grave it was obvious that it had been fought over. Not being used to hilly country I had been deceived by the distance and was buggered by the time I had started the actual climb, nearly giving up but pushed on by pride. During my climb I met my first Frenchmen, farmers tending their terraced fields, who gave me water from the stream. Having got to the top I found that there was a road from the other side up which people came in a lorry and were now playing boules.

After a couple of weeks of this rather less than Arcadian spell, we were put on board the Empire Arquebus one of the Liberty ships mass produced in their hundreds by Fords, metal ships hastily fabricated with plates welded not riveted as in traditional ship building. So began my first ever non-ferry sea journey.

We woke after our first night at sea to the sight of Mt Stromboli sticking out of the sea and then even more exciting sailing through the Straits of Messina. Wow! It was another world, one completely outside my experience. I can't remember how long the journey took but it was very pleasant laid out on the decks in the Mediterranean sun. There were a lot of very happy lads from an airborne division, happy because the Derby had been won by a horse called Airborne which had carried a lot of their money.

One night, just before dawn, we ran into a thick, foetid smell so thick one could almost feel it. Welcome to the land of the Pharoahs! Next morning we put into Alexandria and the first thing I saw was a red headed Arab lad standing on the dock shouting, "Och lads, ahm a fookin Scotsman, dinna ye ken!" We were taken to the station and put on a train

surrounded by beggars and would-be sellers of ice cream, fezzes and "feelthy" post cards. One lad was daft enough to buy one and found one very un-erotic card on top of a bunch of ordinary cards.

Immediately the train started to pull out of the station a shower of rocks was hurled, making us quickly pull up the shutters on the windows. One idiot, not me, didn't move quickly enough and a stone came through hitting his neighbour. Whether this hostility was nationalism or disappointment at not selling us anything, it was a disagreeable experience. Our destination was to be Tahag an RASC Holding Camp in the Canal Zone where we were to spend three weeks acclimatisation, "Getting our knees brown" in army parlance.

The Canal Zone is sand, flat, uninteresting sand spreading seemingly for miles in every direction and Tahag was in the middle of it. The next three weeks was to be the most boring time of our lives. We now dressed in khaki drill, shorts in the day and long trousers in the evening, webbing had to be scrubbed, not blancoed. There was no where to go and nothing to do except eat, sleep and endlessly scrub webbing and polish our brasses. Life wasn't made any better for me when, as well as getting dysentery, one of the instructing Sergeants - another Scotsman - took an intense dislike to me. He tried to put me on a charge but I wriggled out of it on a technicality. Poor chap, he just wasn't up to it!

Relief came when I was posted out - and what a farce that was to become. My Movement Orders said that I was to go by train to Cairo's Abbassia Barracks and then fly to Benghazi in Libya. On reporting to the barracks, my orders were changed, instead of flying to Benghazi I was to go by sea.

It is all so long ago that I can't remember for how long I stayed in Cairo but it was at least two months during which I

did almost nothing though I did click for two spells as a Regimental Policeman. My first stint was quite alarming, it was to take a prisoner from the King's Own African Rifles for exercise. At about six foot six he towered above me and I, unarmed, wondered what on earth would happen if he took a dislike to me? However, things seemed to go OK and we went for a gentle stroll round the Barracks, no problem - until he decided he wanted to go to the African NAAFI which, in those unenlightened days, was out of bounds to any white people and certainly to any prisoner of any colour! I was always a coward so of course we went for a beer, with me paying. Things got worse when he says, "Now we go to white NAFFI." So we went to the white NAFFI and sat out side drinking yet another beer at my expense - and great risk! Now came danger: walking across the square came no other than the R.S.M. Regimental Sergeant Major. What was I to do? If he saw an R.P. drinking, God help me. No problem, taking off my R.P.'s armband I simply became a squady having a drink with a mate. Please notice that a black face in a white area did not attract anyone's attention.

The second stint was very unpleasant, having to do guard in his cell, a supposedly suicidal prisoner, two hours on and four off throughout the night. If he had tried to kill himself I could not have stopped him because I spent most of my shifts asleep on a concrete table. Ah the easy sleep of youth, to do straight away what it now takes 40mg of Temazepam and that not always very successfully.

All things come to an end, however, and I finally got new Movement Orders, I was to go by train to Tobruk, Libya and then finish the journey to Benghazi by road. This excited me, I would be travelling across the Western Desert just four years after the Eighth Army had pushed Rommel's Afrika Corps back to defeat.

We had a few interesting days waiting for the shuttle service from Benghazi which was run by 622 Coy. RASC the one that I would be joining. Tobruk had had little done to it and was mostly as it must have been at the time of the fighting. Libya had been an Italian colony and what was left of the town showed very much of the Italian style.

When the shuttle trucks arrived I was in for a shock. "Which Company are you going to?"

"Yours."

"Where have you come from?"

"Tahag."

"That's bloody funny, we're all going back there next week, the Company is being broken up!

That was lovely, all those miles, all those weeks, still hundreds of miles from Benghazi and for what? Just for the pleasure of going all the way back! Was somebody, somewhere trying to lose me?

Never mind. It was thrilling to retrace the Eighth Army's route along the Libyian Desert. Apart from the ruined towns of Derna and Mersah Matruh, and the odd Arab, all there was to see was empty desert plus the occasional abandoned German armoured vehicle. One of the oddest memories is of how, whenever we stopped, a man would pop out from nowhere offering "eggsabread" and proffering a slice of bread and a small egg. Where did he come from? To whom did he normally sell? Another thing I remember is passing through a battered triumphal arch, one of Mussolini's empty gestures.

We reached the outskirts of Benghazi one evening and were billeted in what had been an Italian army barracks, intact, airy with red tiled floors. The first person to speak to me was the Provost Sergeant who wanted to know whether Driver X had come with us, saying that X had a charge (crime) sheet

"nine and a half pages long." I remembered this bloke, a proto skinhead always surrounded by very shady people, who had boasted to me that he had wangled a job in Abbassia barracks and so had skived out of the Benghazi posting.

I was a week in Benghazi with nothing to do except for one night's guard duty wandering round outside armed with a Thompson sub-machine gun loaded with five rounds. A fat lot of use I would have been, thank God the war was over! As the sole arrival I attracted curiosity and, of course, there was the usual idiot wanting to see what I was made of and being unpleasantly surprised when he found out.

Talking of the war, there were many German prisoners of war, still wearing their Africa Korps uniforms, who were employed driving trucks and who drove past us when we tried to cadge lifts from them, the b*******s! There was quite a scandal about these poor blokes, according to what would now be called Red Tops, some of them were being used as personal servants to the wives of officers, sometimes in doubtful circumstances - but there, what else are scandal sheets for? I met a German prisoner of war in England, a paratrooper and working as a mechanic in the workshops of the Company in Long Eaton. They were short of food and he asked me for some loaves of bread and in exchange gave me a handmade ring and taught me the German words of Lily Marlene

Meanwhile back in Benghazi, after a week of doing nothing, the Company set off for Tahag with us hoi polloi travelling in the backs of American "Mack" ten ton trucks. Our crafty driver put tins of Macanochies' meat and vegetables to heat on his exhaust manifold so we got something of a hot meal at our stops. At one stop we were given rations of hard tack and bully beef. We were supposed to get one carton of tins and one packet of biscuits between five but the officer

dishing them out lost patience and just threw them to be scrambled for. I was with a couple of big lads who got themselves a whole carton of bully and a whole packet of biscuits and shared them with me. We stopped once or twice overnight each time having to sleep either in the back of the truck or on the ground neither being comfortable and both bloody cold.

We'd been told that our last stop before Tahag would be a transit camp at Giza, site of the Pyramids and the Sphinx, so we spent the last lap in great excitement. It was late afternoon when we got to Giza and they were just as they were in all the picture cards, and that was the disappointing thing. Goodness knows what I was expecting but there they were and they did nothing for me! What a let down, was I already blasé about new experiences?

At Tahag we set up camp as a Company and spent another few weeks doing nothing. I managed to pick up in succession tinea, ringworm, and scabies, at least that was what successive MO's called them. Because we were in the middle of the desert, water was scarce and we were forbidden to take a shower except in the morning and evenings but thanks to my fungal infections, I was given a chitty allowing me to shower at any time. Childishly, instead of showing this to the guardroom before my shower I just went in and of course, was seen and ordered to report to the duty officer to whom I proudly showed my chitty. As I said, childish behaviour.

My posting when it finally came was to 63 Coy. RASC, attached to the 6th Airborne Division and stationed at Gaza Ridge Palestine. This was excellent news, I was going to the Holy Land and I would be wearing a neat red beret instead of the stupid misshapen khaki beret I had worn since joining up. I don't remember any of the journey except that it was first by train to Gaza and then by open truck to the camp.

We were given temporary billets in tents and here once again life took on a Carry On aspect. Feeling very thirsty I went to the water tap dressed only in vest and shorts and who should come by, except CSM Jones, nicknamed woof woof? Rooted to the spot I waited, but not for long, after having looked me up and down he bellows, "Who are you? What are you? I thought we only had two rogues in the company, now I see we have three! Look at that vest. Fill it up! Thankfully, after continuing to glare at me for a while he went off. We were to meet again, and soon.

Next day all new entrants had to go on O.C's Orders, webbing scrubbed white, boots and brasses polished and generally "bulled" up to the eyebrows. Now, never having been on a charge, I had never been on Orders before so that when we got the order, "Quick march!" I stepped out at the usual pace while all the others set off with the rapid small steps that were the usual pace which meant that I got to the doorway long after the others. After the CO had had his say we got the order "Right turn, quick march!" By this time I had forgotten about the rapid steps and set off slowly and because I was now the one in front the whole line went into a shunt. Sorting ourselves out, I waited. I didn't have long to wait, footsteps came towards me, hot breath blew into my ear and a loud whispering voice hissed, "I might have f-----g known it would be you!" It was of course, my good friend the C.S.M.

Luckily there wasn't a vacancy for a TMT clerk (or perhaps the CSM had had enough of me) so I was moved to 398 Coy. on the same camp and here the welcome was very different. I had just put my kit down when I was summoned to the CO of my new company who regretted my being messed about and assured me that this was the end of my wanderings. In fact, I was to stay with the company until my demob two years later.

Perhaps I should pause here for a word about the unit in which I was now serving? There were two sections of the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) - or Ali Sloper's Cavalry in World War 1 humour's parlance, Supply and Transport and my unit was part of the transport section. Our job was to take supplies to the other units in our Division. 398 Coy. was attached to the 6th Airborne Division.

This was the division which had landed in Normandy by parachute and glider in June 1944 although, of course, those men had long since gone. Like other transport companies, 398 had its own Workshop Platoon with its vehicle mechanics, electricians and so on to service and repair the 3 ton lorries, 15 cwt pick up trucks, and motor cycles, all under the command of an officer, and a Mechanist Sergeant Major who was equal in rank with to a Regimental Sergeant Major. MSM's, unlike RSM's who often appeared barely literate, were well educated and were qualified Class 1 in many of the workshop trades. I didn't always see eye to eye with Trevor Merrick but he was one of the few upper ranks for whom I had any respect. We T/MT clerks were overseen by Sergeant (Mac) McKenzie who, rumour had it, was a medical student doing his National Service. A nice enough bloke - for a Scotsman!

The governing of Palestine had been mandated to Britain at the end of the First World War on the defeat of its previous "owner", Turkey. I've tried not to use the cliché, "poisoned chalice" but that is what the Mandate was. After the Romans had expelled the Jews and they themselves had left, the land was settled by Arabs who naturally saw it as their homeland but from the 19th century, with the emergence of Zionism, Jews had begun to return and settle in small numbers.

In 1917 the British government promised that Palestine would be a Jewish homeland (the Balfour Declaration), and this in spite of the promise made to the Arabs that Palestine would remain Arab. The period between the end of the war and 1939 saw armed hostility between the two sides with the British army having to keep the peace, and not always successfully. There had been an Arab revolt in the late thirties and some Jews had taken to militancy.

I'm hazy about the details but do know that there was a gang of gunmen led by Isaac Stern and a fascist terrorist group the Irgun Zwei Lumei led, in my day, by Menachim Begin who later on became Prime Minister of Israel. When the Second World War ended, many of the European Jews who had survived the holocaust tried to make their way into Palestine but the British Government allowed in only a small quota at a time. Don't put too much reliance on what I am saying, it's all of sixty years ago and ancient memories like mine have a habit of distorting things.

Jewish organisations like the Haganah, a semi-military defence force formed between the wars, ran illegal boatloads from Europe trying to smuggle in as many people as possible. These boats were often overloaded and in a less than seaworthy condition. When, as often happened, they were intercepted by the Navy they were escorted into Haifa, the people disembarked, deloused (that should give you an idea of their condition) and taken to an internment camp in Cyprus. It was the Army's job to oversee this operation and all the while this was going on the terrorists, like today's IRA, did their damndest by bomb and bullet to try to force Britain to leave Palestine and allow the Jewish people to set up their own independent State. Two of the worst atrocities were the blowing up of the King David hotel in Jerusalem killing 100 people and the hanging of three British sergeants from the

Education Corps, this was in revenge for the judicial hanging of four Jewish terrorists.

Most of the trouble was in the north of the country so that Gaza being in the south was relatively peaceful but we did have to be very careful, going out only in groups and with our personal weapons. Because so many people were needed on guard each night guard duty came round frequently and off we would go, two hours on and four off, rifle, bayonet, 100 rounds of ammunition and carrying a Very pistol. In the winter the nights could be very cold and I have memories of doing 'stag' in battledress, airborne jacket, greatcoat and, when no one was looking, a blanket over my shoulders and still being frozen up to my back side(frawn up my arse, in the language of my Cambridgeshire childhood! One of my happier memories is of bathing in the sea under armed guard and afterwards lying on the beach eating grapes and drinking Palestinian wine. It wasn't all bad!

We spent a year at Gaza Ridge and then the Company moved to Hadera a town on the coast half way between Gaza and Haifa. We were now nearer to possible trouble and it was here that I heard my first shots fired in anger. One night we were raided by terrorists. I was on guard outside the armoury and because stealing weapons was their usual target it wasn't the best place to be. Standing there on my own I felt anxious and exposed but after a few minutes, the lads turned up to collect their rifles and everything looked different. The raid didn't last very long and no action came my way. We were raided again during daylight sometime afterwards and this time I was on guard at the main gate. I have to admit that standing with a loaded rifle in my hands and with a background of shots being fired I felt quite the warrior but again no action. I heard later that two lots of our blokes standing at opposite ends of the camp had been firing at each other! Another time I

heard shots was rather funny, a group of us were standing outside Haifa Station drinking tea when shots were fired somewhere to the left of us. Across the road from us an Arab supernumerary policeman, with a smug look on his face, was hurrying away. A bullet nicking the wall just above his head took the smile off his face!

I quite enjoyed my time at Hadera, working now in the T/MT office but still doing frequent guard duty, coming off duty at half past six in the morning and, after a shower and breakfast, straight to work. One of my odder jobs was that of official scrounger, vehicle spares were in short supply and I was given a driver and escort and sent to various RAOC depots. On arriving at each place I went round knocking on doors, putting on the charm, and trying to explain why our workshops should be given priority. It was all a tremendously cheeky thing to do but it usually succeeded. Anytime I returned empty handed, Mr Merrick was not best pleased with me.

One of my pals was Bert Hanks, an elderly looking cove but a good sort, sometimes after a night's boozing in the NAAFI, Bert would collect me and see me back to the tent. I can remember one night in particular being led by the hand as I was so plastered. My most disgraceful memory is of going on pay parade one Christmas time "half cut" and being teased. Stupidly, I wandered up to the MSM and slurred, "They say I'm drunk Sir. "Instead of slapping me into the guardroom as he should have done, he ordered an NCO to put me to bed and sent my pay up to me. Although no soldier, I was good at my job, I was a Class 1 tradesman.

An odd memory. We were to be visited by the Divisional Commander who, incidentally was married to Daphne du Maurier. Now, I was always smartly turned out and in the whole of my service was never checked on any

inspection so was hurt to hear Mr Merrick tell someone to, "Find Garner, put him in a lorry and drive him round the camp until the General has gone." When I pointed out to him that I was as smartly turned out as anyone else he said, "I know, but I'm not having the General meet your bloody mouth!" I wonder what he meant?

My relationship with NCO's, and the Army as a whole, was a bit odd, they seemed to look at me askance, as if they didn't know what to make of me. Someone once heard a visiting officer ask of me, "Who's that?" and getting the reply, "Oh, that's Garner, we don't take any notice of him." Another time, during my early training, I arrived on parade at the last minute and heard, "Here he is, all the intelligence in the world, and still doesn't bloody know the time of day!"

My strangest job ever was potential strike breaker. On the bigger camps, like the one at Hadera, there was a cinema run by a civilian projectionist and our projectionist was threatening to go on strike for some reason I never knew. Because of my civvy experience I was detailed to shadow his job and in preparation was sent on a projectionist course in Jerusalem. This turned out to be a holiday with pay. The course lasted two weeks and was a doddle. When I rang my unit's Transport Sergeant (who was also Acting Company Sergeant Major) I was told that all the transport was in use. Acting the ingénue, I said that I didn't mind waiting. It was three weeks before they came for me and that meant I had three weeks doing nothing but explore the city and prop up the bar in the NAAFI. What made it even nicer was that, separated from my unit, I was allowed a daily casual payment of £1 (perhaps £10 in today's money) and of course bed and board was free. Mind you, 'board' was strictly accurate as I was sleeping on a wooden floor, not only that but as a visitor I was not allowed to put my rifle in the armoury so had to sleep with

the bloody thing. Back in the unit I was in trouble, "What the hell do you mean telling Sergeant X that you, "Didn't mind waiting."? said a very cross MSM. "Sir", I replied, "He's the acting CSM, I'm a mere Private. Is it my fault if he's daft enough to take notice of me?! He agreed.

At this time of my life I was still very religious, or at least as far as attendance at the Eucharist was concerned, and the Army was very understanding of this, laying on a driver and escort to take me to the Anglican Cathedral in Haifa each Sunday morning. This was very nearly my undoing, one Sunday after the service while I stood outside waiting to be picked up, a very attractive young woman coming out of a nearby office smiled sweetly and said, "Do I get an escort?" Flummoxed, I Mumbled something and she disappeared which was just as well because a few minutes later a Jeep went by bearing both the MSM and the CSM. If they had seen me walking on my own, contrary to the 'at least four' rule, I would have been in serious trouble. Besides, she might well have been a terrorist setting up a "honey trap" as the women do in Northern Ireland. Like the incident at the Fair all those years before, I shall never know.

My religion or, more accurately, my religiosity got me a holiday. Each unit was supposed to have a "Padre's Hour" when we listened to a talk on faith and morals but because of pressure of work we couldn't have one. To make up for this, each unit in the Division was given a place on a five day Religious Course and for 398 Coy. I was it. So hey ho off to Nazareth where we were to stay.

I don't remember much about the course except the trips out. One of these was to Jerusalem visiting the Holy Sites and walking along the Via Dolorosa and going into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre took my breath away. For 10mils in Palestinian money (2/s) I was given a certificate of

Pilgrimage to the Holy Tomb signed by the Reverend Archmandrite of Jerusalem. With it was a piece of wax in which was embedded what looked like small flakes of plaster but, I was assured, were pieces of the stone which had sealed the Tomb. We also had a day in Bethlehem and went in to the Church of the Nativity. I had already been there one Christmas Eve and remember sitting outside on a bitterly cold night singing carols. I also remember the tawdry Mother of pearl rosaries and bibles covered in olive wood. It made me feel quite sympathetic towards Luther. Going back to the course, we spent a half day bathing on the shores of Lake Tiberias (the biblical Sea of Galilee) and being eaten by horse flies.

We were given some time off and I used part of it to go to the pictures in Tiberias and see La Bete Humaine, one of those typical post war French films all of which seemed to me to have a scene in which Jean Gabin - fag in mouth and in a string vest - was in bed in a railway terrace with Simon Simone. The dialogue was in French with subtitles in German and added subtitles on each side of the screen, Arabic on the left and English on the right. While the German subtitles kept up with the dialogue, we only got one English word every so often. The drama on the screen was almost matched by what happened to me afterwards. Having got back to where we were staying, I turned in and went straight to sleep but woke up to find the lights on and two dirty great Military Policemen standing one on each side of my bed demanding to know where I had been and what time I had got in. I was even more alarmed when a pyjama'd Padre appeared but was relieved to hear him tell the Redcaps, "It wouldn't have been him!"

I found out next morning what had happened, a shopkeeper had been robbed by armed men wearing the red berets of the Airborne Division like mine. We were lined up

for an Identity Parade and the shopkeeper picked out three blokes and was then taken out of the room. Meanwhile we changed places and he was brought back for another look, picking out the same three instantly. Oddly enough, I had had them down as wrong'uns from the start.

I have to confess that now, fifty years later, things and places are beginning to merge in my memory, some time in 1947 the workshops (by now combined with another to become 398/716 Combined Workshops) had moved from Camp 80 Hadera to Camp123 Jalaama just outside Haifa and I'm not sure where I was at the time of each of the happenings that I have described. I do know that it was while we were in Hadera that I met up with Dick Fuller, a boyhood friend who was in the same Division as me. Dick was a corporal in the Parachute Regiment and we visited each other, once in his camp and other times in mine. The best time was when he came with me and my friends on a trip into Haifa: when the security state was green we were allowed out, armed and in groups of four. An advantage in being in the RASC compared with the "Poor Bloody Infantry" of the Para's was shown by my being able to take Dick into our mess hall for a meal while he at his camp had to share his meal with me.

Sometime, again in 1947, I got a nice surprise being told that I was to go back to the UK on a course. Apparently the Army was switching to peace time accounting and I was to learn about it and then come back to teach the others in the Division. I rather think that I was chosen only because I was due for UK leave and by sending me on the course they lost only one person. It was the custom to send troops back on leave to the UK after three and a half years abroad, this leave was called PYTHON and as I had been out half that time I was due for LIAP (Leave In Advance of Python).

I sailed home in the troopship Orduna, owned by the P&O Line. As an Other Rank on board a Troopship you are liable to get caught for all kind of duties and fatigues but I struck lucky, getting a job as clerk in the ship's office doing very little other than type up daily reports and chat to the elderly Chief Clerk who was going home for demob. He liked the poetry of Omar Khyam and we spent a lot of time quoting from him to each other. I can't remember how long the journey took but remember seeing some whales - or were they dolphins? Arriving in the UK I went straight to the School of Transport in Borden, Hampshire to start the course only to find that the Army had once more got it wrong. Instead of an advanced course it was an introductory one for non specialists. On the first day the instructor asked me, "Could I ride a bike?". Thinking this was a trick I havered (it was an old joke for an NCO to ask some poor idiot if he could, say, play the piano and when the lad said he could, he would be told to take a piano up three flights of stairs), but this was a genuine question, he wanted me to take his bike and get him some cigarettes. As he said, there was no point in my being there so spent the next two weeks idling, and still passed the exam with an A grade.

Having finished the course I went home for my four weeks' leave about which I don't remember anything. At the end of it I reported to a transit camp in Huyton, later to be Harold Wilson's constituency Liverpool and spent a few days exploring the city while waiting for a passage back to Palestine. I remember palling up with two each very different lads going with one to see a film with Sid Fields and Tessie O Shea, and losing 10 shillings (£2) at snooker with the other one. A more successful game was one in which I won a prize of a packet of Durex which, given my heady mix of naivety/Puritanism was of no use to me. If the Palmers with their life denying

negativity had known, would they have celebrated this as victory for Jesus?

No ship being available, they put us on a train to Glasgow to join a ship at Govan, but after a few nights aboard with, us going ashore drinking each night the ship's boilers broke down and we were sent back to Liverpool. On our arriving there, they had no idea what to do with us and sent us back home on leave! The train home didn't stop at Soham but when it started to slow up I jumped out. We did in the end set out, on the Devonshire, a ship that had been in the public eye as the boat taking the Mufti of Jerusalem into exile. Once again I avoided any unpleasant fatigues during the voyage by landing an easy job taking some light stores to the galley once a day. Back at the unit I was congratulated by the C.O. for my Grade A pass - little did he know, and I was not going to tell him though there was a little Scottish turd the shape and colour of a bed bug who did find out!

Three events stick firmly in my mind, a road accident, what was nearly a bloody carnage, and a lost rifle. Firstly, the road accident. Some lorries had to be returned to stores and my job was to go with them and take care of the paper work. It was a lovely sunny day as we sailed along at the end of a rigid tow bar, eating chocolates, and oranges we had pinched from an Arab's orchard. Suddenly there was a bump, my driver had steered over the line and hit another coming from the other direction, we were OK but the poor other driver was crushed against his steering wheel.

One of the most dangerous places in Haifa was Theodore Herzle Street. I was escort in a wagon going along there with the street crowded with shoppers, standing on the seat head and shoulders through the gun port in the roof and holding a loaded, cocked Sten gun. A man stepped out from the crowd with arm raised, if I had been more alert I might

have shot him thinking that he was about to throw a bomb and kill not only him but many others. However, that the carnage didn't happen was due only to my dozy responses, Before my responses kicked in I recognised him as the civilian camp photographer, the only Jewish person I knew in the whole of Palestine and he was waving to me.

The stolen rifle came about during guard duty. We each had a personal weapon, kept in the armoury and signed out as needed. While on guard duty, when not actually on "stag" our rifles were kept chained in a rack. Although during the night we took any rifle, at guard dismounting we had to parade each with our own numbered one. I was on guard duty when a rifle was discovered to be missing at guard dismount and this meant that the guard commander, a nasty piece of work, was held responsible. A Board of enquiry was set up and the guard commander was court martialled

CHAPTER 4: RETURN TO CIVVIE STREET

In February 1948 my release date came up. I was worried that I would be held back either by the expected court of enquiry into the road accident or by the guard commander's court martial.

On the first day of the court martial those of us who had been on guard duty the night the rifle went missing had to take the Oath but I was then told that I could go. Nothing was heard of the accident enquiry so after three and a bit years I went home aboard the Otranto. I couldn't believe that I was going home and each time the boat stopped, at Malta and Gibraltar, I expected Red caps to come aboard and take me back as witness to the court martial but none came. No fatigues but clicked for one night's guard duty, for which I was made fun of by one of our company's officers. We docked in Southampton after an uneventful passage and I got a glimpse of some of those beautiful Sunderland sea planes which had been in service with RAF Coastal Command.

My actual release date was sometime in May so I was now at home on three month's Release Leave. With three months' pay, unspent pay, and credits I was as happy as the proverbial sand boy. Until May I was still in the army so was

able to swan around in uniform, medal ribbons red beret and all. What a tosser! But now, after three and a half years being fed and clothed by the State it occurred to me that if I wished to stay fed and clothed, I had to get a job and earn money. With no qualifications of any sort this would be difficult even in that period of full employment. I could by law demand my old job back at Marshalls but was uninterested.

I managed to get a job even before my leave finished, with the American Army's Grave Registration Command at the Cambridge Military Cemetery. The U.S. government had decided that all their War Dead were to be disinterred, put into new caskets and reburied. The next of kin could choose where the body was to be re-interred, either in an overseas battle zone or back in the U.S. There were two types of clerks, clerk recorders who worked at the grave site and the mortuary and clerk typists who typed up the daily reports. I was to be a clerk typist working in the office. As someone who had no real office training I was taken aback when Jones the American Chief Clerk told me that I had to be shown the whole operation as he was leaving in a few weeks and I was to take over his job. I will spare you the details of what was going on but he did leave and I became Chief Clerk. There was little ceremony to the handover, the Colonel poking his head round the door and saying, "Well Garner, from now on it's your ass that gets kicked if anything goes wrong! The operation lasted three or four months and I was the last to leave (as the job wound down I had the task of sacking the others one by one).

My next job was as a press operator at Pye (Telecom)Ltd. The first day was spent swinging a very heavy hand press cutting out brass valve seatings. I actually enjoyed it and worked merrily all day - to the disgust of other workers! My reward was to be given a light bit of wire pressing. The fitter sent me to the stores for the press and was surprised to

find that I was able to set it up myself. This did me no harm because the workshop manager took me in hand and gave me one-off jobs which, while they were not skilled, still needed a bit of intelligence. Some of the skilled toolmakers were not to sure about this. They had served their apprenticeships and were not happy about my doing some of their work. If I got into difficulties some would help and advise but others told me to bugger off.

Travelling on the bus each day I became friends with some young apprentices and envied their paid day at Tech College. I asked the works manager if I could have an unpaid day off each week to attend the college and his reply was, "If we let you go we shall pay you." They did let me have paid time off and I enrolled on a City and Guilds Workshop Engineering course. This was to have a tremendous affect on my life, changing me from an unqualified Elementary School drop out to a University Graduate.

The first lesson was on a Monday night, Mechanical Drawing, not to be my best subject but who cares? The full days were on Tuesdays, maths, physics, workshop practice and English. Harry Browne the English teacher asked us to write an account of any film we had seen or book we had read. I chose a book I had just read, Llewellin Powis' Glory of Life and Now that the Gods are Dead, books that had disturbed my what was, thanks to the Palmers, puritanical mind.

At the next week's class Harry Browne asked me what I did and being told, said that I should be at University. With my having no academic qualifications this didn't seem possible but he suggested that I try for a scholarship at Ruskin College Oxford by submitting an essay. I can't remember what the essay was on except it would have been political. I had become very involved with the Labour Party in Cambridge being on Romsey Ward executive and a representative on

Cambridge Trades Council and in addition had been recruited into a shadowy group causing trouble in the Cambridgeshire Labour Party.

By this time I had left home and was living as a lodger with a fellow worker's family but going home at weekends. The Member of Parliament was Albert Stubbs who I invited to tea at my Mother's. "I've brought someone home to tea Mum." "Oh that's nice." "Yes. It's the Member of Parliament." Dear oh dear, what a panic. She wasn't to know that Albert, a Farmworkers' Union official was, well, just Albert.

I spent all my spare time in the next few months working on the essay. Harry would read what I had written each week (in his own time) and then criticise it: mostly we met up in a pub but sometimes at his house. Besides this coaching he and his wife Evelyn did something of a Pygmalion job on me taking me to theatres, concerts and so on. I remember some of the things, The Bristol Old Vic Company doing Tartuffe and a Restoration Comedy and another time Sir Donald Wolfit and his Company in As You Like It.

Another idea of Harry's was that I should join an English Literature class run by the Cambridge University's Extra Mural Dept. The class tutor, Helen Morris, was very good and introduced us to writers as varied as Surtees and Virginia Wolfe. Bit of a hiccup when she asked us to tell her our favourite poem and she would discuss them in class. I was ill at the time and she wrote to me regretting that she could not deal with mine as it had "homosexual overtones"! One of the lines went, "And felt a tear run down my bended neck." and she said that "bended neck" had awful Freudian significance. I make no comment.

In spite of Harry's and my efforts I didn't get a place at Ruskin which - and this is not sour grapes - was very fortunate for me. The plan was to qualify for the London School of

Economics, get a B.sc. in Economics and go full time into politics or trade unionism: Had I have got to Ruskin my life would have been much less worthwhile than it has been. And I've just noticed how bloody pretentious that statement is!

The next suggestion from Harry Browne was that I should go to Fircroft College for Working Men at Bourneville. Fircroft was one of the Selly Oak colleges that had grown up around the Quaker settlement at Woodbrooke and was modelled on the Danish Folk High Schools of Bishop Grundvig. These offered farm workers a year's sabbatical when, freed from the business of earning a living, they could study the society in which they lived (Civics?), develop an interest such as literature or philosophy, and return to their work as leaders.

George Cadbury and Tom Bryan, another Quaker, having visited Denmark brought this idea to Birmingham, adapting it to meet the needs of industrial workers. So Fircroft was born, Fircroft being the name of a large house given by Cadbury. Life was made deliberately austere the founders being afraid that if the standard of life at the college was above that of working class homes students would become unsettled and unwilling to return home after their year. A story is told that when a sofa and a carpet were put into the common room, there were many mutterings and warnings of the place "going to ruin". When I got there in 1950 things had eased though there was still the Quaker idea of students having to help by laying the table, washing up and doing an afternoon's gardening! Gardening could be avoided by asking Bert the gardener to tell you his war experiences.

Going to Fircroft seemed to be a good idea I could still aim for an Economics degree, I applied and was asked to attend for interview with Leslie Stevens the Warden. The interviews (you were interviewed not only by the Warden but

also by the Senior Lecturer and the Housekeeper) lasted through a weekend. The weekend got off to a very bad start when I quarrelled with one of the students on the first night asking him outside until other students pointed out that if the Warden found out he would have nothing to do with me. Not surprising seeing that Fircroft was a Quaker foundation! Why was I so aggressive? I was not long back from Palestine and here was an idiot speaking up for Zionism. I had already fallen out with Browne in a drunken quarrel over the same topic and that was something of which I am still ashamed.

However, Leslie Stevens didn't hear about it or at least he said nothing at the inter view. One thing I did learn at the interview was how two-faced people could be. Helen Morris had been one of my referees and had promised me her support so I was amazed when Mr Stevens told me that she had written suggesting that I should spend another year in her group. Fortunately, he said that he felt that I was so tied up in political work that there was a danger that I wouldn't apply again and so I was invited to become a student in September of that year.

Getting a place was one thing, finding the £130 (possibly £1000 in today's money) something else. Cambridgeshire Education Committee refused me a grant because Fircroft required no entry qualifications. Dad who, lovely man that he was, had already picked up a completely irrelevant academic gown for me, was in tears. Canon Peter Boughy, Vicar of Soham, asked around and thanks to Harry Legge-Bourke Tory MP for the Isle of Ely I was promised £60 by Army charities and to this I added £40 salvaged from a £100 payment I got from Pye's for an industrial injury payment. I then wrote again to the Education Committee telling them that as I had made such an effort, they couldn't not give me the last £30 and they gave it to me.

Breaking off for a moment, that industrial accident. The tip of the forefinger of my right hand had been almost severed when it was forced between the blade and the chuck of a lathe. As a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union my case was taken up by its legal branch who got me the £100 plus a £35 disability grant from what was then the Ministry of Pensions & National Insurance.

And that was a laugh! After I had spent it I was called up before an Appeals Tribunal, the Ministry was appealing against its own award. Having looked at my finger the Chairman said that he was reducing the percentage disability from five to one. "You will get something Mr Garner but not so much." When I said that I had already had the money the Ministry's representative was confused, he hadn't known that. There was talk of repayment until the Chairman said, "I can see from Mr Garner's grin that there's no chance of that." It was agreed that things would be left as they were. Funnily enough, a few days later I got the new assessment - and a cheque for £6.50! This worried me until while canvassing in Cambridge during the 1950 election I met someone from the Ministry who asked me had I made any false statements and when I told him that I hadn't said, "Keep it. If you return it they will only send it back. They will just not admit a mistake."

Settled in at Fircroft in 1950 ,another decision was made that would affect my life. Each student was assigned a tutor and I assumed that mine would be the Economics Lecturer Paul Bertleson, a Dane, but Leslie Stevens in a remarkable piece of wisdom put me with Wilfred Leighton the middle aged, liberal minded History Tutor. This, added to the fact that I found the Economics lectures pointless and boring, steered me away from thoughts of political work. As if this wasn't enough, Wilfred told me that I was considered one of

the top students and would most likely make it to a University History Honours degree.

Life, as you would imagine, was now completely different, a whole year in which to read, talk endlessly, and take a good look at myself and at what I wanted to do with my future. One problem was that although the fees, including food and accommodation, had been paid, I had no money for anything else. I did not smoke and was not a drinker but it would have been nice to have had some spending money for little pleasures. All the other students had received grants from their Authorities. Mr Stevens got me an allowance of ten shillings a week repayable when possible and so could buy some things but I remember having to use a bar of Sunlight soap for washing, teeth cleaning, shaving and laundry! Not having any money to buy extra food I was always hungry and constantly dreamed of pork pies.

It was now that at the great age of twenty three I met up with my first ever girl friend! I don't remember her name but she was a teacher of about my own age. That she was already married was unfortunate but as we didn't get beyond the kiss and cuddle stage no real harm was done. I had joined an evening pottery class at the Bournville School of Art and became friendly with two female fellow students. There was an 'Arts' cinema in Birmingham showing an Eisenstien film and the three of us decided to go and that we would meet up outside the cinema. Only one of the ladies turned up and that was the start of a very low key bit of nonsense.

Telling this story to one of my present friends, she tells me that I was, "Set up". How did I know she was married? One night she didn't turn up for class, some young man came in and spoke to the teacher and then had a chat with me. When, after he had gone, I said what a nice chap he was, I was told, "That's your girl friend's husband." Oh dear. It was of

course quite unforgivable but I was young, very immature for my age, and I was flattered. Actually, now I come to think of it, she wasn't my first. There had been another, June, while I was working at Pye's. I remember her because of a startling transformation at one of our "dates". During the war - and for quite a few years after it - because of a shortage of cloth women's clothes were severely cut until Dior showed his "New Look" clothes with their long very full skirts and coats. One Saturday June turned up in such a suit, it was a revelation, she just wasn't the same girl.

At the end of the first term I earned enough money during the Christmas break for my keep and also to pay off some of the money I owed to the college and so began my second term. Not all the students were mature students, some were from abroad taking time off university courses. One I remember was Alfred Hakmach a German who had been a Stuka pilot in the Luftwaffe and who had been shot down over Russia, wounded in the abdomen and lost part of his foot with frost bite. A nice enough bloke but very arrogant and with his fair hair and blue eyes just like every German I had seen in the pictures. He was almost a caricature of a Prussian Ubermensch. When we played table tennis he pleaded his injuries and demanded that I hit the ball, "Only towards me Ray. I cannot jump to the side!"

He had a gorgeous girl friend, Marlese Liesenhoffen who was working as an au pair in Birmingham. Because Alfred wasn't able to play tennis she and I played most mornings starting very early so that she could get to work at eight. Disaster struck one morning when her bicycle tyre was flat. Being a gentleman I pumped it up but with her standing next to me in her tennis shorts I pumped up rather too vigorously and blew the tyre to pieces! Marlese and I became very good friends and because of Alfred's injuries I partnered her at

dances and walked her round the garden during the intervals. We stopped being friends when our talk turned to the war and the responsibility of the German people, as I saw it, for the atrocities. It was still too near the end of the war for such talk.

Another Quaker custom carried on at Fircroft was Morning Reading, in which we took turns in choosing a hymn or a song and a piece of writing which was then discussed. Anyone, students, staff, domestics were welcome to join in. I think I chose a hymn from the Adult Sunday School hymn book all about Social Justice being brought about by the strong right hands of the working classes. Don't remember what reading I chose but it would probably have been something by Oscar Wilde. On Saturday mornings the twenty minutes of Morning Reading was extended to the whole morning with the reading being an essay from a student in a session called Essay and Crit. It was a quite frightening experience for the student whose essay was the subject. After he had read it, the floor was open for criticism, the first hour and a half up to the break on the form of the essay and the two hours after break on the content.

I was one of the unfortunates chosen for this experience choosing Punishment for my subject. You were given six weeks to prepare the essay and what a miserable six weeks. Why I picked the subject the Lord knows but after trailing through book after book and horror after horror I became quite depressed. As part of my research I spent some time in the London Headquarters of the Howard League for Penal Reform during their lunch break. I thought how trusting they were to leave me alone in their office - until I tried to get out. The place was locked, so much for trusting me! My essay went down reasonably well although I did get attacked for what some of the more solemn students called my flippancy. I had said that at one hanging, the hangman had been so drunk

that he had tried to put the noose around the chaplain's neck and I suggested that the clergyman had probably been as deserving of a hanging as the criminal. Another criticised remark was, having talked about the 'tripod' gallows, I had said that this meant that three people could be dispatched "at one stretch"!

During the second term, the Warden decided that all lectures, tutorials and seminars should centre on the English Civil War. I found the subject fascinating and became so engrossed, that once, reading about an historical pageant in which "Cavaliers and Roundheads walked together", for a moment I couldn't understand why they were in an historical pageant. Were they not contemporaries? It was probably my love for the Anglican Church, particularly the High Church aspect of it that made me give my sympathies to the King's side. I was certainly drawn to Archbishop Laud, however stupid his attempt to force the Book of Common Prayer on to the Scots might have been. Looking back on it I cannot believe that I could have been so simple and naive. It didn't help that the poetry seminar spent a lot of time on the poetry of John Donne.

During the second term we were taken to Wales for a holiday cum study break billeted in a Miners' Rest Home, somewhere near Llantwit Major and we set out to do a social survey of the area. With a pal, Dick Poore, I concentrated on religion. One of the areas we had to cover were coal mines and I was fortunate enough to go down a mine in the Rhondda Valley. an experience not to be missed. Cadburys' allowed their apprentices time off to attend Day Continuation College where they were able to carry on with Further education and some of these came to Wales with us. I think the idea was that they would learn from us that learning and leisure could be combined? On the first night the young ones

had to be told to be quiet and to get some sleep. One of them grumbled, "I knew it wouldn't work, mixing young and old!" Ironically, after a few nights it was the other way round. On our way to Wales our coach stopped at Oxford and some of us had tea in New College with Ruth Spooner, a friend of Leslie Stevens and some kind of relative of the legendary Dr. Spooner, though she said that he had never uttered a "spoonerism" (You have hissed my mystery lessons and you must leave by the town drain)

During the Easter vacation I got a job at Boxfoldier and had digs in Edgebaston which I shared with Ben Rigby, a fellow Fircrofter. Boxfoldier made cardboard boxes and my job was to parcel them up and wrap them in brown paper which had surprisingly sharp edges. Another lodger was a Scottish Dental student Andy, with whom I became friends. I had very bad gums and he arranged for me to see a specialist at the Dental Hospital at which he was a student. This specialist, an orthodontist (whatever that is) had a good look and sent for Andy asking him, "What's wrong with your friend? I've found out." Poor Andy, who had spent a lot of time in the evenings looking at my mouth hadn't a clue. I felt so sorry for him, and a little bit guilty.

My front teeth were serrated and often when being seen by doctors I had heard the phrase Hutchinson's teeth. When I mentioned this to Andy he said "O you poor man, I hope they aren't!" He told me that Hutchinson's teeth were a sign of congenital syphilis which led to Huntingdon's Chorea, a horrible prospect! However, having had a good look he said they weren't, an opinion confirmed by the orthodontist. There was a humorous sequel to this a year or two later. While I was a student at Keele I went to a dentist in Stoke for a filling. I asked him if he would file my teeth level and when he asked why told him that I was fed up with being taken for a

congenital syphilitic. After he finished he joked, "There you are, in ten minutes I have undone all your father's misspent youth!

Meanwhile back at Boxfoldier, there was a young woman to whom I was attracted and purposefully always sat next to her in the canteen hoping that she might ask me to pass the salt or something which I could use as an excuse to start up a conversation: we were not so forward in those days. She never did, but one lunchtime, another girl, whom I recognised sat next to her and spoke to me. Immediately, the girl whom I fancied also spoke to me and so began my friendship with Sylvia Palmer. We spent a good few evenings at her flat talking, and talking, and talking! She once rang me at Fircroft and kept me talking for about twenty minutes. She was a good friend, rather strange - she had spent a year in analysis - but I enjoyed her company and going to concerts together at the Birmingham Town Hall to hear the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Nothing came of the friendship but it was good while it lasted. I ran into her a couple of years later when I was at Keele. Coming back from a vacation I found a note in my pigeon hole, it was from Sylvia who had been at a conference at Keele. That was lucky for me because having broken with my girl friend I would be needing a partner at the Christmas Ball and she was good enough to write back to me agreeing to be one.

During the final term at Fircroft we had to decide on our future. There was no way that I was going back to factory work especially as both Leslie Stevens and Wilfred Leighton were telling me that I should try for a place at a university. Mr Stevens thought that I should do another year at Fircroft and apply for a state scholarship to Oxford or Cambridge but I wasn't so sure and applied for a place at Durham. I was offered one but because I hadn't a Latin qualification it could

only be for a pass degree in Social Studies which wasn't acceptable. Fortunately, a new university had opened, the University College of North Staffordshire which was willing to accept mature students for honours arts degrees on the basis of interview and written examination.

Four of us applied, myself, Bill Wootten, Tom Parry and Brian Nicholson. Unfortunately, the night before the interview I had been involved in a brawl with a drunken student from which I had emerged triumphant but with a set of bruised knuckles! I knew that there would be some handshaking and so on the train journey to Stoke I got the others to shake hands with me so that I could be inured to the pain! Brian, an aggressive pacifist, was disgusted. He had seen the other bloke and said, "His nose was bleeding and his face was bruised so I suppose you won but I hope you are ashamed of yourself." I wasn't. Not really.

So, the interview. The selection committee was made up of faculty heads and chaired by A.D.Lindsey, late Master of Balliol. He was a lovely man and when I made a fool of myself at one point in the interview he quickly came to my aid and dug me out of the hole into which I had dug myself. That apart, all went well and eventually Bill, Tom, and myself were awarded places subject to a written examination.

It wasn't to be so simple for me. At half term I set out to hitch hike home getting a bus to the outskirts of the city. I stood there for hours vainly thumbing every vehicle that passed. Finally, I made up my mind that if the next car or lorry went by without stopping I would give up and spend the half term at Fircroft. A red flat bed lorry passed by and when I saw the words Isle of Ely printed on the back of it I groaned, that would have been ideal. Suddenly, the lorry came to a halt, the driver leaning out and shouting, "Well Ray Garner, aren't you a lucky so and so?" It was "Towser" Hitchings a schoolmate

from Soham. It seemed even more remarkable when he told me that he wasn't supposed to be going home! However, he took me all the way home, where I found that Dad was in hospital with cancer of the lung. Mum had not let on to me that he was ill. Was it just a coincidence that had it not been for Towzer sneaking home, Dad would have died without my even knowing that he was ill? As it was I had to leave him, Mum insisting that I go back so that he wouldn't be suspicious - he didn't know how ill he was.

During the last week of the term I was sitting in a lecture when one of the college maids brought me a telegram. It said, "Come home at once. Your Dad is dying." I stumbled out of the room with no idea of what to do or how I was going to get home. That good man Leslie Stevens followed me out, pressing money for my fare into my hand. I went home by a series of bus journeys, Birmingham to Northampton, N'hampton to Cambridge and from there to Soham. Sitting on the bus at Cambridge a woman, a neighbour of my parents, came over and told me that my Dad was dead. It was June 1951, he was forty five.

Getting back to Fircroft after the funeral I found that Bill and Tom had sat the exam at Keele but arrangements had been for me to take it on my own under the supervision of Mr Stevens, he had even found me a job at Cadbury's chocolate on the factory night shift and also digs with Eric Kesby, another student. There were two parts to the exam, a general paper testing your reasoning abilities and a second paper on your chosen period of history. Coming to the college after my first night shift tired and dispirited I had to be coaxed into starting on the first paper. The only question I can remember was being asked to discuss a quotation, "Ah Liberty, what crimes have been done in thy name?"

Once started on the question I lost my tiredness and enjoyed working on the paper. Working in a familiar environment made it a lot easier and it helped being brought coffee and biscuits by Inge, a pretty Norwegian maid! During lunch the Warden read my answers and encouraged me by saying that he was impressed and that, having previously thought that I would need another year at Fircroft, he was now convinced that providing I kept up the standard in the next paper I would pass. The History paper dealt with the English Civil War and gave me no trouble.

Having done the exam, it was a question of waiting for the results. In the meantime I was earning money packing chocolate on the night shift, though luckily, when the factory closed for the works' holiday, we 'temps.' were kept on for 'clear-up' work and when it opened, some of us were kept on the day shift. A group of us, all students, were set to work packing filled cartons into boxes for despatch. My job at first was tying up the boxes but I was so slow that I was "promoted" to wheeling containers to the loading bay but even then I tended to day dream and one of the gang would come and look for me and crack the whip. They were very tolerant especially, when being on piecework, my dithering was costing them money!

All this time I was fretting on my result and every day ringing up the College to see if there was a letter for me. It was usually one of the students who was staying on during the vacation. There was a particularly interesting bloke who had told us that his name was Leo Ross, that he was a Latvian, graduate from Riga University and that he had escaped from the Communists. Some years later at a Fircroft reunion he took me aside and confessed that he had been lying to us and that he was Russian, had fought with the Red Army then,

taken prisoner by the Germans, joined the German army and escaping to Britain in the post war chaos.

It was Leo who told me my results: I had asked that if an official looking letter arrived for me they were to open it and so when I rang I would know the answer immediately. When I rang one day Leo answered it and after deliberately keeping me dangling for a few moments told me that I had been accepted by Keele. So that was that, the unqualified labourer had joined Academe. No problem over fees this time, a County Major paid all fees and gave me spending money. Dr. Wynne the Bishop of Ely (I had applied for ordination) sent for me to give me his blessing and he asked, “How much was my grant?”. When I told him, he said that wasn't enough and how was I going to buy my beer and take my girl friend out to tea? I suppose I won't be able to was my reply. "Nonsense", he said, "You might as well not go to University. Leave it to me." Sometime later I got a letter from the Diocesan Dilapidations Board telling me that I had been awarded a £60 grant. Fearful that this amount would be taken off my county grant I wrote to the Chief Education Officer saying that if this was going to be the case then I would refuse the Bishop's money because, "The Education Committee has more money than the diocese!" Back came the reply that he had written to the Bishop and had been told that the money was for the purchase of theological books.

CHAPTER 5: UNIVERSITY

So, came the great day, Ray Garner as working class as you could get, elementary school, uneducated, and with hardly a penny to his name, entered academe. Keele, then the University College of North Staffordshire, was the dream child of AD Lindsey (Lord Lindsey of Berker), and Alderman Tommy Horton. I had never read J.H.Newman's "Idea of a University" but I understood the ideas, with its emphasis of a course away from the narrow specialisation of the older universities. Students, "Getting to know more and more about less and less until they wound up knowing everything about nothing!" were the inspiration behind it.

Like the other universities, the degree course would last three years but before starting on it, everyone would have to do a year's Foundation Course in which there would be lectures by the Heads of all the faculties. Also, students would study four subjects, three for one term each and one for the whole year. The subjects had to be spread through all the faculties: Science, Social Studies, and the Arts. My choices were History, and English for the Arts subjects, Historical Theology for the Social Sciences, and Biology for the science. I didn't have any choice for science because Biology was the

only one that could be taken by Mathematical innumerates like your father!

Keele Hall had been a wartime base for the American army centred on the 17th century house of the Sneyd family. Apart from the Hall itself, the only permanent buildings were the science departments and a hall of residence which housed some of the women students, the rest of us lived in wooden huts though these had been much improved. They were divided into four comfortably furnished rooms. I had to share a room for the first term with an American, Bob Sandford an archetypical all-American college boy who grew as we watched. His father had been a professor at U.C.L.A. but had fallen foul of the McCarthy witch hunters and was now working at the Tavistock Institute. Bob and I got along fine, although we did have a few play fights which I used to win at first by falling into him, punching him then slipping away. Unfortunately he soon got wind of this tactic and when I next fell his fist was ready and so I was the one who got winded! He had a habit of singing "Be my love" like Mario Lanza interspersed by something rude about "a titchy digit".

We were invited to tea by two girl students, Jane Lambourne and Margaret Boulds, very nice but I was worried about Bob and his other habit of shouting, "Ah s**t!" whenever he made a mistake, especially as these girls seemed very "proper" and correct. Before we went I spent time coaching him that, whatever happened, he was not to use that expression. Off we went, Bob in an immaculate silver coloured suit and all went swimmingly - until he dropped a blob of jam on to his trousers. I held my breath, stuck my fingers in my ears - and out it came, loud and clear in the afternoon air the words I had been dreading through out the tea time. I should not have worried, the words simply disappeared into the conversation. Anyway, I found out later

that they were not particularly "proper". Amongst the others in the hut was Bernard Gilhooley who, of course, became my life long friend together with his wife to be Sheila.

Although I was better off financially than I had been at Fircroft - I could now afford toiletries and could discard my bar of Sunlight soap, money was still very tight and I had to forego the pleasure of the Keele scarves, ties, and blazers now worn proudly by many others (the "grey masses" as they were described by the women students). Women students had a knack of coming up with unkind, but appropriate nicknames, one unfortunate lad with a low brow, and coarse features became: Neanderthal Man, and an unpleasant American woman, Marian Lobenburg became: Slobberguts! My long thin face earned me the name of El Greco, dreamed up by a girl who later became Fashion Editor of Vogue. I learned later, forgive your old Dad his boasting, that I was reckoned to be "the most masculine of all the men students"!

I had determined that I was going to work hard and quickly settled down to it but was undone by a slim, beautiful blonde named Thelma Gwyllim. Sitting in a corridor reading. I was passed by this piece of gorgeousness who turned and asked, "You won't hurt your eyes, will you?", and that was that! To borrow from an ancient poet:

Idly browsing over Hesiod,
I espied where Pyrrus trod.
Downed the volume with a furious,
So much for Hesiod.

We went on to be very close.
During the first, or foundation, year we were expected to attend lectures in all disciplines. Some, like those given by the Arts Profs, were interesting and useful but some of the science

lectures were boring and seemingly of little use. I took to missing some of these and meeting up with Iris Degg a second year student. We used to meet down by one of the lakes where I sang to her in exchange for her feeding me sweets and cigarettes, all this while her boyfriend was busy elsewhere. Not so pleasant was some "agro" between me and the President of the Students Union. Seemingly there had been complaints about the new students' behaviour and he had been asked to reprimand us, something that as an ex serviceman I didn't intend to take from some still wet behind the ears overgrown schoolboy barely out of short trousers and getting hold of him afterwards threatened that if he were ever to speak to us again like that I would thump him. I felt sorry for him afterwards as he turned out to be a quite nice lad. I have to say that I was backed up afterwards by other ex servicemen.

Life at Keele was very different from that at Fircroft, where at Fircroft we had been a large family living together in one building here we were three hundred students scattered over a "campus ". Then, too, the academic work was different, with tutorials in a group instead of the individual ones we had had. Much more importantly whereas our Tutors at Bournville, good as they were, were long out of the academic world here we were in touch with up to date learning. Although senior staff kept largely to themselves many of the younger and junior staff living on the site met with us in the local pub and at Union hops and so on. However, as with Fircroft a lot of learning was done amongst ourselves during endless talking over coffee in the Students Union or each other's rooms.

Talking about pubs, our local was the Sneyd Arms in the village kept by the Cottons and serving beautiful Diamond Ales. Mrs Cotton was one of the best: once during the wintertime I had an essay to write which I had put off until the

night before it was due to be handed in. Should I write it or go for a pint? I decided to do both and took books, pens and paper down to the Sneyd asking Mrs C. if it was all right. Not only was it all right but she cleared every one from the table nearest the fire telling them, "You'll have to move because Ray has to do his work." Someone, I don't know who, sent me a pint! Just to complete my happiness, in next day's tutorial with the Professor of History I gained a B+++. He said that it was beautifully written but he couldn't give me an A because, "It isn't on the subject I set you!" The subject had been, "J.S. Bury has said, "History is a science, no more and no less." Discuss with reference to the writings of Macauley.

I had never read Macauley so skipped through a chapter in his History in which he was critical of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, something of a hero of mine largely because of his friendship and support of William Laud Archbishop of Canterbury and so my essay was simply a defence of Strafford. I know now of course that Wentworth was a tyrant and Laud a fool whose attempt to impose the Book of Common Prayer on the Scots led ultimately to the Civil War and the death of Charles. One of the results of maturity is the realisation that historical rights and wrongs were never as clearly defined as youth had supposed.

One of the odder subjects on offer was Historical Theology, known to us as Hysterical Theology. The Reader was JB Henderson, an old man brought out of retirement. The only thing we knew of him was that he had written a book, The Four Witnesses, a study of the Gospels. None of us bothered to read it but, for some reason or other he dragged me along to a lecture he was giving to some Society on his interpretation of Mark's Gospel. I remember nothing of it. Nor do I remember anything of his tutorials except an essay I

wrote for it on Plato's Allegory of the Cave for which he gave me good marks.

At the end of the first term I went home for Christmas looking for a job that would provide cigarettes and beer. Soham Post Office doubled as an Employment Office and so I went there. Mr Trinder the manager fixed me up with a job on Ely railway station and so it was to there that I reported. Oddly, they knew nothing of me but set me to work as a temporary porter, it was a doddle of a job with little to do except when a train arrived and with a nice fire to sit against in the intervals between trains. Actually I wasn't all that happy, having split up with my girl friend Thelma just before coming down, but nevertheless, enjoyed my portering. A few days after starting work a postman asked me whether I knew a Raymond Garner. Yes folk, you've guessed it. I wasn't supposed to have been a Porter. On starting work at the station, I had supposed that I was going to work for the railway, whereas the job was with the Post Office unloading Christmas mail on to and off the trains. It was all sorted out and I stayed with British Rail.

The 'Classics' Department organised a trip to Cambridge to see a production - in classical Greek - of Aeschulus' Agemmenon. It was easy to follow, because we knew the story and were given an English version of the script. One odd thing, the girl playing Clytemnestra played her as a nasty spitting termagant and afterwards I learnt that this was the actress' real self!

During the coach trip, I was surprised when a junior lecturer, having asked my name, told me that the Bishop had asked him to look after me and that he was to introduce me to Sir John Lennard Jones who we were to meet at Corpus Christi College. Sir John, with whom the Bishop had also had

a word, was then Professor of Physics at Cambridge but was to take over as Principle of Keele, Lord Lindsay having died.

After watching the play or it might have been before it we were taken to Corpus Christi to meet Sir John and to drink his sherry. What annoyed me was the obsequiousness of his butler, each time you lowered your glass he was there at your elbow with the decanter and if you felt for a cigarette, there he was with a cigarette case and lighter. I got so fed up with the bloody man that I hid in a corner, got out my own fags and lit one with my own lighter!

It is all so long ago that I have no continuous memory and can only hope to pick on people, places, and happenings as they occur and with no idea of the exact order in which they occurred. Sorry. I do know that I enjoyed my first year, made many friends, drank lots of beer and kissed some very pretty girls.

One girl I do remember, Jill Picton, who I met at a dance at her college. In the fifties many of the Teacher Training Colleges were single-sexed and for their dances they had to import men students from other colleges. Jill was a student at a nearby college, Nelson Hall. It could be quite frightening to be amongst the first men to arrive and be confronted by 350 young ladies. Jill caught my eye by her beautiful lemon ball gown with a black ribbon around her neck. It was the Easter term and I stayed on at Keele to catch up on shamefully missed reading - and also working as a ward orderly in the North Staffs. Infirmary, in Stoke. She wrote to me, I rang her back, she came to Keele to see me. And that's how it started. These girls could be quite cheeky, just before our Commem Ball, I was passing the phone box outside the Students Union and was told I was wanted on the phone. It was a girl I didn't know and she asked me was I taking Jill to the Ball? When I said I didn't know whether Jill wanted to go,

she said "O yes. That's why I'm ringing. "She then asked me to hand the phone to another lad and he got the same treatment regarding a girl he had met and so it went on.

There was one problem, all female colleges were very strict and I was told that the girls would have to be back in Nelson Hall at 10.15. This, of course, was bloody ridiculous so off I went to see Mary Wilson, Warden of Lindsey Hall and so responsible for our girl students. Now it just so happened that Miss Wilson the Women's Warden was in my moral debt thanks to her having falsely accused me of breaking in to Lindsey Hall. As the Bible might have said. "It happened in this wise." Actually, I'm not sure whether all this was during my first or second year but never mind. Sitting in my room about half past ten at night, someone came and told me that Paul Rollo wanted to see me. Paul was Warden of Horward Hall, the men's Hall. It seemed that Dr. Kerne, a Law lecturer, had seen a man climbing into the women's Hall of Residence and reported it to Mary Wilson who taking Kern's description and fuelling it with some weird logic of her own decided it could only have been me! Paul made it worse by saying, "I hope it is you, Ray because then it will not be serious! I was bloody furious and let Paul know it. It was so insulting to think that the only way I could meet a girl was to break into a window.

The next day I stormed up to her house but she was out. She told me later that she had gone out deliberately to avoid me. The next night Mary and I met up at midnight and patrolled all the girls' area. All we found was Dr Plesch rabbit hunting. Another result was that when Dr Kerne gave a party for her students she invited me. Guilty conscience or what? Something odd happened at that party. At some stage, Professor "Sammy" Finer, Chair of Politics, came over to me and launched a fierce verbal attack on me, accusing me of

being an agent working for the Russians. "I know you Garner with your affected High Toryism which is only a cover for your communism. You don't fool me!". Everybody stopped talking while he rampaged on. Then he quietened and said that he didn't mean anything and just wanted to give everyone an idea of how McCarthy worked. I think he chose me because after he had said during a lecture that, "Jacobites were traitors". I had said, "And still are ladies and gentlemen". I bodged up a pamphlet on paper, treated it to look as if it was old, and using seventeenth century idiom attacked him, calling it Belial Slain or Finne Confounded. I put it secretly into his pigeon hole but it wasn't long before he stopped me to tell me that he thought it was me. He said that his wife had found it in a drawer and gave it to him thinking it was genuine. I should add that at that time I was still very pro Stuart. That all went after I had matured intellectually.

Now back to the dance and the calling in of my debt. Mary was good enough to ring the Nelson Hall Vice Principal and plead for an extension for Jill and her friends. It was funny listening to the conversation, obviously, Miss Wilson was not getting very far, till she said, "Half past twelve then" and put the phone down. We were allowed to send the college bus to pick up the girls - and a good time was had by all.

Other than studies, and chasing girls, my two interests were the English Society and The Student Christian Movement. In the English Society I palled up with its Secretary Cordelia Lamb. Cordelia was lovely, a daughter of the Vicarage, broad as she was long and delightfully humorous. She and the girls in her hut invited some of us to tea, afterwards demanding that the men washed up. Simple. We filled up the bath and put all the plates and whatnot in together. When Cordelia complained, we put her head first into the bath and "launched" her with a lemonade bottle

tapped on her bum. She and I were in the same English tutorial and often passed the time quoting Keats to each other, always the same verse. I've just noticed how precious that sounds. Sorry.

At the end of the first, Foundation year, we had to take the Foundation year exam. This was an important hurdle, no pass, no going on to the degree course proper, though if you fail with a good enough mark you were allowed a re-sit. There were questions covering the whole of the academic spectrum. I remember only two of the questions I answered. One needed a discussion of the quote, "Ah, Liberty. What crimes are done in thy name?" Isn't that the same question that I mentioned in the exam I took at Fircroft? Probably. The other asked, "If you were faced with the choice of saving either a person or a priceless painting, which would you choose and why?"

When the results were posted I was in London. I had applied for the priesthood and had been recommended by Roland Wall, the Bishop of Ely's Chaplain and had the Bishop's approval. What a lovely man Dr Wynne was. I salute his memory. However, although Bishops ordained people, who they ordained was decided elsewhere. Because individual dioceses could not afford the cost of training Ordinands, all funds and decisions were pooled into a central organisation, the Central Advisory Council for the Training of Ministers (CACTM). As a first step I was to be interviewed by CACTM's Secretary, Prebendary Browne at Church House Westminster. Because I desperately needed to know the results of the Foundation Year exam, I arranged that friends would send a telegram to the Secretary. Tell Garner A would mean I had passed, B that I'd failed but was allowed a resit and C, Tell him not to bother coming back, we'll send his luggage on! As soon as I got into Prebandary Brownes office, he smiled and

said that he supposed he should congratulate me? The telegram said A. So, my first year at Keele ended happily and successfully. I heard later that Reverend Browne was sufficiently impressed to put me in line for a Selection Conference.

CHAPTER 6: THE GREAT LOVE OF MY LIFE

During the first year we had to decide what our degree subjects would be, we needed two at principal level which would be followed throughout the three years and two at subsidiary followed for one year each. I chose History and Moral & Political Philosophy at principal level and English, Biology, Latin as subsids. Lawlor, the English Professor was doubtful about accepting me but after hearing me give a talk on Oscar Wilde to the English Society he sent word that I could take it at either principal or subsid. level. I wasn't at all happy about Biology but as I mentioned earlier, all Arts students had to take a science and Biology was the only one that didn't need a math's background. It was a hell of a struggle and I needed two goes at it but I emerged triumphant with a 90% pass. We also had to choose a Social Science but because I was going to take the advanced Moral and Political Philosophy paper in my finals it counted as my Soc.Sci. option. In the Latin exam it was possible to pass almost wholly by answering the Literature and History questions so that hurdle was scraped over. After the English exam, which I passed, I found myself questioned over my answer to one question. "Tragedy is not pessimistic, Lear might lose his life

but he saved his soul." Discuss. I just could not agree, I'm sure that when he carries the body of the dead Cordelia, his daughter, he does not understand that his actions were directly the cause of her death.

I have little or no recollection of the second year but do remember going before a CACTM Selection Conference in Farnham Castle. These conferences were of the country week-end sort, they were mixed in with talks, discussion groups and so on and during these you were observed and assessed, then interviewed as to your scholastic and spiritual qualities. I remember one interviewer pointing out disapprovingly that my reading list contained only History books and no spiritual ones. Obviously a very black mark! Another Ordinand and I became friends, we agreed that we would go to the same theological college. This didn't happen, he was accepted but I wasn't. One other thing that I do remember is that in the vac. the Bishop had found me a place at Hawarden Residential Library and I spent two or three weeks studying and attending services. It was while I was there that I got a letter telling me that I was not being accepted for theological training.

To do some extra work I went back a week before the beginning of the (1953) Autumn term. Extra student accommodation was provided in a large house in Keele village known as Hawthorn House, but because of building work it was out of bounds during the vac. Ralph Cornes, a friend of mine was, however, living there, legally or not, I can't remember. He and I and a villager, Cedrick, were playing darts in the Sneyed Arms. Ralph goes off early but invites Ceddy and me to call in for coffee.

When we left it was very dark and there were no lights showing in the Hawthornes' windows. In the dim moonlight I could just make out where the French windows were and set off there. I knew that there was a gravel path along that side

and when I felt soft earth, which I took to be a raised flower bed, I jumped down the "few" inches. Those few inches turned in to an eight feet trench because my flower bed was the earth raised by a six foot deep trench. When I landed at the bottom, I heard a sharp crack and I lay on my back with my right foot somewhere below my left shoulder. An ambulance arrived and took me to the North Staffs Infirmary in Stoke, they diagnosed a fractured femur and the leg was put into a Thomas splint. Ralph, who had come in the ambulance with me, disappeared and was found outside - having fainted!

So began an eight week stay, flat on my back. The next day a nurse brought me a very nice flower arrangement with a card saying they were from Lady Lennard-Jones and this of course upped my social status amongst the nursing staff. The Thomas splint was still on but I was now tied to the bed, immobile and totally dependent on the nurses for feeding and other basic needs. This was the era when a patient's bed sore would bring disgrace on the nurses. At least three times a day your buttocks were rubbed with surgical spirit and powdered with talcum.

When I was examined by the orthopaedic specialist he told me that because it was important that I should get back to my studies as soon as possible, he would pin the break using the operation that was normally used on the aged,(I was 26). This involved pushing a 12 inch piece of steel "Kunschener Nail" down the centre of the femur. In preparation, the splint would be taken off, a wire passed through a bony part of the knee and weights attached to keep the leg in tension. Luckily, the Charge Nurse, Mr Whitehead - known to the nurses as Sister Middlesex - disagreed and used sticking plaster to fix the weights to my calf.

The ward was run very tightly, almost like an army barrack with every procedure, such as washing and bum

treatment, temperature taking, and medicine giving etc was timed to the minute. You could look at your watch and know exactly when the ward doors would open and the appropriate trolley wheeled in. It was somehow reassuring, though a lot of it was repetitive. For instance, just before the night shift went off, you would have a thermometer put into your mouth, washed given a bottle and the bed would be tidied, then as soon as the day staff arrived, it would all be done again!

The time came for the op. Being chloroformed, when having my tonsils removed at twelve, had given me a horror of anaesthetics so had become nervous while waiting and this must have shown because when I was wheeled into the anaesthetic room Whitehead ordered, "Put this one down straight away." Charming! There had been nothing to fear, I went out like a light. Waking up I noticed that a drip had been attached to me and I asked was I suffering from post operative shock only to be told, Don't be daft. If you were, do you think you would be able to ask!"

Things went O.K. but what followed was weeks of boredom. I couldn't get out of bed, I was too uncomfortable perched on an air ring to study properly, all I could do was smoke and make a nuisance of myself. I did get lots of visitors, from all kinds of people from Keele and also got frequent letters from Iris Degg (she of the lakeside visits of the first year) who was doing her Language year in France. The college was very good, providing accommodation for Mum and my brother, when they visited me. Gilbert Ingraham, a great friend of mine apparently appointed himself 'looker-after' of them, what they made of each other, I've no idea. Gilbert was a very good mate. I was one of those awful people who are already fully alive - and chatty at breakfast time so a stranger coming into the refectory would have noticed this one person completely alone with the others keeping clear. Even Gilbert

who knowing I never had any fags at breakfast time would come, give me a packet of fags, and go and eat his breakfast elsewhere!

I spent eight boring, uncomfortable weeks being fed, watered and bum wiped. There was the occasional incident to break the monotony. For instance, the Charge nurse noticing that I had burnt a hole in the sheet with my cigarette, so he turned it top to bottom only to reveal that there was a hole that end as well. A more tragic one, was in the middle of the night. A young man had been brought in the previous day having had an arm torn off in some agricultural machinery and he died at about three in the morning. Not able to sleep, I was reading by my bedside lamp when the doctor who had been trying to save the boy, utterly dejected, seeing my light came over, "Get the fags out Ray, and talk to me." Sometimes I would be asked to read Ward Prayers and when I did so, all nurses, not actually doing anything, had to line up besides my bed and stand with their hands clasped behind them. What a laugh! Then of course there was physiotherapy, one not too unpleasant involved fastening two electrodes to my leg and stimulating muscle movement by passing a small AC current through. Very unpleasant was having one electrode fastened and another, with DC current touched on various parts of my leg to stimulate nerve endings. The acid which formed on the end caused small but painful sensations. Once, when I made an indecent remark to her, she touched me with the end on a very sensitive part!

But came the time when they, having had enough of my groaning, threw me out. Sometime around the beginning of November, I think, I know that the snow was on the ground when the ambulance dropped me off outside the Union building. It was rather frightening at first, I had not really had enough time to get used to crutches and with my leg

in a calliper, I was not very mobile. The College authorities had been very good, giving me a room in a hut right in the front. Mrs Morgan, the house manager, even gave instructions to the cleaner to give me a raw egg mixed in milk each day.

Bit by bit, my walking got more and more efficient, though snow and ice didn't help. Gerald Nussbaum, a blind post graduate student helped me here. Rather funny in a way, the snow made things difficult for him because he depended on the echoes from his feet and the snow muffled them so we became a team me guiding him and he supporting me through the slippery parts! Having metaphorically found my feet I was able to get back into things and even went to the Christmas Ball on crutches and managing to "dance" supported by my partners. I had invited two of the male staff and their partners, a staff Nurse Helen Glover and a physiotherapist whose name I forget but with whom I went out for a while.

Come the Christmas vacation the college once again turned up trumps by arranging transport back to Soham. One of the academic staff took me to Crewe station to catch a train. Everything had been arranged. I had a whole compartment to myself and at Bletchley station, where I was to change, I was met by a porter who saw me on to another train, in which again I had a whole compartment, and arriving at Cambridge station there was an ambulance waiting which took me home. After the holiday an ambulance picked me up and took me to Cambridge station for the return journey. As we got into Bletchley station I noticed an old fashioned padded invalid carriage waiting, presumably, for some big-wig but actually - for me! I felt such a fool being put into this and wheeled across the line. All this, for the price of a third class ticket.

The third year has left no impression on me except that I passed the Latin subsid. so now could put all my effort

into my main subjects. I can remember a union hop at which I sat in the bar minding my own business when Menna Galley, wife of one of the Philosophy profs, asked me go over and sit with her. Before I could move, a woman's voice cried, "Don't sit with that bitch Ray. Come and sit here. "Mrs Evans, wife of a senior Biology lecturer and slightly pie eyed. Both ladies were Welsh - as if that has any significance. Menna was something of a "character" who could sometimes be seen running after the bus waving a piece of toast and shouting, "Stop the bus! Stop the bloody bus!

Your Mum and I met Menna many years after and went to tea with her and her husband and she hadn't improved one little bit. When she spotted how quiet and innocent Anne was, Menna went all out to shock telling some vulgar story as to how, during a christening service, her bra strap broke and her breast fell into the font. God knows how their son Charles turned out, when years later I asked a friend he replied, "They all went to the bad."

So I come to my fourth, and final, year. I am ashamed to say that I did little or no work but did manage to get a lowly Honours degree. Before the results came out there was a series of parties given by the departments. Besides the History and Philosophy do's I got to go to the Chemistry party because I had been a baby sitter for one of the staff and even to the Physical Education staff because, don't laugh, I had done Morris dancing! Your once uneducated, very working class father was now a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) of Keele. One comic incident, just after the results came out a bloke whose name I forget came storming into my room. "It just isn't fair Ray Garner. You have done nothing at all four years except drink beer and chase women, I have worked the whole time and yet we have got the same degree. It isn't right!"

My Mother was not able to come to the degree ceremony so I offered the tickets to Mr. Walker my Orthopaedic surgeon. When I rang him at the hospital he was pleased but said that he had a full list that day and couldn't make it. A couple of days later he rang me and said that he had cancelled all his list for that day and would be coming.

So then, here's your father, it's 1955 I'm 28 and, unaccepted by the priesthood, without a clue as to what I'm going to do. After graduating I took a ward orderly's job at the North Staffs. Infirmary and got digs with a nice old lady in Newcastle-under-Lyme. I had made friends with two first year students Jamie, thrown out of the Sorbonne, and Judith his girl friend. Jamie was doing a vacation job in the Isle of Wight and Judith who lived locally. She intended to hitch hike to the I.O.W. and come back with Jamie, would I please go with her? He would pay the return fares of us both and we would be back on the Sunday night. With only enough money each to pay the ferry fare, off we set.

Don't remember anything of the journey except that we hitched to London, bought return tickets to the Isle of Wight and met up with Jamie - and that's where everything began to go wrong! They were catching a ferry that night and to pass the time I took a round-the-island bus trip. Unhappily the tour took longer than expected and I missed the boat. Literally, so there I was with no money and only a return ticket to Waterloo. Arriving in Waterloo about midnight there was nothing I could do except try to pass the time until the morning as best as I could, thirsty and very tired. I tried to sleep in the waiting room but got moved on by a policewoman. Someone had bought two bottles of pop and left one unopened when he left to catch a train. That went down very well.

A digression now. Talking of Jamie, one night while still a student Jamie and I were in my room having a chat and about three am there was a knock on the door and in came Chris, a student and a woman post graduate, name forgotten, neither of whom should have been in a man's room at this hour. Come on Ray, let's go out and do something. My idea was to go into town and paint the statue of Queen Victoria red. Problem, no red paint, solution: take a pink cleaning goo from the kitchen. Unfortunately the statue was not able to be climbed, so we contented ourselves by 'painting' rude graffiti on the Guildhall. After mooching around a bit Jamie and I went for a coffee in an all night cafe but the ladies went back to Keele, Chris because it was five am by now and she risked expulsion if caught and the post grad to count hatching eel worms. Shows you how much the world has changed: can you imagine now two young attractive women walking off in to the night on a three mile hike? They told us afterwards that when the had gone a little way a police car drew up.
"Are you with Ray?".
They were invited to hop in and the policemen drove them back to college and smuggled the girls into the women's Hall.

Back to the vagrant. In the morning I walked until I saw a vicarage, went in and asked to borrow my train fare back to Stoke. He gave it to me but wanted my driving license as security. Of course when I got back I found that I'd lost the hospital job. With no idea as to what I was going to do, I went for a pint to think things over. While drinking my beer I looked at Situations Vacant in the Licensees' trade paper and saw that a barman was wanted in the Ocean Hotel, Sandown I.O.W. with a transferred charge telephone no. I rang and was asked to go straight away. I was given a room in the hotel and given my own bar which became known as Ray's Bar.

It was interesting at first. A couple of odd incidents. A clergyman who got snooty because I didn't know how to make up a White Lady, and the there was the young man, showing off to his girl friend and ordering a Pimms No 1 for her. Being honest I made it simply, Pimms, lemonade, and a hint of decoration, and charged him the minimum. "This isn't the right one. Give me the real Pimms." So I put another measure of spirit in and filled the glass with lemon slices, cherries and goodness knows what and charged him five times as much. "That's better." he said, giving me a large tip. Another bloke, a whisky salesman, ordered each day a large whisky - not the one he was selling - and always left a two shilling tip. Then there was the idiot who asked me to make up some odd concoction, paid for it plus a tip, and then asked me to drink it!

The trouble with this bar was that because of the glorious weather very few people used it during the day so I got bored and eventually asked to be moved to the hotel's very busy pub and that's when my work really started. By this time I had lost my room in the hotel and moved into the hotel's staff quarters. These were very poor, nicknamed Rowten House after a notorious London doss house. What a come down. The day started at about nine clearing last night's debris and setting up for the morning opening. Afternoons were free mostly spent either in bed or on the beach. It was a lovely hot summer. Starting work again at five we worked on until the half past ten closing time plus some tidying up. Days off were used to drink in the bars of other hotels. It was a very sleazy period, by the time I left every one of the other bar staff including, the manager, had been sacked for fiddling and replaced. Hotels were so desperate for staff that any one sacked had only to walk to the next hotel and get another job and so on until the end of the season.

I enjoyed working in the bar which was always busy and crowded, especially in the evenings. It was comical to see how when the holiday makers, most of whom seemed to come from the Birmingham area, first arrived they would come into the bar ordering rounds of drinks for each other then at the end of their holidays come clutching a fist full of copper coins and asking the price of a half pint of mild. One group of lads, for some reason, took a shine to me and on their last night asked the bar manager to let me sit with them and he agreed. Of course, it all ended nearly in tears when, worse for drink, I was daft enough to go behind the bar and topped up someone's drink. Luckily the manager excused me and it all passed peacefully.

After a few weeks I became bored once more and asked to be transferred to the still room. This was very light work and was mainly preparing salads and other food elements e.g. cooking hard boiled eggs and shaping butter into circular pats! However, the lure of the licensed trade - and its better money - still held me and I took to waiting in the bar in the evenings. This was so profitable that we were willing to do this unpaid. I'm ashamed to say that I got into bad company and sometimes joined in cheating the customers. The "scam" worked like this. The most often ordered drink was a "Boiler Maker " which consisted of a half pint of mild and a bottle of Guinness and the price was something like nine pence for the mild plus one shilling and six pence for the Guinness. You took the order to the bar but the barman, with whom you were in league, would substitute a bottle of cheaper stout costing seven pence less so you would pocket the difference and share it with your mate at the end of the evening. Seven Old pence doesn't seem much but with a half dozen each round and god knows how many rounds each evening we finished up with a packet of cash. Yes. It was wrong, I am

ashamed and sorry, and no doubt at some time I shall be paying for it. As my Mother would often say, "God never pays his debts in money", or as the Spanish say, "Take what you want says God, and pay for it."

Eventually I decided to move on, I packed in the job and got another one in the Totland Bay chalet hotel in another part of the island as a kitchen porter. Not a lot to report except making friends with a very pretty waitress whose name I forget but do remember meeting her under an archway because there was no where else, and going to the pictures to see Doris Day in Calamity Jane. Rock and Roll had not been invented and the hit record was Ruby Murray singing Softly, Softly.

By this time, the summer was nearing its end and the hotel closed after taking all the staff on a very interesting trip round the island. And so where to now? I had a bit of money so I could, unlike earlier, afford my fare back home to Soham. I still had no idea at all of what I was going to do with my life, so as a holding operation, I got a job in the machine shop as a capstan lathe operator, of a factory in Cambridge which made scientific instruments. Not much of note here. One afternoon we were given twenty minutes from work to stand in the road outside to cheer the Queen as she passed on her way to open some scientific place or other, she looked quite pretty - she was still under thirty. One of the other workers was an American from, so he said, the hillbilly country of the Ozark Mountains. The only thing I remember of him was his telling me that back home they had no toilet paper but hung an empty corn cob from the ceiling! I was doing quite well in the job even being invited by the shop foreman not to go anywhere but to stay and take up a job as setter.

I still had absolutely no idea as to what I was going to do for a living but once again my old friend the Bishop of Ely

took a hand, and I got a letter from the Chief Education Officer of Cambridgeshire saying that the Bishop had asked him to see me. At the meeting he asked me to consider teaching, even getting me a place in the University Education Institute for a teaching diploma and fixing up a grant. However, I thought it was time for me to get down to earning some real money somewhere. Out of the blue came another letter, this time from the Chief Education Officer of the Isle of Ely inviting me to a meeting with his Director of staffing who offered me a temporary teaching post in the Duke of Bedford School, Thorney. Thorney is a small village on the A47 half way between Peterborough and Wisbech. I accepted and it turned out to be a really huge change of direction in my life.

I was asked to start work at the beginning of the New Year,1956 and arranged a preliminary meeting with Mr Jackson, the Headmaster, a few days before. That winter was a very severe one with the snow piled high and he suggested that as the buses were having difficulty I should meet him in a tea shop in Peterborough. He seemed a nice enough chap, and I tried not to notice either his dicky bow or his facial twitch, and arranged to go to the school a day before it opened. He had been good enough to arrange accommodation for me with Mr and Mrs Achurch who had a flat above their newspaper shop. More about them later. The school was an 'all age' school taking pupils from the village and the hamlets outside. Rather like Haworth plus Oldfield, Stanbury etc.

My first day at the school was almost the last day, as I went into the door, the smell of carbolic soap and the voice of a teacher bawling at some kids brought all my own school days back to me and it was touch and go for a moment. The winter of '55/'56 was very severe, with deep snow drifts and because most of the children were bussed in from the outskirts only a

few turned up and so it was decided that we would make one class out of the pupils from three. This was fortunate for me, it meant that I did not have to face a class clueless and on my own. At least there was help with registration and a chance to get my bearings.

My class was the Third year, 13-14 yrs. Thirty six children, equal numbers of boys and girls. I was to be their Form Master teaching them Maths. English and History. In addition I would be responsible for teaching English and History throughout the four senior years. I think that's right. After three days, the weather eased and I was on my own with a full class. Of course, I dropped 'clangers' all over the show. Taking them through areas of circles I got frustrated at their inability to understand and growled," I could do these at eleven years of age". Up went a hand, "Please, Sir. Perhaps you had a better teacher than we've got?" Another time, a girl fainted. With absolutely no idea what to do I went to pick her up. "Ah don't worry Sir, she's always like this when she has her periods!"

It was difficult at first because, really, I had no idea of what to do. Luckily the kids were on the whole quite docile, they seemed to like me, and the other senior teachers were very helpful. The Deputy Head was a Yorkshireman named Ron Driver who gave me lots of advice and practical help. The Woodwork teacher, a Welshman named Mudd, the Science master Turner and his Domestic Science teacher wife, were equally considerate of my untrained floundering. The Head was initially helpful but rather a shady character where the girl pupils were concerned. Three girls in my class were often missing from my afternoon registration and I would always find them in his study, on one occasion sprawled across the floor with him. One of these girls figured in a humorous incident. When a class arrived they had to line up in twos

outside the door, girls first (although it was supposed to be a mixed school, Jackson insisted that they were kept separate). The wall dividing the classroom from the corridor was made of glass and through this I saw one of the boys doing illegal things with his ruler under the skirt of one of the girls. I roasted the pair of them, he for what he was doing and she for enjoying it.

The clown of the class was Janet Rook, a well built cheerful girl, captain of the school hockey team. One lesson she made out that she couldn't see what was on the board, so I got her to stand with her nose six inches from it intending that, when she said she couldn't see it, I'd push her towards it. Disaster. She flexed her neck muscles and I couldn't move her. Collapse of thin party!

Meanwhile, back at the Achurches; it was a very comfortable flat with a nicely sized bedroom and quite large lounge with a round brass topped table on which I had my meals. These were brought up to me and were always beautiful. Elizabeth Achurch was Hungarian with an oink of a husband, uninterested in any food other than meat and two veg. so her cooking skills were all practised on me.

Thorney is as you know a small, one pub, one church village. The villagers were a friendly lot who seemed to accept me, both the farm labourers and the farmers and professional people. I spent my leisure time in the Rose and Crown and in the Parish church. Not long after I had started work I became quite ill. This seemingly is common amongst new teachers who un-immunised are open to all the infections floating around the school. A doctor was called who told me that I had laryngitis and signed me off sick. When he had finished he said, "Well that's the medical business, now let's get down to the social part", Lighting up a fag and offering me one. What he wanted was for me to join his singing group, so with that,

the local, and various church duties I soon had a very full social life. This included a little shenanigan with the village Postmistress and the (female) organist. I had another strange meeting with this doctor some time later. One Sunday afternoon I was taking the Achurch's dog for a walk through the village when a car stopped and the driver Dr. (whose name I can't remember) asked me to get in and offered me a cigarette. He was very nervy, he was coming back from attending a road accident which had left him shattered. Thorney was on the very busy A47 route with a middle overtaking lane, very dangerous and with frequent accidents.

A bit of rural farce. One of our teachers, Stella Bacon a mature spinster lady, was the object of the affection of Bill Gutteridge a local farmer. Bill fixed up to lend me a shot gun so that I could join in the local pigeon kill but, of course, it was just a ploy to get into the school. When he brought the gun to the school, Stella screamed, shot off and hid in the lavatory. Another time, Stella, me and a couple of other teachers walking along decided to go for a pint. Suddenly a scream from Stella. "God. There's Bill Gutteridge!", and off she flies. As far as I know, she still lives an unmarried life in Thorney.

The Reverend Haines, Thorney's Vicar had to go into hospital and the Bishop licensed me to take the services whilst he was away. Can you imagine it? Your father standing in the pulpit, in cassock, surplice and hood, preaching against the wicked? I can't believe it ever happened. Thorney had a daughter church right out in the fens so I had to go there in the afternoon. Margery the organist and the post mistress came to both services which was embarrassing as I used the same sermon at both. Albert the verger, father to the postmistress (it was a very small village) asked whether I had permission to "Wear that thing hanging down your neck." He

meant my hood, in parish circles what items of ecclesiastical dress allowed were supervised!

Life was very comfortable for me, a good job which I enjoyed, girl friends, and an interesting social life. Some week ends I spent with my Mum at Soham, during one of which I became ill enough for her to call out the doctor who gave me a shot of anti-biotic up my backside. I had pneumonia. I was supposed to have stayed in bed but stupidly insisted on going back to Thorney because I had a part in a church play. She said later that the doctor, calling to see me next day, was annoyed and worried. Anyway, the treatment worked and I recovered.

A cataclysmic change in my life began one evening. Whilst sitting drinking in the Rose and Crown, friends came up and asked me to go to a dance with them. There was a village hall in the pub's grounds. I told them that I didn't feel like going and anyway I had no jacket or tie on but they nagged me into it. So I went reluctantly, asked a girl to dance and was accepted. I can't dance so was not surprised when she refused a second. Feelings hurt, I turned to a girl whose blue dress and very pretty face, had caught my eye. Not only did she accept but allowed me to take her home - and also be on the receiving end of a good night's kiss. She told me she was a Third Year student nurse at Stamford hospital and was staying with her Mother on her days off. Her name was Anne Marie Gibbs. You two know her best as MUM. I have always blessed my friends for dragging me along to that dance.

It really was love at first sight for both of us. It never occurred to either of us, right from that moment, that we would do anything other than marry. She was petite, curvaceous - I called her my Pocket Venus, and very affectionate. I couldn't believe that this lovely young woman could love a scruffy, dirty-finger nailed oaf such as me, but she

did. Her Mother once told me that before I met her Anne had seen me walking outside and had said, "I'm going to marry him".

She had been born in Chatham Royal Naval Hospital on August 6th 1936 to Claira Louise Gibbs nee Ounsworth and Robert Gibbs. Her Dad was a Royal Navy Petty Officer who had joined the R.N. at 14 years of age serving throughout the First World War and stayed on as a Regular, retiring just before the beginning of World War 2. As a Naval Reservist he was called back into the Navy. That was September 1939, in May 1940 he went down with his ship the destroyer HMS Wakeful when she was attacked by German E.Boats while helping to evacuate the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk. That meant that Anne, not yet four, had lost her beloved Father.

We used to meet up each time she was home, when I was at school I would nip across to her house, just over the road from school, for coffee and cuddles. Later, we took our first holiday together going to Llantwit Major, the place where I had spent the holiday/study course as a Fircrofter. Thinking that there would be plenty of vacancies, I stupidly left booking too late, so we had to stay at different pubs but we did book into a Cardiff hotel for a day or two, very liberated for the stuffy Fifties! One thing I did learn about your Mum was her craftiness about money.

We set off on the holiday each with £40. She suggested that we should use up my money first and then go on to using hers. I should have known better for when, about half way through the holiday, my money ran out and I asked her for 2 shillings (10p) for some cigarettes she said, "You can't have my money; I'm saving that for a new dress."!

Each time she went back to Stamford, I'd go with her on the bus but I wasn't allowed to go as far as the hospital.

Long after we were married she confessed that she hadn't wanted the nurses to see me because I was too scruffy!
It was strange. This was no great Barbara Cartlandish romance, just the absolute certainty that we were meant for each other. Years later that love is still there, even though she has been dead many years. We had three months of happy togetherness when the inevitable happened, Anne became pregnant. We had already decided that we wanted to marry, this just hurried things up a bit! We didn't want to live near either of our Mothers so I got a teaching post in Birmingham: there were so many teaching jobs available that you could move any time.

I was posted to Stirchley Secondary Modern School, not far from Bournville. On wet days you could smell the chocolate factory. I got digs in Balsall Heath,red light district, Brum.'s very own Lumb Lane! Money was short to the point of non existence. We would have to rely on her Mum for the wedding. Where we were going to live, God only knew.

CHAPTER 7: AND THEN CAME IAN

Because we could only marry with Clara's money she made all the decisions as to where and when. She insisted that we marry in St. Mark's church in Peterborough where she and Anne's Dad had been married and where Anne had been confirmed. This was difficult. To marry in a Church of England church, essential to all three of us, one or other of you had to live in that church's parish and neither of us did. The answer was a Special Licence which could only be granted personally by the Archbishop of Canterbury. What a performance. Firstly we had to fill in a large form and get a reference from Anne's Mum, my Mum, the vicars of Thorney and Soham and, strangely, Anne's old Headmaster! I was then dispatched to London for an interview with the Archbishop's secretary, swear on the Bible that everything on the form was genuine, and pay him £25. All I remember was travelling in a First Class carriage on a Third Class ticket, opening a tin of beer and spraying the whole carriage with foam! One thing I did learn. I had thought the Archbishop's permission was not made by him in person but by some official but no, every application was personally vetted by himself. Something to do with Peter's Pence

whatever that is. Apparently it goes back to Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Anyway we got the Licence, on a parchment document with an enormous Seal. Armed with this we could now be married in any Parish in any Diocese on ten day's notice.
The wedding was fixed for Saturday September 29th 1956. In the meantime Anne carried on nursing and I went back to Birmingham. One day, a phone call came for me at school. It was one of Anne's nursing friends telling me that Anne was in a terrible way, crying and very upset. She was working nights and, because there was building work going on at the hospital, she was sleeping in a large country house in Pilsgate, a tiny village outside Stamford. Penniless as I was I took a train to Peterborough and then a bus to Pilsgate. This was the Fifties and a man in a Nurses' Home let alone a nurse's bedroom was something unthinkable, but being, as you both know only too well, arrogant and domineering I marched into her room and told her to pack a case, she was coming back to Birmingham with me.

I rang the Matron to tell that I was taking Anne away. When she answered the phone, she started berating me, "About time I heard from you!". In the full flush of stupidity I told her to shut up and that I was not one of her nurses. Anne got up, dressed, and we went off to see Matron. Here was the difficulty, explaining what we were doing without letting on about Anne's pregnancy. However, after a very uncomfortable few minutes we made our excuses and left. This meant of course that her nursing career was at an end. This was something for which I will always regret but it does show the measure of your Mum's commitment to me.

We caught a train to Birmingham and booked in at an hotel staying there for a couple of days but Anne decided that she should go back and work out her period of notice at the

hospital. The night before the wedding, my best man, Bernard Gilhooley and I stayed at the Rose and Crown Inn, Thorney. Of course I had to take a lot of stick from the blokes.

Arriving at the church together with Bernard and Marion, a friend of Anne's, I was surprised to see a small crowd outside the gates. “Looks like there has been another wedding”, I remarked. “It's for yours, you daft thing!” said Marion.

To say that the groom was nervous would be an understatement, I was scared stiff. My Mother, who was standing behind me, didn't help by whispering,” Well you've done it now. It's too late to change your mind." Nothing could have changed my mind, I couldn't wait to get married. Especially, when this beautiful woman, walked down the aisle and took my arm. Please don't expect me to describe her dress (it's in my wardrobe) except to say it was cream. It had been made by Evangelina a fellow nurse from Spain. Years afterwards Mum told me that Evangelina couldn't understand why at each fitting Mum's waistline had grown!

What was really worrying me was this: Bernard would need to be paid for the money he was laying out for things like the bridesmaid's flowers and his and my carnations. I hadn't a penny in the world. I settled it later with a loan from Anne's Mum. A minor worry was how were we getting to the reception? The hotel was just across the road from the church, surely we weren't going to walk? On the other hand, how silly we would look getting into a car and just driving a few yards. The answer of course was we would get into the car which would then drive around the block before arriving at the hotel.

Still, all the worries in the world could not take away our happiness. The weather was fairly bright but rather windy and I have a photo showing me trying to control the bride's veil which was floating up. A crude friend, on seeing this

photo said, "You couldn't wait to interfere with her clothing!" I found out later that this bloke, whose wife was heavily pregnant and who had been left at home, spent the night with the manageress of the hotel.

Anne Gibbs and Ray Garner were now Mr and Mrs Garner. My life was to undergo a very great, and exciting, change. In the afternoon we caught a train to Birmingham and booked into a hotel in Broad Street in the city centre. Sadly I forget its name. What I do remember was when we went upstairs to sleep, Anne asked whether I minded if she changed in the bathroom. Off she goes and when she comes out she is wearing thick pyjamas, woollen bed socks, a dressing gown and carrying a hot water bottle! I told her that she didn't need that, I would be her water bottle. This hotty was to play quite a big part in our married life. She always felt the cold (you two have inherited that trait seemingly) and liked to take it to bed with her, sometimes in the hottest weather. I'd wake up in the night and feel this cold lumpen thing at my feet, sticking to the sheet and being very hard to move out of the way. In the morning we woke at about half past ten, staggering to the window and opening the curtains I saw in the windows of the first floor offices opposite, the street dividing the hotel from the other side and workers standing and clapping us!

Anyway, here we were in Birmingham, married, no money in my pocket and with no accommodation fixed. This last was totally my fault, during the weeks that Anne had been back working out her notice I should have been trawling the ads looking for somewhere to live but had done absolutely nothing about it, to this day I am sick with shame. Anne had enough money to pay hotel bills, though we soon slipped down the scale from good hotel to grotty commercial hotels. All day while I was at school your Mum would plod round looking for somewhere. Poor love, she was so innocent. She

came back one day and said the she had been knocking on doors and brown faces were only too anxious to oblige. Luckily, a policeman stopped her and wanted to know what she was doing. When she told him, he laughed and said, "I don't think your husband would approve of you being here"? Too right I wouldn't. She had been traipsing round Balsall Heath, the notorious red light district where I had stayed before we were married. No wonder the residents were so willing to offer her a room.

Eventually, the school's secretary found us temporary accommodation with a friend and this gave us time to look for rented accommodation which we found at 66, Winnie Road, Selly Oak. We were given a lounge dining room, bedroom, and use of the kitchen. The landlady was Miss Lily White, that really was her name. She was one of those heroic ladies who gave up their youth and stayed at home to look after their parents. Hers were now dead, leaving her in her fifties, having lost all chance of marriage and children that she may have wanted. On the whole she was very nice and helpful but had a habit of taking me to one side and warning me about doing too much to help my wife. I suppose she was jealous of our happiness. She sometimes complained of what she called our "bedroom noises"! We were young, yes even me, and newly married, what else could she expect? Ah. The arrogance and inconsiderateness of the young!

After a time Mum got herself a job in a city office: she had had secretarial training before beginning nursing. Poor dear. This innocent country girl found rush hour travel and crowded pavements bewildering and came home the first night in tears bruised by her experience. She soon learnt to cope and stood on toes and elbowed her way on to busses to the manner born. Her Mother came to visit once, staying in a B&B and having meals with us. It didn't get off to a very good

start with a row between Mother and daughter. At one stage, Clare rushed out saying that she was going straight back to Thorney and I had to talk her back into the house. Actually Anne didn't like her Mother, who told me that at sixteen while they were in London, Anne had told her, "If you were not my Mother I wouldn't talk to you." There was a lot of resentment in Anne at the way she had been treated in her childhood. Something to do with her Mother's relationship with men living with them. I never knew the whole story, but there, they are both dead and it is all in the past. Let's move on.

We were still poor but with two pay days were no longer destitute. She was very good at making do with what little we had, a typical meal might be a tin of stewed steak and onions with vegetables. A pudding could be perhaps two jam tarts each on a plate with custard or, cooked apples, stewed apples, baked apples, apple charlotte and all with Birds' custard. So clever was she at making ends meet that I could bring visitors home unexpectedly and she would still cope.

A few memories of that period 56/57. One Saturday we went to the Birmingham Ideal Home Exhibition and when we set off home Anne said she would like an ice cream, this was unfortunate as we had only enough money for one, and needed what was left for our fare back to Selly Oak which was at a distance far beyond our walking abilities especially as she was by this time, well into her pregnancy. We bought one ice cream and I was permitted one or two licks! Another time we had an extraordinary piece of luck. We had been to the cinema in Birmingham to see The King and I and were standing at the bus stop waiting for a bus home. Now, Brum is a huge city and it was getting dark so what a surprise when a car stopped and took us home. We had no idea who it was. The same thing happened just after we came to Keighley when walking to the bus stop on Station Bridge pushing Ian's push chair, a

stranger stopped and took us home. How very strange, I can only guess that your Mum's charisma had reached out into the traffic.

However, back to the early days. I had an absolute thrill when one night in bed she placed my hand on her stomach just as the baby gave an almighty kick! It was only then I realised we were actually going to have a baby. By this time Anne was too far in to her pregnancy to go on working so we were back to my wage. We had visited a GP in Selly Oak and he booked her in to the maternity unit of the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham with the baby due early in May.

Thanks to Mum's persistence and hard slog we had been given the tenancy of a new Flat in Sutton Coldfield. I really could not believe our luck and when she told me about it, I thought of things like key money, furniture and fittings fees, and all the kind of things I had read about. When I went to see the agents, Barr Son & Thomas in Birmingham they assured me that there were no such monies wanted. The rent would be £3 plus £1 rates payable each lunar month. Anne was very tickled when she called in the office later and they said, "It's all right Mrs Garner, your father has been in already." It was a long time before she would let me forget that as you can imagine. Oddly, Barr Son & Thomas's offices were just across the street from the hotel in which we spent our wedding night so it would be the girls from there who had applauded me when I opened the curtains the next morning.

The Flat, no.3 was in one of two brand new blocks of six flats each. Our block was called Bickley House and we were on the first floor. Above us was Mrs de Berry, a divorcee, rather posh and with a young son. Below us was a middle aged lady whose name I forget but came from Harrogate, so you can imagine her poshness. Across the corridor were John and

Betty Frudd who were also expecting a child. The Frudds and we became good friends and visited each other some evenings. Because both couples had only minimal furnishings, when we visited each other we took our own fireside chairs. Our flat had a lounge, entrance porch, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen. We had gone into Phillips' furnishing department and when the salesman asked us what we were looking for, Mum said lounge furnishings, at the same time as I said beds. We bought a dining table and four chairs, a sideboard and a book case (which I still have) for the living room and a double bed. All on H.P., do they have such things now? The system was that you paid weekly instalments which included hire charges. After so many payments the goods were then yours. Grandmother Gibbs gave us a double wardrobe and a kidney shaped dressing table. The lounge floor was varnished, though I did manage to buy a 6 foot x 2 foot Belgian carpet. Can't remember anything about the floor covering in the other rooms but think we probably had some lino or similar. In the kitchen we had a table and two chairs. Cooking was on a Baby Belling cooking hob and water for clothes washing was from a small boiler. Other hot water was from a tank with an immersion heater. Having no money for entertainment we just went to bed, read and listened to Anne's wireless set. I went to the Doctor's once because I had not been feeling well and was rather tired. Perhaps you should go to bed sooner, he advised, when I told him that we already go to bed at six, he laughed and said that in that case we should go later!

Now we had moved, travel was much more complicated. Winnie Rd was only a bus ride away from school but the flat was outside Birmingham on the far side of the city: equivalent, say, teaching in Morley and living in Lothersdale. Sutton Coldfield was in Warwickshire, Four Oaks was a suburb of Sutton Coldfield and BlakeStreet where the flats

were was a newly created village on the edge of Four Oaks. It was a rural position but did have some shops and an off licence, or selling out shop, run by Mr Dallow. This gentleman was to prove a very good friend. Money was almost non existent. My nett monthly pay was £38 pounds, per calendar month payable by money order which could be cashed only at one branch of Lloyds which fortunately was just next to the school. Rent and rates were payable at each month. Electric bills were about £5 per quarter. Train and bus fares to work were £3.75 per month. A grand total of £22.20 pm leaving a little less than £16 pm or about £3.50 each week for everything else. We struggled on with a £70 overdraft and sometimes even that was breached.

Somewhere about half way through one particular month, the worst happened. I had worked out that we had a little over six pounds left so changed a cheque for six pounds, in good faith, with Mr Dallow. A few evenings later an apologetic Mr D arrived on the doorstep, my cheque had bounced. Telling him that I really thought there was enough left in the account, I apologised and said that all I could offer was another cheque post dated to the end of the month. As I was writing it out, he said, "Wait a moment, you have no money for the rest of the month, make it out for £12. He then took out £6 and gave it to me!

Time I think to introduce another character. Ian Peter Robert Garner. Anne had always been very brave throughout her pregnancy in spite of awful morning sickness and never let it stop us enjoying life, though once we nearly went too far. We had taken a bus ride into Coventry to see the ruins of the cathedral and decided to climb the steps up a very tall nearby spire. About half way up I suddenly realised, God Anne, you're seven months pregnant and we scrambled hastily down.

The baby was expected sometime at the beginning of May 1957 and we went to bed early on the Sunday the fifth of May. We had not long been to bed when Anne felt a contraction. At each new contraction I checked the time between them and was bemused to find that the intervals between them were getting longer instead of the expected shorter! Having fallen asleep I was woken at about 3am and told, "Get an ambulance, the baby is coming". She had been hiding the contractions.

We had, of course, no telephone so I had to dress and walk about quarter of a mile to a telephone box. The operator was very soothing. "Don't worry Sir. Everything will be all right. Just get back to your wife and leave everything to us." Getting back to the flat I was amused to see that she had laid out my best (only) suit, shirt and tie! If you're coming to hospital with me then I want you looking smart. We had already decided that I would be in at the birth with her and getting permission for that was a laugh.

Weeks before, I had rung the Superintendent of the Maternity wing of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, where Anne was booked in, and asked if it was OK for me to be with my wife while she was having the baby? She told me it was possible but she wanted to know something about me. What work did I do? Teaching. "That's good, for we don't want people like bricklayers and so on." What did I know about the process? I had studied Human Physiology as part of my University degree course. "Excellent, but what about seeing blood and so on?" I had been employed during vacs as a Ward Orderly. "Well, that makes you the perfect person. You may stay with her but understand that, if anything begins to go wrong, you will have to leave immediately."

It wasn't very long before the ambulance came and orf we went. It was a long journey; we had to get to Brum and through the city to the other side. The ambulance men were worried as to whether we would make it in time and each time we passed a hospital they asked Mum should they stop but each time she said no, that it was all right. We got to the ward about sevenish and were told at first that there was no hurry, the baby would be a long time arriving. They were talking about sending us home when another nurse did an examination and said. "This baby will arrive at any time". We were rushed straight to the delivery room. My job was to hold her hand and to encourage her. She was very brave, none of the agonised screaming you see on films. She raised a smile when on being urged to push she said, "Can I wait until the pain has gone?"

I was urging her along and unconsciously pushing so hard myself that I had to make a very quick dash to the lavatory. Coming back into the room, I was struck by the silence and saw half a blue head coming out. Our first born was arriving. It soon became obvious that everything was OK. The baby had all its parts in the right places and the Mother was perfectly safely delivered, thanks be to God. I was a Dad! I had a son! It was 8 am, Monday May 6 1957. Life was going to be very different from now!

I went back to the flat promising to come again in the evening. The first thing I had to do was ring the school. George Merideth the Head was very nice, congratulated me and said that I could take the day off. I now had to tell the Grandmothers. Anne's Mum was working at the Rose and Crown in Thorney so was able to ring her there. The only way I could tell my Mum was to write and this I did, addressing the letter to Old Granny Garner. As she was only 52, that didn't go down well though she was very pleased at the news. As we

had no relatives in Brum I found it very frustrating. Here was I bursting with pride and no one to tell it to. In the evening I caught the train to Birmingham and went to a Lyons Corner shop for a pot of tea and a bun while I was waiting for a bus to the hospital. To my delight I saw Dudley Buckingham, a friend from Keele, and rushed to tell him the news. "I know", he said, "Your Mother-in-law has told me!" She had travelled to Brum and going in to the cafe had met Dudley and somehow got talking to him.

Babies were kept separately from their Mothers, except for feeding times when they were placed into a line of cots behind a glass screen. I couldn't wait to see him and went each night of the two weeks they were in, always recognising him by his little beaked nose. Mum told me later that the nurses had said that I was only supposed to see him on certain nights but, "We haven't the heart to stop him". A funny thing happened one night. Getting into the city too early, I called in at a pub for a pint. I have always loved the sight of a clear glass of bitter and held it up to the bright evening light, the barmaid brought me another one "With the landlord's compliments". I've no idea why, though suspect that I had told her where I was going.

I went to the hospital every one of the fourteen nights she was in and woe betide me if I wasn't the first father through the door.

CHAPTER 8: WELCOME TO THE DALES

Now came the great moment - Mother and baby were coming home. I had got things ready. Clare had given us an old fashioned "Treasure" cot (kept it for years, (wonder where it is now?), somehow or other we got baby clothes together - expect granny Gibbs provide them - KB Ellis gave us a dropsided cot and someone gave us a baby bath. I brought Mother and son home in a taxi (God knows where the money came from - Mrs Gibbs I suppose?

When we got in, the Frudds came and looked at the baby and when we had closed the door after they had gone, the awful truth hit us, this child was ours, we were totally responsible for his welfare. Whereas up to now there had always been nurses and doctors close at hand, now whatever food and caring he needed we had only ourselves to rely on. It was a quite frightening thought. We were both young, Mum was only 20 and even I had not had my thirtieth birthday. In fact your Mum was under the age of majority, which in those days was 21 so I had to sign the hospital consent forms

But what a lot of pleasure we got from our new born. He was an extremely good baby and very rarely cried. On the few occasions he did wake up in the night we invented a test.

If he cried, I would lift him out of his cot and laid him on the floor, if he continued crying we guessed that there was a genuine problem and Anne would try to find out and put it right. However, if he scrabbled happily about on the floor, he was given a light tap on his nappied bottom and gently replaced in his cot. The odd thing about Ian was that when he reached various stages in his development they arrived suddenly. For instance, he had always lain still in his cot not making any attempt to sit up and so it was a surprise to us when sitting in the living room and the baby asleep in the bedroom, we heard a bump and a yell. Rushing in we found that he had decided it was time for him to sit up - and straightway fell out of his cot! Fortunately there didn't seem to be any damage. Much later on, when he could now be laid on the floor, there was no attempt to crawl. One Saturday returning from Birmingham and with the rain pelting down I rushed upstairs, opened the door and laid my bags on the floor. Another yell and a series of bumps. He had crawled out to the landing and fallen down the concrete stairs, all fifteen of them! Again, no damage but looking at the antics of the grown up Ian, I do sometimes wonder! Anyway, it was now obvious that we couldn't leave him unattended for a second. As my old Mum would have said, "You need eyes up your backside ".

So life went on quite happily, though money was still a very great problem and a source of worry to me. We did manage a few trips home either to Thorney or Soham but travelling with a pram was difficult, not every bus driver would let us get on, but as Ian grew big enough to travel in a push chair (10 shillings from a neighbour) it got easier. In those days there were two railway stations in Peterborough, each at opposite ends of the town and each time we went home we had to get off at one and trek to the other and what a trek it was, suitcases, baby buggy, the lot. Even when we were going

to Thorney we had to traipse from railway station to bus station, thanks to Beecham and his bloody axe, the line between Peterborough. and Thorney was closed. Going to Anne's Mum was always better than going to mine. My Mum lived in a small bungalow and we had to sleep in a single bed whereas at Thorney we had a lovely double bed with an electric blanket.

Because money was so short I took a part time job in a nearby pub, can't remember its name but do remember my first stint. It was on a Saturday morning and the place was full, the Landlord and his wife were unable to help serve for some forgotten reason leaving me to struggle on my own but, thanks to the Isle of Wight experience I was able to cope very easily. Life then for me was one round of school, long journey home, a snatched tea and then work at the pub. I usually finished about half past ten and then faced a long walk home. The Landlord was away one evening, and not wanting to leave the landlady alone, I agreed to stay until he returned. This meant that I didn't get back home until midnight. All was quiet and dark, no lights on in the flat as I tiptoed in hoping to get into bed without waking Mum and Mother-in-Law, who happened to be staying with us. Suddenly, on went the lights and I was facing two very stern faces. Yes. I was deeply in the doo doo.

I have said earlier how good your Mum was at coping with visitors, here is a sample. We were getting a meal together when I saw KB Ellis coming towards the door. "I'll put another egg on." I'm afraid you'll need more than that I told her. "His Mother and his aunt are with him!" God knows how she did it but she fed us all. The Ellis's were quite well off and had built a self contained flat for guests and we were invited to stay for a while. It was quite enjoyable until Anne managed to block the toilet with used "Paddy Pads", a brand of disposable

nappies. Another unfortunate faux-pas when Mum criticised post natal clinics as unhygienic only to be snapped at by Aunt Honor who was a health visitor. Luckily all was smoothed over.

They were very good to us and came to Ian's christening. This was at Little Aston, a very posh place with a very class conscious vicar with a double barrelled name. Once in a sermon he spoke about, "This modern world where every child thinks he is as good as his parents and every servant as good as his master!" As we came into the churchyard another christening party was leaving. What a difference, our party, we three, plus Mum-in-law and three Ellises, theirs, twenty or so dressed in morning dress and the baby wrapped in a very posh robe. Never mind, we were just as good as them.

Another break in routine was getting an invitation to Bernard and Sheila's wedding in Stoke-on-Trent. Because Sheila was a Catholic, I expected the service to drag on but was surprised when after an exchange of vows and a blessing it was all over. Because Bernard was not a catholic they were not allowed to have the full Nuptual Mass, just the bare civil rites. Had it not been for the desperate shortage of cash, life would have been idyllic, we made friends amongst our neighbours and with people who lived in the nearby houses. Two of these were Bill and Ben a lovely couple who occasionally let us watch their television and with whom we exchanged suppers. The "posh" Harrogate lady, who lived in the flat beneath us, was a pain. She constantly moaned at Anne about noise and other things but I put a stop to this by getting a solicitor to send her a letter saying that she should either take legal action against us or shut up. Unless she did either of these things we would take out an injunction against her. I was sorry for her but what else could I do?

There was no point in a slanging match, a young couple against an old lady but I was not going to allow Anne to be upset. When the lady told me I was being unfair I pointed out to her that she had a son living nearby and that she should have asked him to come and see me. Mind you Anne wasn't always the victim. One day she complained to me that a pharmacist had been rude to her and I stormed into the shop demanding to see the b******d who had upset my wife. A chap came out and said that it was quite the opposite and that my wife had been grossly rude and offensive to him! You knew your Mother, who was right do you think?

Now that I had a family, I had to think of Life Insurance. One of the neighbours with whom I travelled to work was an insurance man and I asked him to come round and see us. He worked for a firm called London Life and I signed up with him and from this came a bit of luck, for he told me that as he was the regional manager, he would not get a bonus so he would put me down as the agent which would mean that I got it on my own policy. When the cheque came it was for £6. 10s, for us it was a godsend. So much so that I asked him whether I might sell some insurance in the evenings and so I became a part time seller of Mortgage Protection policies and actually sold one or two. Two odd incidents, one of the couples I visited were young, newly marrieds and for some reason they took a shine to me, actually having a meal ready for me when I next called. Another time, I made an hilarious mistake. An elderly gentleman invited me in and listened carefully to my sales talk. After I had finished he said that it seemed a very good scheme but couldn't see what use it was to him, as his was a Council House!

To give you an idea of just how serious was our money situation: at the end of July, the Education Office paid us both the July and August salaries together. In 1957 mine came to

£109 which just covered our overdraft which meant that our debts were cleared but we would be without money until the end of September 1958. Only one thing for it, a temporary job as a kitchen porter at Butlins Skegness holiday camp, so Anne and the baby were shipped off to Soham to live with my Mother. It nearly ended disastrously. I was told that I should start the next day but due to a muddle, Chef said I should have started the previous day and was going to sack me straight away. Fortunately the second chef spoke up for me and I kept my job. One of my jobs, one day, was the dreaded pan room, a room filled to the ceiling with large zinc pans encrusted with dried porridge, custard, vegetables, milk and God knows what else. The only washing materials were a steam jet and wire scrubbers. My working class experience and pride kicked in and towards the end of the afternoon I had cleared the whole room. When I told the second cook he didn't believe me. "No one ever finishes the pan room!" After he saw that I had really done it, I was the blue eyed boy and for the rest of the time got only light jobs. As well as working in the kitchen daytime, I occasionally got night time jobs in one or other of the bars, either as waiter or glass collector which brought extra monies in wages and tips.

There were other temps. students and teachers. I, of course, gravitated towards the prettier students and teachers. One teacher, Finola and me became good friends. Before you say anything, it was purely platonic and I kept your Mum informed at all times. However, I did have one stupid lapse of memory. It was at the end of one evening, which I had spent with a group of friends, that I said good night to Vi and kissed her! God knows what I was thinking about. Something had to be done. I had a photograph of Mum, Ian and myself and next morning at breakfast passed it to Vi. "I knew," She said,

"I just bloody knew!"

No bones broken or hearts and Mum never knew. There wasn't a woman in this world for whom I would hurt her.

On a pleasanter note, on days off I went to Soham (travel was easier then) and on one occasion I missed my train back to Skegness and returned to the bungalow. It was about midnight, no lights on and all doors locked. Luckily the window of the bedroom in which Anne was asleep was open so I climbed in, took off my trousers, shoes and socks and slid into the single bed with her. She never woke, never asked who I was, just curled herself round me and slept on!

Back in Sutton Coldfield, life went on as usual, our social life not very much in evidence but we did have a weekly change. Dicky and Olga Bondford whom I had known from Keele days were living in a flat in Erdington a northern district of Birmingham. They had no children and were intent on saving £1000 pounds as quickly as possible in order to buy a house. Everything they bought, everything they ate had to be the cheapest possible, we suspected that the only substantial meal they had was the one we fed them. They came to us one week and we went to them the next. When we visited them we used to take everything Ian would need at bedtime. When the time came for him to go to bed, we would bath him, put on his night clothes and lay him in their bed. At our going home time he would be wrapped in a blanket and I would carry the sleeping child home by bus and put him to bed in his cot. I once caught a glimpse of what happened when they were on there own. We were at their flat, it was after a meal and Olga had gone into the kitchen. I took some dirty plates into her and she, without looking around and thinking I was Dicky, let out a volume of abuse! Poor old Dicky.

So life flowed solidly along and then I was moved to a school on the Sutton side of the City which cut out a lot of my

journey. My new school was another sec mod in Perry Common and my time there began very badly. It was a two form entry and I was given 4B as a class, they had already forced the resignation of three teachers. They were just wild, anarchic 14/15 year old boys and I hated it and dreaded every day. Eventually the stress took its toll and I began to get mysterious headaches. Fortunately my GP spotted the problem - I was in depression and sent me to a psychiatrist who pronounced me well integrated with no mental health problems. This same GP put me on a course of pills telling me to take 2 each morning and night. On the morning after the two pills on the first night I woke up strangely relaxed and full of energy, and what is more, bursting for a fight.

When, after registration and assembly, I found myself once more facing the mob, but this time it was to be different. What follows now will make unpleasant reading, I should explain that my time table included English, Maths, and Geography with this class and this first lesson would be Maths. One way of settling down a class was to set them to working out simple four rules sums, this usually works. Sitting in front of me were two boys, Oliver and Bardsley and I saw that Oliver (his surname) was copying from Bardsley. Stop copying I told him, he looked up at me and calmly continued copying. That did it, with my opened hand I hit him so hard that he went crashing against his desk and both fell to the floor. He then started to say, "Don't you effing hit", that was as far as he got before I knocked him over again, stood him on his feet and caned him viciously. By break time I had caned eleven boys including Oliver and Bardsley and that was that. No more trouble and the class and I got on famously. At the end of the Easter term the leavers, including O & B came to the flat for supper. While they were washing up one accidentally broke something. Anne said they were terrified.

Groves, the head congratulated me on how I had tamed the class and asked me to tell him how I had done it. I said that it would be better if he asked me that on the day I leave the school. When I did tell him on my last day at this school, he said, "Thank God you didn't tell me at the time ".

One period I hated was Games, everyone took their own class for these and it meant a long walk to the games field. Completely clueless about sport I just set them off playing football and hovered around. Thankfully, the walk to and back from the field took so long that the actual period lasted little more than half to three quarters of an hour. One funny incident. For some unknown reason I was asked to take a boy from one of the Grammar schools and who wanted to be a teacher, under my wing. Walking to the games field he, swollen with his self importance, met up with some small boys from his own school who shouted to him, "Hi ya Podge!" Poor lad, his dignity shattered, blushed. Actually he was very good for he had a sort of manual calculator which helped me when it came to totting up the attendance figures.

Much as I hated games periods there was one teacher, an elderly bloke the kids nicknamed "Squib" (a name that well described him), so dreaded it that he would do anything to avoid it. One of his ploys was to threaten that any noise from his class and he would cancel the games period and that they would do written work instead. Of course the kids would never make a sound and as the time crept towards the start of the period he would become increasingly frustrated. Finally in desperation he would see a piece of paper on the floor, pick it up, flourish it, and say, "Litter! No games period."

Another source of income supplement was the Christmas Post. At Christmas 1957 we both applied for temporary jobs at the Post Office but I was turned down because the school term ended too late for me to be of any

use. Then a strange turn of luck, I always walked home from the station with a middle aged gentleman who, when I told him of my disappointment, stopped, laughed and said do you and your wife really want to work on the Post? Having replied “Yes!”, he said that, "You couldn't have talked to a better person. I am the Head Post Master of Birmingham, write a letter to me asking for jobs for you and your wife. Anyway, I wrote the letter and shortly afterwards got a phone call at school from someone saying, "I am in charge of temporary postal work and I have been told to give you and your wife each a job by any means short of sacking a permanent worker." It was decided that Anne would work in the Sutton Coldfield Sorting Office by day and I would work in the main Birmingham Sorting Office by night. This meant that poor little "Noddy", as we called him, was left in his cot while one or other of us was sleeping. Still, he came to no harm, was still well fed and petted and looking at him now, seemingly no real harm was done. Work was very boring, either tossing parcels into sacks, labelled by destinations or, even more boringly, putting letters into the right pigeon holes. For the first part of the first night, used to the discipline of the factory, I put my head down and worked with a will. By about half past ten I took a break and went up to the rest rooms to find that many temporaries, all students were lazing around working only when they felt like it. It was a phenomenon I had noticed at Butlins. Students are an idle lot. Meanwhile, Anne was enjoying herself in her daytime work. One odd thing, when she found out that some of the girls were Keele Students, she quizzed them about Drina Rawlinson one of my old Keele girl friends! Why? I have no idea. It was the same peculiarity that when she found that Drina had written my name in my books, she insisted on doing the same. She had no need to worry, Drina was history. Anne was the only woman in my life.

At the end of '58 came the great move. Living in Sutton was very expensive and we were hardly holding our heads above the financial waters so that when your Mum spotted a history post with an offer of a council house at an economic rent, I applied for it. It was at Haworth Secondary Modern School, Keighley, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. I had a vague knowledge of the Bronte family, other than that, all I knew of Yorkshire, was my brief stay as a recruit in Bradford. The chance of cheaper housing was very attractive so I applied. I had never read any of the Bronte novels so thought I'd better have a look at one in case I was asked a question and chose Wuthering Heights, getting about half way through it. Years later it's still unread, though I have now managed to read Jane Eyre. Nothing came up in the interview.

I was called for interview at Keighley Town Hall and set off by train, when I arrived it was puzzling to find no one around so decided to mooch around and come back later. On return I found one other candidate, John Marsh, a fellow Keele student. Luckily there were two posts vacant, one at Haworth and one at Eastwood, had there been only one, John, whose degree was better than mine, would have got it. I remember two questions I was asked, what was my opinion of the use of the cane in schools? and how important was the offer of a council house to my application? My answer to the first was that although it was an unpleasant option, it needed to be in the school's armoury and to the second, if there were no such offer I could not afford to take up the post.

The interview went well and I was appointed to Haworth and John to Eastwood. As we came out of the interview room my new Headmaster, Charles Kingsford, said, "Actually Mr Garner, there were three spelling mistakes on your application form, occasional, accommodation, and equipped."(the spell check tells me that I still got two of them

wrong here! John's Head, Clifford Sims took him to see the school but Kingsford said he would walk me to the station. When we got level with the "Vic" he took me in, bought me a pint and introduced me to a half dozen other heads.

Reaching Birmingham New Street I was fast asleep but a porter knocked on the window, " I think you get out here don't you Sir? A good thing he recognised me because the next stop was Bristol Temple Mead. Thank goodness for having the kind of odd face that gets remembered!

It was settled that I would give in my notice at Perry Common, work till Christmas and start at Haworth, January 1959. We had to give five weeks' notice at the flat and because our lease had not run out we had to have someone to take it up. Luckily we did not have to wait long and to save paying the rent, Anne and Ian went to live with one of the Mothers, I forget which, and I went to stay with the Bonfords in Walsall, they had saved their £1,000 and bought a house. At the end of the term I left the school and travelled down to where Anne and the child were.

While we were still at the flat a letter from Keighley Education Committee told us that we had been allocated a Council house and we were offered a choice of Carr Bank or Bracken Bank. Neither name meant anything to us, so we chose Carr Bank because Bracken seemed wastelandish. After we got here we found out what a good choice we had made.

CHAPTER 9: BUTT LANE COLLEGE

When we moved out of the flat we had put our furniture into store so we could now give the go ahead for the removals to take it to Keighley. The removal firm would pack everything away so there was nothing for us to do. When I asked if there was anyway I could help? I was told, "Yes sir, go into the kitchen and keep the tea coming! We gave them the house keys so that they could have it there before we moved. Sometime after Christmas we took a train down to Keighley, arriving outside the station without a clue as to where the house was. Someone told us to get a Bradford bus to Swine Lane. Our hearts sank when we discovered what a steep road we had to climb with our hand luggage and Ian in his push chair. He was still four months' short of his second birthday. We managed it and found that Carr Bank was a small, very nice estate.

The removal people had been and the furniture placed as per the plan Mum had given them. We were so tired that we decided to make the beds before we did anything else, that way we could work as long as we wanted and just get into bed when we had had enough. The house was an "Airey" house, one in which the outside walls were made up of pebbled concrete slabs wired onto concrete posts. The inner walls were

plaster boards. We were number 8, a semi detached house with a fair sized lounge, kitchen and upstairs two bedrooms and bathroom. Outside was a smallish sloping front garden and a much bigger one at the back. The previous tenant was a divorced lady who had not done anything to either gardens. The house itself was not too clean and this brought a confrontation. Mother had told the neighbours about this and it had got back to the lady. The first I knew was a furious knocking on the back door. Opening it, I came face to face with a very angry woman. "Where's your wife!" She's been telling everyone lies about me being dirty". Mum started to come to the door but I asked her to leave it to me. Ever the coward when up against angry females, I made some soothing noise and managed to calm her down.

The neighbours seemed very friendly. One Scottish lady, Mrs Feather fiftyish sent her husband to give me a hand in constructing a rock garden in the front. Poor old lad, he was in his early sixties and I'm sure that after a long day in a Bradford Mill, the last thing he would want to do was work in someone else's garden. We became very good friends, a friendship that was to last until their deaths. The back garden was fallow and I had to set to, firstly to take off the turf and then to dig it over and prepare the seed beds. On Earnest's advice the first crop was potatoes as a way of clearing the land of leather jackets. Eventually I got it done and set spuds and salads but not being a gardener, not very much came of it. As I have said, the neighbours were friendly, though a little nosy. Anne was surprised to be told by one lady, "We knew you were clean because we've seen your washing on the line!" Something that we did put a stop to was their habit of knocking on the door and walking straight in. The first person to fall foul of me over that was the electricity meter reader.

Being a teacher that time gave me something of a cachet. One lady came over and asked me would I have a talk with her 11 year old daughter who was being naughty? One or two of the neighbours' children, who were at local Grammar schools, would often call in for advice and a chat. One 16 year old from the Girls' Grammar school came and stayed talking to me for two hours. Then there was Billy, not one of the brightest who came with a letter to ask what it meant, it was a court summons regarding a motor bike offence.

The head of the school Charles Kingsford came and took me on a tour of the area. Then I started in my new school, Haworth Secondary Modern School, four years and three streams. I was given 1c the youngest and most educationally challenged group. Unlike the Birmingham school I was spared the Fourth years which meant that I wouldn't have the hassle I had at Perry Common because when the next year came I had already met them as third years. My time table included: teaching history throughout the school and some third year English and Maths. One of the first things I wanted to do was to learn all I could of the woollen trade, and spent a deal of time in the public library but the best thing was going round the mills. Norman Shackleton who was taking the fourth year history had arranged trips to one or two mills and kindly let me take his classes on these trips.

I found the staff very friendly though I did have a fall out with the school secretary on my first morning. She came bustling in and pointing out mistakes in the dinner register for the last term. I was rather abrupt, telling her that as I wasn't in the school that term, how could I do anything about it? This must have upset her because the head came and asked me to apologise to her as she was crying. Well done Raymond. It was all smoothed over and Esther Finlay and I became good friends.

I hadn't been long at the school when I became quite ill. One evening I was supposed to paint the kitchen ceiling but felt so really ill that Anne's Mum offered to do it for me so that I could go to bed. Mum of course wasn't happy about this and accused me of shrimshanking but I really was ill, so much so that in the morning even she was worried enough to send for Dr Lochead, our GP. He came, took my temperature and said that I had to stay in bed, not go to school, and he prescribed me medicine telling me that he would be back in a few days. After he had gone Anne told me that my temperature was 106°. It was the same thing that had hit me twice in 1946 at Skegness. Apart from the awful symptoms, it was nice having tea and toast brought to me for three weeks. I spent the time with books on the Brontes that I had got from Keighley Library. Kingsford the Head was kind enough to cash my salary check and bring the money to me.

My time at Haworth were the happiest days of my teaching career. After the yobs of Birmingham, the Haworth kids were very amenable, though of course, there were exceptions to this. One mistake I made was to treat these kids at first with the strong arm methods I had had to use at Birmingham but I soon realised this and took the brakes off. Once, I was ticking some big lads off, when one suddenly says, "Ah sir. Stop nagging us and just bray us!" Most of the children came from the Worth valley district, scattered farms and villages, not so different from the pupils at Thorney. One pleasant feature was Haworth Park which was just across the road from the school, in the spring and summer terms it was possible to carry out dinner supervision by walking through the park. Once, creeping by some trees I came upon a fourth form girl sitting with her back to a tree, reading and calmly smoking with a boy laying in her lap also reading and smoking. There was no way that I was going to break up this idyllic

scene, so I quietly crept away. It was also in the summer time that Anne would bring Ian and at the end of school we would have an excursion in the park.

In that first summer came another medical crisis. We had offered to supervise a mixed, all-schools group to Humphrey Head camp at Grange over Sands and were due to leave on the Monday. Saturday morning we went into Keighley shopping but Anne became too ill to carry on. We could not wait for the Bingley bus which would have taken us up to Carr Bank. These buses went only every hour while the buses to Bradford went frequently so we could only take the bus as far as the end of Swine Lane. The walk up the hill, with the shopping, Ian in his push chair and Mum so ill that I had practically to carry her all the way was frightening.

Getting home she went to bed while I, worried even more by this time and wanting to make sure that the Doctor would come out, went to Bingley and called at his home. We were now to find out what a great Doctor he was; having examined her, he said that it was appendicitis, he would call an ambulance and that she was to go to hospital. He had barely left the room before he came back and asked her whether she had missed a period? On learning that she had, he told me that there was a chance that she had an ectopic pregnancy i.e. an embryo implanted outside the womb. A life threatening illness. Later that day I went to the hospital (the old Victoria Hospital, Drewry Rd) and was met by a young medic who, using babyish terms, began to tell me about the problem. "You see Sir, inside your wife's tummy there is a tube" I said "You mean she has had an ectopic?" His face lit up with relief. She had been operated upon and things were now going to be all right. Thank God for Dr Lochead without whose quick thinking she might have died.

When Anne came out of hospital she would need looking after while I was at work and so would Ian. My Mother came and stayed with us. She wasn't happy at the state of the front garden and I came home once to find her hoeing vigorously and telling passers by, "My son has all the brains but he's a useless gardener." I don't think they had ever come across anything or anyone quite like my Mum.

We had other visitors. Ron Jarvis who had been Deputy Head at Thorney and who was visiting relatives at Silsden spent a day with us and took us round the district and introduced us to blueberry picking something we had never seen before. Another visitor was K.B. Ellis, a friend from Keele who took us to Bridlington - Anne being car sick by the time we got to Boston Spa. Along the way we came across the Marston Moor memorial and being good Royalists we attempted to deface it. Luckily we had no chalk or paint so tried to leave messages on paper and scrawling graffiti with a Gaviscon tablet!

We did have one visitor who stayed quite a while. By this time we had a new head, a large red-haired ex navy man, Harry Fitton. He was a very good chap who was willing to change things. One thing that had annoyed me was staff having to sit on the stage during assemblies, standing up when the head arrived and when he left the platform. We also had to eat our dinners on the stage in the full view of the kids. When I had asked Kingsford why we had to do it, his reply was, that it was because he the head said so! When Fitton came, I called in his office and, pointing out that it was not personal and I would resent standing up for the Archangel Gabriel, asked him if the practice could stop? He agreed and from then on we would stand in assembly with our class and we could eat lunch in a classroom. However, back to the visitor. The Head told me that we were to have a new geography teacher who

was living in London but would not be able to bring his wife and family down for a month or so. Could he board with us? Mum agreed and I went to the station to meet him. What looked like a grey haired old man came off the train but turned out to be someone of my own age. Jack Henderson. Anne was on nights and he and I stayed up to 3.am talking our heads off and putting the world to rights. I have never known any one to be so fond of tea as he was. Between 9pm and 3am we drank at least three pots. Many years later another friend with Irish connections, Cathy Furness, drank just as much tea, perhaps tea drinking is an Irish thing?

Later on, long after Jack had gone, we had another lodger. Mavis Turnpenny, our Music teacher, she was a young woman living with her parents in Leeds and travelled to Haworth each day on a scooter. When the ice and snows of winter came, this was very dangerous and I was asked by the head if she could come and live with us during the week. Again, Anne approved and she came.

I should break off here to explain that Mum had gone back to nursing. When she came out of hospital after her ectopic it was obvious her thoughts were on her career. I worried that if anything happened to me she would have to go to work and knowing her it would be in a hospital. It upset me to think that as an older woman she would go as a ward orderly having to take orders from young student nurses. My idea was that she should go back to training, get her S.R.N. qualifications and then give up working. It was arranged that I should see the Matron, Miss Greenwall, explain the position to her, and arrange an interview for Anne with her. It all came right but at a price, Anne would have to do her second year training again, plus an extra six months.

This meant that I would have to look after Ian. We arranged for him to go to a Nursery in Riddlesden which

meant my getting up early and taking him before going off to work. It was easier in the evening because the nursery taxied him back to Keighley and I collected him and took him home with me. Once, I got off the bus from Haworth and boarded the Riddlesden bus. Sitting down and reading the evening paper, I was approached by a lady whom I did not know, who said, "Don't you usually have a little boy with you?" Oh my God, I had forgotten him! All was OK, I had enough time to hop off, pick him up from the taxi office and still catch the bus. Another time, having missed the bus and waiting for the next, I took him into a cafe, (where the Bradford & Bingley office now is) to buy a coffee for me and a coke for him. He asked for a biscuit but I said he couldn't have one because he would be having tea as soon as we got home. When I got back to the table, there he was, munching a chocolate biscuit. An elderly lady sitting nearby said apologetically, "I felt sorry for him and bought him one." I had, of course, to swallow my anger - towards her not Ian.

Ian, now was growing into a sturdy lad with a secret wish to be a monkey, or at least we presumed that was the reason why he trailed around the house always with one of my ties pushed into the back of his trousers and dangling down like a tail. Another oddity was each time he drew a figure he always gave it an elongated belly button. Why? He was mostly very well behaved but like all boys sometimes let off steam. Usually when we were in public, of course. We decided that because I had no training in teaching young children we would leave the basics to when he went to school. We did, however, give him the run of any books in the house thinking it was better for him to become familiar with them even if it risked him damaging them. Actually, other than an occasional scribble, he did no damage. Unlike another one of our children, nudge nudge wink wink!

He went through the usual children's illnesses like measles and Mumps and also had his tonsils out. We made a huge mistake when he came out of hospital. Thinking that he would be better coming home in an ambulance we didn't go to fetch him and because he was only in for a day or so, and we had no car we didn't visit him. When he came home he was very frosty and unfriendly. He resented being the only one whose parents didn't arrive at visiting times. Who could blame him? He did put us through a lot of worry with his chest troubles. Each winter we had to send for the doctor in the night. Once, the GP gave me a prescription and said I had to get it straight away. As it was midnight and knowing nothing of Keighley, had to find my way somehow into town and called in at the Police station. They told me that there was a chemist, in South Street and I should walk there and bang on the door. Fortunately the chemist lived above the shop and came down and made up the prescription. Poor little lad he had to spend nights smothered in Vic Vapour Rub - or Jick as he called it.

Ian and Anne were not the only ones to have medical problems. I suffered badly with indigestion, not just a spot of heartburn but really serious pain and vomiting. We used to have a week's holiday each year in Bridlington and one evening while there, I spent the whole of one night in the bathroom being violently and painfully sick. Back in Keighley I went to the GP who put me on various anti-acids, none of which did any good. Finally he sent me to the hospital to see the radiologist who gave me barium solution to drink and then x-rayed me. At the end I was told that there was nothing wrong and my troubles were nerves. So it went on. Even a half pint of beer would send me retching to the wc. Plainly, it couldn't go on, so I went again to the GP but by this time I had taken out medical insurance with the Private Patients Plan

and so was able to go back to the Radiologist as a private patient. My goodness, what a difference. It was the same man but where on my first visit he had been curt and unfriendly now he was very polite and considerate. He put me through the same procedure but this time I was turned upside down and immediately it became obvious that I had a hiatus hernia, that is that the valve to the stomach was weak and allowed the acid contents of the stomach to leak back into the oesophagus, hence the intense burning. It was my own fault really, I should have told him first time that it was always worse when I bent down.

Anyway, now that they knew 'what' was wrong, something could be done about it. An appointment was made for me with Mr McCartney at his home on Skipton Rd. I was rather surprised when after saying hello he picked up a jar of Vaselene and asked me to take off my trousers and lie on the couch. He then examined me, presumably to rule out things like cancer. He then booked me in as an 'in patient' in Bingley Hospital for a number of tests.

One of the first was a sigmoidoscopy (examination of part of the bowel) done under a general anaesthetic. Then a test to find the amount of sulphuric acid in the stomach, this meant a tube up the nostril and into the stomach. The problem here was that Mum had done some time here as a Staff Nurse and they were frightened of hurting me. When they did it, it took Sister, watched by a staff nurse and an orderly, a long time. I think I would have been better on a general ward with some little nurse with a half dozen of these to do, doing it swiftly and not messing about worrying about my feelings.

One amusing incident was at visiting time. It was a small room, Mum and Ian came, so did Sister, staff nurse and an orderly, all wanting to talk to Mum. So that's five but

shortly were joined by Jack Henderson. Then along comes the GP, followed by Dr Fountain a consultant physician. To complete the chaos, two men arrived to install a television! I still had no idea what was going to happen, mention was made that Dr Fountain had said something about a duodenal ulcer but not really convincingly. Mr McCartney then handed me over to Mr Davidson, a consultant surgeon at Bradford whom I visited at his home. After a couple of visits he said that it was a borderline case and that it was up to me to decide whether to have the operation. This wasn't at all satisfactory to me and I asked him could he do another sigmoidoscopy. His answer was to send me to the BRI for more X-rays as he wasn't happy with the ones done at Keighley. Having got the results from this later batch he told me that my condition was more serious than he thought and that I should have the op and I was booked in at the Duke of York, the private wing of BRI

We are now up to 1963/4, Ian had started school at Haworth Junior which meant that he could come with me as the two schools were on the same site. His school finished 20 minutes before mine so I had to arrange for one or other of our fourth year girls to look after him until I was finished. It worked out fairly well except for the times that he decided to play them up. One of the most difficult times was when Anne was on nights and I had to go to an evening do. I had arranged that one girl in my class would take him home with her and I would collect him later. Something went seriously wrong and they weren't at the meeting point - and I had no idea where she lived. I had to catch two buses to Riddlesden where our Head Mr Grainger lived to get the key to the school so that I could look up her address in the register. By this time it was midnight. Mrs Grainger took me back to the school in her car and after finding the address took me to pick him up and then take us both home. I should say that at this time Harry Fitton

had left, Haworth school was merged with Holycroft Sec Mod to become Bronte school. The new building wasn't finished so we were still at Haworth. The new head, Grainger decided to treat the two schools as one and I, like the other Heads of Depts had to travel between the two schools. We didn't have a car but I was able to get lifts.

CHAPTER 10: OUR FIRST HOUSE

While this was all happening we bought our first ever house, thanks to Anne's Mum giving us the deposit. The new house was 7, Thornhill Avenue, Oakworth. The asking price was £2,500 but Mum got £50 knocked off! It was a lovely house, Lounge, Dining room, kitchen down stairs and two nice sized bed rooms and a smaller third bedroom. Bath room and W.C were separate. A small front garden with a larger one at the back with a summer house from which we got a good view over the Worth valley. When My Mother and Harold, her new husband came to stay with us they would sit in the summer house long into the night fascinated by all the lights on the opposite hill side. There was a separate concrete garage, a drive and at the front a good solid gate, Mum liked this gate and said that when it was closed at night she felt safe. As to the garage, although we hadn't a car it was useful for keeping tools and Ian's bike, it was also useful as a hidey hole for me when boss woman was on the warpath for I could lock the door from the inside. The back garden was full of roses and the previous owner kept his promise that in the spring he would come and show me how to prune them.

Before we moved in I started to redecorate - and immediately hit a snag. We had decided that the dining room ceiling would be painted blue, I wasn't satisfied with the first coat so after it dried I began to give it a second. When I was half way across the room I looked back and was horrified to see that the paint was coming away from the ceiling and in despair I downed tools and went out into the back for a smoke. One of the next door neighbours, Hugh Rowland, had also come out and when I told him the problem he gave me the answer. The man from whom we bought the house had for some reason painted the ceilings using distemper which meant that I would have to soak them and scrape off the distemper, bit by bit and afterwards size them. God what a problem but after a struggle I did the first ceiling and asked Hugh to have a look. He said that I had made a much more thorough job than he anticipated an amateur would make and the ceiling was so clear that it did not need to be "sized". I was to find out that except for the kitchen, all the ceilings had to have the same treatment.

Next came the wallpapering, something, that thanks to Grandad Feather, I was good at. When I started to paper the Carr Bank house he had shown me how, by doing it, with me labouring. After a while I was able to do the papering while he did the labouring. In the end I was doing the papering in their house! So back to Thornhill Rd. The dining room was to have a very delicate pale paper and there I made my first mistake. I stripped the old paper off and sized the walls but had forgotten to wipe the skirting board afterwards and after a few strips I noticed that the paper was very dirty. This meant that I had to buy another lot but luckily the shop keeper took pity on me and let me have it at half price. In the end and after we had moved in I had done the whole house except we had a professional whom we knew, to paper the front room because

it was a thick very expensive paper. However, I did put on the lining paper which was difficult because it had to be put on horizontally with the strips separated by a millimetre. What was funny was that we had chosen a light blue ceiling which came out green but after the lining paper it turned to blue reverting to green when the final paper was put up - or was it the other way? I ran into two more problems, one was the hall ceiling which was to be painted green. I didn't know it but green paint is made up of shades and after I had finished the ceiling was covered in patches of two different shades. It was O.K. because the second coat dried up perfectly all of one shade. The other problem was the small bedroom, which was to be Ian's. The previous lady was a "Burler and Mender" who brought home the cloth and did it in that room. If you have ever smelt wool during processing you will have an idea of the problem. The smell was vile and before I could start to decorate not only did I have to strip the walls and ceiling but scrub them with soap and water.

Eventually, over a number of months the whole house was redecorated. One of my gardening exploits was the planting of an herbaceous border on a strip between the garage and the path, in fact I'm rather proud of my effort. I answered a newspaper ad offering 50 plants and a numbered plan. It needed me to do a lot to prepare the ground including, getting rid of all the existing things except for a clematis growing up a trellis fixed to the summer house, and digging in a great heap of manure. When the plants arrived there had been a very sharp frost leaving the ground very hard so that they could not be planted. Luckily, I had enough gardening "savvy" to heel them in and this was done though, at the end, my fingers were frozen stiff. Still it was all worth it because eventually the border became a beautiful item.

In the meantime I had had my hiatus hernia repaired. One morning during the school assembly Esther Finlay the school secretary told me that there was a telephone call for me from the hospital asking me to go in the next Monday night for an op on the Wednesday. The Duke of York was the private wing of the BRI, how was I to get there? We had no car so thought about a taxi. This wasn't needed because Brian Field who lived in the house opposite came unexpectedly and offered to drive me there. More of Brian later. So, Monday night comes and Brian takes me there. The first thing I learned was that they would be operating on me on the very next day, when I rang to tell your Mum she burst into tears. Its something of which I could well have joined her! After the usual pre op exams (I was only 37 so quite fit) I managed to sleep remarkably well.

The next morning I was wheeled into the theatre and was surprised to see Mr Davidson sitting on a trolley smoking a fag. This was surprising because as a thoracic surgeon he must have removed a good many cancerous lungs. I learned later that he had a disabled son and that smoking kept him on a more even keel. The next thing I remember is waking up on my stomach with a searing pain and gasping, "Oh my back? Oh my back" and aware that Mum had come and was there with me. Soon the anaesthetic took over again and I lapsed back into unconsciousness. The next three weeks was spent in the DofY. I was a miserable patient who couldn't stand the, very intense, pain each time I moved. When they brought in a mobile X-ray machine I insisted that only nurses should move me. When a lady came in and said that she was my physiotherapist I just said, "And you can bugger off for a start!" You should understand that they had opened up my back and stitched it together not only with the usual light surgical suture but also with what looked like cheese wire

looping in large stitches. However, I apologised but she brushed it off saying that that was what everyone said when she first met them! She went on to explain that physio was necessary to inflate the one lung which had semi collapsed during the operation. All I had to do was to cough, a hideously painful operation while she held me tightly around the chest. She presumably had to do that to prevent the stitches bursting. It seemed to work after a time. One night around 10.30 the pain from the wound became unbearable and I asked the Sister for morphine. When she told me that only Mr Davidson could order that I told her, "You can just get him here to do it." Oh the pleasure of being a Private patient, he came and gave me some.

After about a week or so Sister said that she would be coming to take out the large stitches, something I had been dreading, and so I spent the next quarter of an hour waiting in fear and trembling. I got fed up with waiting and went to her room and insisted that she came at once. You see what a first class s--t I had become. (What's that you are saying you two? "So! no difference there then"). All this time, your Mother was an absolute brick, even though she was working and had always to travel by bus she made very many visits even bringing me water from home because the hospital's was vile. She also brought Ian who impressed me with his thoughtfulness in putting his shoulder under mine when I was having difficulty getting up from the chair. One of the worst things was only being able to eat soft things, especially as the food was excellent.

Nevertheless, time literally was a great healer and I was able to wander around the place and gang up with the other men on the unit. One was an alcoholic who was so stupid that he had his workman bring in bottles of scotch even though this negated the whole of the reason for him being in hospital.

After three weeks I was discharged and went home in the taxi that your Mum had come in. I was very nervous, particularly when the car skidded in the snow. All came right and I got home safely and was promptly put to bed where I stayed for a week.

Sometime after this, 1964/5 we moved into the new school. I have explained previously, Haworth Sec Mod and Holycroft Sec Mod (the building with a truncated tower at the junction of Goulbourne Street and Victoria Rd and now the offices of the Highway department) needed new buildings and it was decided to merge the two schools and build one new one at Bogthorn to be called Bronte School. The head of Holycroft was leaving and it was decided that whoever was appointed would be head of the new school. Harry Fitton, the Haworth school head told me that he had been advised that he was not to apply, God knows why, because the man they wanted was Ken Grainger, nice enough as a person but a truly, truly weak character who didn't seem to have any worthwhile policy. He once confessed to me that if he were ever to be attacked by pupils he would simply roll in to a ball and let it all happen.

An example of his timidity: some child let off a stink bomb and I nabbed the idiot who had brought it into school and because only the Head was allowed to apply the cane I marched him into the head who was teaching a class at the time who told him to report to his office at break time. It was always a matter of professional pride to me that I dealt with my own disciplinary problems and not pass them up the line, but because of the caning rule, this one I had to. Meeting the Head on the stairs I pointed out that the only reason I had taken the lad to him was that he deserved something that I was not allowed to minister. Grainger thought for a while and then said, "Yes you are right. Will you cane him and I will sign the punishment Book and take responsibility." I ask you, what

kind of leadership was that? Well, I sent for the boy, told him to bend over and brought the cane smartly across his back side. He immediately straightened up with a gasp, "Cor Sir, that hurt?" I pointed out gently that oddly enough that was what it was supposed to do! Actually the cane itself was rarely used, mostly a snack on the backside with an open hand on boy, and an upper arm punch or a gentle nose twisting for the girls usually did the trick. I found using Barbera Woodhouse's animal soothing trick of shouting up horses' noses quite effective. Once at a year's end, while we were waiting to be called into the hall for the Leaving assembly, I looked up to see a line of boys at my desk with one hand on their hips. When I asked what was going on, I was told, "Please Sir, we have come for one last dead arm.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. As I was to be at that school for twenty three years you will not expect a detailed account of all the years. The school was a big improvement on Haworth. My room, on the top storey looking out to Oakworth Road, large, well lit, and warm in the winter. Across the corridor was my stock cupboard. In our new house at Thornhill Avenue I was within walking distance of the school, so that was a bonus. My job was to coordinate the teaching of History throughout the school with two teachers each taking some of the other classes. In addition I was a Form teacher to one of the fourth year groups and to whom I taught English. Later on I became Careers master but that will need a whole chapter to itself. I taught English which was the overall responsibility of John Hulse with whom I had a flaming row before the school even opened. It was entirely my fault and it was this that made me upset. So much so that Anne wanted to go to school to sort John out! As you know, eventually John and I became bosom friends.

The merging of the two schools went very well and the two staffs mixed with no resentments, even from those who had lost their departmental headship to their opposite number from the other school. Certainly, there was no Haworth/Holycroft division in staff room groupings. There was usually a very good atmosphere at break and dinner times and we had various pastimes going like crosswords, bridge, dominoes and so on. Of course, it wasn't always sweetness and light, teachers are human and sometimes struck sparks off each other but largely they didn't involve me. The only fall outs I had, were with Jack Henderson, not fall outs, just disagreements, mostly political, though occasionally he would rampage at me when I called him a fascist. Sometimes he would lose his rag and threaten to punch my head but I don't think he meant it, though once I told him, in all seriousness, "Jack. If you threaten me once more, you are going to have to make good your words." These disagreements, but without the threats, are still going on in our very old age.

One of my assistants, a Welshman, Derrick Roberts, left for another school. I have to admit I wasn't sorry that he went - I had had very sharp words with him, once about his bullying treatment of children (even threatening him physically if he didn't ease off) but it meant we were one short in the department. The head found me a temporary replacement, one of his wife's friend's daughters who needed to earn some money before she went on to university. Gillian was the daughter of one of the posh Smith families, think Stephen Smith the garden centre people, Dean Smith Grace and so on. A charming, attractive girl, unsure of herself who attached herself to me. Once, in the staff room, I sat deliberately away from her only to be told by another woman teacher, "Idiot. Couldn't you see that she was dying for you to sit next to her? "Once, after school, I took her home to tea and showed her

our new record player. She asked to hear the slow movement of Beethoven's Violin Concerto and surprised me by lying full length on the lounge floor to listen. Mind you, we had a beautiful blue carpet but the three piece suite had yet to be delivered. Anyway, her teaching was adequate, though she had little control of her materials, I would give her a couple of dozen pencils one day only to have her ask for more by the end of the week! She came to me once and asked what she should do when the lads whistled to her when she came into school. I said jokingly that she should put her arms round them and give them a big kiss. Thankfully she didn't take my advice! I got the idea that things between herself and her father were not all that happy. She didn't say anything but once when she didn't come into school I rang her father to see how she was and he seemed to have no idea and no interest in his daughter. After she left for university I heard that she went astray having run off with some American bloke, became pregnant and gave up her studies. Oddly enough I have met her lately. She's married, living in Keighley, and working in the laundry at AGH. In fact, only yesterday in Sainsbury's car park she brought her daughter and introduced her to me.

CHAPTER 11: ALONG COMES RUTH

Now comes a big moment in all our lives. Anne and I both hoped for another child, a brother or sister for Ian but it seemed as if it was not to be. The ectopic pregnancy of 1959 had left Anne with only one fallopian tube. Poor dear, she underwent various, sometime painful procedures including a salpingogram (running a fluid through the tube to see if it was patent. Graham the gynaecologist at Airedale was not very sympathetic saying, "You've got one child, be thankful". As a last resort Anne booked herself in privately in BRI, as a nursing sister she got one night's stay plus a consultation with another gynaecologist for only £1. Still no luck, she was told to go away and forget about it. When I picked her up next day she was very upset. To get a bus back to Keighley we had to walk down Duckworth Lane to the stop on Toller Lane. Passing a pet shop we had a look in and saw a poodle and decided to buy it, a substitute I suppose and with that, a basket and a blanket, we set off for home. It was a thoroughbred with kennel club certification. I forget its official name but we called it Sooty.

It was a lovely little thing but it was just like a baby, even crying at night and I had to go and soothe it. Unfortunately, I tend to get very "ratty" when woken up at

night and I wasn't averse to smacking it I'm afraid. No, whatever either of you might say, it didn't happen in your babyhood! Then, a remarkable thing happened, Anne became pregnant. One explanation given in cases like this is having accepted that a child was impossible, you both relax and things happen. As soon as it was confirmed that a baby was on its way I decided that the dog must go, I had visions of it laying on the baby's face and stifling it.

An ad was put in the T&A and someone from Nab Wood bought it. After about a week they rang begging us to take it back as it was going mad, crying constantly and not settling. We were unwilling to take it back and suggested they should put it into kennels for a time. It was decided that they would put it into kennels at Marsh, Oxenhope and we arranged that I would meet them in South Street. It was really amazing, when they arrived I could see that the dog was jumping around. As soon as I got into the car it jumped over my shoulder and into my lap and went straight to sleep! They said it was the first time that it had been quiet.

However, it still didn't work out, after a week in the kennels they took it back but it still would not settle and reluctantly we took it back and refunded their money. We had better luck when we readvertised. A professional breeder from Halifax bought it. When I told him that whatever happened we would not take it back he said that there was no way he would be bringing it back. It was all a great pity because it was a lovely little thing and it looked so funny and smart when we had taken it to the poodle parlour.

So, the new baby. It was thought that it would be due around the middle of November 1966 and Anne was admitted into St. John's Hospital which stood then in Fell Lane. The Hospital was both a Maternity unit and a geriatric hospital; it amused me to think that Keighley people could both begin

and end their lives in the same hospital - perhaps it should have been called the "Alpha and Omega"? She was put to bed and a couple of birth inducing tablets slipped under her tongue. They certainly worked because very soon afterwards she went into labour. Like Ian's birth, it had been arranged that I would be there but this time it's very different, while at Birmingham I had been tolerated but ignored, here I was brought into the event. It helped of course that the nurses here were known to us, in fact one of the midwives, Avril Tomlinson, (Stephen, and Karen's Mother), was a neighbour. They laughingly said "Come on Dr Kildare", put a gown and mask on me and asked me to keep wiping my wife's face. Again as at our son's birth Anne was very brave, no screaming as in TV birth scenes, though she did grip my hand so tightly that at one point her nails dug into my finger perhaps it was an attempt to share her pain with me?

All went well and my darling wife gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, complete with all the bits and pieces. I was so affected that I found a corner in an empty room, knelt in thanksgiving - and burst into tears. Needing to tell someone, I rang Stanley and Margery Anderson, friends of ours. While walking along the Oakworth road in a daze and with no idea where I was going, a car pulled up beside me and Stanley grinning said, "Get in, we thought you'd be wandering around lost somewhere and took me to their home and gave me cups of tea. Afterwards, I went home and rang his Grandmother Garner. My mind's rather blank here as to where Ian was at this time, probably had been sent to one or other of his Grandmothers "for the duration"?

Mother and baby continued to thrive but Ann had been disturbed on waking up to find that her plastic identity bracelet said that her baby was a boy. That was soon cleared up and we began to think of names, choosing Ruth because

we wanted a Hebrew name and the biblical Ruth was a heroine of mine and Louise, Ruth's maternal Grandma's middle name. This was a sop to match Ian's middle name of Peter chosen for my father. Unlike the time of our first born's arrival, we were relatively affluent so there was no need of second hand cots etc. The same goes for her "layette" which included some beautiful nightdresses hand-made by one of Anne's nursing friends.

Now came the excitement of bringing Mother and our daughter home. Edgar Waddicore the deputy head of Ian's school had advised me that Ian should come with me to fetch them. That way he would not come home to find a stranger and potential rival in possession when he came home. So he was brought home and sent to school. I arranged that his school would let him come home in time to come with me. We still did not have a car but a friend, Shirley Sugden I think, took us and brought everyone home from hospital. When we got home Mum saw that Ian was staring at the baby's nappy. She, seeing what was going through his mind, unpinned it, opened it and told him, "Take a good look and then forget all about it!" She was a very wise person.

As when her brother was born, so now with Ruth, I was puffed up with pride and couldn't wait to show her off to everybody. When she was big enough to be taken out in a pram I pushed her coach built carriage and all, the two miles into Keighley forgetting that what goes down must sometimes go up and had to struggle all the way back against the steep hill. It was worth it! The baptismal ceremony was at Oakworth Church. Godmothers were Clare her grandma and Mildred Rowland a next door neighbour. We had hoped that 'Grandad' Feather would be Godfather but he was very ill on the day. Can't remember who else was there except for Jayasree Upadaya, an Indian pupil, and her Mother. Don't

remember why they were there, we went to the wedding feast of J's brother but can't remember which event was first.

Next big event in our lives was buying our first car. February 1968.It had been a holiday in Whitby that decided me. We hadn't booked anywhere so had to trail round the town looking for suitable digs with us lugging suitcases, push chair and God knows what else. That's it, I thought, we must have a car. Thanks to the Army I had a licence and had kept up to driving ability by a series of lessons from time to time. Before buying the car I took one last couple of lessons from Paddy someone, he was good but annoyed by going mechanically through instructions all the time. At last, with £400 (good old ma in law) we set of for Burgess' in Hanover street and bought a Ford Anglia 1200 in green with a white roof CCE483C.Not knowing anything about car values I arranged for it to be inspected by the AA with Burgess agreeing to put right anything the inspector found.

Came the great day when it was delivered to our door. I think the man was surprised when I asked him how to start it! Although I was quietly confident, I thought it best to take it for a spin on my own to get used to it, it would be the first time I had gone 'solo'. Mum wasn't pleased but I did have the safety of my family on my mind. So orf I jolly well went, Oakworth Rd., Slaymaker Lane, left into Oakworth Rd. and back home. I don't think that you two, who have had the use of a car all your adult lives, can appreciate the sheer thrill of having our own car. No more waiting on windy, cold bus stops, and no more heaving heavy suitcases and baby equipment when we travelled anywhere.

Our first journey was into town, Ruth, three months old, was laid well wrapped up in the back seat but by the time we got to town she was silently and tidally vomiting her stomach out. Oh dear, was this a comment on my driving? I

hoped not, still at least the other two passengers were all right. We went from strength to strength. First out-of-town trips were to Bradford and later Skipton. We went to Bradford over the tops and my heart lurched when I saw a Police Panda car in front as we went along Sandy Lane even though I was doing nothing wrong! What puzzled me was why it was putting its indicators on alternately until I realised it was telling me that I had left my indicators on. My first "brush with the law", there were to be others in the future mostly relating to speeding. I was a competent driver but for a long time quite unsure of myself. Once in a cafe in Skipton with the car parked up in the car park, I rehearsed in my mind the drive back planning all the gear changes.

However, I soon became confident and we decided on our first long journey, we would drive to Thorney and then on to Soham. What never to be relived excitement! The first thing was to work out a route to the A1 there being no M606/62 in 1967 and we set out along the A650 through Bradford to Wakefield and then the A638 to join the A1(M) at Doncaster. We took sandwiches and a flask of tea for we had no idea how long the journey would take. Because the car was small I didn't expect a very rapid rate and was surprised on the motorway to see the indicator showing 75mph. With my complete lack of motorway experience I should not have driven anywhere near so fast but it was quite OK and we rolled merrily along. The A1 at that time was very different from now, most of it was single carriage way with some stretches of three lanes so that the journey took much longer than it does now. As you can imagine I was very tense for most of the time but much encouraged by Anne's support - she held her hand affectionately on my knee some of the time. What was surprising was the intense aching of my right ankle after some

time. Presumably the constant pressure of my foot upon the accelerator was bringing formerly little used muscles into play?

When we got near Grantham we stopped at what was then a transport cafe but is now a full blown motorway station. We drank a very welcome mug of coffee and phoned Nana's neighbour, Al Sherwood (Joy's father) and asked him to tell her that we were on our way. I had only a vague idea of how we were actually going to get to Thorney but followed his advice by turning off at Stamford and taking a country route through the fen villages. We got there in the end and I remember Anne's Mum hugging me with relief! So ended safely our first journey of any length. After staying at Thorney for a few days we went on to Soham again using a route through the Fens. Going through March, Chatteris, and others all places. I remember my Dad telling me of the places he had worked, I remembered him and was sad. Perhaps I should have been guided by Christina Rosetti's poem?

And if you should forget me for a while,
And then remember, do not grieve
For if the darkness and corruption leave
One vestige of the thoughts I had.
Better by far you should forget and smile,
Then that you should remember and be sad.

Now that I had driven the 400 or so miles return journey, the sky was the limit. From then on we used the car for all holidays, Bridlington, Scarborough and others. I particularly remember the first time we drove to Brid. with Mum singing happily, but off-key, Cliff Richard's 'We're All Going on a Summer's Holiday. Another memory is going off to Scotland where we had booked a self catering holiday at Butlins at Ayre. Ian was taking his O levels and so for the first

week we ‘swopped’ him for another lad leaving Ian to stay at the lad's home. After the first week we put the lad on a train to Keighley and his parents put Ian on one for Ayre. One fly in my own ointment at this time was very sore and painful feet. I had wanted to go to a chiropodist but Mother kept putting me off with tales of blood and anguish caused by them. I know what it was, a nursing auxiliary, a large Germanic woman had taken a chiropody course and had offered to do mine free. Yes folk, you've guessed it, Mother was jealous, and had feared that more than chiropody was on offer!

Still, back to Ayre. We had a good time but missed our own son although actually, it was nice having someone who actually listened to me and who was admiringly surprised when I beat him at snooker. However, I was glad when Ian came. He became addicted to whist drives and went every evening even though he would come back with shins sore from being kicked by partners whenever he laid down the wrong card! As we were self catering I was sent into the town for supplies which included a chicken bought from a big grocer’s (no supermarkets then). Tragedy. When I got back to the camp I found out that I had left the chicken in the store. There was nothing I could do other than get my ears roasted by you know who and to put it down to experience. In the afternoon we all went into Ayre and walked down the high street. Passing the store where I had left the chicken I was surprised when someone came out of the shop and said, "You left a chicken here this morning", and gave it to us. One of the advantages of having a funny face. I'm getting chronologically mixed up here. When we were at Ayre, Ian was 16 so the year will have been 1972 and a lot will have happened between moving into Thornhill Ave in 1965 and 1972. So let’s go back to '66 the year of Ruth's birth.

The years between 1966 and the middle '70s were among the happiest of my life. I had a good marriage in spite of the occasional squall, we had our own home and a car and two wonderful children, what more could anyone ask? Ruth grew into a beautiful and charming child. One of my funniest memories was the way that at a certain time she would press herself against the back gate waiting for her hero, Michael, who lived directly opposite, to come home from work, he would wave to her and say, "Hello droopy-draws". Satisfied, she would come back into the house. She was a loving child who wanted endless cuddles and for me to sing her asleep. For my part I worshipped her and I suppose still do. Ian was much more 'spiky' pushing me away if I tried to put my arm around him, but he was friendly and other than the odd boyish nuisance making, was an attractive lad causing little worries for us. One incident was seeing him walking along the avenue with three neighbours' children and a dog, he hit the biggest who turned and hit the next size down who hit the smallest who promptly kicked the dog!

The only time he gave us serious worry was when, turning out his trouser pockets prior to washing them, his Mum found a dog eared note from his Headmaster asking me to contact him at once, "On a serious matter". I rang him at his home and was told that Ian was accused of demanding money with menaces. This was out of my league and in a panic I rang the village bobby, Lance Turner, who was a friend of mine, asking him to come and find out what was going on. Ian had been sent to bed and when Lance came he went up to talk to him. After a while he came down smiling. "If you told me he had thrown a brick at someone, I might have believed it but there is no way I can believe Ian capable of demanding money with menaces". The true story was this: children were not allowed out of the playground during the dinner hour but

Ian was capable of defying this and some of the other children asked him to buy sweets for them and being given one in payment. This developed into Ian asking around for who wanted sweets, 'fetching' deteriorating finally into: "You do want me to fetch sweets for you, don't you?", with perhaps a clenched fist to make the point "

These years were also amongst the most fulfilling of my professional career. To my teaching schedule was added the post of Boys' Careers master. This involved finding out what jobs, professions and so on were available and finding out the ideas that the boys had themselves. Each year, before the end of the year they would be interviewed by the Council's Careers officer or one of his assistants. Keighley at that time was an Excepted District within the old West Riding Authority with its own Educational Committee. One of these assistants was a very prissy young married woman whose name I forget. I asked her once whether she minded me calling her by her first name and was told, "I spoke to my husband about this and he says that it's all right for you to call me by that but that I must always call you Mr Garner." Can you believe it! As a Careers master I attended the Youth Employment Committee, this was often boring but I had two good friends on it. Danny Ryan, Careers master for what was then St. Anne's Catholic Sec. Mod. and Alison Claybourne from what was then Keighley Girls' Grammar.

One bit of humour was the rivalry between a Tory Councillor Mrs Lily Hardaker and Albert (last name forgotten) a Labour Councillor. They took it in turn to be Chairperson and were always quarrelling, accusing each other of cheating and threatening to report each other to their respective organisations. What a laugh. Fred Atkinson, the Careers Officer, acted as Secretary whom I once greatly discomfited: he had said once that Asian children left their jobs more often

than indigenous ones. I didn't say anything at the time because I had no way of knowing whether he was right but I didn't like the inference. At that time the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, was head of the Race Relations Board so I wrote to him at the House of Lords and got a reply from his Secretary that there were no figures to back up Fred's statements. I said nothing to Fred about it until the next meeting when I announced what I had done and read out the Archbishop's reply. As Punch cartoonists would say, 'Collapse of stout party'.

He got his own back later on. There was a weekend conference at Grantley Hall near Ripon and having no car was given a lift by Fred along with three boring old farts from other schools, God, it was horrible. On the Saturday evening Alison took me out to a pub and we got on well in a totally platonic way. 'Amitie amoureuse' covers it I think? When we were ready to go back to Keighley I asked Alison, Could I go with her? and she agreed. The weather was lovely and we stopped off at Fountains Abbey for a while. Ruth was still a baby and I asked Alison if she wanted to see how good I was at bathing the baby. When she had gone, Mum said that Fred had rung asking to speak to me and being told that I had not arrived said, "That's funny. Ray and Alison left before us and we have been back a long time." Luckily Mum saw the funny side but said that one thing that did worry her was that Alison and I looked alike.

One of my jobs as Careers master was to make contact with the Services because of their potential as providers of careers, particularly since we had become a Comprehensive, we had no pupils likely to become teachers, doctors, lawyers etc. This led to some very interesting occasions such as a visit from a Royal Marines display team who put on lots of demonstrations including unarmed combat, this last brought

me criticism from colleagues because in the break-time, kids had been found throwing each other around! We also got a visit from the Duke of Wellington Regiment and this was interesting because as a Territorial soldier (more about that elsewhere) I had spent some time at their camp as a supernumery instructor during which I had had a fallout with one of the regular NCO's and here he was now a Sergeant Major having to be very polite and calling me sir. What I regret was at break-time giving the officers coffee with us in the Staff room and putting the other ranks separately in another room. Wrong but it was done instinctively.

I suppose this is the place where I talk about how I got into the T.A? It began with Mum's horror of drawing attention to ourselves. We came to Keighley, as you know, right at the end of '58 and in the summer of the next year we went to see our first Keighley Gala parade, taking our place on Station Bridge. Not liking to stand anywhere for long I decided to sit on the bridge. "If you get up there I shall go home ", says Mum. True to her word, as I sat down she went off in a huff vowing never to see another parade ever. After the parade had passed I ambled off to Victoria Park to see what was going on and came across a large artillery piece, a 5.5 howitzer belonging to the 3rd Territorial Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's Regt. Now, I had always been interested in large guns and was fascinated to get so close to one. Getting talking to the chap who seemed to be in charge I managed to get myself signed up to "C" Company based in Keighley. The man to whom I had been talking was Phillip Knowles the company commander. Thinking back, it was a good job that it wasn't a unit of the French Foreign Legion on display! Incidentally, your Mother never did go to see another parade, that's how stubborn she could be as if you didn't know!

So I became a part time soldier. It seemed funny after all these years once more to be in uniform, the uniform, by the way, I took to a tailor in Keighley to be fitted, there's posh for you! I was to be a surveyor, one who plots a position and then sends it and the bearing to each of the guns' positions so that if they are in error, they will all be out by the same margin. What was strange that when I went to the first lecture by Lt Bond, although I could follow the steps of his argument I had no idea what he was talking about. Luckily he was away one week and the lecture was given by the Permanent Staff Instructor and everything became clear. We met each week in the Drill Hall for lectures, drill etc., after which, the bar was open. Being a territorial was useful financially, whenever we went on a weekends or annual camp, we were paid at regular army rate including marriage and children's allowance. We did not declare it to the PAYE people and it wasn't taken off my teachers' pay unlike say sickness benefits.

One of the first annual camps was to the firing range at Sennybridge, Wales. It was extremely interesting seeing the guns in action, if you stood right behind the gun and looked up at a certain angle you got a very brief sight of the base of the shell looking like a tennis ball. A particularly frightening sight, was standing in the Observation Post and seeing the air burst shells exploding (from a distance of course), thick black clouds with a deep red glow inside. Just imagine what it must be like in battle to be underneath them with red hot shrapnel showering down? Though I am pleased that I was too young to have gone into battle and not to have killed or seen men killed, somehow I regret not having my manhood tested. I know that's irrational but that's what I feel. Coming back (I had been given a lift in a friend's car) we stopped at Nantwich where I bought a beautiful blue negligee for your Mum. There were no such things as cheque guarantee cards then but,

thanks to my air of honesty (joke), they accepted my cheque. Another year, instead of annual camp I was sent to the Army, RAF, & Marines' School of Nuclear & Chemical Ground Defence, Winterbourne Gunner near Salisbury, Wilts. This was to last three weeks and because it was only open to corporals and above I got my two stripes and became a Bombardier, the artillery's equivalent to a corporal. Amongst other things, this meant a pay rise! It was a very interesting course and as one of only two territorials I got a good idea of what life was like in the peacetime forces. I was known as "Schooley". The curriculum included how a bomb worked and we saw lots of pictures showing the blast effects (the sixties were a time of atom tests in the South Pacific and these pictures were taken at the test sites.) We also learned the use of radiation measuring counters and how to plot levels of radiation at different times.

Defence measures against chemical attacks were also studied. As part of this we had to enter a room filled with CS gas. You went into the room wearing a mask then, when the gas was released, you were told to take off your masks and to stand for a minute or two before you were released. I had done this in my army training days when it was tear gas but this was something else again! When I took off my gas mask, the immediate sensation was of someone thrusting a fist down your throat and squeezing your lungs! We also learned about treatment of mustard gas. To teach us how to cope, we lined up and received a small drop of liquid gas on our hand and then had to walk slowly round in a circle before being allowed to sponge it off and apply the necessary cream! I wonder if it was the real stuff or were they kidding us?

The three weeks passed pleasantly enough with me spending some time in the NAAFI Club in Salisbury but then came the exams. They included, theoretical, practical and

giving an instruction. This of course was where I had an advantage over the others. They were scared stiff at the thought of having to stand in front of a class whereas it was my day job. My lesson was teaching a Radiac Survey. i.e. plotting levels of radiation at different times after the explosion and at different distances from the blast. All went well, I gave my talk, and did all the written exams but my school insisted on my return in time for the beginning of the autumn term. The School were very helpful allowing me to take the practicals on my own, visiting the different instructors and demonstrating using the different gadgets. I learnt later that I had achieved a total score of 95% making me fourth in the whole intake and I was now a certified instructor in Nuclear and Chemical Ground Defence! The RAF Officer, by the way, who assessed the lesson giving wrote of me, "Obviously superbly qualified for his civilian job!".

This put me in very good books with the powers that be in the Company and in fact I was made an officer cadet which put me in the running for a commission. I was very proud of the white georgettes which I now wore on my collar. The Colonel was going to give a lecture on rocket propulsion and I was asked to give a lecture before him on the atomic bomb and its effects. I spent a happy few months being treated as an officer manqué but spoilt it by getting p----d out of my mind at a posh officers' dinner.

Phillip Knowles said that I had to be introduced to people like the Brigadier and the Lord Lieutenant of the County and that I was to buy each one a drink. They all asked for large pink gins and I had one myself every time. What with the wine at the meal and the port at the end I was out of my wits. An example of my errors. The Battery padre spoke to me and said that he was the "Colonel's sounding board ". Did this mean I asked, "That he would tell the colonel what the men

were saying?" On his saying "Yes", I asked him to tell the Colonel that he was a “?!!&”. Then I told this reverend gentleman a filthy joke. Worse was to come. Around midnight the young subalterns started acting stupidly by debagging each other. I suggested that we went for the Brigade Major but was talked out of it. On the following Saturday I found out just how stupid my suggestion was. Watching the start of the England Scottish R.U match, who should come out as the Scottish champion, but our Brigade Major. All in all, a disgusting exhibition and the end of any ideas of my being commissioned. I couldn't be anyway because illegitimates could not hold the Queen's commission.

Another year when I couldn't go on annual camp, I spent three weeks with the regular army as a supernumerary instructor with the Duke of Wellington's Regt. at Strensall near York. The Territorials were to be issued with the army's new rifle, the self loading rifle or SLR which used .3 rather than the traditional .303 and I was to learn how to use and maintain it and then come back and train the others. As a quid pro quo for the army I would be assisting in the training of the recruits and give instruction on what I had learned at Winterbourne Gunner.

I was fascinated by the speed of firing of the new rifle and went out to the range on most days and fired off lots of rounds. One of the instructors told me. "You came here to fire these and we're making sure you get lots of experience. The SLR is a lot lighter than the old SM Lee but still with quite a recoil. Having little muscle to cushion the "kick", my shoulders became quite sore and I was reduced to tucking my rolled up beret under my battledress blouse. As an extra experience I got to fire a Sterling sub machine gun. (In some ways you know, I have never quite "grown up"!

Two highlights of my time at Strensall. One was the fallout with an NCO which I have mentioned earlier. He refused to give the lads their mail until they had done something or other and I objected which of course I shouldn't have done. As he pointed out, it was OK for me, who was only there for a week or two, but he was with them all the time. The second was a bit of over enthusiasm on my part to "join in" all the activities. One Saturday they were going on a five mile route march and although they said I didn't need to, I insisted, not only that but I borrowed pack and rifle for good measure. It did not take me long to find out how stupid I was and how unfit but I stuck it, I didn't drag behind and I triumphantly finished the march. Something that surprised me was seeing parents coming to the camp to complain about things like perceived injustices etc towards their sons. I thought this only happened in schools. At the end of my time I came back to resume civvy life.

My time in the "Terriers" came to an end when we were taken off our Royal Artillery role and reverted to Infantry and I was asked to train for Intelligence duties.

One weekend we were made to climb Pennyghent. Oh dear, oh dear even though all my equipment was carried for me it was, if you will excuse the pun, an uphill struggle. Coming down was even worse, struggling along exhausted and with no equipment I heard a shout, "Eh up Ray!" and looked to see this lad, a Bren gun on each shoulder, gaily running down and leaping effortlessly over walls. That was it. There was no way he and I could be in the same mob and so I left the unit. Not without some regret for I had enjoyed my time and would miss the social activities such as the Christmas parties.

One year Mum and I had shared a table with two friends and their wives who were both pregnant. Next year, sitting next to the same four, I suggested to the wives that they

must feel more comfortable than did last year. Both laughed and said, "We're both pregnant this year as well!" Another TA memory or so. A lift in a Bond mini car, imagine a motor bike engine encased in a motor car, which left me deafened. Phillip usually gave me a lift back and once we were very late back. Mother was furious and let me know it, when he tried to explain on my behalf he was told, "And you can bloody shut up, you're no better than he is." She hadn't even met him at that time. I'm getting my chronology muddled again, so let's cut our losses and start anew. The year is 1968 and there has been a big change in the school system. Whereas up to now we had been a Secondary Modern School in a Selective System, we now were a Middle school in a comprehensive system. Under the old system we had upper years' pupils who, while they had not been selected for Grammar school, were quite capable of getting some academic qualification and some of them took, successfully, GCE exams. Even I was able to get some of them through GCE History thanks to the guidance of a friend of one of our staff. In the first year of our change, parents had the choice of leaving their 15-16 year olds with us, or sending them to the Upper School. This meant that any child with parents interested in their child's education went on to the Upper School and we were left with those who had no interest. This was a pity because we were sure that there were those who were capable of getting academic qualifications in our smaller classes and who would now sink out of sight amongst the upper school. A pity, but there it was.

This was one of my busiest periods, my golden years as George Skirrow was to say. Ian, now eleven, was a pupil at Bronte and was being his usual mischievous self. One of my worries was that one of the staff was a bit of an obstreperous loud mouth who wasn't particularly fond of me. I had visions of him being unfair to my son and of my having to confront

him. I needn't have worried, they got on fine together. The teacher came to me and said his only complaint against my son was that while he had to force the other lads into the showers after PE, he was always having to force Ian OUT of them! "Ray, he even takes his bloody shampoo in with him!" Actually, the only awkwardness was caused by the frequency in which he got his backside smacked by George Skirrow one of the ex Haworth teachers. I knew I had to say something but to mention it to George without the formality of an official complaint seemed to be taking an unfair advantage. The problem was solved without my having to say anything by Frances Dawson the Domestic Science teacher. She, without telling me, went up to George and demanded to know, "Is Ian Garner's arse the only one in the school?" He never smacked Ian again.

I did, however. I was spared the embarrassment of having Ian in any of my regular classes but we did occasionally brush together in the corridors. One lunch time as I walked down the main stairs m'lado ran past me going up, running was forbidden. Calling him back, I told him to go right down to the bottom of the stairs and walk back up. He walked only up a few stairs before once more breaking into a run. As he passed me I clipped his ear and sent him back. Days later, Mother told me that he had complained to her, asking that she go to school and tell the Head. She said that he didn't mind the ear clip but objected to being called a "Silly little bugger". This I told Grainger the Head and asked,

"What would you have done if she had come to the school?"

"I would have gone home and left it to my Deputy", was the brave reply!

Much of my time in this period was taken up by my careers' teaching work. A lot of my time was spent visiting the mills

and factories of Keighley looking out for the possibilities of employment. In the 60s there was no shortage of unskilled work, often when walking through the town, a shopkeeper would stop me and ask whether I could send them someone. Sometimes, too, I would be faced with an employer despairing of someone they already employed. One lad, Rodney had a job in a shoe shop which also employed the daughter of one of my colleagues. She told me that Rodney had been warned not to open the drawer of a card file too quickly, the very first time he used it he yanked it so hard that it turned over and a thousand cards lay scattered everywhere. He was sacked but found a job in another shoe shop where things became so fraught that I avoided passing the shop! His next job was in a delicatessen, the manager of which once stopped me and said, "Mr Garner, I just don't know what to do with him. I've tried everything, even taking him up to the stockroom and giving him a good hiding!" He eventually grew up and became a successful manager of a newspaper office. He seems to have developed into a model citizen writing often to the Keighley News on local politics. I should add that on Anne's death, he sent me one of the first Condolence letters.

Talking of good hidings, when I was teaching in Birmingham a neighbour travelling on the same bus asked me whether I could send his firm a lad as an apprentice. He told me that they only ever took on boys from Grammar schools but were unhappy with the ones they were getting and were prepared to try one from a secondary modern. As I was new to the school I had to ask the other staff and I gave him a name. Sometime afterwards I happened to meet up with the same neighbour and asked him how they were getting on with 'our' lad. Turned out that he was a disaster, disobedient, lazy, you name it and he was it. Then the friend went on to say that out of friendship for me, instead of sacking him they sent for

the lad's father. When Dad arrived and was told the trouble, he asked, "Have you a room I can take him into?" He was shown a room and Dad and son disappeared into it. Next thing there was such a banging and crying out and afterwards the lad came out bruised and in tears. "There," said Dad, "any more trouble, send for me". After that the boy became, "The best apprentice we've ever had!". A better outcome much later while teaching at Bronte, was when two of my old pupils who had joined the army came to see me. I was so impressed by the change the army had made, they were now smart & confident, that I wrote to their CO complimenting him on the good job that he and his men had done. He wrote back thanking me, saying that he had rewarded them by extending their leave.

One of the advantages in being a careers teacher was the opportunities to make interesting visits. One of these was a three day visit to HMS Drake the Navy's training ship for boys at Ipswich to which I was invited by the Chief Petty Officer from the RN recruitment office in Leeds, a burly, jovial man who came to Bronte each year at my invitation to talk to the pupils and who used to have coffee at our house in the dinner hour. The downside of the Drake invitation was that he also asked Verna Harker senior mistress of Bronte who had responsibility for the girls' careers advice.

Nothing much wrong with Verna except she was boring and the thought of driving the three hundred miles to Ipswich with her for company was not to be thought of. Luckily, Lewis Woodfine, a Bronte pupil, had gone to Drake the previous year and had done so well that the Navy had kept him on as a sort of prefect for the following years' intake. This gave me an idea, his Mother a widow had the catering concession at the local swimming baths (she never charged me for my tea and buns during the School's swimming galas). I

asked her if she would like to take advantage of our visit to go to Ipswich to see her son? She agreed, so I had a chaperone, though my Mother was a bit surprised when I called in to see her with two middle aged women in tow. When we got to the place Verna asked me whether she should lock her door. I told her, "Verna, this is the Navy, I'll lock my door!"

I wasn't impressed by what I saw, there seemed to be far too much emphasis on what, in the army, was called "bull" to use its polite form: they even had to polish the waste bins in their sleeping quarters. Much worse was finding out that there were no opportunities for the boys to continue ordinary education. Another thing, I certainly didn't like the instructors and the general "feel" of the place. However, they were very hospitable to us, making us honorary members of the Officers' mess giving us each a no. for billing. This was spoilt for me when each time I ordered a drink someone put it on their bill. Which meant that I was too embarrassed to order any more.

Another officers' mess in which I was entertained was that of RAF Topcliffe to which I took a party. One of the officers was leaving and a barrel of beer was opened. Someone put a glass in my hand telling me, "Go on. You are a member of the mess. Another good visit, this time without children, was to Timothy Taylor's brewery to weigh up job possibilities for the kids. Mr Hey the Head brewer gave me an interesting tour of the processes and afterwards took me into a basement in which a stone 'cave' had been built containing two barrels of bitter. Handing me a pint glass he told me to try both barrels and then tuck into whichever one I preferred. Getting back into school one of the teachers asked, "Where have you been today?" When he heard where I had been and with no children, he was jealously annoyed!

One of the most interesting visitors was Chay Blithe who with Andrew Ridgeway had just returned from being the

first people to row across the Atlantic. They both were serving soldiers in the Parachute Regiment, Ridgeway a Captain and Blythe a sergeant and the Army sent them, separately, round the schools to give talks. I was asked whether I wanted one to visit Bronte and having said yes, we got Chay (now Sir Chay) Blythe. At the end of the school day I took him into the staff room for coffee and chatted. Because we lived so near to the school I invited him home so that he could have a bath before setting off to his next school. He took up the invite but asked whether there was anywhere he could go for a run, I suggested the local golf club and off he trotted. After a while he came back and said that he'd had a run in with the greenkeeper!

He had tea with us and eventually it was decided that he would stay the night sleeping in Ian's room. Mum had to go to work and he was kind enough to offer to lend me his car to take her there, I didn't have enough confidence to take up his offer (we had not yet got a car of our own) so she went off on the usual bus. Chay and I talked, with him telling me about the voyage. He was a friendly enough chap but had the arrogance of not only a Scot but a member of the Parachute Regiment. Still, it all went OK and he set off for his next place next morning. Subsequently, he sent Ian a signed copy of their book and invited us to stay with him and his wife at their married quarters in Aldershot. We were pleased but we didn't take up his offer, though we did exchange Christmas cards.

Meanwhile, back to school matters. When, after the first year of Comprehensive and those with parents interested in education had left to do their fourth year at Oakbank, we now had a fourth year with little or no interest, what to do with them? For reasons not entirely altruistically I used my History periods to introduce a kind of community studies. The main prop of this was to get them into First Schools as 'helpers'. I thought it would be a good idea for the boys to

help in the juniors' PE periods, especially during football sessions and for the girls to help Mothering the little ones, such as helping to tie shoe laces, fasten buttons and so on.

Firstly I needed the cooperation of the Deputy Head, and this was my first hurdle. For some reason, Des Manning was always suspicious of me, seeming to view any of my ideas from a jaundiced, "What's Ray Garner wanting to get out of now?" Still, with a back up from the Head I got my way. To be fair to Des he was a good enough teacher especially when dealing with disruptive lads, Eric for instance. Des was walking along a corridor and came upon Eric standing kicking the door of Joe Lowis' classroom. "What are you going to do now Eric?" "I'm going to f*** off!" says the lad suiting actions to words. The odd thing about Eric was that each time he ran off he would always come back shortly and take his punishment. I had a soft spot for the lad. Long afterwards a smart lad with a wife and family greeted me in the street with a polite, "Hello Sir". A very different person. There's no happy ending I'm afraid. Eric was later murdered by his sister.

Des left the school and was replaced by Trefor Day who gave me 100% cooperation. Each time I took an idea to him he would ask me what could go wrong and having decided that everything was OK would let me have my way. Going back to Des. He was a nice chap but had a weakness, gambling on the horses. Once he came to me on the verge of tears telling me of his massive debts - but not asking for help, just sympathy.

Having got permission from the Head to carry out my ideas, the next task was to get the cooperation from the Heads of the Junior schools. This was an eye opener, I didn't realise how cut off some of these Heads felt especially those in the remoter schools. The Heads of Stanbury and Laycock poured out all their school worries and ideas each for nearly an hour. I

began to appreciate what it must be like for Vicars calling on their rural colleagues. As to that, I remember Peter Boughey Vicar of Soham, and Rural Dean, asking me, rhetorically, "How does one handle a rural priest, with a car (essential) a repair bill of £200 and only £100 in his bank account?

Anyway, all the Heads plus the manager of Haworth Community Centre (whom I later excluded from the scheme on hearing that he was offering cigarettes to the children!) agreed and the scheme started. Looking back I can see what a tremendous risk I was taking. What if a child was in an accident or committed an offence? What if any of them were brought back to school by the police? It really frightens me. Certainly, it was something that could not possibly be done today. Of course, I kept a very close watch on things, constantly touring around and making spot visits. However, on the whole everything went swimmingly.

As if all this wasn't enough, I had become involved in union work, firstly as a school rep. i.e. 'shop steward' and as secretary to the Keighley branch of the National Association Of Schoolmasters, NAS later, with its amalgamation with the Union of Women Teachers, the NASUWT. The school rep part involved keeping an eye on the effect of hierarchical policy on teaching staff's working conditions and supporting members involved in disputes with the Head. Being Branch Secretary involved liaising with the district branch, setting up branch meetings and supporting the school reps in the other Keighley schools. As an example of the calls upon my time, one evening the phone rang and whilst dealing with that call, the front doorbell rang. Still talking into the phone I ushered the caller in to wait exactly as at the same time the backdoor bell rang announcing yet another visitor! Besides visits from teachers I would get parents knocking on the door wishing to talk about their children's careers. It had its good moments

such as when one father after our chat, left only to return later bearing bottles of beer as a thank you. Another father insisted on taking me to Bradford to see the kind of work (colour matching) he did. Then there were the old pupils, usually girls, wanting advice on further education..

There was a girl in my form, Beverly, a precocious 15/16 year old about whom I was very worried that she was likely to "go to the bad". Each time I sent a message to her Dad asking him to come and see me he refused. Finally, having asked the girl in which pubs her father drank, I told her to tell him that if he wasn't on my doorstep at 7pm the following Thursday I would trawl the pubs until I found him. He came. Not that it did any good, she became a prostitute ending up in hospital very ill. The last time I saw her was in a town pub, dirty and dishevelled, in the company of two very unlikely looking lads. "No kiss for the bride?" she asked me.

All this time Mum's nursing career was developing, she passed her SRN exams in 1963 - taking two or three 'best nurse' awards and was appointed Staff Nurse in the Private ward of Keighley Victoria Hospital. In celebration, I took a bottle of champagne up to the ward and the two of us and Sister toasted her success from medicine glasses. The cork, which I remember shooting along the length of the corridor, is in the top drawer of my bedroom.

CHAPTER 12: SOMERSET CIDER

When the hospital closed down she became a staff nurse in Morton Banks Hospital, once a fever hospital but then used as a convalescent/Day hospital. When a vacancy for a Sister's post appeared, she was appointed. To show how very much they thought of her, there were two Sisters' posts a senior & a junior one. It was the senior post that became vacant and although the obvious thing would have been to promote the junior and give Mum the junior post, they passed over the junior sister and put Mum into the senior post. When Morton Banks closed she was appointed a Night Sister, in the recently opened Airedale General, doing this job right up to her death.

That she was excellent at her job is proved both by her promotions and the many people who have come up to me and telling me what a marvellous nurse she was. There was one "blip" in her career when she made a mistake in a telephone call to a patient's family. I forget which way round it was, either she told someone her husband was dead, and wasn't, or the other way round! Either way it had serious professional consequences for her, she was brought up before Matron and issued with a written final warning, only dismissal is more serious.

I went to the hearing with her but the old biddy of a deputy refused me entrance. I was furious when Mum told me that her SRN rep was too scared to help and the Regional official was useless. I rang his home at Harrogate to tell him what I thought of him and reminded him that if she were to lose her job as a result of the union's incompetence she would sue. A very chastened man went to AGH and did what he could in damage limitation. A few years later the warning was revoked but that is a story which will be told later. As to Mum's reputation, especially in her caring for student nurses, I have one or two letters sent to her both by grateful students and in one case, a Mother. Only the other day while attending a funeral one of these nurses came up and hugged and kissed me, it was obvious that it was Anne, not me she was kissing.

Let's start yet again. It's 1968, we have lost our fourth year pupils, and our oldest classes are 13-14 year olds and my careers/community work was at an end. Time for me to move on. There was an advert for a teacher to take charge of the academic top forms at the Blake Secondary Modern School in Bridgewater, Somerset and having talked it over with Mum I applied by writing to the Headmaster. Granger, Head of Bronte agreed to write me a reference. Having applied, I was pleased to be called to the school for interview. Because of the distance it meant taking two days off school staying the night at one of the Blake teachers' home.

The journey from Keighley to Bridgewater was the longest I had made, something like 350 miles and in our little Anglia 1200, not a very comfortable one. It was though very interesting and for me, an exciting one. The M62 had not then been built so getting to the M6 meant a winding, slow journey Skipton, Colne through Whalley and so on to join the M6 at Preston. Once on the motorway it was 90 miles of mostly monotonous road to Birmingham. At Birmingham you joined

the M5 which petered out not many miles later and became an ordinary trunk road, though this time through very interesting country side and rural towns. Near Bristol and passing by the Clifton Suspension Bridge, the road skirted the city then becoming once more the M5 right up to the turn-off for Bridgewater. A total journey time of five and a half hours with two comfort stops.

The interviews would be taking place in the afternoon so I set off early in the morning to explore the countryside visiting Wookey Hole and the Cheddar gorge. I was especially interested in trying to get the feel of the place. The last battle to be fought on English soil had taken place nearby in 1688, Monmouth's Rebellion, the historical background to Blackamore's Lorna Doon. This battle had been followed not only by the massacre of the lads who had foolishly followed him but by a number of trials and hangings conducted by Judge Jeffreys - the so called Bloody Assizes. The country around the battlefield was low-lying wet lands with an oppressive air. It would be interesting to take someone there who knew nothing of the battle and its aftermath and see whether they detected this or was it just because of what one knows? I was fascinated and imagined the bodies of the poor duped lads hanging from all the trees. This was stupid, of course none of the trees I saw were there at the time! Actually, Jeffreys wasn't all that bad, people really were scared that the new king James II would reintroduce Catholicism, though I have never been convinced that he would.

The interview itself went well, with the Head seemingly impressed by my initiative in using the opportunity to explore and he admired the all roundedness of my Keele degree. There were half a dozen of us candidates and as I was the first called, I had a long time to wait in the office of the Deputy Head. He said that he knew who would get the job

and to prove it wrote a name on a piece of paper and hid it. Well I got the job and asked the Deputy to show me his piece of paper on which was written my name!

I had of course to work out my notice. Getting back to Bronte an annoyed Head called me in saying he had told me that he would give me a written reference, not act as a referee, yet the Blake Head had rung him during my interview asking him about my classroom control! I explained, non too gently, how did I know that that was going to happen? Granger took the point. I was given some nice presents by the staff including an illustrated Chaucer (still in the glass bookcase in the lounge). The head himself invited me to tea and then took me out for a couple of pints in the Grouse. On getting back to the house we still lived in Thornhill Ave. I was surprised to see a police car outside. Getting into the house, I was even more surprised to see a policeman's hat and a breathalyser kit on the kitchen table and to hear a voice saying get in here and blow into this! It was Lance Turner, the community policeman, to whom I had once said I would like to be tested after a pint or two to see what the effect would be and this was why he was here and to wish me luck in my new job. He asked me to put my car keys in a drawer explaining that now whatever the test showed there was nothing he could do. I blew into the bag turning the chemicals a slight green which he said showed I was just under the limit. He then asked me if I had any whisky and if so to have a drop. When I blew again it turned a vivid green and became so hot that I had to drop it!

I set off to Somerset to take up my new job some time at the end of August '68/'69. I'm not sure of the year but remember the month for I have a recollection of seeing a poster advertising the Keighley Show on September 3rd. The bad news was that I had to go down alone, the people who were buying our house couldn't get rid of theirs so were

unable to complete our sale. Going along the M6 I remembered that the 29th of that month was our wedding anniversary and I had done nothing about it. Stopping at a service station I rang Fields the Florist and asked them to send some flowers in my name. There were no such things then as credit cards but that was no problem, I was well known to them never even having to tell them who I was and I found later that they had put on the card the exact words that I would have chosen!

I have forgotten where I stayed at first, but do remember at the end staying with the school secretary so suppose that I must have stayed there from the beginning except for when she and her husband went away on holiday, when I stayed at a farmhouse. They were very kind and patient with me, I suppose that I should have got up off my backside and looked for my own "digs" but as I shall be explaining later, unknown to me I was in a clinical depression with all that that meant in lassitude. Presumably this depression was a result of being separated from my family.

One thing which I did have to do was look for a house. I found a lovely detached house some way out of the town, but couldn't do anything about it because of not selling our own house and I wasn't at all keen on taking out a bridging loan especially as we were going through a very thin time financially. What we should have done of course was to forget about the chap who wanted to buy our house and put it up for sale again and, for the life of me. I don't know why we didn't.

What I did do was look around for a school for Ian, a nursery for Ruth, and a job for Anne! There was a selective grammar school, The Doctor Morgan which was willing to give Ian a place. It would have been fun to have seen Ian in the school's uniform which included a school cap with a tassel.

What larks that would have been! Ruth would have had a place in a nursery school though that would have been very expensive, but as it was a school rather than just a nursery, it would have been worth it. For Mum, I got the promise of a Sister's post for her in the local hospital.

As for the job itself, everything seemed promising, I was going to be able to carry on all the schemes that I had been running at Bronte. The head gave me all the facilities I needed. I was even able to go further, one of my ideas was for the girls to staff a crèche for the school's staff, both teachers and domestics. The boys would use their craft lessons making toys for it. I enrolled on a nursery teachers' course so that we would be cleared for insurance. In fact the Head gave me quite a status in the school, for instance, at Speech Day I was asked to escort the biggest of the big wigs amongst the visitors! Perhaps the greatest honour was during a staff meeting in which the head announced the intention that, from the beginning of the new term, the whole school would run along the lines I had set up. Another one of my ideas that he let me put into practice was to arrange a meeting between all the School's Heads of Departments, and the Heads of all our feeder Schools. This was to end the criticisms by our teachers that the Primary schools were not preparing their pupils for the change over to a Secondary school. It was a flop which ended simply in more recriminations.

Those were the good things, now we come to the darker side. Firstly, discipline was much more difficult, at Bronte I was dealing with children whose parents, siblings, and other family members had passed "through" my hands and so to a large extent my discipline was already made before they came up. (One little lad, in his first year at Bronte, had asked me, "Are you Mr Garner, 'Cos my Dad said that, while it didn't matter how I behaved with the other teachers, if I upset

you, you'd bloody kill me!". I was pleased that at least his Dad had learned one thing from me. To the pupils at Blake School, however, I was an unknown quantity and they didn't take to me at all and so the daily routine became a grind. It didn't help that one of my form, an individual of Italian descent, was quite one of the most unpleasant lads I have known.

As if all this was not enough, I quickly fell foul of other members of staff who resented my political and union views. One unpleasant encounter came when I aired my views that the bombing of the Mohne Dams was licensed vandalism, and the destruction of Dresden a war crime. I should have realised that these people were as culturally apart from Northerners as we were from Danes or whatever. As for union views, a meeting was called of the Bridgewater NAS/UWT Association to discuss whether or not we should join the NUT in their half-day pay strike. I was quite horrified to hear one lady say that we should ask the county's Education Director whether he agreed with the teachers' demands and if so, we shouldn't go on strike! Well, I ask you? A proposal was made that we would join the NUT strike conditionally. I proposed an amendment that we should join unconditionally can't remember what the proposed conditions were, but anyway my amendment was defeated.

It didn't help that, the family were going through a bad patch financially and besides, I was dragged down by an acute homesickness and an overwhelming need for my family. Mum made it worse sometimes by putting the infant Ruth on the phone pleading for her Daddy to come home. One week when Mum was on holiday, she and Ian came to stay. We booked a caravan in Western-Super-Mare. Beds hard and a bit smelly from gas fumes, little did we know then that one day we would have our own caravan. What was noticeable was that all the time they were there, my life took on a new and

much better aspect. With an increased confidence even my disciplinary problems eased. The hand drawn picture of Ian which hangs in my bedroom was done by an artist working in a department store in Taunton. Don't know where Ruth was, probably staying with Anne's Mum in Thorney?

Life outside the school. I was determined to explore as much of the surrounding district as possible, starting off with Taunton the nearest town of any size. Apart from its Bloody Assizes connection, there was little of note - or at least what I can recall of it twenty years later. Spreading out, I went on a tour of the Quantock hills and the coastal town (village?) of Watchet. The two best visits were to Bath and Glastonbury. Turning a corner during a walk through Bath I came upon the most impressive crescent of eighteenth century houses, this was of course the famous Golden Crescent, a truly amazing sight. The cathedral, Bath is part of the diocese of Bath and Wells, and was well worth a visit as were the Roman Baths in which I sampled the sulphuric waters, not a taste I want to repeat!

Some Sundays the husband of the secretary with whom I lodged took me to a cider house in Athelney (where Alfred hid from the Danes and burnt some lady's cakes. Although fully licensed, it was quite unlike any pub being a farm house and once you had got your drink you could sit anywhere in the house you like. The first time we went Mr, whose name I forget, said I must be careful what I do or say because it was a semi-private place and he didn't want to get barred. We sat in an out-house which contained two enormous barrels of cider, one of sweet and one of rough, I learned that it was best to have mostly rough topped up with sweet. On the first two or three visits, I had to give him my money and he would fill the glasses. As I got known, I was allowed to fill my glass and take the money to the till.

One Sunday I proffered the money and was told, "You're quite capable of putting it into the till and take out the change yourself. I had been completely accepted. The Landlord was a well known ornithologist who introduced a nature programme on local radio.

Most evenings I went to pubs in a couple of villages in the nearby Polden Hills, quite a beauty spot where we hoped to buy a cottage which was for sale. There were two pubs I used, one in which I was befriended by the local lads who worked either on farms or the Bridgewater Cellophane factory. This factory was one of the minuses of living in the Poldens, the stench was awful when the wind blew in that direction, especially as the whole area was low lying. With these lads I played ninepins, some pubs had bowling alleys in the cellar. Another pub I used had a very different clientele, mostly professionals. One was the managing director of Clarks the shoe makers at nearby Street. Once for a joke I suggested coming to work for him. "Ray. You are a lovely chap and I would do anything I could for you but give you a job? Never!" Another man was the manager of Lloyds Bank. Now, I had left Lloyds and taken my overdraft to the Yorkshire Bank and relations with them were rather sticky! He invited me to transfer my account to his bank. I said that before I did that, he should write to the Yorkshire Bank manager and see what a poor thing it was. He did this and said he still would welcome my account. What pleased me was that I seemed to be equally liked in both pubs. One night I overdid it on the alcohol and had to drive the eleven miles back to Bridgewater with God knows how many whiskeys and beer inside me, obviously well over the limit. Had I been stopped and tested I would probably still be in prison!

However, in spite of the drink and friendship, I was very lonely and unhappy without my family. Unable to sleep I

was taking large amounts of sleeping pills, not mild sedatives like temazepam but barbiturates the ones which killed Marylyn Monroe and many other people, and I still lay awake most of the night. Things could not go on like this, the end came in a most surprising manner: laid up with a "fluey" cold I went to the local GP who gave me the usual placebos and a sick note. I got over whatever it was and returned to school after about ten days. Within a few weeks I was back to the GP with the same complaint. This time, he said, "Never mind about your cold. Tell me about yourself". After listening, he gave me another sick note and told me, "Go back to Keighley and don't come back until I tell you." Seems I was in a clinical depression.

CHAPTER 13: BACK TO KEIGHLEY

The next month or two is a muddle though I do remember the sheer delight of driving home, much like I had felt on going home on my first leave from the army. I had gone home on one or two weekends but it was a long tiring journey, once I very nearly came to grief. Motorway driving is, as you both know, a boring, sleep inducing (in) activity. Somewhere along the M5, which in those days was quiet, I did go to sleep for a nano-second waking up to find the car heading for the crash barrier but managed to steer away. Incidentally, I find it helpful to take a wet flannel when setting off on a long journey, also to drive with every window open. Another mistake was not to turn off the motorway to join the A38.The M5 was incomplete between just outside of Bristol and Quinton on the outside of Birmingham. I saw the turn-off sign but in my dopey, and perhaps doped up state, I ignored it and sailed on. I now found myself trolling along a motorway with all the direction signs pointed to God knows where. All I could do was keep going until a roundabout at the junction with the M4, go back to Bristol and start again.

Another memory of the time: my route was to Laneshaw Bridge and over the tops to Oakworth. Now, I was a member of Oakworth Social Club and passing it once at 3am

I saw that its lights were on, and as the journey had given me a great thirst, I stopped the car and went in. “Hi Ray”, said the steward, “What'll you have?”. So there was I having a pint of bitter when all decent people should be tucked up in bed.

I really have little memory of my time in Keighley whilst on the sick. I had of course to go to the GP for medication and continuing sick notes and remember him sending me to see a psychiatrist in Bradford who said I did not have a mental illness.

That shrink, whose name has left me, was later on an expert witness in the Sutcliffe trial. I was to see another one in Taunton, this visit was horrendous, for in the waiting room I met patients who were really in depression and this put the wind up me. This depression, and the two previous ones must have been much milder than the one through which I have just travelled, because I had no suicidal thoughts and certainly did not need hospitalization: of course having your Mother and you two by my side would have had a lot to do with it. All this time, I was getting letters from the Blake head telling me that some of my pupils were going off the rails without their "anchor" and enclosing patently insincere notes from some of them.

After a time, I felt that I should go back to Bridgewater and try again so with the doctor's blessing set off. I've no idea of what time of the year this was but know it was raining - and raining hard, so much so that on the M6 in Cheshire with heavy lorries passing and flooding my windscreen with water displaced by their tyres, I panicked and was afraid to go on. Pulling in to the Keele service station I rang Allegra, KB's wife, they were living in Newcastle. She told me to take the next turn off the M6 and go to their house. I rang the school to tell them what had happened,rang your Mum and decided to accept Allegra's invitation and stay the

night but then a strange thing happened, something which no one had prepared me for. I became restless, unable to sit, stand, lay down or anything else, I learned later that this sometimes happened in clinical depression. It's called agitation and by all accounts what I was suffering was comparatively minor.

My recollections of that evening are hazy, hardly more than impressions, KB's agony with acute constipation and my suggesting the old nursery remedy of inserting a slice of household soap, the television on showing The Clangers, are just two. Now I get really muddled because although I remember going to bed, I went home that same night. What happened, I think, was that Mum rang insisting that I go straight home and Allegra equally insistent that I was in no state to drive and that I must stay the night. There could only be one winner of that argument and off I went. Turning on to the A59 I stopped at a telephone box to ring home and was amazed to see a young girl, coatless and barefooted although it was a cold night, walking past towards Preston. This was well after midnight so this must be the night I had the three o'clock pint.

What happened over the next month or so is a blank but with one or two things - and people emerging from the darkness. For a start there was my surprising friendship with Sister Mary Campion S.H. (Collette after Vatican II) the Headmistress of Holy Family School. How this started I do not know but I came to rely on her help in what were miserable times, times in which I quite "lost the plot" having little or now idea of where my career was going. I spent a lot of time in her office talking and listening to her. She was quite a traditionalist, even though after JOHN XIII reforms, which allowed nuns a little freedom in their dress, she stuck to the longer hemline. She thought that the reforms had gone too

far, giving me an example of what she meant. It seems that an English priest visiting in New York was invited out somewhere and was surprised to find two young ladies, one in leopard skin tights, sitting on the floor drinking coffee. He was even more surprised when they introduced themselves as nuns! Another memory of her, In Keighley library one day I had just taken a 'Life of Archbishop Roberts SJ' and was reading it when a black robed arm came out, a hand snatched the book from me and there was Sr Collette, "Don't read that, that's heresy!"

I really don't know what I did during the time I was off sick, I suppose I would have mooched about looking after the house, fetching Mum to and from work. I did go on my own to Thorney, presumably as a half way point on my way to Soham. It was while I was there that I had a slight recurrence of the agitation but luckily it didn't last long, and thank goodness, it was the last time. While my career was on the wane your Mother's was blossoming. On the old Victoria Hospital closing she went as a staff nurse to Morton Banks Hospital. This was the old "fever" hospital at the end of Hospital Road, Riddlesden which was being used as a sort of half way house between hospital proper and home. A couple of stories she told me, one was of her finding an old man who was being discharged sitting crying on his bed and holding a prescription. "Look Sister," he wavered, "They're poisoning me with rat poison". What he had was a prescription for Warfarin, an anti-coagulant!

Meanwhile I was drifting along with no clear idea of what to do or where I was going. The end came when I decided to go and have a talk with Longmoor, the Borough Education Officer. Keighley, at this time, was an Excepted District within the West Riding with its own Education Department and more or less independent of the County

Council. Integration within the Bradford District was yet to come. After listening to my woes, Longmoor very kindly offered to take me back into Keighley, saying that he thought that due to my previous service in Keighley, “Something was owed me". The agreement was to be, that I would work as a supply teacher based in Bronte whenever there were no schools needing a supply. So there we were. Almost back to where we had started! To use the old cliché, I would have to put it down as an experience. On my first day back at Bronte I was ribbed about when was I going to give back their leaving presents but on the whole I was made to feel welcome.

My first supply job was to take the place of Highfield Middle Schools Charlie Mallinson who was in hospital and would be away for six weeks. Charlie's duties as a fourth year Form teacher would be no problem but he was the school's Art Teacher, for Gawd's sake. Me! an art teacher? Me who couldn't draw a straight line? Oh dear! However, I managed it OK. First thing was to lick the Form into shape which I managed quite successfully thanks to a mixture of my natural charm and a big stick. The art lessons I managed by a lot of drawing and painting. Was I successful? When Charlie came back he pronounced himself satisfied. "I can see that the room is clean and tidy and that work has been done. I'm pleased", he said to me. My other job was two Library periods wished on me by the Head. It was during one of those periods that I made a daft mistake. Calling out the name Mahomet I was puzzled when a boy answered and yet there were no Asians that I could see. Turned out that Mahomet was an old Keighley family name.

On Charlie's return there was a bit of kerfuffle between Walton, Head of Highfield who was anxious for me to stay on there and Granger, Head of Bronte who insisted on my return as per agreement. For some reason Walton won the

battle, all this of course simply swelled my ego having two Heads fighting over me. As Ian knows, while I'm not all that hot as a teacher, my discipline was faultless and I think that that was the attraction.

So now, Charlie's back and the schools complement of teachers is complete, what do I do? Until Keith Whalley the History teacher took pity on me and split his top history class in two and gave one to me, whatever I could find. On one occasion the needlework teacher was off ill and the NTA was at a loss because she couldn't take the class herself. My suggestion, which she took up, was that I would come in and keep order while she saw to the needlework instruction. It worked well. She said that that was the best lesson she had known. Another time the Head asked me if I would sit in with a woman teacher whose class control was wobbly. After a few minutes I had had enough of the mayhem going on. Professional ethics barred me from intervening so I suggested to the teacher that she should take the opportunity to go to the staff room and get on with some marking and preparation. Off she went and within seconds, full order had been restored.

The deputy headmistress was off for some weeks and I was asked to take her top year English. Two things that I remember of this assignment, one was the class's confusion at being set a piece of imaginative, continuous writing (it was a class of 13-14 year olds). Please Sir, we have never done anything like this was the cry, this shocked me. I read Dylan Thomas's short story "The Charabanc Outing" to them and having discussed it and talked to them about their own holiday memories I asked them to pick any funny incident and write it up in such a away that it brought out the funny parts. After more talk they set off on their stories, not, I'm afraid, very successfully. Still, it was a start. Then of course there were the girls on the back row who thought they would have a bit of

fun with me. This was still the '60s and tights not having been invented, girls wore stockings. Walking between the rows keeping an eye on things, I was startled when one of the girls suddenly lifted up her knee, "Hey sir! He's laddered my stocking", cries she, pointing to the boy sitting in the row in front of her. At that, the whole of the back row did the same in unison. Luckily at just that moment, there was a knock on the door and in walked Tilleray the deputy head. Tilleray was a very unpopular member of staff, the woodwork teacher wouldn't even talk to him, preferring to send written notes to him! "Ah Mr Tilleray", says I, with a sigh of relief. “Just in time. Perhaps you will sort out this little mess?”.

Life during my time at Highfield was quite enjoyable though, as in any school, there were one or two pupils who needed "seeing to", one lad, son of a junior school Head, in particular. Don't remember much of the incident except he had been rude to me and refused to apologise. I gave him a day to think about it with the threat that either he apologised or I would forget our age difference and punch his head. He apologised. Why did his father not come up? Had a teacher threatened either of you, all hell would have broken out. Perhaps he thought telling his Dad would lead to worse trouble? Each time I behaved like this, my career was on the line, but there, I was never ever going to let a child humiliate me. Thankfully, I never met up with his elder brother who was reputed to have thrown a clock at his secondary grammar school head.

One of the really good times, was in the depths of a hard winter. The school was closed to the pupils and with nothing much to do we sat in the warmth of the staff room being fed frequently with tea and biscuits by a kindly domestic science teacher. Another memory was of the first school assembly I attended there, hard to believe but I once had a

strong singing voice and was able to hold a note confidently. During the hymn I sang out lustily till the pianist hit a false note but we were able quickly to get back on track. She told me afterwards that hearing me sing had put heart into her and that it was a long time since she had so enjoyed an assembly.

Another teacher I remember was the woodwork teacher, can't remember his name, except that it was vaguely Lancashire. Anyway, he was very kind and did a good job on our coffee table that due to the heat from a radiator had come unglued. He put it together again and it is still solid in its home in the small bedroom. This poor man came to a tragic end as I heard sometime afterwards. He was off school for a long time with clinical depression and one evening his wife went out to a shop leaving him peeling potatoes. On her return she found him hanging from the banisters. Although by this time I was back in Bronte the Head gave me time off to attend the funeral.

Having finally been allowed back into Bronte I did a little substitution for absent colleagues. One that stands out is substituting for Leah while she was away in hospital. This meant that for the first and only time Ian was in my class. He responded very well, always calling me sir and never taking advantage of our relationship. Ian had a friend in that class, Glenn Keat, who was always making stupid noises. Long after they had both left school Glenn came to the house and I could hear funny noises. "Goodness Glen", I said, "Haven't you yet grown out of making stupid noises?". There isn't a lot that I remember of this time except that there was little or nothing to do which was boring and led to certain resentment amongst one or two "colleagues". One old teacher, Joe Lowis was often off sick and I took his classes. And that is about all I can remember of the time at Bronte.

Another supply job was at Greenhead Grammar School (as it was then known) taking the place of a teacher who had been taken to hospital. This time, because he taught German, I wasn't able to cover for him. His German classes would be taken by others and I would be filling odd gaps in the time table. The two deputy heads each unloaded on to me their bottom math's groups. I seemed to make something of a success of this because a chap came up to me in the Willow Tree and told me that his son had said that my lessons were the most interesting and useful he had ever had. I had used the lessons to give them some idea of pay slips, overtime payments, deductions and so on. I did take one German class and was able to help one struggling girl by pointing out that German nouns had initial capital letters which was about the only thing I knew! She seemed pleased because her father came up to me and said that his daughter had had a lesson with an English teacher and had learned more German in that one lesson than in any other! Not so successful was the one lesson with a class of flaming great brutes who had no interest in anything I had to say. When I threatened one with sending him to the Head, he said, "OK. He'll tell me off and send me back". In spite of what I have said earlier about not giving in, this lot was so damn big that I played the coward and let it all ride. OK, I'm a wimp - but an uninjured one!

If in a lot of my time at Highfield I was spare to requirements here I was even more so. When GCE exam time loomed up, the whole of the top lot was sent home to prepare and for days I just sat around in the staff room reading. The only break came when the exams started and I was roped in as an invigilator.

When I got back to Bronte the Head mentioned that he was being given money enough for an extra teacher and I suggested that he appointed me as RE coordinator which he

did. All the staff were pleased because they hated having to teach RE and now I took it throughout the school plus some History & English. It was even better when I was given an above scale post bringing my salary to what it had been before I went to Somerset. So the wheel had turned full circle.

CHAPTER 14: MALVERN

The really big news at this time '70-'71 was selling the Thornhill Avenue house and moving to Malvern Crescent, Riddlesden. The people in the large bungalow at the junction of Bar Lane/Malvern Crescent, Alfred and Margaret Feather, had had a smaller bungalow built at the end of their land for her brother and family: this brother's work had then required him to move out of the district leaving the bungalow on the Feathers' hands. The asking price was £6,500 or there about and with Mother and I both earning reasonable salaries this was well within our budget. With three nicely sized bedrooms, large lounge/diner and decent sized kitchen it looked a good bet. There was a double garage which went underneath the front garden. Being built halfway up a hillside, the under floor space varied in height from, some seven or eight feet at one end, to about three at the other end. The highest space could be reached by way of a trapdoor and we were able to use the space as a sort of oddment shed. To get to the bottom I had to tie a chair to a piece of rope and lower it down. When I wanted to get back up I stood on the chair and having got back up pulled the chair after me!

One thing which worried me was the large steeply sloping back garden, when you stood at the top you were on a level with the ridge tile and was terraced, with three well built natural stone walls, the lowest about four feet tall was about three feet from the back wall of the bungalow. A spectacular feature was a huge piece of stone at the bottom right hand corner of the back garden, about four feet in height, three feet or so wide and an unknown distance back into the soil. The builders had broken a digger in trying to remove it before deciding to let it stay there. So now came the problem of cultivation - and this time without Grandad Feather to help me. Mum did find me a young man who started work but on the first day he was stung by a wasp and fled! We never saw him again and he didn't even return to collect his money. The worst problem was the weeds in the bottom (large) and middle (smaller) terraces. My first attempt was to cover both terraces with sodium chlorate which was reputed to kill all living things and it seemed to work. The downside of this was that I could set nothing for the first two years. A narrow strip between the path which ran the whole length of the back garden could be weeded by hand, as could the front also steeply sloping front garden. The top of the double garage I made into a small lawn laying strips of turf which I bought from a Shipley rugby club which was replacing its pitch. This had to be carried in batches much to the horror of my poor Anglia's back springs. I seem to remember being helped by someone. (Ian)?

Eventually after many years of back breaking work we finished up with a very decent garden. One of the really big bugbears was the great number of dandelions, every year I dug them up by their roots and every year they returned until one year I was delighted to find that they had nearly all gone! I think what finally did for them, were the long hot summers of 1976/7. There were two doors, one leading from the kitchen

which looked out towards the bottom retaining wall which was separated from the house by a three foot or so tarmac'd pathway stretching the length of the back wall. Another (front) door was on the side opening inwards to a small hallway and outwards to a large area bounded on two sides by a low wall and on another the path on the front of the buildings. This path ended in a row of stone steps to the road. I have a pleasant photo somewhere of a very young Ruth in a straw sun hat, sitting on a rug in this area reading a picture book. She looks somehow 'posh'. On the fourth side of the house, that is on the opposite side to the front door, was a patch of earth bounded by a bush separating us from the next, much older, bungalow. The front garden was as steeply sloping as the back but not terraced and was separated by the double garage.

So that was the outside, now comes the interior decorating. At least there was no rubbish to be scraped from the ceilings as there had been in the Thornhill Road house and all the walls were level. It was just a matter of getting down to it and doing as much as I could when I could. Wanting a heavy paper in the lounge diner which would be beyond my competence to hang decently, we asked Keith the same man who had papered the Thornhill lounge to do it. Once more though, I had to do the tedious job of putting on the horizontally hung lining paper. I don't remember how long it was before the whole house was decorated but it all got finished eventually. When I came to paper the biggest bedroom, the one at the back of the house, I tried the new "self pasting" paper. Never again, what a job! The idea was to fill a waterproofed cardboard trough with water and then immerse each strip of paper through to wet the paste. All right in theory but one, the paper did not slide easily on the wall making it difficult to position the strip, and two all though the

middle of each strip stuck firmly, neither edge would and I had to paste each side with a stronger paste.

Ian was given the smallest room which fortunately was big enough to accommodate the combined wardrobe, desk, cupboard unit which had been in his room at Thornhill. Ruth's room was on the end of the house and also facing out to the Avenue. One lovely memory, Ruth's asleep in her bed, I'm sitting in the lounge when the cry goes up from her, "Hey, someone come and kiss me!" Our room, the largest, was at the back though eventually, because we had a large elaborate bedroom unit fitted, and was too awkward to go in our room, we swapped rooms with her. Another memory: I usually sat and had a last fag before going to bed, this night I stood in the hall between the bedrooms thinking, "Anne, Ian, and Ruth, all my family are sleeping, completely safe." What a marvellous moment.

Now comes one of the two most awful times in my life. It's 1977, a Sunday and we have just returned, no Ian, from a holiday in a farm house in Northumberland. Anne is in the bath and I'm in the lounge when she calls to me to come into the bathroom. "Feel here", she said, putting my hand on one of her breasts. There was a lump, it reminded me of the spikes on the outside of a 'conker' shell. Since having a family I had always been afraid for their health, Anne, breast cancer, Ian (polio (until the Salk vaccine) and Ruth, leukaemia and now here was one of the fears becoming real.

On the Tuesday Anne went to the G.P. a nice lady Dr. Pritlove. During my dinner hour I had a call at school from Janet Howley one of the practice's nurses and a friend of Anne's from Victoria hospital days. She asked me to come to the surgery because Anne was very upset.

I arrived there to find a very tearful Anne telling me that Dr Pritlove had confirmed that there was a lump and was

referring her to Mr. McCartney a general surgeon at A.G.H. We spent a very worried couple of days but your Mum was very brave about it. On the Friday night I went to the Applegarth to do my Pools promising to come home straight away. While I was in the club she phoned me to say that I could stay for a pint as Shirley Sugden had arrived to keep her company. At least, because Anne was a Sister, she didn't have to go on a list and wait goodness knows how long for an appointment. Saturday morning Mrs McCartney rang me to say that I was to bring Anne to their house straight away. He examined her and said that he would take her in to hospital to remove the lump but thought it might not be malignant. She was to go in on the Monday for a mammography. This showed that it was probably benign.

On the Tuesday I was given time off from school to take my Anne in to the Private Ward and wait until the operation was over. This takes me back to another time, when she went in for a hysterectomy. On that occasion I had a worrying wait until the Sister called me to the phone to take a call from Mr. Phillips the gynaecologist who apologised for the delay, there had been a mix up in the schedule nothing to do with Anne and everything was all right and that she would be returning to the ward shortly.

This time was very different. The wait stretched seemingly for hours, at one time the Sister came out and told a nurse, "Take that gentleman and give him a cup of tea". It was awful, sick with worry I drifted round the hospital fetching up in the outpatients' reception having a smoke. Marion Hiley, another of your Mum's friends was in charge of Reception and she called me over, pointing out that I couldn't smoke there and invited me to sit in her office and smoke. Still unable to settle, I walked back to the ward along the corridor off which was the Recovery Room. As I got near to it, a porter, sitting

outside smoking, and recognising me glanced into the room. Now, I remembered your Mother telling me once, women who had a mastectomy were left with a wrist tied behind their neck. Oh God. There she was lying with her wrist tied. The worst had happened. As I arrived they wheeled her out and back to the ward. Anne was crying softly, "Ray, Ray". I caught up with her and holding her hand, went back with them. When I rang the school the Head told me to take the rest of the day off.

Things take a hazy turn here and I'm not sure of the chronology of my movements, just fleeting images in no particular order. Mr McCartney, he of the Vaseline jar and sofa all those years before, came to the ward to check saying that there was no involvement of the glands under the arms, (with some women these glands are already affected and have to be incised, a radical mastectomy) and there didn't seem any evidence of metastasis or loose bits of the growth travelling along the blood stream. As he and I walked back along the corridor he said something, can't remember what, that took away some of his previous assurance but when I mentioned that, he went straight back to Anne and sorted out my worry.

With Anne slipping back into unconsciousness I walked off in a trance. Somehow I found myself in someone's home, goodness knows whose, sitting on a sofa between two of Anne's friends with a whisky in one hand and a cigarette in the other. One of my disappointments was that there was no Gerry Dodds whom I very much wanted by our side but she had flown to the U.S. to marry some one she had met when she was a nurse in America. I went home to feed the family, Ian 20 & Ruth 11 and let them know what was going on. Afterwards I went back to see Mum and was amazed to find Gerry there. She had had some premonition, though not about Mum but another friend and had cancelled the wedding and

flown home. There was also a very good home-made model of Paddington Bear belonging to Jeanette Bacon, Mum's line manager.

Anne was kept in a private ward (privilege granted to nursing Sisters) and I, after looking after the rest of the family, spent all my evenings visiting. Her room was filled to overflowing with cards, fruit and flowers. Everybody wanted to see her. One night things got completely out of hand there were so many people there - I counted forty, at one point including Jeanette's sister-in-law sitting on Anne's bed, bottle feeding a baby, that I went to the Sister in charge asking her to, clear every one out so that I could talk to her. One of the most frequent visitors was Thomas Rowan her hairdresser who turned up two or three times a week with June, his then girlfriend and always laden with flowers and chocolate. Well done Thomas, it was good of you.

Although they were sure that they had removed all of the growth it was decided that Anne would need a six week course of radiotherapy in Cookridge Hospital. But first she would come home to rest while arrangements were made. One thing I remember was a very sad homecoming, an empty house Ian at work and Ruth at school. As soon as we got in she said, "I just want to go to bed with you", and so we lay cuddling together, she in tears and me not very far from them. My first and most important job was to convince her that she was still the lovely girl that I had married and that nothing would alter my love and admiration for her. She had been given a prosthesis to use once the wound had healed and this she never got used to, hating it all the time and always being reluctant to put it on. I don't know whose idea it was for me to see the scars but remember "psyching" myself up not to show any reaction to the sight. It was more pitiable than anything. There is so much I want to say here but will keep it

to myself. "Unhappy as I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth". Lear's daughter Cordelia

As to Cookridge she chose the option of staying in on weekdays and coming home for the week end, so for six weeks we settled into a routine of my taking her there on Sunday night and visiting her each night, bringing her home each Friday. During the six weeks she underwent sixteen doses of radiation which she bore with all her usual grit and except one evening was always her cheerful self. On that day she must have received a bigger dose or something because I found her completely exhausted. One good thing is that she didn't lose her hair and, as far as I am aware, she wasn't sick. There was one old chap with throat cancer who made models of dogs from cigarette packets and insisted on giving her these. This was the thing about her she had that charisma which always drew people to her. Once at the end of a holiday in Tunisia, when we went to get on the coach we were surrounded by people taking photos of her!

On the first of her weekends we went off for a ride to Wycoller and drove right up to the village we had no blue badges then and the Warden or whatever came to tell us that cars were not allowed. Flashing her hospital identity bracelets she was wearing, she smiled and said, "I have got cancer you know!" This was unfair but it was used once or twice against policemen such as once when I overshot a road repairer's red light and was stopped by a following police Inspector. "Please don't charge him," she cried, "It was my fault because I was nagging him." When this didn't work. "Madam, he's driving and it's his responsibility", she fell back on to the shroud waving. Anyway, I got off with a gentle wigging. On another occasion a member of my family attempted to intercede for me. We were driving back from Cambridgeshire and had left the A1 at Morley when I was stopped for excessive speeding

(60mph in a 40mph zone) and was being ticked off very politely by a young P.C. He was reminding me of my duty of care to my passengers when from the back came a cry from Ruth. "Just say bum to him Daddy!" "I think, Sir," says he, "You had best be on your way."

We're at about the late seventies, Ian is in his middle teens and Ruth is six or seven. Ian is growing into a good, fairly stable lad but hates school! He seems to have avoided the real violence of adolescence 'sturm und drang' the psychologists call it but is by no means an angel. Life for me was a succession of knocks on the door by angry neighbours, nothing remotely criminal, just being a bloody nuisance to people by walking through their gardens. One neighbour turned up with two huge dogs threatening goodness knows what. I would have liked to have thumped the bloke but faced with the dogs decided discretion etc! One poor old bloke complained that Ian had kicked a ball which broke the lower glass panel on his door. From what I gathered from my friends who were teachers at the school he attended. Ian was an argumentative, barrack room lawyer type. One teacher rang me late one evening saying that he had ordered Ian to report to his study after school. While he, the teacher, was dealing with something, Ian knocked on the door but was told to wait. After a while, the study door opened and me laddo pokes his head round the door, "Excuse me sir but do you mind telling me by what authority you are keeping me here in my own time?" "What did you do?" I asked him." Threw him down the stairs", says he. Seemed a good enough result to me, for that's exactly how I would have dealt with him. Of course, when I tell people this they say they know where he gets his bloody mindedness from. When all comes to all, he only really went too far once. Mother, Ruth, and I had been out for the weekend. As we drew up to the house, Anne said, "The

window's open, someone's inside." When we went into the house, Oh dear, what a sight! cigarette ash, cigarette burns on the sideboard and worse than all, a girl's coat on the ruffled bed. There had been Tony Smith and two girls in with him and who had leaped out of the window.

Taking the coat I drove off till I came to two girls whom I asked whether they knew whose coat this was. One of the girls, daughter of the landlady of the Willow Tree admitted that it was hers. Getting them into the car I went to the pub, it was a Sunday by the way, I knocked on the door and it was opened by Margaret Thompson, the, very nice, landlady. On being told the story she sent both girls into the house, and then sat me down with a pint of bitter. After apologising and assuring me that her daughter would be dealt with she told me that the other girl was from the Eastwood Tavern and that she would come with me to take her home.

That done, I returned home and called Ian to account in what I'm afraid was a rather brutal, too brutal, manner. My anger stemmed from my sorrow for his Mother who was heartbroken that her beautiful house had been invaded. There was a strange sequel. Later in that week I made my usual lunchtime call home and was astounded when the operator asked me who I was and that it was an 'Intercepted Number'. When she put me through, Ann told me that there had been nuisance calls, nothing obscene just a wireless being played into the phone. Naturally, I took my leave of the school and went straight home. She then told me the full story. Remember, this was a woman on her own who had no idea what might be coming next. She had rung the police, who had arrived in the person of P.C. Lance Turner. Asked who she thought might be the culprit, she gave the name of Tony Smith. He found his telephone no. and waited. When the phone rang he picked it up and hearing no voice put down the

receiver and rang Tony's no. straight away. Of course he got the number engaged signal so went straight to his house and arrested him for making nuisance calls. This was Tony's idea of revenge on me for Ian's hiding. Going before the magistrates his misguided loyalty to his friend cost him £10. I was disappointed that Ian had not thumped him for upsetting his Mother.

On another occasion Ian told me that the school had threatened to expel him for not wearing a tie. Having put that right I went to the school to have a word with the teacher and was surprised to see a lad going into school with full Bay City Rollers' gear. Oh dear I thought, if they were going to expel Ian for being tie less, this boy would almost certainly be crucified, but no, the teacher who was something of a friend of mine, went into some garbled explanation that they dealt with children according to the level of cooperation they got from parents. I was livid, "Oh", I said, “Because you could count on the good will of decent parents you feel safe dealing with their children but too scared to exercise control of pupils with ‘yobbish’ parents. Disgusting."

CHAPTER 15: IAN JOINS RAF

Time at Malvern was generally happy, Anne's nursing career was blossoming and we had a fair sufficiency of money. There were some bad times in our marriage, much of it my fault. The worst incident happened one evening when I wanted to go to the Applegarth and had no loose cash and couldn't find my cheque book and neither Anne nor Ian would lend me money. When I asked her to help me find it, she refused, saying she had hidden it. I was so angry and humiliated that in a moment of madness I slapped her face. What made it worse was that my wedding ring scratched her face. So began a very nasty few weeks during which she disappeared. I reported her absence to the police who came, questioned me, looked round the house, but decided not to search the loft. I have never ever forgiven myself. After a while she came back saying that she had found digs in Sandywood Street of all places.

During her absence I got a letter from her solicitor saying she was suing for divorce. Things turned farcical, not knowing what to do, my solicitor wrote back challenging the suit and saying that I would be pressing for custody of Ruth. The farce came when she returned home and was furious that I had taken things seriously! Nothing happened, she came

back and things got back to normal. Looking back I get the impression that she thought it a bit of a joke. The person who really suffered was Ruth who was torn between us. It surely says something about the security of our marriage that through all such horrors we stayed together?

Talking of Ruth, she was at that same delightful stage that Ian had been at the equivalent time. I used to bath her, until one day I went in and I don't know why, it came to me that her bathroom was no place for me and I handed over the bathing routine to Anne. Strange that, because there was no obvious physical change. That came later when she was about ten years old. Mum had left her in the bath while I was sitting reading a book. Suddenly, in she burst dripping wet, seized hold of my hands, putting them on her chest crying, "Daddy, Daddy, I've got lumps!" They were about the size of gooseberries. I was absolutely in love with her, with both of them, and always put her to bed and sang to her. Frankly, I went too far and unthinkingly excluded Anne and what was worse, I think this went some way to the Mum/daughter difficulties of Ruth's adolescence but more of that later.

So life went on, Ian stayed on at school to get A's in French and English and Physics. This annoyed me because it showed that had he bothered to apply himself there was no reason that he couldn't have got a full hand of O levels. What a waste, there was no telling how far he could have gone academically. One thing, he was always willing to work and earn himself money, starting as a shelf stacker at Morrisons. Oddly enough, Ruth, when she became 16 also went there and I kept getting telephone calls of complaint about both of them. Ian left school deciding that he wanted to join the R.A.F and asked me to take him to the Recruiting Officer in Bradford. It was a friend Mark Mawson who persuaded him. In the meantime he took a job, as did many, with the Tax

office. One thing I had to warn him was not to put his hopes up too high, regarding passing the medical, because it could well be that the serious bronchial trouble he had had as a baby might have left some weakness in his lungs. No problem, he sailed through the medical. Having investigated his record on joining, they now did a further check sending someone to see Joe Lowis, who had been a reference, to find out anything he could about me his father. Well at least that was what Joe said, not resisting joking that he had told him that Ian's father was a communist.

He did his elementary training at RAF Swinderby and at his passing out, the three of us went to support him. Our journey there was anything but calm, Mum being in one of her contrary troublesome moods. We hired a Ford Escort from somewhere in Silsden, as our Anglia wasn't up to the journey. Setting off late I was getting tongue lashed, Gawd knows why, throughout the whole of the journey. Anyway we got there safely and enjoyed the parade. Couldn't believe that this ultra smart disciplined lad marching along in perfect step was our often awkward son. We were very proud of him but did get the idea from his Instructor that Ian wasn't all that hardworking or amenable to discipline, something I was to be told by NCO's in each of his subsequent postings, all the way through his service but he did well at being selected for training in some secret communications work..

After tea and buns, Ian was given leave and we set off for home. Mum had done her preliminary nursing training at Lincoln so we stopped, looked round the place and the cathedral. When we got back to the car I found that I couldn't switch on the engine or move the steering wheel. The Escort being new, it had a steering lock, something I didn't know existed. Thanks to a passing policeman we got the hang of it,

started the car and set off for home. This time without the earwigging.

Ian stuck with the RAF for two or three years, not exactly thick and thin, more in a state of constant tension. North Luffenham for instance, he had arranged for me to pick him up there to bring him home, was he there? Of course he wasn't. I did run into the RAF equivalent of an RSM who told me, surprise, surprise, that they were all disappointed in him. That he was just too slip shod in his approach to his work. “He could do so well, go so far Mr Garner!”

Things went on to be farcical. Consider; he was stationed at Bawtry near Doncaster and by this time he was fully trained in his job. Something was going wrong and Anne and I were asked to go to Bawtry to talk to his Commanders. Getting there we found a scene of panic, the unit were taking part in a NATO exercise and Ian it seemed, was just being bloody silly and driving them to despair. Things must have changed since my service days when he would have been simply locked in the guardroom but here they were asking my advice as if it were a public school. All I could suggest was that we took him home out of the way for a few days. They jumped at the chance, his leave pass was issued and off we went.

I'm afraid that things got more and more unfortunate but to this day I'm no nearer to finding out the truth of things. What was obvious was that he was desperate to get an honourable discharge and set about acting oddly so that he would get a medical discharge, thing like pinning socks on the ceiling and when told to take them down, march into the administration office demanding to see, "Where, in Queen's regulations, does it say I can't?" He phoned one day to say he was in a Lincolnshire hospital and got a surprise when his Mother recognised it as a psychiatric unit. The next thing was

my getting calls from the RAF till finally he got an honourable, 'sevices no longer' required discharge. Ian's story was that he had a moral objection to the work that he was doing.

One story of Ian's RAF years. He had a motorbike (it didn't endear him to Harold, my Mother's second husband, when he crashed it into his garden gate). I'm afraid of bikes but his Mum was soon up and away as his pillion passenger. Anyway, he once brought home a Welsh lad for a day and in the evening they set off back to Bawtry. Now, it was a bitterly cold night with snow and ice and I worried about the pair of them. Anne was at work, Ruth asleep in bed and I was left to bite my nails, sick with worry. I decided to have a bath and amused myself by plotting their journey back in my mind. I had just concluded that thankfully they would be back when there was a bang on the bathroom window and Ian's voice asking me for petrol, they had only got as far as Saltaire before one of them ran out of petrol and having to wheel it back. I really could have cried with disappointment but gave them a can of petrol and set them off again.

Eventually I got a call from Ian that they were back at base. So much happened during the time we were at Malvern Crescent. (c1970-c1981) that I don't know where to start so what follows are random memories that stick out. Anne was always anxious that I should earn extra money during evenings and holidays, bar work at Sutton Coldfield, kitchen portering at Butlins and now was no exception. There was an advert in one of the local papers for part-time taxi drivers and, as I needed money to pay a decorator to paint the outside of the house, I applied. It's funny to think that the extra money I earned was used to pay a colleague who was also doing extra work. I went to see the owner of Rainbow Taxis in his office which was at the bottom of what was then the Variety Club in North St. opposite the Keighley News Office. A funny little

man, Vince Pankhurst, gave me a job for £1 per night and keep any tips. I was given a Ford Cortina Mk 2 to do my first job which was to pick up some bloke from Steeton and bring him into town. Except for a little wobble on the outward journey it went smoothly (no tip!).

Unfortunately, for most other jobs, I was allocated a Ford Zephyr, a heavy handling beast with the gear lever in the dashboard. I worked one or two evenings plus Saturday, mostly the work was boring especially sitting on the taxi rank. One or two of the longer journeys were interesting. On one I was asked to take a 'just married' couple to Blackpool for their honeymoon, the highlight of which, the journey to the honeymoon, was being stopped by a motor bike cop for speeding. I have a dislike of police on bikes, they seem somehow sneaky and a very much hated an N.C.O. who was a dispatch rider. Luckily he only gave me a ticking off which was perhaps because he could see the confetti strewn couple in the back? Another longer journey was to Manchester airport. In those days of no M62 the route was through Todmorden and on to Littleborough just outside Rochdale. Here I came across the A672 which had been turned into a motorway which took me into the suburbs of Manchester and a tortuous route taking in Sale, Hyde and others I forget. Once I was sent off to take someone to the airport with the admonishment to get back as soon as possible for an important fare. Getting back I was greeted by Muriel, Vince's wife with a parcel of sandwiches and a flask of tea and sent back to the airport with another fare. Another out of town trip was to Penryth in Cumbria, the highlight of that journey was a blown radiator coming down the Shap. No answer when I phoned the office so I called in the AA. He said that he would put in a new radiator but of course I couldn't sanction that so he goes into a shop, gets a packet of chewing gum, chews a bit and sticks it

in the hole. Giving me the rest of the packet he told me to drive slowly stopping every once in a while to renew the plug! I have had more pleasurable journeys. All that and Vince, who was a perpetually miserable old sod, could say was to moan about how difficult it was going to be cleaning out the radiator.

Going on such long journeys, although interesting, made tips in short supply. In the time it took to do an out of town trip you could have done a half dozen or more local runs each yielding fifteen, twenty pence tips, while obviously the long distant passenger could not afford to pay a commensurate amount on his expensive fare! One dismal failure, to work from the rank you had to pass a police driving test and I was sent off to Shipley in the Zephyr not a good idea! Well I made a mess of it, firstly I had difficulty turning into a very busy Manor Rd and then stopped on a slope, the handbrake an awkward thing to handle I slipped back although I made no contact with any other vehicle. Anyway I didn't pass, which actually pleased Ken Grainger my Head who didn't think taxiing from the rank "appropriate". I know that this will sound like special pleading but two things worked against me. One was the hostility that came from the policeman tester who didn't agree with a teacher taking a taxi driver's job and secondly having to take the test in the difficult, lumbering Zepher, had I been allowed to take the Cortina I could have walked it.

It was during my time as a taxi driver that I had the only accident at speed involving another vehicle. We parked on the side with the car facing towards Skipton and if we had to set off in the opposite direction we did a U-turn. The time was around midnight, a fairly clear road but with the rain pouring and I had been driving almost non stop since eight o' clock that morning. I set off to turn the car round to face the

other way having picked up Mike from the Variety club as a passenger. I looked in the driving mirrors and through the rear window. What I did neglect to do was wind down the driver's window, as you should do in a rainstorm. Having barely began my turn there was a terrific bump from a car travelling at a great speed having driven, I think, through the red lights at the junction of Cavendish Street. I had just picked up Mike the manager of the Variety club to take him home to Steeton. What I remember the most was the sudden silence, everything went dead as if a switch had been thrown.

Although I didn't seem to be hurt I was much shaken and Dave, a driver using his own car took me to hospital. I was expecting the police although I had no fear of a breath test but none came. Joe, the porter was very good and looked after me well, the other driver was treated very roughly and was interviewed, I think. Anyway nothing more was heard and after the casualty doctor had seen me I was pronounced fit and sent home in an ambulance. Going back to work next night I was expecting my services to be "no longer required" but all I got was old misery guts moaning because the car had been written off. This was a blessing to me because from then on I could drive Cortinas. One odd story of my taxiing days. It was a Friday night and people having come out of the club were queuing for taxis, I was standing outside waiting to be assigned a fare when two young women came up, one of whom grabbed my arms saying, "You're mine." I should have refused but you know me, always a sucker for a pretty face! Of course on returning to the office I got told off for going out of turn. One of the women was a policewoman named Jill, how funny, baring in mind my friend Jill who later became a policewoman.

One incidental advantage for driving for Rainbow was that I became friends with twin brothers Ray and Charles Gil

both of whom were in the motor trade and who kept my old banger, by now, on the road. Charles was chief mechanic at the Post Office garage and Ray was a foreman in Cox's Body Shop. Chas had a good & very profitable operation going. He would service/repair friends' cars in the evenings using all the facilities of the P.O's garage ramp, tools, inspection pit and so on, though it is important to note that all parts were bought and paid for by ourselves, no Post Office parts were used. (Later on Chas did veer from this restriction, but that is another story and not part of this one so will leave it there, except to say it all happened long after I stopped using Chas's facilities). Having Charles do the servicing had the great advantage of you knowing that everything he said he had done, had been done, because you stayed with him and also any parts needed, you fetched from a garage so you knew what was being used. Getting your jobs done by him wasn't dirt cheap, what might have cost say £100 at a garage he would charge perhaps £60 and of course there was no VAT.

His brother Ray was a panel beater so he took care of any bumps, scratches and so on. There was one occasion when the two of them really get me out of a mess. Driving the bigger cars of Rainbow made me dissatisfied with the Anglia so in a moment of madness I bought a second hand Cortina Mk 2 which was a disaster! So much so that once, taking it to Cox's Garage for its MOT they told me that the mechanic had refused even to take it out for a road test it was in such a dangerous condition. Both brothers worked on it Charles doing the mechanical stuff and Ray looking after such things as springs, shock absorbers etc. At one time Ray nearly set fire to it accidentally. He had put rags on the floor of the car while he was working underneath with an acetylene torch and suddenly we saw smoke and flames coming from inside the car. No damage and so successful was their work that it sailed

through its MOT. Eventually we sold the damn thing and bought a Ford Fiesta which like the Anglia gave us long service. To show you how good the brothers were, when we bought our first new car the man from the dealers who bought the Fiesta came over and said that it was the best serviced car he had ever seen. The story of the new car will come later.

Eventually I tired of the late nights and general sordidness of taxiing, Friday and Saturday nights were taken up mostly by taking them home from the "P!*!? 'oles" and I gave up the job. As they were often 'well-away' there was always the danger of them being sick and if you have vomit in a car, however well you clean it, the smell lingers for weeks. Once I took a lad to Steeton and fearing he might throw up I asked him to hold his head out of the window which I then wound up so that he couldn't be sick in the car. Oddly enough, once, while I was living in Thorney and before I met your Mum, I was taken genuinely ill in a pub in Peterborough and the barmaid sent for a taxi saying that I was ill. The poor man thinking ill was synonymous with "about to throw up" was worried to death and kept asking me whether I was all right and did I need some fresh air. Actually this was the illness that I have described much earlier.

CHAPTER 16: MOTHER-IN-LAW

Time to start talking about Grandmother Gibbs. She and I usually got on, much better than she and her daughter did. Once we had a car, we stayed with her often, fitting in our visits at the same time as a visit to my Mum. On the whole, I liked these visits especially in the winter when we slept in her bed with an electric blanket! Not so good when she took in a "lodger" Bob Spridgeon who was always moaning about the children probably connected with the fact that his own children would have little or nothing to do with him? Once when Ian had being staying with them I was told that he had hit Ian and I went immediately to Thorney with very evil intent! A wasted journey because he went to stay with some one so as to avoid me.

To be fair to Bob, he was quite generous and when Anne and I went on a few days' holiday to Majorca he gave us some spending money. Another time, he asked me to take him and Clare to Weaverham in Cheshire and rewarded me quite handsomely. One nice memory: he and I would drive off to the nearby village of Crowland for a pint: I had known someone from Crowland whilst I was living in Thorney and I asked the landlord after him and was told that both he and his wife were dead. A little later while we were drinking, two very

smartly dressed lads came to me and said. "We understand that you were a friend of our parents and we wish to pay you our respects." That certainly made my night and Bob was very impressed.

Thorney, being Anne's home town so to speak, meant that there were people she wanted to visit. She had a special friend, Joy Spriggs, who with her husband, lived in the village so we often visited them. They both were typical "Thorneyites", John was a very serious player of the horses, though in all the years I knew him I don't think he ever had anything like a really big win. When, after Anne died, they used to come and stay with me, John went off to Keighley every morning to place his bets at Ladbrokes, he chose them because he said that he could collect any winnings when he got back to Thorney. They were a nice couple, very hospitable who made me welcome after I was left by myself. My only criticism was their food faddiness. Once, while they were here, I went to a great deal of trouble to cook them a shepherds' pie, only to be told, just before I set it on the table, "Sorry. We never eat lamb, too greasy". I felt like throwing it at them.

It was on a visit with them to Ripon Races that nervousness cost me £400. Being a right scrooge I hate losing money and that day I was £10 down by the time of the last race and was reluctant to put a last £10 on a horse I fancied. Not only did it win, it swept home at a marvellous 40-1! They say "faint heart ne're won fair lady", and that goes for the gee gees as well seemingly.

Got a bit diverted there, back to Thorney. Life was a bit miserable and boring - but the food was good! One of the most disheartening visits was going to see Anne's uncle Sid and his wife, Londoners who were living in Thorney. They had a budgerigar and the aunt used to make me sick showing us how it would take cheese from her mouth. They, too, had

lost a son who had died while doing National Service in Egypt and kept a bedroom as a shrine which I found rather macabre.

Actually I never got to the bottom of all the ramifications of the Gibbs' family. I know that Clara's maiden name was Ounsworth and that she was a cousin of Anne's Dad. Obviously the naval connection accounts for Anne being born in Gillingham (Ian has the papers from the naval hospital where she was born) but I don't see what the Thorney connection is and why Clara, her brother Sid and her elder sister Polly, a game old bird I had the pleasure of meeting, came to be living in a backwater like the edge of the Cambridgeshire fens. All I know is that on the death, in action, of Anne's father in May 1940 her Mother brought them both to live with an "uncle" who was another Sid and who gave Anne away at her wedding to me. I get the impression that Anne's childhood was less than happy what with a house filled with smokers and some hint of Clara's male visitors. Still, they're all dead now, best let sleeping dogs etc.

Oh dear, another kink in the narrative! Still there isn't a lot really to say about visits to Thorney. Joy was always nagging us to go and live in the village. "What is there to do in Thorney?" I once asked her. "There's me for a start," she answered! "There's charming," as a 'pantomime' Welshman might say. We always linked a visit to Thorney to one with my Mother, first at Soham and later at Newmarket. If there was little to say about a visit to Clare there is even less to say about visits to my Mum. Of course at Newmarket there was my brother and Margaret his wife to visit. However, two incidents do stick in my mind. One was when we took Margaret to visit Bedford, when not looking what I was doing I came near to killing the lot of us. The less said about that the better.

A more pleasant memory was at one Christmas time when we were staying at Soham. Anne said, "Let's take your

Mum to London and show her the lights in Oxford Street and pretend we're taking her to see the lights at Cambridge!" We set off in the late afternoon, Grandmother at this time still had her sight, and we headed for London. At frequent intervals she asked whether we were there and we pretended that we were somewhere near Cambridge. So it went on until we came to a large brightly lit sign which said London. We're in London says she. I don't think she had been to London since her days as a maid in Hackney. Goodness knows where I got the courage to head off to London because I had only the vaguest idea where I was going. But you see, that's what it was like when your Mother was with me. She was my steel, my backbone. With her beside me, I could do anything.

Back to Grandmother Gibbs, or Nana as she preferred to be known. Sometime in the early 1970s she decided to move to Yorkshire and we found a Warden supervised flat for her in Cullingworth run by the British Legion Housing Association. It was ideal, she would be completely independent but at the same time she could contact the warden by pulling on an alarm cord placed in all the rooms and the bathroom. The rent would cover all heating and lighting and use of a laundry room. She could if she wished either keep to herself or join in community life centred on the communal room. She was entitled to a flat by being the widow of a serviceman. Anyone who had done six months' service in any of the Armed Forces or whose spouse had served.

Before she moved, Anne decided that we would all go to Thorney and that she would sort out what her Mother should take and what was to be left behind. I remember that week as one of the coldest and most miserable weeks of our lives. To come to a house without central heating in bitterly cold weather was awful. And if the cold wasn't enough, your poor Mum came down with a painful ear infection needing to

be treated by the local G.P. In the end it was all sorted and we thankfully got back to our own house.

When we knew that the removal vans were arriving we met them at the flat and Anne placed everything beautifully as you would expect of her. Then came the blow; as she was thanking the men they said, "There is another load," and in came all the rubbish that Anne had forbidden her Mother to send! She was heartbroken. Clare had not come with her furniture which, given Anne's anger and disappointment was just as well! Luckily the flat had a small room into which we were able to store all the rubbish items. Later on Clare arrived and I picked her up from the train at Bradford. When I saw her I was ashamed, (notice your Mother had not come with me!) she looked unwashed, had a what looked like camel hair coat and was pushing a shopping trolley, She looked in fact like a poor old bag woman.

She settled in all right and we exchanged visits, one in particular, I remember. She was going to come to tea and I was to meet her after school in a cafe in the town centre (no Airedale Centre then). She told me that she needed to go to the Post Office to draw her pension so I suggested she give me the book and I would nip to the PO which was next door. When she opened her handbag I saw roll on roll of tens and fivers and on asking her why on earth she needed more money I was told that the money in the bag was for something else. This was typical of your maternal granny, she had various amounts in a number of building society and bank accounts and she was for ever drawing money out from one and putting it somewhere else. Seemed she liked the sight and feel of the money.

There was another time I remember but this was a visit before she moved here. She had come to spend Christmas with us and on Boxing Day she told us that she

wanted to go back to Thorney because she didn't want to miss the British Legion Christmas party! Having found out times of trains we got a phone call from Marion Smith one of Anne's school friends. She had married a builder who had his own plane with a landing strip at the back of their house. Tell Mrs Gibbs said Marion that Ted was going to fly to Yeadon and take her back. "It's OK Mother", I told Clare, "Your broomstick is coming for you". At that time security wasn't so strict and we were able to go with her right up to the plane. I still have this picture in my mind of Mother-in-law sitting in the back as it was taking off, like the proverbial Lady Muck. The flat was one of a number of flats called Scarborough Court, all British Legion Housing Association were named after some local big wig, this one after Lord Scarborough whoever he is. The Courts were administered by a House Committee of volunteers guided by one of the association's full time staff. Ours was Mrs Pam James of whom more later. I say ours because one of my National Association of Schoolmasters colleagues Maurice Calvert, a keen British Legion man, was treasurer and he roped me in as Secretary to the court. I found it interesting but it had its problems. One of which was Mother-in-law, God rest her soul. The Warden Dorothy O'Neal was often complaining to me about her. The use of the laundrette was on a rota but she, as did others, sometimes did not bother about such things and used it whenever she felt like it! Another grumble was that Ma, whose No.42 flat was on the ground floor, would keep throwing food scraps out of her window to everyone's annoyance. Mind you, she wasn't the only one to cause Dorothy grief, one resident Mr Allen insisted on keeping the heating in his flat screwed to the maximum all day and every day which wasn't fair because the association paid all heating and lighting bills.

We were once rang by Mrs O'Neal and told that Clare had had a fire in her kitchen and on Anne and I going there, found that she had left a frying pan on which had caught fire leaving the kitchen blackened and needing complete redecoration. No harm had come to Nana, but where was she? Nowhere to be seen. We managed to track her down at an old folks' tea party in the village where she sat completely unconcerned. Another Cullingworth memory, some of the flats were occupied by married couples one of whom was Fred someone or other with his wife. Fred, an ex teacher whiled some of his time away painting pictures and this was another source of moans because he did his paintings using the Court's community room. I say some of his time. Across the road from Scarborough Court were the Licensed Victualers Retirement Homes and Fred was conducting an alliance with a widowed Licenced Victualer. It might seem funny, an elderly Romeo and Juliet, but to his humiliated wife it was not so funny. She told Anne and me that he would spend the night at his 'doxy's' and then turn up at his own flat expecting breakfast and a clean shirt: he didn't get a way with it because his wife threw him out. The last I heard after my breaking connection with the Court was that he and his lady friend had moved to another Legion Court in Scunthorpe.

The cause of my breaking connection was Clare's death. Harold Fleet my own Mum's second husband had died in Newmarket where they had bought a house on Mum's insistence. I liked Harold, though because they had married long after I had left home, I never thought of him as a stepfather. I had met him once when I went into his shop in Soham and he came into the shop letting the door slam shut smashing the glass. Poor old bugger he got such a rollicking from his then wife that I felt so sorry for him. He was much older than Mum and it was something of a mutual advantage.

He had his own house, a car and some capital while Mum was living in a council bungalow with out a penny to her name. The marriage gave her financial security and companionship and in return she looked after him.

Anyway, he died "full of years and honours" as it says I think somewhere in the Scripture. His funeral was to be on a Thursday so I went the almost 200 miles on the Monday. We all went out for a pub lunch and on getting back to Mum's house, found a written note from a local plod, saying that I was wanted urgently back at home in Keighley. When I rang Anne, none of the family in Newmarket had a phone in those days, she told me that her Mother had had a bad fall and was in hospital in Bradford. You have to remember that Anne had recently had the trauma of breast cancer with all its concomitant upsets of radiation including the destruction of her ovaries and was in no state to handle her Mum's illness on her own.

So there was I with a tearful Anne insisting that I came home, and my sister-in-law Margaret, in tears, saying that I was desperately needed at Harold's funeral. There was only one thing for it, having driven 189 miles to Newmarket on the Monday I now had to trail back to Keighley on the Tuesday, settle my dear wife and then plough back to Keighley the next day so to be in time for the funeral on Thursday. A total of 756 miles in a 1200 cc Anglia in less than a week and at fifty, I was no spring chicken.

CHAPTER 17: DEATH OF MOTHER-IN-LAW

Ruth, I think was about fourteen which would make the year around 1982. The three of us set out for Leeds, my only recollection of the visit was going into Schofields and I remember this because they were offering some sort of deal on ear rings with free ear piercing. Ear piercing was something Ruth had clamoured for some time and now her Mum reluctantly gave in having resisted for some time. On our way home we called in at the Bradford Royal Infirmary to see how Mum was and we were told that they couldn't find anything wrong with her but they wanted to keep her in for a little longer. Leaving the hospital, we called in at Cullingworth to check that the flat was OK. While we were there the Warden rang saying that we were to ring home. Ian answered with the news that Mrs Gibbs had died suddenly. She must have died very soon after we had left her. We were later to be told that it was a burst aneurism.

Long before all this happened, Clare had been in Airedale hospital and once, when I visited her, I jokingly said that when she died we would take her ashes to Dunkirk. She took this seriously and said that it was just what she would want. So now Anne did something about it by contacting the

Dunkirk Veterans' Society who were about to go over there for a reunion and who agreed to take her Mum's ashes with them and scatter them on the beach during a service. The downside to this was it gave Anne the idea for her own ashes to be taken to Dunkirk. An idea that was to haunt me at a later date. So the poor old dear was cremated and a subsequent memorial service was arranged by her daughter at Thorney Abbey so that her friends there could pay their respects.

Clare had made a will leaving everything to Anne so one of the first things was to obtain Letters of Administration (Probate is obtained where there is no will.) Ian and Ruth, I suggest you read this next bit carefully - you will need it one day! I knew something about getting these because I had done it twice for Ella Feather on the deaths of each of her two husbands. The first thing to be done is to obtain the Forms which can be done by ringing the Probate Registrar's Office in Bradford. This Form has to be filled in listing, among other things, all assets and expenses including details of funeral and memorial costs. They charge according to the value of the estate, less these expenses. Having filled in this form and sent it back, you will then be called to the Registrar's office and asked to swear on a Bible that all details are true. Anne going to Bradford was a right farce. It was a Thursday and because I was working in the Union's Bingley office I could only drop her in Bradford promising to pick her up later.

When I went to fetch her it began to snow quite heavily and after a short search I decided the best thing was to get the car home before it became impossible. So begun a long and fearful wait, where on earth was she and why couldn't she ring? At last, about 7pm I got a phone call from a complete stranger saying that Anne had travelled with her but the bus terminated at Shipley and that she saw Anne get on a Keighley bus. My memory fails me here, did I go to meet her in Shipley,

or did she get a bus to Keighley and I met her on the Bradford road? I think she caught a bus and I met her at the bottom of Banks Lane. What I do know is that the climb up Dunkirk rise was horrendous, the car sliding from one side of the road to the other with a terrified Anne weeping at my side. But we did get home safely

Anne took her Mum's death quite well and dealt efficiently with the aftermath. We cleared Clare's flat (the bed in the spare room, the bureau, and the tea tray are the only things left). She arranged a tea in the communal room for the residents and we gave them our gramophone for their use. When all the money in the various banks had been collected Anne put the £6,000 in her own bank.

I had liked Clara, who was a very generous ma-in-law and who in the earliest days of our marriage when we were really on our beam ends pulled us out of quite a few holes. In fact, I still miss her and on the times that I have gone to Thorney to see Joy I have felt very sad when I passed her old house.

We were running a second hand white Ford Fiesta on which I had spent a lot of time and energy keeping it clean though Charles was still doing the servicing. There was one time that Anne quite broke my heart. I had spent two whole days first T Cutting it to remove all the grime and then polishing it, only for her to ignore it and tell me how nice the man opposite's car looked! This was Mr Green who spent most of his time lovingly cleaning and polishing it.

As to the Fiesta, although running quite well, it was getting somewhat past it so we decided to change it for another second hand car. We had seen a Datsun Cherry for sale in the garage on the Bradford road just before Coxs' roundabout. Cherries at that time were the smallest of the Datsun models. Anyway we called in intending to ask for a

trial run. As luck would have it its battery was flat and they went off for one. While we waited Anne suggested that we look at a spanking new Datsun Violet 1400 which stood in the showroom. Sitting in it, Anne asked me did I like it and when I said that I did she delighted me by saying that we would buy it. A brand new car, O frabjous day, caloo calay! When I collected the new car, the trader who had bought our Fiesta came up and told me that it was the best maintained car he had ever seen, quite a feather in Charlie Gill's cap!

Now that we had a fairly powerful car Anne decided that the next step was for us to become caravanners, something that she had "picked up" from her nursing colleagues. Eventually, she found an advert in, I think, the Telegraph & Argus for a second hand Eccles Elan 14. So off we go to Holmfirth having had a tow bar and electrics fixed. Interestingly, something I hadn't thought about, when I asked the garage from whom we had bought the car to fix one, I was told that it would be better to take it to a firm supplying these and avoid the mark up which the garage would charge. We learn something every day. The owner lived in a street called Rosegarth hence our subsequent house name when we moved to Wheathead Crescent. Having got there, I was very reluctant to set off home towing a caravan for the first time and did all I could to keep the conversation going till the bloke said, "Well, you're going to have to tow it sometime so let's go." He joined it up for me and with a couple of instructions off we went.

A very nervous new caravanner, frightened to death, yet excited gritting his teeth and gripping his wife's hand made his way home. All went well and we were getting more relaxed until we got to Brighouse when a series of sharp cracks scared the life out of me. Stressed as I was it hadn't dawned on me that it was Bonfire Night and that the cracks were simply fireworks being let off. Panic over, until the sidelights failed!

Nothing to be done until we reached the Flappit pub where we stopped and leaving Anne in the car I went in to the pub to phone the AA. When I got back Anne was laughing, she said that her bladder had been bursting and to take her mind off it had decided to look round the caravan and found that it had a toilet. When the AA man came he soon found the problem, a blown fuse, something of which I knew nothing.

And so at last we reached home. Luckily there were no cars in the lay-by at the end of the Crescent so I was able to do a U turn and park the van safely outside the bungalow. It was a good sized van which slept four, two in front which could be used as singles or, with a central board pulled out, a double and in the back, two bunk beds around which could be pulled a curtain. This was handy because Ruth was still young enough to come with us. It had a cooker, fridge, and a gas fire, lit with a 'pizzo' effect. This was to cause a lot of back breaking kneeling and having to press the button many times. Oh, and there was a gas lamp with an old fashioned mantle. Next thing was to join the Caravan Club and to register with the Yorkshire Dales Centre. Now came the problem of where to store it but luckily we found a farm along the Bingley road between Cross Roads and the Guide pub. This was quite illegal, the farm was one of those licensed by the Caravan Club but was hedged by rules, one of the most important, and which the farmer was breaking, was that no caravan should stay for more than five days.

Incidentally, I have just turned up the date for all this. Your Mother kept the badges from all the rallies we went to and, wanting to find out where we went first, I looked at the file. The first of over fifty such rallies was Skyreholme in 1980. Each rally has a competition and, what do you know, we won the prize! But we were not impressed, we found them clique and having been told that we were first time rally folk and

would always be helped, we were surprised that no one hardly spoke to us. What made it worse was that at the end of the rally when we were packing up someone said, "You were so efficient that we didn't know it was your first." A likely story! We had decided early on during that weekend that we would not bother any more. Fortunately we were invited into the caravan of Norman and his wife from Halifax and found them friendly.

However, ever afterwards we preferred whenever possible to go with the East Lanc's Centre, a very friendly lot. Once we booked up with them for a rally in Clitheroe and just before the weekend had to take the van in for service and so couldn't make it. When I rang the Rally Marshal to tell him he begged us to go for the social. We went to so many rallies that I can only mention a few of the outstanding ones. Each Centre held a holiday rally but because of the five day rule, anything longer meant moving every five days. Our first holiday rally was in July 1980 with the Yorkshire Dales Centre, five days at Mawgan Porth, Cornwall on to Barnstaple, Devon for five days and a final five days in Wells, Somerset.

Having seen how popular barbecues were we had stopped off in Bradford to buy one. The weather was beautiful and sunny and we had a marvellous time. The Keighleys were on the same rally and Mum, who always showed pride in the doings of her family, was delighted when we got our 'barbie' up, quicker than them. Actually, I don't really remember much else, our first Cornish, Cornish pasty seemed nothing to write home about and nor the neighbouring RAF aerodrome, mind you, it is twenty years ago. Mum wasn't keen on the high hedges, she couldn't see over them.

I remember, too, the journey to our next stop, near Barnstaple, and the steep climb on the road from Mawgan Porth with us leading a convoy and being gratified to find how

well the Datsun coped. In fact, when we got there the chap who had been behind us said how impressed he was that I did not slow down or change gear and hold him up. I'll have to merge the Barnstaple and Wells sections because quite frankly I remember nothing of either of them.

Sticking with 1980, I see that we went to weekend rallies at Malham, Marsham, Harewood House, a Teenagers Rally at Sutton in Craven, and a Halloween Rally at Shipley Glen. I wonder whether the Malham rally was the one that we set off for on the wrong week? These rallies are always well sign posted from the first turn off from the main road and so we were a bit foxed when turning off the road at Gargrave there were no signs. As we went on, still no signs and no sign of any other vans so stopped and looked at the book. The wrong weekend, we were a week too early. Deciding that we didn't want to go back we trudged on in the gathering gloom. I knew that there was a commercial site in Malham, couldn't find it, so rather than try to reverse in the darkness we went on over the moor's gated road in Littondale and on to Arncliffe where, the book said, there was a site. Couldn't find this one either. Finally we fetched up in the Long Ashes caravan park which was full so we put the legs down and spent the night in their car park for which had to pay full fees. Not the most successful of weekends!

Nothing daunted, we went to the rally there the next week and had a great time. Thanks to Ian, it was a very alcoholic weekend. Don't know whether it was that weekend or a later one in 1981 at Thornton Watless when Ian's planning of pub trips caused one or two of the wives to ban their husbands from having anything to do with him! Looking over badges now, I find only fleeting memories of the highlights, some I don't remember at all. Take the 1982 Forest of Dean rally with the Upper Thames Centre. Looking at the

badge I see that we were in a site at Five Acres and the only memories of that were that we had to move because the locals objected to our taking up space in their recreation ground. Finding a large blue mark all along one side of the van, and Mum frightened when we were driving through the dark forest in the late afternoon. The blue stain was caused by sheep spending the night against the van and leaving the blue dye of their marks behind. At the end of the rally we set off for Chepstow where there was a Caravan Club Site on the racecourse. These club sites were very comfortable, providing electricity hook-ups, showers and W.C's. It was in this site that we came upon a Scandinavian tragi-comedy. Club sites were also used by campers and we watched a car arrive and wondered at the way in which the passengers, man, woman, and small boy, were wandering around the car looking lost. Sometime later when I was filling up our water barrel at the tap, I met the man and asked him was everything O.K? At first, he said yes but then said that it wasn't. They had arrived that day from Sweden, a journey which had cost them £500 and now found that they had brought all the equipment needed for a camping holiday except that they had forgotten to load a tent! What his wife said to him, I'd rather not know.

When I told Anne she laughed but then told me to offer them the use of our awning in which to sleep (it was quite late in the day) and this they accepted intending next day to go into Chepstow and hire a tent. Ruth, who had come with us, advised that it would be better to buy rather than hire. They had a meal with us in the caravan and after chatting with us they took their sleeping begs and slept in the awning. Next day we all went into Chepstow and they went off to buy a tent. One other thing I remember was us three taking a walk round the race course. The next day we set off for home by way of the Severn Bridge and eventually, the M6.

In spite of the book of badges I am not at all sure where we went every time. For instance where were we headed the time that we stopped twice on our journey? Once at Chirk Castle and once at Bridgenorth? I do remember that at Chirk, having set up the caravan and had a meal, we went out for a drink and returning to the van in the dark catching scores of rabbits lolloping around in our headlights. While in Bridgenorth we spent a day looking round Shrewsbury. I think that we must have been going to the West Wales Centre's rally at Overton in the Gower peninsular.

If that is so, then there was an earlier stop, in a club site somewhere in Wales. We were intending to stop a night on the Royal Welsh Agriculture ground in Builth Wells but stopping to look at the book, we found that the site was closed because of an agricultural show. This is where the Caravan Club's book of sites was useful because I saw that there was another site at some unpronounceable Welsh place. At least, I know the exact date, it was the day of the Charles & Diana wedding.

We hadn't a television in the caravan then so we spent the day watching the broadcast on the sets in the television showrooms. At night we went into a pub and asked if we could watch a repeat on their set. They were nice, and agreed, although the others in the bar groaned because, "We're sick of the thing".

This rally in the Gower is memorable for three things, Ian spent a week with us, Ruth had a brief fling with the rally marshal's son, and a ship was wrecked on the beach the night we arrived! In chronological order, we woke to the news that a paddle steamer plying from Bristol had run ashore whilst we were asleep. Off we go to have a look, wreckage was lying all over the sand, we were told that the ship's bell and liquor

supplies had been "lifted" before the morning. As far as I remember there had been no casualties.

Ian was on holiday and had agreed to spend some time with us so it was arranged that I would pick him up from the bus stop. It was great to have him with us, he and I set off each evening to the nearest village pub and I really missed him when at the end of the week he went back home. One day when we were all in Swansea I came across Ian talking to a young girl who after listening a while, I spotted was a Moony and not "after" him for his good looks.

As for my daughter's brief romance, late one afternoon the 21 year old son of the rally marshal knocked on the door and asked whether Ian wanted to come for a drink and supposedly, an afterthought, whether Ruth would like to join them. Come the next day, we noticed than Ian wasn't included in the invitation! I pointed out to the chap that Ruth was just fourteen. He had promised her that he would keep in touch with her after the rally but once we got home nothing more was heard from him. Both her brother and I were disappointed for her and on going to Leeds Uni. for a meeting I toured round the campus looking for him but didn't find him.

It was a particularly enjoyable time, the weather was good, we were all together as a family and people and the place were very nice. We made a couple or so of visits. The Mumbles, Swansea and Dylan Thomas's study. All in all, one of the really successful rallies. Not so good was a touring rally in Wales in 1986 with the South Staffs centre. We had met up with a couple in an earlier rally in Dorset, Dick and Margaret Harrison from Swinton, and they had suggested we meet up with them in the Birch service station near Manchester and travel to Wales in a sort of two van convoy. The first site of this rally was in Caergeliog in Anglesea. Once we got there the

other bloke moaned a bit about how fast I had driven. I think he was a little narked because he couldn't keep up with us in the Volvo of which he was very proud. The first day was a beautiful sunny day but it began rather bloodily. After the four of us had a meal together in our caravan I went to open a bottle of Gaviscon, the cap was stiff and my pressure snapped the neck of the bottle and I was left with a deep gash on my thumb which needed hospital attention. I wasn't able to drive so Dick kindly offered to take Anne and me to casualty in Bangor. After a very long wait we were seen by the tiniest doctor I have ever seen, an Indian lady. When she gave me a local I gasped "God!", yes she said, "What can I do for you?" She and Anne managed to have a laugh at my expense and I was sent off with a completely unneeded sling. Getting back to the van we found that Margaret had done all the washing up. That sunny day was the last good weather of the whole fifteen days.

Our next stop was Criccieth, birthplace of David Lloyd George. We managed a couple of visits, in spite of the rain, one of which was to Betts y Coed though I remember little of it. We also went to Snowdonia and I attempted to walk up to the top but was forced to give up by a fierce gale like wind threatening to blow me off the slope. While we were at Criccieth Anne had to deal with a heart attack. It was about eight in the morning, Anne was still in bed and I was boiling a kettle for a cup of tea, when a knock on the door. A girl stood outside, "Is your wife a nurse? Can she come, we think my Dad has had a heart attack?"

Mum jumps up, puts on a dressing gown and dashes out. Moments later she was back. "I think I'd better put my knickers on in case I have to kneel down and resuscitate him!"

If we thought the weather in Anglesea and Criccieth was bad, when we got to the final stop Brynrefail we found

that "we aint seen nuthin yet". Around about bed time such a storm arose that we thought we would lose the caravan. I went out, just as I was, to secure the awning, helped by Dick, who shouted, "Go in and put your britches on before you get assaulted!". We survived but one family deciding that they had had enough packed up their van and went home. Next day we found that all the permanent caravans in a nearby site had been wrecked.

We tried to make the best of a bad job and went on a tour of places such as Penrychaiber and Llandidno. Going by the sea shore we saw metres high waves crashing down on the promenade. Not at all a successful rally.

Leaving aside rallies for the moment, we found other uses for the caravan. One was when we moved to a new house in Wheathead Crescent. We had talked over the idea of selling up and moving, Anne didn't like paying the high rates the bungalow attracted. One evening she said that we ought to do something about selling because, "No one is going to knock on the door and say that they wanted to buy the house". She was wrong. The next night the door bell rang and there was Mr and Mrs Saunders who lived nearby saying that their daughter Jane, who was at school with Ruth, had told them that Ruth said that we wanted to sell the house. "We have always wanted to buy your bungalow". I think that the money was there because they had had an accident in their motor cycle which left Gillian the wife disabled and there had been an insurance payout.

It was agreed that we would have the place valued and that they would buy it at valuation. Anne called in someone from McMannus & Poole who said £28,000 or £26, 000 for a quick sale. As we had bought it for £6,000 only a few years before, we settled for the lower figure. A bonus was that the agent Billy Poole, an old pupil of mine, refused to invoice us

telling Anne, "If I can't do something for him, who can I do it for?"

The house we picked at Wheathead was going for £15,500 which after clearing the bungalow mortgage and paying solicitors' fees left us around £9,000 to spend on improvements to the new house. There was a lot needed, new bathroom, new kitchen, and installation of central heating. All this would take a long time so Mum (NB: notice who makes all the decisions) decided to ask Gerry Dodds if we could put the van in her garden and live in it until we could move in. The year would be 80/81. The first morning was chaos with me not able to find a tie and going off to school with Ruth's Greenhead School tie.

Then came catastrophe, we were feeding ourselves and one evening while the dinner was cooking everything, cooker, gas light, fire, all went off. Thinking the gas bottle was empty I put on a new one but to no avail. Fortunately Towler & Staines from whom we bought gas was open. Mike at the shop said that the problem would be that in the bitter cold the gas would freeze. He went on to say that we should change from Butane to Propane which had a higher freezing point and he let me take a bottle of Propane and the necessary valve. Thank goodness it worked and everything was OK. Anne and Ruth had gone into Gerry's house in the meantime. From that time onwards I stuck to Propane even though using this gas was not advised for domestic use because it burned at a much higher heat than Butane. One drawback of living so near to the A.G.H was that most mornings, nurses coming off night shift, would call in hoping for coffee. We managed quite well and didn't get too much in each others way, there were only the three of us, Ian having struck out on his own a little earlier.

And thereby hangs a tale, he came home once asking if we could have a dog. Anne had not been long out of hospital

having had her hysterectomy and was feeling very week and so we told him that he would have to wait until she was stronger, when we would all go to the RSPCA and choose one together. Three days later he came in plus a dog; he wasn't prepared to wait. On being told that there was no way he was going to keep it at home, OK he said, “No dog, no me”, and off he goes. I wished him well while secretly hoping that he wouldn't be coming home with his tail between his legs; him not the dog. A few days later he came in saying that he was moving into a flat on Monday with his mate Keith Hanley and could he stay the weekend?

He told us later what had happened. For three days he had lived in Keith's van - and that the dog had been run over on the second day! Well at least he was safe and so Ian's leaving home went off without a lot of trauma and we parted friends all round. Funnily, when Ruth left home it was in similar circumstance but much more traumatic, more of that later. Back to Ian and the flat. It was above Erics' camera shop and though it was supposed to be one flat, but a number of people moved in, sub-letting it from Ian & Keith, using every bit of space. As you can imagine with several young, single people the place was no Ideal Home, Mother wouldn't ever go in, too afraid of what she might see! I spent most of one day there putting up some flat pack furniture for Ian and enjoying it. I think the flat and its inhabitants had something of a reputation because when I went to the police about some money missing from Ian's room and mentioned the flat they said. "Oh yes, we know all about flat 36b.

Back to the caravan. Not only did we have a new house, we had a new caravan, an Avondale, which was a great improvement on the old Elan. For one thing, the fire was lit by an electrical switch on the wall which took out all the back ache and sore knees. Another plus was a shower. We did have

a sort of shower in the Elan, a Heath Robinson affair, rigged up in the awning - with all the danger of exposure! It was quite clever really consisting of a garden spray linked up with a shower attachment hooked over one of the awning's ceiling struts. A lot of caravanners wouldn't have a shower fitted because of the constant need for replenishing the water barrel but I have always found a morning shower essential for waking up. We joined the Avondale Owners' club, rather a snobby outfit, Avondales came in three classes the names of which I forget but we will call them Top, Middle, and Bottom, we had a Top class. There was an owners' club for each class and you could join only your own class's club. We went on one rally with them at Broughton Castle - a very boozy affair. On the Saturday there was a football match broadcast and all the men gathered in one van to watch and all the ladies in another for a chat. We couldn't ask them to use our van because Mum had been working and so was asleep.

Two more holiday rallies come to mind, one in which we had first met with the Harrisons of the Anglesey rally fame, the 1983 Carnival Holiday Rally with the Dorset West Centre. First stop was Fleet (remember Moonfleet?) just outside Weymouth. It was a beautiful summer's weather and we used the time to explore the hinterland. A map in the local paper showed Hardy's memorial and we set off to find it and after a long trawl through open heath we found it but was disappointed to find that the Hardy was the "Kiss me Hardy" of the death of Nelson and not Thomas Hardy the writer. It says a lot for your Mother's patience with me that she was always willing to trail along with me on expeditions. From Fleet we moved on to Cerne Abbas on a field overlooking the priapic hill carving. Disappointingly there were no post cards of this to send to our friends

We had settled in and Anne was preparing a meal when this man called and asked me had I any blocks. These were sometimes needed under the jockey wheel to keep the van level horizontally. Having been given some, he stayed on and talked and talked and talked. Mum, who as you know was made of sterner stuff than me, came out eventually and said outright, "You'll have to go as my husband wants his meal". And that is how we met the Harrisons who became firm friends. While in Cerne Abbas we visited Dorchester the county capital with all its memories of Judge Jeffries and other hangings. On the way we passed the ancient fort of Maiden Castle and I spent a wearying half hour or so trailing round what turned out to be a very large site.

This, however, was one time that Mum preferred to stay in the car as she did when, on the way back to the caravan site, I saw a sign post to East Coker and turned off to find it. It was a very interesting visit because Feast Coker is the name of one of T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets" and the home of the Eliot family. A sign in the church said that Eliot's ashes had been put there before burial in the Abbey.

Our third stop was to be in the New Forest and Mum suggested that to avoid having to pitch the van next to the Harrisons or another elderly couple who had befriended us, we should let them move off and wait awhile before we did. All to no avail because arriving at the new site we found them both waiting for us outside and one went before us and the others behind, so we found ourselves pitched between them! I don't remember the names of the other couple, they came from Somerset and were much older than us. When I complained about my backache this old chap told me that he had some pills for it and went off to his van to fetch them. Mum said to just keep them in my mouth and spit them out afterwards but this didn't work because he came with the pills,

followed by his wife with a glass of water! Don't know about the backache but I urinated green for days.

Let's forget about caravanning for a while except to say that we bought a third caravan on a whim. We were on a rally at Bingley St Ives and needing some toilet fluid and some minor spare part, we went to the caravan saleroom Dickinson's on Canal Road in Shipley and came out with a brand new £7,000 pound van. Oh, one memory, this caravan like the others had a bed which could be made up as a double or two singles and while we usually used it as a double this particular evening she asked me to make it up as singles just out of curiosity. So, I dutifully did as I was told and we crept into our separate beds. After reading for a bit we turned off our lights and settled down to sleep. It wasn't long before a little voice was saying,

"I don't like this."

"Too bad ", I muttered, "I'm not getting out of bed and make it up as a double ". After a minute, two feet were sliding past my face and slipping into my sleeping bag!

I'll have another try to get off the caravan motif - if that's the word I want? Let's get back to 1981, a year that I can be sure of getting right because that was the year of our Silver Wedding Anniversary. Mum with her usual flair and efficiency had arranged everything. She booked a room at the Beeches Hotel and ordered a finger buffet from someone in Silsden and asked dozens of people we knew from various parts of our lives, Derrick and Margaret couldn't make it but many did, the Gilhoolies, various nursing staff and neighbours. Ian fixed up for his mate Keith Hanley to run the disco using Ian's equipment. Keith put on some kind of dance competition arranging for Anne and me to win it. The prize was a meal at the White Hart in Haworth. One problem when we got there: no one knew anything about it but a call to Keith and it was

sorted and we enjoyed a good meal. People gave us silver coloured presents of which the carriage clock and the candle holders on the dresser are two. A bonus was being taken out for a meal by Bernard and Sheila Gilhooley. Sheila suggested the Box Tree Restaurant in Ilkley but when we pointed out that it would cost £100 for each of us she settled on The Captains Table also in Ilkley. Altogether a memorable anniversary.

Wheathead Crescent had belonged to the Smith family, the children of which had each been Bronte pupils. It was very clean but it needed a lot of improvements and as mentioned, because we had come 'down' market, we had plenty of money in hand. Top of the list was central heating, after our experience in Thorney we were not going back to coal fires. We asked a local plumber Colin Murray to install it and he called in an electrician to do that side and a joiner to put a door into the basement into which Colin put the gas boiler. We were impressed by these two and got them to do various bits and pieces, the electrician to fit sockets and an outside power point for the large freezer which had been in the garage at Malvern, and Brian the Joiner to fit the new kitchen from Magnet, the large bedroom furniture around the chimney stack and put a mantle on the new fire place.

The interior decorations were not to our taste at all and we asked Norman Rhodes and his business partner Tom to re-paper the lounge and dining room ceilings and when we found out how reasonable were their charges they were given the job of all the downstairs' decorating, plus hall, stairs and landing. This left me with the three bedrooms. When I came to strip the paper from the main bedroom I was disconcerted to find five layers of paper one after another and was reduced to using a stripping lotion which helped take off the paper - but also stripped the paint from the skirting boards! Mum also

arranged for the son of one of her nursing friends to build a new hearth. It was fascinating to see how he went about it, one day he arrived with a lot of stone which he left in a pile on the lounge floor and then built this beautiful fire place with a mantle, niches and hearthstone. I was sent to fetch the hearthstone from somewhere in Bradford Street. I, of course, couldn't lift it, so after the men in the yard put it into the boot, there it stayed until the builder took it out. The mantle and floors of the niches were of a beautiful hard wood and there we have the basis of a gentle falling out with various people. Because the wood looked natural I said that we would not stain it and was horrified to come home and find that the painters had stained it. Their excuse was that they had been suborned into it by Anne. We had this idea for asking the Smiths to come and see it once it was finished but this was knocked on the head when I asked our neighbour on one side if he would like to come and that we would also ask the people on the other side, a sort of reunion of old neighbours. Unfortunately, they both hated the Smiths and didn't want to have anything to do with them! Oh well. Nice idea.

So here we are in our fourth new Keighley home and very nice too, the garden is small so I should be able to keep up to it (ha ha). We had to have the overhead kitchen cabinets set low so that Mum could reach them. The time we spent in this house was among the happiest I can remember. Ian paid regular visits and Ruth of course was living at home. One of my jobs was rescuing my son's car(s) during their problems. I was usually asked either to jump start a flat battery or give it a tow start. Still, what else are fathers for? Ruth discovered boyfriends, turning up one day on the back of a motor cycle looking as if she had been through a dirt track. Once, when she was fourteen I had taken her to a youth club in Cullingworth and going in, to bring her home, discovered her

in a clinch with some lad. This floored me and I just didn't know how to handle the situation till panic set in and pulling her off I clouted the lad. How stupid of me. A year or so later she said, "See that lad coming up the path? That's the one you hit". He was nice and friendly which was just as well because he was a big lad.

Once more I'm getting into a muddle regarding dates and what was going on and where but I am an old man and it is all a very long time ago. Let's think about foreign holidays for a moment. Mother had been first to go on one round about 1971 - and on her own. Can't remember where she went but it was as part of a party connected with the hospital. She must have felt guilty for leaving me in charge of the house because she brought lots of presents for me, including the watch that I am still wearing thirty years later, though I was upset that all she brought poor Ian was a belt. Perhaps he had not been on his best behaviour for a while? She also went on other occasions such as a trip to Rome and Capri. She came back from that upset because the tour had included the Ardeantine caves in which the Germans had shot a number of Italian partisans. She used to say that it should have been me have gone on the trip because "You would have understood it more". This was typical of your Mother's self effacement.

The first journey we made together was a five day holiday in Majorca in 1973. We took Ian and Ruth to stay with my Mother and set off from Soham on a very cold January night to Luton airport in the Cortina with which we were still stuck. It was easy enough to find the way to Luton but finding the airport was another matter. Eventually after trailing blindly round the place we fetched up in the right place. Always cautious I took off the distributor head and hid it on the boot. (This was to cause me some grief when on our return I had the job of refitting it. Things were not to go smoothly, there

was a great deal of fog and we were told that there would be delay and our flight was to be merged with another. This meant that there were too many passengers and they offered overnight hotel accommodation to anyone willing to fly the next morning. Mother wouldn't hear of it so we just sat tight until our much delayed flight. My only previous air experience had been a flight in an army Horsa glider such as had taken part in the D Day Normandy landings. Anne, from the depths of her two previous flights, played the experienced flyer and insisted that I take two diazepam, "To steady your nerves." It wasn't a comfortable flight, with a great deal of buffeting of the plane, a bit unnerving, sitting as we were, level with the wings, and seeing the wing tip alternately above and then below us. Another discomfort was my difficulty in breathing, this was long before I was diagnosed with asthma, and made me think that flying was not for me and that I had better forget all about any long haul flights.

However, the flight over, we had a marvellous three or four days, particularly given the better weather in Majorca. We had left a freezing cold Luton with a coating of ice and snow and now, one day later I was walking about Palma with my jacket slung over my shoulder. Very little else to report, a visit to the cathedral and a surprise finding a woman in the public toilets collecting money for using them! As it was January the shops in Parma were decorated with symbols for Epiphany of which the Spaniards make more than protestant countries do. We learned that children were given a second lot of "Christmas" presents. Of course we went to the obligatory feast during which, grabbing another bottle of free wine, I spilt it on my wife's (rabbit) fur coat. This met with disapproval, naturally. A final memory of the break was waiting in the departure lounge for the flight home and having to help a man calm down his wife who was terrified of flying. Arriving back

at Luton I had to struggle to replace the distributor cap but otherwise made an uneventful journey back to Soham to pick up Ian and Ruth. And oh, the difference in the weather.

CHAPTER 18: HOLIDAYS

This was to be the first of several trips abroad, usually we used the caravan in the spring and summer and took foreign holidays in the winter. Another one was a ten day trip to Tunisia, Mum, who of course knew about these things, chose a slightly cheaper package in which you choose the resort but took pot luck in which hotel you were put. This time we took Ruth, Ian, I think, must have been at work. We had thought that Ruth would be excited at her first flight but no, she acted as if flying was her usual form of transport. We were allocated the Sahara Beach Hotel in Skanes, and on the first day our daughter 'acted up'. She didn't like the hotel, the country or anything else and followed us around until we told her to bugger off and that we didn't want to see her again until lunch time. Off she went, returning after a few minutes with a girl of the same age, both of whom had their arms locked round each others necks. After that we saw little of her except at meal times.

We were a fortnight in Tunisia and though it was a while ago, I do have quite a few memories of it. One is of the beautiful sunny weather, except for one day of really torrential rain, a sort of summer flood. Next day it was as if it had not happened with everywhere bone dry. An odd happening,

walking through the hotel I met two young women one of whom was sobbing uncontrollably. Ever the good (read nosey) Samaritan I asked what the trouble was and was told that she had suddenly realised her own mortality and that one day she would be dead! There wasn't a lot I could do about that but did manage to cheer her up a bit and we became friends. They were from Birmingham and were sales girls in a Corporation Street department store, one that Anne and I had frequented in our Birmingham days. When, a day or so later, Anne and I decided to make a trip to Suisse using a local and not the expensive hotel transport (the Thomson reps ever looking for commission, tried to talk us out of it, telling us of all kind of tales but we ignored them) these girls asked us if they could come with us.

A funny thing happened at the start of the trip, getting off the bus and walking with my four attractive ladies, and you won't believe this, passing a group of local men one of the men made me, me mind you not one of the women, a startling request for my body! I told you wouldn't believe it. One highlight of the Sousse trip was a visit to a souk where I was made an offer for my very bright M&S shirt, which at the finish, I took off and swapped it for one of the stall owner's stock plus a cash payment. Another bit of trading was to sell the tins of Coca-Cola we had brought with us to the waiter in the hotel who was selling an inferior version. During this trip we went into a café to try the local coffee, the men in the place were very disapproving of the presence of Anne and Ruth. Another bit of humour came when Anne and Ruth went off along the beach, disappearing out of sight, and then along came two camels on which were perched my womenfolk! Thanks to your Mum we always made friends on all our trips and this one was no exception.

At the end of the ten days we packed up ready for the flight home but there was a delay and we were invited to a party. The problem was that we had spent up our pesetas and at that time of night there was no way we could cash any Travellers' Cheques, which in any case were packed up in our suitcases. It became very embarrassing with people insisting on buying us drinks and us not being able to get our rounds in until I hit upon the idea of taking a bottle of whisky out of the case and putting that into the kitty. Brains you see.

Two more random memories of holidays abroad. We made a second trip to Majorca staying this time in a hotel in Parma Nova of which the only memory I have is of a coach trip to Porto Christie on a day in which it rained solidly throughout. On another occasion we returned to Tunisia but where escapes me. One person I do remember is a lady staying there on her own. She was not on holiday but had come to meet her twenty something daughter. On a previous trip the daughter had fallen for a waiter and after their return to England the girl had decided to go back to Tunisia and move in with him. Her Mum was now here to find out how she was, Dad had refused to come not being able to face whatever was there. We met the daughter when she came to the hotel and she and Anne took to each other. Anne got a letter sometime later to say that the waiter had turned up in England and was looking for a job. When your Mum died I wrote to tell them of her death but the letter was returned because she was no longer living there. I rang whoever was living at that address but they had no idea of the new address so never found out the end of the story

So let's return to the family, it is 1981 and onwards. We're settled in 5 Wheathead Crescent, Ian is living in the flat, but having some meals with us, Ruth is living at home and generally speaking it's one of the best periods in my life. Anne

by now is a Night Sister at Airedale, she is enjoying it but now in her late forties finding it increasingly tiring. She does three nights 8pm - 8 am each week and four nights off. Sometimes she does her nights end to end which means working six consecutive nights and then eight nights off in a row. This worked out well for caravanning breaks but was slowly getting too much for her. You could see this in the ever lengthening time she stayed in bed. At first, on arriving home from duty she would stay up for a little while and then sleep till about two pm. Her time staying up got shorter and shorter, while her getting up time, got later. In the end she would go to bed almost immediately and get up about seven.

I said sleep but like other night workers she was often woken by outside noise: one of the worst was a lad with a drum kit which, with his window open, was deafening, it wasn't so bad when he didn't get to use it until he came home from school at 4.30pm. Anne used to say that this was OK if she could sleep till about that time, but he took to bunking off school at lunch time. I managed to stop that by having a word with his father. Every time I came home I'd try to be quiet but however hard I tried before long I would hear the cry, "Make us a cup of coffee". She drank coffee as if it was going out of production. (Mum was one of the world's worst spellers and coffee would appear on her shopping list as coffee along with sausages). When I got home from school she would hear and call out for coffee. This I'd make, take it up to her and then taking off my trousers and shoes, slip into bed with her

So. Where are we? Mum's working and sleeping, Ian is living his own life and working as a lab technician when he's not driving clapped out old cars or vans. What of Ruth, the youngest member of the Garner Quartet? Ruth is still at school and hating every minute of it as did her brother but where Ian's hostility to school was shown by a likeable

‘barrack room lawyer's’ bloody mindedness, hers was wilful disobedience and wrong doing. Where his teachers tell me of their affection for him, hers hardly bear talking of her. As Al Read the wireless comic used to say, "The less said about our Edie the better!" She and her Mum continually rubbed up against each other, leaving me, her father, having always to mediate and getting accused by Anne of not supporting her. There was a lot of truth in her accusation and I can only "Put my hands up" but I still remember the pain of always being split down the middle. There was nothing vicious to Ruth's behaviour, just a very bad case of adolescence. It was the same ‘sturm und stress’ that I mentioned earlier, when talking about Ian's growing pains. Ruth was, and still is, a paradigm, if that's the word, of the girl in the nursery rhyme. When she was good she was very, very good but when she was bad she was horrid. By the way, when in my teaching days I was faced with a new class, I used to deliver this mantra. When you are good I'll be very very good, but when you are bad I'll be (pause) awful!

Tension between the two got more and more unbearable, something had to give. Breaking point came, when Ruth, having been told that she was to stay in, escaped by jumping out of a window and disappearing. For days we heard nothing of her except a phone call from some girl saying that Ruth was all right but she would not tell me where she was, you can imagine what I went through. Then I got a call from the Social Services saying that Ruth was in the office, could she come home? That, of course, didn't need any thought and I told him so. Turned out that she had thought that she could get some kind of Benefit that would enable her to live independently. The chap said that when Ruth had turned up in his office, he thought she had come for a job!

When she got home we learned the story of where she had been. She had had a succession of boy friends, the current

one being Peter Kit son of a Ukrainian father and Austrian Mother. He was a decent enough lad in a skilled job. During the time she had gone AWOL, they had slept in his car parked outside his parents' house. I'll pass on the details. Now she was home there was still the problem of school, she was sixteen and so able to leave school but there was no way in which I would allow her to while she was living at home. The solution was that she could leave school but on the condition that she started a full time course at what was then called the Keighley Technical College. After a little moaning, "I wish I hadn't come home, now" she took up an R.S.A. Receptionists' course.

This was to be the making of her. After a year, which included work experience placements in an office (forget which) in Keighley and in the Victoria Hotel, Bradford, she passed the whole of the course and gained the RSA certificate. She was the only one of the intake who did, the rest having failed one or more of the tests. One girl scored more points than Ruth in three others but tripped up on one, so wasn't eligible for the Certificate. On the first day of job hunting she came home at dinner time saying that she had been interviewed and told that, although they had one girl to re-interview, they had made up their minds and that she, Ruth, would be appointed. Not bad for her first application. She said that she had felt sorry for her friend who was going that afternoon not knowing that she wasn't getting the job

She started work at Alton textiles a small firm in Aireworth road Keighley which dealt in man-made fibres. Sometimes they bought raw fibres and sold them on in the same raw state and with others, they sent them out for processing and finally, selling the finished article. (I took one of my Bronte school groups to Sir James Hill's factory, mentioning that my daughter worked for Alton they laughed

saying that they were processing some fibres from there, which they themselves had refused to buy, as worthless. (One day I'll tell Colin this).

Joining this firm was an excellent move giving her a superb grounding in business affairs. For this she has to thank John Graham, one of the Directors. There was one odd thing, she arrived home at about 4.pm with John who told me that things had got a little fraught at the office, things had been said and he thought it better that she should be gotten out of the way. She seemed very happy in the job especially when driving the boss's posh Jag. She used to tell of the way in which, while waiting at a traffic light, any male driver waiting next to her could be seen anxiously getting ready to try to zoom off before she did! Another incident which I found amusing. She pulled up at Sainsburys next to a Greenhead teacher who abhorred her and she was delighted at the look in his eyes. I told her that I could guess what he would have been thinking, "O yes, I can guess how she got that car". His name was Lockwood and after she was married, I had pleasure in letting him know that her married name was Lockwood.

So, that's Ruth dealt with for the moment, she is now stable and with a succession of boy friends. One incident amuses. I had come home from school and as usual had taken Anne her coffee and then climbed into bed with her. Ruth comes home and Anne tells her that she had bought herself a new dress. Ruth takes it, goes into her own bedroom then coming back wearing it. Ruth, slim, looked beautiful; Anne takes one look and bursts into envious tears. Now in her late forties she had begun to fill out a little. I consoled her saying that she was still the little 'pocket' Venus that she had always been. One other memory of that time. Ian, hoping to set up home with Karen Ryder, an old pupil of mine, had bought a house in Shann Park. Mother sets to scrubbing it out while

father did most of the decorating. I say most, because when it came to papering the lounge it was decided that Ian would finish it. Unfortunately - or if I'm truthful - fortunately, thing didn't work out with the girl friend and Ian sold the house, continuing to live on in the flat.

While all this was going on my family, what about me? I was still teaching but spending more time out of the class room in various committees than in it. Not so long ago, at a Bronte staff reunion, a woman says to me, "I taught more of your R. E. than you did yourself." Perhaps it was better that way? I wasn't a very good teacher, too lazy and disorganised. The committee work was tied up with my being a very active member of the National Association of Schoolmasters, Union of Women Teachers NASUWT. In addition to being shop steward at Bronte I was second negotiator for the district NAS committee which in turn took me to meetings of the Bradford Education negotiating committee and the Leeds University Professional Committee dealing with teacher in-service training matters. In this committee I was representing all teachers of all unions. Another hat I was wearing was Training Officer for Bradford NASUWT, running one day courses for school reps. On one of these I set up a meeting in which a teacher was up before his Head on a disciplinary matter with me playing the part of Head. I must have been too convincing, for the chap playing the teacher said, "God Ray. You're scaring me witless!".

This was funny because, on the term's course in Ilkley during another meeting, I had played the part of the offending teacher and again must have been too realistic because the lady playing the child's Mother refused to attend the meeting! The authority allowed all senior union officers like myself one complete day off each week for union work. Plus all kinds of

incidental meetings. We met up each Thursday in the British Legion club (now defunct).

My shop stewarding meant representing NAS interests to the Head. My job in this was made very easy by there being seventeen NASUWT members out of a staff of 35, all seventeen sticking solidly behind me. A couple of examples of how this worked. A lady teacher was off sick for an extremely long time during which we had to give up our marking and preparation periods to take her lessons. When I told Mr Grainger our Head that we were getting fed up with this and asked for supply teachers, I was told that Bradford would not allow him to spend money on this. On the last day of term, and with the backing of my members I told him that I would be coming to see him on the first day of the new term and if he still would not budge, I might have, "Something to say to him!" Sure enough, as soon as I got into school on that first day back he called me in and asked whether I knew anyone who would come in on supply. When I told him that I knew three people he said to get them all in. In other words he was able to tell Bradford that he had been leaned on and they had given way. When we got a new Head this man wanted to introduce an 'after school' bus duty to which I objected arguing that the bus turnaround was outside the school boundary and was thus outside of our responsibility. His reply was that he would ask for the Education Department's ruling. Not long afterwards he called me in to tell me that Bradford had told him to drop it. You have to understand that this was not down to my personality or talent but on the rock solid group behind me. The pity of it is that anyone doing my job now would not have a leg to stand on.

Besides the routine Bradford and Leeds University meetings and the odd meetings with my own Head (once, after a difficult session with Mr Grainger, I suggested that he

should look on me as an extra gun in his dealings with the authority. He said that yes but that it was a dangerous gun!) I sometimes had to go out to other schools to back up our members in problems with their Heads.

One I remember particularly was being called out to a Primary School where a woman member was in trouble over her refusal to attend a training session in a lunchtime - a refusal to which she was entitled. This session was the idea of a really obnoxious female Advisor who took umbrage and the Head was wanting to placate her by attempting to discipline the *refusenik*. To do this he chose the long outdated procedure called "logging", all schools kept a log of significant events such as General Inspections, changes of staff and so on and in the past, teachers accused of misdemeanours would have their names put in the log, this was something long discontinued.

When I tackled the Head he became annoyed and, to spite me, said that while he had only been toying with the idea now because of my visit he had decided that he definitely would put her name in the log book. How did it all end? I had a word with someone in City Hall and the next thing I heard was that the teacher had been called in by the Head to be told that she had won hands down and that he was to cancel the logging. The bloody fool of a Head then made matters worse for himself by tearing out the pages - in itself a heinous offence. This doesn't follow of course but now many years later I hear that he was in a sexual relationship with his male deputy!

The friend in City Hall who had put the pressure on that Head was later to help me again. At a meeting with the authority I opposed very firmly a plan to let Asian students get into the teaching profession by a back door and not only that but on the same occasion had said that I would never allow an Imam into any of my RE classes. This was because of fear of

the physical violence that they were reputed to use on their pupils. Two things followed from this, a phone call from my City Hall contact warning me that the Press were looking for this racialist teacher and my Head telling me that one of our school governors had come to see him about my "racialism". The pity was that both these warnings were given in confidence so I couldn't act against the accusers but at least I managed to get the man who had told the press about me excluded from all subsequent negotiating meetings.

Thinking about race relations reminds me of an in incident at a meeting of the Race Relations Group (another of my commitments), some Asian members of the group and in particular Mohammed Ajeeb, who was to become Bradford's first Asian Mayor, were complaining bitterly about discrimination when up popped the headmistress of Bell Vue Girls' School in Bradford, "You don't know what discrimination is. I am Jewish and was brought up in Leeds in the Thirties, I'll tell you what racial intolerance is." Collapse of stout party as the old Punch magazine cartoon had it. We mustn't forget though, just what Asians had to put up with, assaults, employment difficulties, and obscene graffiti. An example: when Ajeeb became Mayor, the Telegraph & Argus newspaper splashed a picture of him on their front page, the woman paper seller in the entrance to City Hall shouted, “Asian mayor for Bradford,(and sub voce) the old black bastard!"

Another reason for my not being in school was a full term's in-service course at Bradford Community College, Ilkley. Seventy per cent of the wages of teachers doing a full time course, for at least a term, were paid from the ‘In Service pool’ paid in by Bradford, Kirklees and Calderdale authorities. So Bradford encouraged us to go on such a course to save the Authority money. Planning and validation of in-service course

was administered by the in-service training committee of Leeds University Professional Committee, in both of which committees, I represented all Bradford teachers. The Principal Advisors from the other authorities resented Bradford's use of this money and it was quite funny to find myself having to support Bradford's Principal Advisor, a nice lady named Eunice Beaumont, against the attacks of the other three.

It was an odd course something about the Aims & Practices of the Middle School or some such rubbish. There were twenty or so of us some from Bradford and others from Leeds. There was one other from Keighley, John, an Art teacher from Nab Wood Grammar School. John and I took it in turn to drive to Ilkley, one afternoon on the way home I made some flip remark about homosexuals (this was in my bad old un-restructured homophobic days) and noticed that he blenched. The next day I said to two of the lady teachers from Leeds, "I think that John's a gay man". "Didn't you know that?", said one We could tell that the moment he came into the room!" That's how naive your father could be. These two women, Maureen and Kate became friends, the three of us having pub lunches in the Troutbeck each day.

One odd thing, was that for some reason, I became a sort of talking point to all the others including the lecturers. Everyone seemed to want to talk to me about their interests and in the discussions at the end of each session it seemed that my views were sought. At the end of the course we each had to give a talk. While Kate was giving hers, one of the older ladies told her that she was showing a lot of leg. "I know", she replied, "I have to keep Ray's attention somehow!"

When it came to my turn to give a talk, I just droned on about religious/aesthetic experience, mainly as an excuse to play classical music and read poetry. Afterwards Graham Williamson who was running the course said that he had

worried about what mine would be saying and that when he had someone like me he wondered whether to have let me say what I wanted or to keep me strictly to a given topic. He did say that my talk was wonderful and how glad he was that he had left me off the hook. I was allowed one day free from the course so that I could take my own Bronte class to Fountain's Abbey as I had promised.

At the end of the course it was decided that we would have a farewell party and John offered us his house. Before the party, Anne and I went to see him in his home off Hospital Rd, Riddlesden and she couldn't get over it. John lived with his partner Peter and everything about the place said old ladies. Candlewick bedspread (double) and even a candlewick lavatory seat cover. Obviously they were in a happy and loving relationship and far be it from me to be judgmental, still, not my cup of tea. As the old tag has it: *De gustibus non disputandem.*

Anne was working on the night of the party so I had to go on my own. Although it was nice and relaxing with my fellow students I didn't enjoy it much. Maureen had brought two macho blokes and a bloody great dog and they didn't hide their contempt for John and abused his hospitality relentlessly. I soon left, Kate more than a little *squiffy*, showering me with kisses and telling me how precious I was! I told you she was drunk! Some time afterwards I got a telephone call at home asking me brusquely if he could speak to Kate. When I suggested that he had got the wrong number, he said, "It's your number in her address book." I put on my best offended "I'm a respectable, married, RE teacher". I rang Maureen who told me that it would have been some boyfriend of Kate's. Someone high up in the Leeds Education Department hierarchy. Good job Anne hadn't picked up the phone even though I had nothing to hide.

Let me now go to June July 1987, I had, with Anne's agreement, decided to give up teaching and take my pension. I had done 31 years and Bradford added five extra years, meaning that I would retire on 36/48, of my final salary and a lump sum of a year and a half's salary. Previous to this I had resigned all my Union posts and had been given some nice presents, such as an inscribed pewter tankard from the Keighley Association. In addition, Bradford District had phoned Anne and told her she could spend thirty pounds on me, I was very pleased with the wall clock she purchased for the lounge. What was nice too, was that they sent Anne a plant arrangement with a card which said, "Thank you Anne - for lending Ray to us." Another, and completely unexpected gift, was two crystal drinking glasses from the Bronte School members.

When it came to leaving the school I had asked my family not to arrange any elaborate do's. On my last day we had a staff party at home time and I was given a camera and one or two books. Anne, Ian, and Ruth had ideas of their own. Anne told me that she had arranged an evening meal at the Beeches just for us, plus Ian's and Ruth's friends. We drove to the Beeches on Friday night and I was very impressed with the layout of the table but before I could sit down, the waiter said, "Excuse me sir" and drew a curtain aside to show a large well lit room filled with people singing, "Happy Birthday to you!" and on the far wall, a large poster saying, "Happy Birthday Ray".

There were people there from most parts of my life, colleagues, nurses, Bernard and Sheila, neighbours from various times and lots of other friends. What an absolutely marvellous party, talk about the wine flowing freely! I was loaded with presents which included eight bottles of Teachers whisky (which I subsequently took to Sainsbury's to be

'converted' to Bells). Keith Hanley did a disco using Ian's equipment. Towards the end of the evening while I was sitting sizzled, nursing yet another glass of booze, Ian came up to me with a large box, one of the presents to which I had not got round to opening. Glory be! It was a video recorder from the family. Anne told me afterwards that Ian had talked her into paying half. What did I ever do to deserve a family like mine? I can remember sitting up in bed the next day saying to Anne, "Did that party really happen or have I imagined it? I learned later why a neighbour had crossed the road in Hanover street on seeing me and why Jack Henderson had been so reluctant to accept a lift with me. It was because they had been afraid of dropping a hint about the party.

Now I was retired I set about developing interests and signed up for a course at the Tech in Microwave cooking and an informal class in Basic Cooking at the college's extension at Hillworth Lodge. This last meant spending a period watching the instructor cook something and then the next week taking our own materials and cooking it under her supervision. I already had a hobby, wine making which was enormous fun and something I could do with Anne who acted as my assistant! Also at this time we had a friend staying with us. This was Bill Wootton with whom I had been a student both at Fircroft and Keele. Can't remember if he had come up for the Party but doubt if he had because I know the Gilhooleys had been and there wouldn't have been room in the house for all of them. Anyway, Bill spent three weeks with us and I was able to show him around the area. He had just lost his sister with whom he had been living; Anne said I should encourage him to talk about her.

Bill and Anne got along together famously and she even forgave him when he broke a sherry glass and burnt a hole in the telephone handset with the cigars he was always

going outside to smoke. I have a photograph of the back view of the pair of them walking along the Keighley Show ground at which I had won a First and a Second prize for my wine. Talking about wine, Ian had taken to making some in his flat and he brought a rack full to store at home which we put at the top of a kitchen cabinet. One day while sitting in the lounge I heard a scream from the kitchen and rushing in I found Anne, drenched in a cascade wine, looking like a statue in a fountain. Ian had not let the wine ferment out before bottling and now all the corks had popped!

CHAPTER 19: MY WORLD ENDS

So we come to September 23rd 1987, Wednesday, late afternoon. Anne in bed and me getting ready to go out. Ruth comes up with a humorous plastic apron for me to take to the cookery lesson plus a tin with my initials taped on to take my materials. "You're spoilt rotten", says Anne. I had never been happier. I needed to go to Sainsburys for something and to go to the caravan as the farmer had asked me to move to another part of the site. Anne didn't really want me to go saying, “What if something happened to you?”. I would rather have stayed but it was vital that I moved the 'van that day. When I got to the farm I was horrified to see that the front had been damaged by an impact - a ram presumably and was a little worried what Anne, who never liked my leaving it at the farm, would say. Having moved it, I returned home to find an ambulance with its doors open, outside the house. Thinking that perhaps a child had been run over on the awkward corner, I went up to the house and found Ruth standing outside in floods of tears. She wouldn't say what was going on except to tell me to go upstairs, "And look what is there."

What I saw was two ambulance people bending over the bath trying to resuscitate Anne. After a while they stopped:

Anne, my wife of thirty one years, lay dead. I'm hazy about the next hour or so. I remember seeing Peter standing shoe-less with Ruth. She told me afterwards that she had screamed at him over the phone, "Get yourself here, now!" A policeman turned up from somewhere, Anne had been laid on the bed in the spare room covered in blankets. He asked me whether he was to take off her wedding ring, "They sometimes disappear at the undertakers." I was only able to give her one last hug before they took her away.

Looking back I realise now that I was totally in shock, incapable of thinking properly - or even thinking at all. However, there were things to be done, first of which was to tell Ian, he and Janet had gone camping somewhere in the South West but where, I had no idea. Luckily I was able to get in touch with one of his friends who knew which campsite they were at. This meant that I needed to get in touch with our local Police station to give me the telephone no. of the station nearest to the campsite. When Ian rang I didn't tell him his Mum had died but to come home straight away, he told me afterwards that he had guessed. Anne had been due to start work that night, so of course they had to be told. My next thought was an urge to tell everyone. Later that evening people began to arrive, Gerry Dodds first, Jack Henderson, Kathleen Keighley and then Rosa Lister. All this while I was desperate for my son to come home. He was driving an old rickety van and several times he rang to say that he had broken down. Each time I pleaded with him to just leave it where he was and that I would come and fetch him. Eventually he did arrive, thank goodness. Incidentally, I realise now how wrong I was to be so wrapped up in the loss of my wife that I forgot that my children had lost their Mother.

Another visitor on that night was a doctor, who he was or from where he came from I do not know, asking me

whether I wanted anything to see me through the night. He nodded towards the bottle of sherry on the wine table but I told him that I had some temazepam, he suggested a double dose. Actually, as Anne worked nights, sleeping on my own was very slightly less difficult than it might otherwise have been. Remember, I was totally in shock, it just did not register at that time. When it came to telling my Mum I decided that I would tell Derrick first so that he would be with her when she heard. Stupid as I was, I dialled her instead and then out it came. However, I rang Derrick and asked him to go to Mum's straight away. Then of course I had to ring an undertaker and chose Maurice Leach with whom I had dealt with on Clara's death and also when each of Ella Feather's husbands died. Anne had told me that when she died she wanted her ashes scattered in the sea at Dunkirk where her Father's ship had been sunk and where Anne's Mother's ashes had been taken. Odd. Sometime before, I had told her, that when the time came for one of us to go, I hoped that it would be me first, that I wouldn't want to live without her. That's a very selfish attitude she said. Now of course, I know just how right my instincts had been. In the days immediately after the 23rd it was impossible for me to settle. I kept going outside the house, sitting down on the front step not even being able to light a cigarette. I had given up smoking eight years before. I remember the perfect double rainbow, even seeing her face in them. Funnily enough, the year end saw a number of tragedies, the gale, the ferry disaster and some time round about then the sinking of the Marchioness.

People turned up over the next few days. John Hulse came the next morning after I had rung the school with the news and this was surprising because he and I had never really "got on", but I was pleased. Less pleasing were the visitors who brought children, one child marched straight to the fruit

bowl and took a banana, another one went upstairs and came down starkers! One lovely moment was going to the back door and finding Cathy standing there with flowers. "Am I welcome?". Nobody more! Gerry came bringing three or four night staff but I don't remember who they were. Then came Chris Holbrey. A surprise visitor was a reporter from the Keighley News who told me that he had seen the notice in his paper and wanted to know more about Mum. For answer I gave him the sheaf of condolence letters we had received. He asked me for a photo he could use and the only one I had to hand was one was a snapshot taken while she was on holiday somewhere in Europe. In the next edition of the KN there was a front page article including the photo, the original I keep in my wallet. Once, in Sainsburys I took out the wallet to pay and the lady at the checkout, who had worked at AGH, said what a lovely photo of Anne.

These condolence letters, about seventy all together, came from all manner of friends, NAS colleagues, neighbours, nurses, Bronte staff, all from a wide circle. Two I remember, were slipped under the door. The first one said, "Dear Mr Garner. I'm sorry to hear about Mrs Garner". Signed Martin Hakes, paper boy. Martin was an old Bronte lad. Sometime afterwards I happened to meet his Mother who told me that he had gone home from school very upset. The other one was a card announcing the birth of a baby. I didn't know the lady who sent it but it said, "Anne had been so interested in this baby and I feel that by telling you I am telling her". Funny. All the letters were very nice, but the three which most touched me were from men. I have kept all the letters and sometimes when I am feeling down I get them down and read through them

The funeral. I had asked for it to be at Oakworth Parish Church and then to the crematorium. I chose

Oakworth because I had read the lessons there, Ian had been confirmed and Ruth baptised. Actually, the Vicar was on holiday and the undertaker had arranged for the service to be taken by the Vicar of Riddlesden and that was ok by me because both Ruth and I had been involved at Riddlesden at different times. So this priest came to see me along with the Vicar of St. John's, Ingrow. Properly, the funeral should have been at St. John's because Wheathead was in that parish and that's why both vicars had come to see me. Good Anglican as I once had been, I asked for the full service from the 1666 Book of Common Prayer choosing as one of the hymns 'All things Bright and Beautiful'. I chose this because when we had that hymn at Thorney, it had always amused Anne when I got the words muddled.

Bernard came, so did Bill and though Bernard was able to go back that same day, Bill, carless, needed to stay. Mum, Derrick and Margaret staying meant there was no room for Bill but I found him lodgings with David and Kathleen Keighley. Other people coming were Ken Popely, Anne's Dad's friend from Thorney, and Dick and Margaret Harrison our caravanning friends. Poor old Margaret H had had some accident or other and was in a neck brace. My sister-in law Margaret not only offered to do the catering but had brought all her own food, even her own kitchen implements! The day before I had been to see Thorburn who asked me did I need anything? I said just give me something to stop me making a fool of myself at the funeral.

Can't remember which day but think it was the Wednesday. Just before the hearse arrived I got a phone call from Maurice Leach the undertaker saying, "Mr Garner we are going to have to alter the Acknowledgement notice, I have never seen so many flowers, I've had to put some of them in another car." Because Anne so loved flowers I had put a

request in the funeral notice. I think it was about half eleven when it arrived. Even though the tablet from the doctor was no bigger than a pin head, it certainly seemed to work and I was amazingly calm - at least outwardly. The heroes here were my two children, Ian and Ruth who stayed by my side holding my hands throughout. I couldn't have managed without them, bless them.

Ian, so that I wouldn't be hurt at a small attendance pointed out that it was a large church which would dwarf the congregation. He needn't have worried, the place was packed out, I learnt afterwards that poor old Trefor had had to stand at the back. Obviously, I couldn't tell who was there and who was not but I do remember the rows of nurses and the rows of Bronte staff.

The service at the crematorium went off smoothly and we went out to see the masses of flowers laid out. Impressions. three or four NAS members from other schools, Mrs Rowan, standing looking lost, Thomas, Anne's hairdresser, Martin Bottomley handing me a letter from Mr Kerr head of Holy Family (this was a real surprise because, in my NAS role, I had caused him trouble). His letter told me how very sorry he was and that Anne had been remembered in a school Mass, I got quite a lot of support from Holy Family. Martin had paid for a Mass to be said for Anne at St. Anne's Catholic Church. As Anne had been Protestant this was an unusual honour. I also got a call from Sister Mary Colette of whom I have talked previously. By this time she had gone into retirement. I was told later that she had intended coming to Keighley to see me but had been unwell. One small bit of humour, apparently when Bill and I saw Bernard to his car Ruth, looking out of the window at us, said to her Grandmother, "Look Nana, Last of the Summer Wine!"

Taking my Mother back to Newmarket, she had stayed for a few days after Derrick and Margaret went back, I made the mistake of trying to keep a hold of memory by deliberately using the journey from the A1 via Stamford and Thorney just as Anne and I had done many times. It was awful; going through the village of Polsgate, from where I had snatched Anne to take her back to Birmingham with me - and even more on reaching Thorney - it was just too much. I should have learned my lesson but didn't, next day I took Mum for a pub lunch at Wicken, something that Anne and I had done many times, I just couldn't eat anything. This pub, the Red Lion, held another fond memory, she, Mum, and me had once had a meal there and afterwards Mum said, "You know that 50p you left for the waitress? When you went to the toilet Anne took it and put a 20p down instead!"

Caitlin Thomas, writing after the death of her poet husband Dylan, called her book, Leftover Life to Live, a title that goes a long way towards describing my life after Anne. I am hugely fortunate in that my children were there to support me. Ruth was still living at home and Ian nearby. Each time I came home I would find a crunchy bar from Ian pushed through the letter box, often in Keighley when I got back to the car I would find his address label stuck by a corner on the car's window. Ruth would bring me chocolate bars on return from work. Little things that showed me that I was not alone. They were quite angry with me once. We had bought a new car weeks before Anne died and coming back from Newmarket and finding myself on a deserted length of the motorway and on a perfect day thought I'd see just how fast it would go. Sitting at the dinner table I told them this, "How fast did you go?" they asked. When I told them 114mph, well I thought they were going to hit me! They were both absolutely bloody furious!

As soon as possible I set about taking Anne's ashes for scattering as she had wanted and booked a passage with the Sally Line to Dunkirk. There's no mistaking the date on which I travelled because on getting into a taxi at Kings Cross for Victoria I saw a newsstand telling of the stock market crash. Lovely I thought, I've just lost my wife and it now it looks as if I've lost my savings! It was a very bleak journey to Ramsgate, not because of the money of course but there had been the great gale and the whole way from London was littered with fallen trees. Even worse I was travelling along a route with intense memories of Anne. She had been born in Gillingham, Kent and had talked about her holidays in Ramsgate, where I was heading. It was especially hard passing Chatham station where we had gone to find her father's name on the Royal Naval monument. I pictured her as she had stood there that day tracing her finger along his incised name. There was a lovely lady in the carriage, we got talking and I told her where I was going, she told me of scattering her husband's ashes. As she got off at her stop she told me, "I'll be thinking of you all day tomorrow."

Arriving at Ramsgate where I had booked a room in a hotel, I had a meal and walked down to the ferry office. I wanted to ask if it was all right for me to scatter the ashes from the ship. The receptionist said that they often had people doing the same and that when I checked in next day I was to say who I was. Next morning I boarded the ship and was introduced to the security officer who stayed chatting to me and then the Purser came up telling me that the Captain was working out the best place to scatter the ashes so that the tide would carry them over the site of the sunken Wakeful. When the time came both men took me up to the far end of the stern and stood by me while I tipped the ashes over the sea. Owing to the wind, some of the ashes blew back into the ship.

I found this difficult to cope with, so after emptying half the contents I dropped the whole container overboard, and you know what? As it sank I saw your Mum's face sinking into the waves. As we went back down I told the security officer that I could easily have jumped with it. "Why do you think we stood so close to you?"

When I booked the ferry tickets, I had also bought francs thinking to step ashore at Dunkirk and do some Duty Free shopping but when the ship docked I just did not have the heart and stayed on board and made the round journey, this was to do with my inability to come to terms with her death.

This was to be the beginning of a fair number of trips abroad because not having spent any francs I needed to go back to the tourist place to exchange them back into sterling. Whilst I was in Thomas Cooks, I decided to book a holiday in Gran Canaria. What a mistake! For a start, I had always travelled with your Mother so had no need to think about anything, just hold this, stand there and so on. On my own in Manchester airport, I got into such a daze! Couldn't find my boarding card, endlessly scrapping around looking for my ticket. What a carry on, I was all the Three Stooges rolled into one, if your Mum had been looking down she would have wet herself with laughter.

The holiday was a very bad move, it was far too soon, all the time I kept thinking of Anne. Ruth and Ian were very helpful and understanding, ringing me up while was on holiday. Ruth had previously prepared sticky address labels for the cards I would send to my friends, unknown to me she had stood by the line outside her office to wave to me as the train passed.

A year after scattering the ashes I decided that I would go back to Dunkirk and lay a wreath for the three of them, Anne,

and her Father and Mother, and I wrote to the Sally Line asking if that was OK and telling them the story of the three deaths. In their reply they said that naval tradition required the ship to stop during the wreath laying and that they were sorry but with five sailings a day they couldn't do that. However, they went on to say that if I cared to charter a boat out of Dunkirk they would arrange it for me. I replied thanking them and asking if they would do that.

Next thing was a telephone call from the Managing Director's secretary saying that the MD had been moved by my letter and that they were sending me two tickets so that I and a friend would be met in Dunkirk by their French agent and they would take me to the Inshore Lifeboat station. There, I would meet with an Anglican priest and we would all go out to where the ships were sunk and the priest would conduct a service. I suggested that to save them invoicing me, I would give them my credit card details so they could take payment from my account. There would be no charge she said. I could not believe that anyone could be so kind, I straightway wrote a letter of thanks to the MD and sent a huge bouquet to his secretary.

When the time came, Gerry and I went to Ramsgate staying overnight in the same hotel that I had used when taking the ashes. On arriving I went to the Sally Line offices hoping to meet the MD. When we went into the office, the secretary looked up and said, "You will be Mr Garner?" Unfortunately we didn't see her boss as he was away. It was a very windy passage and I had to go indoors because I feared that I would lose the wreath overboard. Arriving at Dunkirk it was just as they said. Once we got out of the harbour the sea was very choppy and I had all on holding the wreath and not falling overboard. Afterwards the priest took us to his Mission

to Seamen place and gave me a couple of pages from a book which dealt with the Wakeful.

Then came absolute shame. Gerry and I, both heavy smokers, didn't buy any cigarettes on the way out thinking to get them from a hypermarket. O woe! It didn't sell fags and there were no shops around so that we had to go without until we got back on the ship. We were reduced to cadging fags from complete strangers. Oh the shame, oh the same. On the way back we popped into Newmarket to see my Mother.

Another holiday with Ian was in Almeria, Spain. The weather was extremely hot, so much so that I found it difficult. Ian, showing his usual concern for his old Dad, asked the hotel if there were any rooms with air conditioning, there weren't but it was all right once I got used to the heat. There were people from Belgium in the hotel and these turned out to be some of the nicest, caring people I had ever met, even the young showed me consideration. Once, watching a Flamenco troupe by the pool, and having no seat, stood propped up by a wall, we saw a lady carrying a chair on her head coming towards us. Unbelievably she was carrying the chair for me! On another time, when I was coming out of the sea and finding walking up a slope difficult, a lady wordlessly stretched out a helpful hand. During our time there we found our way into the town by catching the local bus. A hot, very tiring afternoon but well worth it.

Chris Jones, now Holbrey, one of Anne's nursing colleagues, who had moved to Norway due to her husband's job, invited me to Norway to stay with her and her family for three weeks. I booked a single cabin in a ferry from North Shields. Ian, Ruth and Peter took me to North Shields and while we were waiting, went into the town. We were all pretty shocked at its poor and neglected look, many of the shops boarded up and a general air of abandonment. If my three

were shocked at the town, it was nothing to their horror at the pub in which we had gone into for a drink. Chris told me later that in her day the girls in the pub had chalked their price on the soles of their shoes!

It was a quite pleasant journey, though I was disappointed to find that the only food in the restaurant was of the smorgasbord type. My cabin was very comfortable and I passed a very quiet night. By the morning the sea had cut up rough and when I came out of the cabin a female steward advised me to go back in. In Bergen I decided that, not wanting to get thrown out of the country, I would be honest about my four hundred cigarettes and go through the red channel. When the Customs ' Officer asked me what I had to declare I told him of the cigarettes. "How many are you allowed?" "Two hundred", "Well they are very dear here in Norway so you had better hang on to them". Going outside, a chap asked me "Ray?". It was Chris's husband Bob and he took me to their house outside the city.

What a beautiful country is Norway, when you come into it you have a gorgeous view of mountains and fjords, you have to wonder why the Vikings left! Chris took me and her three children on a rail and sea cruise. The train ride was through marvellous scenery, the guard pointed out things as we passed. Quite outstanding was stopping and being invited to get out to take photos of a magnificent falls which even had a sign giving the name and height. We also went into Bergen where I found out how right was the Customs' Officer about prices. Can't remember how much a packet of twenty Senior Service cigarettes were in the UK but I do know it was nothing like the three pounds fifty I paid when I forgot to bring them on the Bergen trip.

Now, a bit about Chris and her family. Bob her husband was from Bradford and had gone to Eccleshill Upper

school. This was very much a "sink" school and it says a lot about Bob that he went on to a get a Physics First at Oxford. He was in Norway working for a French oil company analysing the cores from the drillings. He took Chris and the children with him because she had revolted against him always being out of the UK leaving her with the children. Funny story coming up. Bob would go off, Egypt, Sudan, France and so on, she would stop taking the pill, or whatever, then he would turn up out of the blue. Result? Three children, three, two, and one! Once at the breakfast table Mark, the eldest was grizzling and pushing his corn flakes around his plate, Sarah the two year old was standing on her chair spitting her food out and the baby was just screaming. Chris bursts into tears. "Oh Ray, will it always be like this?" I uttered a few soothing words but what could I say? We were having a picnic once by a lake, Sarah at her worst, Chris once more at her wit's end. In the end even I nearly lost it, Chris had told me that in Norway children were not allowed to be smacked and the penalty for so doing was £25. "Chris" I said, "I would be more than willing to pay your fine!"

Chris asked me again the next year but I don't really have much memory except that when I went up to North Shields, Peter, by now Ruth's ex boy friend took me. He had rung to say that his new girl friend wanted to go to the Metro Centre in Gateshead and he offered to take me to North Shields. Coming back from this second trip I was joined by Chris and her children and so I drove back to Keighley with them, Chris taking the car on the ferry. On this return I had to share a cabin with four lads but as they all stayed out through the night it didn't make any difference.

Two memories, though, I am not sure during which of the two visits but Chris had invited some Norwegian friends for a meal and was making a big meat pie, she made the pastry

and I had the job of making the filling from a long and complicated recipe. All good fun. We had made a trip to Bergen Fish Market and had bought fish for the evening meal. On our return to the house Chris took the fish into the kitchen. Not long after I heard her shout, "Come in here please!" There she was half in tears, having stuck the knife into the fish intending to gut it, she just couldn't do it and handed it over to me. I did it, she cooked it and it was uneatable!

It was during one of my visits that Ruth rang to tell me of my letter in the Telegraph & Argus. Three IRA terrorists had been killed in Gibraltar by members of the SAS and this had been reported in the T&A under a headline calling them SAS Killers. I had written to the editor protesting at this description saying that whilst I had no views on the right or wrongs of the incident, the SAS men were soldiers carrying out their duties and should not be branded as common criminals. I sent a copy of the article and my letter to the Press Complaints Agency who told me that they had written to the editor telling him to deal with it. Ruth was ringing me to tell me that the T&A had printed my letter with a note from the editor admitting that I was right to complain and that the paper had made an error of judgement. One up to me eh?

A year or so later, Bob had been posted to Paris taking Chris and the children and now I was invited to stay there with them too. Booking the flight it never occurred to ask for insurance but the assistant said that they were offering free insurance which I accepted. As it turned out this was a godsend. As we approached the French coastline I asked the flight attendant if we would be crossing near Dunkirk. When she asked why, I told her, stupidly my eyes filled up. She went off, returning with two miniatures of cognac. Drink one she told me and put the other in your pocket. A little later she

comes up with another two bottles, "Here. Put those in your bag."

I had a great time in Paris, Chris taking me around showing me something of the city. We went up the Eiffel Tower and I got a glimpse of Mum in the way that Chris, trying to get into a lift against streams of others, grabs me by the arm and hurls me into the lift. I couldn't be in Paris and not go into Notre Dame. Afterwards we sat having coffee and cake in a pavement cafe. While we were sitting there a lady came down the street in our direction. Chris hissed, "Look at her", everything about her, from the dress, to the shoes and handbag were a perfect match and it will all have come naturally to her! I also saw something of Chris, the feminist, when I spoke disapprovingly of a policewoman's gun. "Why shouldn't women be armed as well as men?"

Although Chris was in a hurry to get back to pick up the children, she took me to Pere Le Chasse cemetery to have a wander around. I would like to have seen Oscar Wilde's tomb but it was on the other side of the cemetery and there wasn't time. We did see the tombs of Abelard and Heloise. There had been a move to move them into the same grave but French bourgeoisie hypocrisy wouldn't allow it.

While in Paris I was able to do something that Trefor had asked me. Would I look up a church? the name of which I have forgotten, and take a photo of a statue. I found this and took the photo. This church was opposite the Louvre and although time didn't allow for a visit, I did get to see the famous or infamous glass pyramid.

So far so good but on the Friday, things began to turn sour. As a thank you to Chris and Bob, I bought them a meal in a restaurant near Versailles. The meal went off all right but walking back to Bob's car I started to get breathless, so much so, that by the time I had got into the car, I was fighting for

breath and had to use an inhaler. Things settled down a bit but on the Sunday during a visit to Monet's garden the breathlessness came back. Being due to fly back on the Monday, I started to pack on the Sunday evening but the breathing got so bad that they called in the local doctor who ordered me straightaway into hospital. Chris said that I should get either Ian or Ruth to come over and I asked her to phone for Ruth because she was most likely to be around. I learned afterwards from Chris that the doctor was more concerned with my high blood pressure than my breathing. Apparently if my heart hadn't been so strong I might well have had a heart attack!

Bob took me into hospital where I was given an oxygen mask which I tried to take off, only for Bob to put it back. Eventually I was wheeled onto a ward and hooked up to a monitor, a cannular was put into my arm and two or three assorted liquids pumped in. For breathing, oxygen was fed directly into my lungs via a nasal tube. This didn't hurt, not even felt uncomfortable but was upsetting simply by being there. So I spent the night with all these attachments and with the monitor screen flashing up, to me, meaningless messages. Occasionally a nurse would come and adjust something or other. So the night passed and miraculously I slept.

After a couple of days on a monitor, I was moved, to what I suppose, was a less intensive care ward, the little I remember of it is largely taken up by a visit from Ruth. Remember my telling of the cognac measures? Ruth said that on her flight to Paris, she being a little weepy, a flight attendant (not the same one) gave her a couple! The power of tears eh? I had to tell Ruth that the oxygen mask plus odd wire were nothing as bad as it looked. The only other memory is of a nebulising fluid that was occasionally put into the mask. The nurse in Chris came out when, trying to take of my mask, I

was made to put it back on, pointing out that there was still some nebuliser left. Ruth brought me a new pair of pyjamas - it hadn't taken her long to find a Marks and Spencer's.

Both Ruth and Chris fell in love with the very charismatic doctor looking after me. Eventually I was moved to a double bedded room and lost all my appurtenances. After a day or two, I was told that I could go home. It was now that I got the benefit of my Insurance. Someone from Norwich Insurance even rang me up to keep me company. Then there was the matter of flights home for Ruth and me and the settling of the hospital bill. All taken care of, the insurance company arranged flights for us and paid the bill. We stayed with Bob and Chris till the day of the flight. I gave Chris a cheque covering the first doctor's bill (£40), £30 for a taxi to the airport plus something else to cover the time up to takeoff. It was a nice journey home with my daughter, we were both tired and tended to lean into each other and at one point she said, "I hope all these people know I'm your daughter!" Ian was waiting for us at the other end.

Now back to my many other holidays, at least by now I was able to travel on my own - unlike that first expedition without Anne! I think the most memorable was three weeks in the Gambia at the Atlantic Hotel, Banjul. This got off to a good start because Colin Chapman, Ruth's boss had a friend who was going there and when I arrived at the hotel they had sorted out a good downstairs room for me and arranged for a supply of mosquito sprays to be in my room. It was a very good room indeed, with a balcony and a small open space in front of it. It was such a marvellous holiday that I don't know where to start. Well, the hotel, room, food, service was really top class. The other guests showed tremendous friendship. Examples, sitting on my sun bed by the pool talking to a chap with an empty bed, obviously his wife's next to him, she came

out, stood listening for a moment - and then grabbed her bed and pulled it next to mine!

Another time I was on the beach talking to another couple underneath a shade, the next morning I noticed there was a third bed next to theirs so I got my bed put right away from there. Turned out that they had put the bed there deliberately for me. And again and again, going into the dining hall I would find someone standing asking me to join them at their table. Even the Thompson rep seemed to take a shine to me. Each time there was a bit of dancing she came and grabbed me. Once, she asked me whether I minded her talking to me so frequently. When I said not at all, as long as it was not because she felt sorry for me being on my own she told me that in each set of tourists there was a favourite and I was hers!

Although Banjul was not a particularly dangerous place we were advised to go with a Gambian escort whenever we went out sight seeing, there were some of these approved by the hotel but I went with one or other of the lads waiting around the hotel doorway. And if you think that was risky, how about this? Two of the people with whom I had made friends recommended a young lad who they had used, they said that he had taken them home with him, so that when he invited me to go with him I went. Admittedly I was a little fearful going out on a dark night passing by open sewers with him and his brother walking either side of me. They lived in a very small house, two rooms and lit by a bare electric bulb. I sat on a bed talking to the Mother and holding a small child. Everyone was very friendly, offering me a bottle of beer and some peanuts. After talking a while the two brothers took me back to the hotel, stopping by a bar where I bought us all a beer. I couldn't help noticing that the three beers cost me only

a little more than the one beer I had bought on my own that day. Obviously not what you know but who you know!

Every holiday sometimes has a black moment, this one had two, I was invited to join with some others on a speedboat trip and of course I fell trying to get on the boat! Only a grazed knee - and the amused concern of my friends. The other was at breakfast time. I had noticed that a middle aged woman always sat on her own and was never joined by others so, Big Hearted Arthur like (that's a reference to a radio comedian Arthur Askey) decided to sit with her. Oh God! No wonder she was always alone, she did nothing but gripe throughout the meal. Didn't like the Hotel, hated the country and it was too hot!

During the three weeks of the holiday I enjoyed one or two treats, the first was a "Champagne and Caviar" boat trip down the River Gambia or, more exactly: fizzy wine and rock salmon. Never mind, it was very interesting and during that trip I found myself giving medical advice. Talking to a chap I saw that he had a cold sore and told him that I had found that Zoverax usually got rid of it, during the rest of the trip no less than three others came up and asked me the name of the ointment.

The second most interesting trip was to a village that was supposed to be where the writer of Roots was born. Also a visit to the island, from which slaves were kept, whilst waiting to be shipped out. Then there were restaurant trips, one of which was to a Vietnamese restaurant somewhere out in the bush, with the couple who had befriended me on the beach, these same two invited me to go with them to the hotel's posh restaurant.

Beyond my "garden" wall there was a path and I could watch a man carving trinkets. As I was watching him one afternoon his chisel slipped and gashed his hand. Immediately

he leaps over the wall finger outstretched. "Daddy, Daddy, I've cut myself!" I took pity on him and gave him a tube of Savlon. In the room next to me there was a couple of people from somewhere in Berkshire who were very friendly. When I showed them a photo of Anne, the wife asked me for it. Why? I don't know.

All I know is that when I told Ruth she wasn't pleased. These people told me that their daughter was coming after they left and would be taking up the same room. Would I hold on to some money and things like insect repellent to give to her? In the end she didn't come and I gave the money to a charity. The room was taken by a lovely American lady, built like, and with the temperament of Tesse O'Shea. Her friend occupied the next room to her and each evening we would chatter until one day she said that instead of talking to each other out of our windows we should meet up in her room. We took it in turn to bring the whisky bottle. Sometime after I returned home she wrote to me from America to say that she was coming to Britain to attend a Nursing Conference in Harrogate. Gerry Dodds and I arranged to meet her. The visit ended rather in comedy, I took her back to Leeds but couldn't find the way into the station until just about the last minute before her train was due.

My first long haul flight was with Gerry Dodds to the Far East, a holiday booked up by her, flying with QUANTAS the Australian line. It started with a day and a night's stopover in Singapore staying at the very posh Shangrila Hotel being taken there from the airport by car. And what a difference from the hotels that I had been used to. We were greeted by ladies in traditional dress and taken up to a large twin bedded room with a very pricey mini bar from which we took only nuts and a beer.

After breakfast next morning we went on a guided tour of the city which included a visit to a temple and my first sight of someone doing T'ai chi. Quite exciting, but I didn't like Singapore that much, everywhere was too clean and hygienic and it was annoying in the public lavatories to find someone either male or female in there watching that you flushed the toilet - not to flush was an offence!

In late afternoon we were taken by car to Changi airport to catch a plane to Hong Kong. We arrived over the city at night time, and what a sight Hong Kong is by night, all those towers and city lighting, breathtaking. We spent a couple of full days staying in the famous Mandarin hotel and went on some very interesting outings. I loved the place, so busy and exciting, everyone seemed to have a telephone clamped to their ear and if they didn't have a mobile, they couldn't pass a land line without picking up the receiver! Well at least that was the impression I got. One of our trips was to a market where I bought Ian a Chinese hat complete with a queue: that's a pony tail to you. For Ruth I went into an Armani shop, I'd no idea of what to buy or even her size but bought some kind of coat which cost me nearly £300. I wonder whether she's ever worn it? One day perhaps, I'll summon up the courage to ask her! After a couple of days we were taken to the airport to catch the plane for our next stop, Bangkok. Getting to the airport I realised that I had left my anorak in the hotel. The anorak wasn't important but my keys were in it so I had a word with the rep and she said that she would contact the hotel. Sometime afterwards a man came through the lounge carrying my scruffy coat on a coat hanger, oh God, I could have died with embarrassment!

At Bangkok, once again we were met and taken to our hotel - another Shangrila, another group of really beautiful ladies in traditional dress and another very plush room. One of

the pleasures of this hotel was a coffee lounge overlooking the river. We had three days in Bangkok which we spent touring. We had one day's trip which took in a temple which had one of the biggest Buddhas in the world and a silk factory where I bought Ian a kimono. I notice that he still has it hanging on the back of his bathroom door. Coming back from a trip we decided to get off before the stop and walk back. Somehow I got separated from Gerry, went into the hotel by a different entrance and got lost. Fortunately one of the receptionists recognised me.

After a couple of days we were taken by car to a seaside resort the name of which escapes me. It was a decent hotel but a come down after the luxury of the Singapore and Bangkok hotels and the rooms were small. The one thing that sticks in my mind was a visit to the River Kwai Bridge and a ride on the railway ending with a walk to a restaurant. Then we were taken to a British war cemetery. Amongst the graves, which were marked, not by the familiar tall headstones, but by a low stone. I was intrigued to see that many of the stones had the names of soldiers from the Cambridgeshire & Suffolk Regiment. These were some of the Territorials of whom I had been envious, when I saw them training in Soham, at the start of the war. There but the grace of God etc.

So that was my far eastern holiday, something to be remembered for a long time. Whilst I was in the Gambia, one of the friends I had made suggested that I should go to Kenya. Gerry told me that she would come with me, if I would go with her to Egypt the next year. That was OK by me, so off we went. We made arrangements with a tour company for a week's tour of the Masai Mara Game Reserve to be followed by a two weeks' stay in a beach hotel in Mombassa. As we were flying to Nairobi from Heathrow, we booked a room in a hotel near to the airport to make sure that we caught our

flight. We were picked up from this hotel and taken to the airport in good time. We had also booked to stay in that hotel on our return to the UK. Determined to make as much as possible of this holiday I took no less than thirteen rolls of film to be used on the very expensive camera I had bought for the trip.

At Nairobi we were met and taken to our hotel and told to pack enough clothes to last a week and leave everything else for when we came back. After a night's sleep we got into a minivan and were driven for two or three hundred miles along rough, potholed roads to the Reserve. A very uncomfortable but fascinating journey, stopping at some quite interesting places including the Thika of the Flame Trees of Thika film. Less nice was a roadside "comfort" stop, I passed on the comfort part and was lucky. The only convenience was a hole! Suffering as I was at that time from a nervous belly, I was always worried about getting taken short, although the driver, who would be with us the whole week, assured me that he would always find me somewhere to go. The eight of us would be a party in all our consequent wanderings that week.

We arrived at a Game lodge and Gerry and I were allocated a very comfortable bungalow. The door of this bungalow was split like a stable door, now, we had all been told to watch out for monkeys and be wary of letting them in, for they could destroy a room in a few minutes. I had just put down my case when I heard Gerry scream. Sitting on the bottom part of the door was a monkey. Gerry rushed past me and pushed the thing off. That evening we had our first meal and afterwards watched some Masai dancers. I know that English women think that Masai warriors are the bee's knees but I'm not an English woman and I was put off by what I saw as arrogance.

Next day we went on the first of a number of game drives in the same mini van in which we had travelled from Nairobi. We spent the day, with a meal break, being driven around looking for game. My first sight of a lion was of one lurking behind a bush some distance away. Amongst the game, the ones we were advised to look out for were the "Big Five" lion, leopard, cheetah, cape bull and elephant. By the end of the week we had spotted all except leopard, this was disappointing because it was the leopard I most wanted to see but they are very much night animals we were told. One of the most startling sights was a group of lionesses around a bull which they had just killed. Interesting to see, that while two of them were feeding, the others were nursemaiding the cubs.

We travelled to other Game Lodges, one was on the Kenya Tanganyika border where we were set down on the bank of the Marai river. It was good to have the ground beneath our feet although I was reassured to see an armed game warden with us. There were hippopotamus in the river and a pride of lions slinking in single file along a wall presumably hunting. What was funny was to see a small cub following them as brave as the others. Another time we were taken to the edge of a saltwater lake and watched the flock of flamingos.

When George VI died in 1951 I think it was his daughter Elizabeth who was on holiday in Kenya staying in a Game Lodge called Tree Tops and of course the papers were full of it and the game lodge became famous. We stayed one night there - or rather *would* have done had it not been burned down previous to our visit. They had built another one on the same site and it is here that we spent that night. Not very satisfactory, the rooms were very small and we saw no animals come to the watering hole which was supposed to be the attraction of the place. We had been told to take only night

wear and a toothbrush. When I took off my coat Gerry gave me a coat hanger: here's your wardrobe! When we left, the young couple in our party, he owned a car saleroom, annoyed the rest of us by leaving a huge tip. We pointed out to them how unfair they were being towards later guests. I should have described our party. Besides us two there was a middle aged couple from Cambridge, the two I have just mentioned and a blacksmith from the south west and his wife. He got his living from shoeing the local hunt. He preferred the name of farrier but he was a nice bloke with no side.

Another time we stayed at a lodge, right on the edge of a river, during which time we had to sleep underneath mosquito nets. Here's another example of your Dad's absentmindedness, I managed to lose the rest of my malaria tablets but because we were having to keep taking them long after we got back I was able to borrow some of Gerry's and pay her back on our return. Other than the 'mossie' nets the only other memory of this particular lodge was the crocodiles. In the grounds was a long wall about three feet tall and each night there were a dozen or so croc's sleeping. I was surprised at the size of them, at least twenty feet long. They were no trouble, they just slept like logs.

At the end of the week we were driven back to Nairobi to spend a night at the hotel in which we had left our main luggage and then on to the airport to be flown to Mombassa where we were to spend two very luxurious weeks sunning ourselves. Knowing me it won't come as a surprise to know that I got into a near fight with a German over a sun lounger. He said that I was lying on one which he had bought and I stuck out as long as I could but had to back down when the hotel manager took his side - much to the amusement of my lot who jeered and called me chicken. One memory was of the food. Breakfast was cafeteria with just about every hot and

cold dishes possible. You could have your eggs cooked in any of the usual ways with each one cooked in front of you, and as for the fruit, fabulous. Lunch and dinner were enormous with five courses for the evening meal. Often the evening meal was served outdoors. One evening the hotel staff stood around in African tribal costume. I couldn't make out why one exotic looking lady was smiling at me until I realised it was the hotel receptionist.

During our time there we made two trips, one into town and one into a nature park. The town trip was made memorable for me. When passing a shop a woman wrapped her arm around my neck and pulled me into her shop. "You are my husband", she hissed. Well that's one way of attracting custom. Funnily enough the same thing happened to me in Yugoslavia and again in the Gambia. Do I really look so gullible? The nature park trip provided one or two interests such as the green mambas in a cage - what a terrifying sight they were, and an enormous turtle. Gerry and I got quite scared when at the end of the evening, with every one gone, our taxi did not turn up! When he turned up he told us some lie or other. It was at this trip that we got to hold a python, I wasn't all that keen but was shamed into it by Gerry.

A trip I made without Gerry was to the Ambeseli Game Park on a trip organised by the hotel. There were about eight of us, flown in an executive jet. The biggest thrill was to stand outside watching a herd of elephants passing by. One thing surprised me was seeing a lioness loping by some deer and not taking any notice of them. I had supposed that lions ate things at any time possible. The trip ended farcically. We were taken to a Game Lodge for lunch to be followed by a game drive. For some reason the drive couldn't take place and we were taken back to the plane but where was the pilot? There we were, all eight or so of us, in a tin hangar in the

middle of an African wilderness, now what? With my usual flair I collared a passing African and asked him to drive the truck, which was in the hangar, to the Game Lodge for the pilot. Unnecessary, because just at that moment the two pilots turned up and so we got back safely. Back in the hotel I tried to get my fellow castaways interested in making a claim for compensation but they weren't much interested so I let it go.

While I was enjoying all this, poor old Geraldine was having a horrible few days having caught a tummy bug. It was so bad with terrible diarrhoea that she was scared. We saw a pharmacist who gave her some medicine and I bought her several rehydration packets. I wasn't at all pleased when I found that she had put water purifying tablets into our ice water carafe. It made my whisky and water undrinkable! She did get over it but it left her shaky and determined that she would not be going to Egypt. It was odd that she, the sturdier one, should get it whilst I with my perpetual irritable bowel symptoms should be free of it. Funnily enough, it was just the same when Pam and I went to Egypt, she got it even worse than Gerry while I remained in the clear. More about Pam's and my Egyptian tour later.

After our two weeks in Mombassa we flew back to the UK but only after a bit of bother in Nairobi airport. When we booked in our luggage we had to show it to someone to have it ticked off and I was sure that the bloke was not registering mine and sure enough, after we had taken our seats in the plane I was hauled back into the terminal building for a check. This was when I had a lucky escape from serious trouble. It was forbidden to take Kenyan currency out from the country. While still in England I had read of a returning Briton, asked to change his currency back to sterling, had simply torn it up, landing him with a six month's gaol term. When I said that I had none, the official asked me for my wallet but finding none

let me go. It was only when I was back in the plane that I found I did have some. Phew! Getting back to Heathrow the muddle over my luggage returned to haunt me when it didn't turn up at the carousel. However, I had just completed all the lost luggage forms when the carousel started up again and out came my suitcase. We had booked another night at the Heathrow hotel so we got a good night's sleep before catching a train back to Keighley. So ended a very interesting holiday.

Now to another holiday, Egypt with Pam James, one which I think neither of us really wanted but were slightly "encouraged" by Ruth who was still living at home. It was to be another three weeks' holiday like the Kenyan one, one week in Luxor and two at a resort on the Red Sea. There was a bit of excitement before we went, Pam, who had been on her own since widowed, suddenly found herself a boy friend. Ever tactful I put a message on her answer machine that I would either sell her my ticket for her friend or she could sell her's to me and I'd take either Ian or Ruth. I chose to put it on her machine because it would be easier for her to decide at a distance. Next thing I knew was Ruth telling me that Pam had rung saying she was to tell her father that he was stuck with her! I was very pleased to hear that.

The fun started on our arrival at Luxor. The queue for Immigration was so long that we couldn't even get into the building and had to stand out in the heat. But not for long. I don't know how she managed it but we were taken firstly into the building and then right to the very front of this enormous line. I was so embarrassed and apologised to the people we were overtaking but no one seemed to mind. The whole of that week was spent touring the sights such as the temple of Karnak and a trip down the river to yet more temples. It was all rivetingly interesting and quite exciting seeing the huge feet of the ruined statue which had inspired Shelley to write

Ozymandias. All the time I was in a temple I had O Isis and Osirus from Mozart's Magic Flute echoing in my head. Perhaps the most exciting and exhausting was the trip to the Western bank and a whole day tramping into and out of empty tombs. One of the sites was the temple of Hatsephoset, a female pharaoh, all of whose names and signs had been obliterated after her death. Long after we arrived back home a gang of thugs massacred a group of German tourists at the same spot. There but the grace of God eh? During this trip we made friends with a couple from Oswestry, she, amusing and strikingly thin, told us that at school she had been known as Stick Insect. We spent one evening shopping in the town where I bought Ian an Arab kufeya while in the hotel I bought a gold cartouche with Ruth's name, supposedly in Egyptian hieroglyphics

At the end of the week we boarded a bus which took us to the Red Sea resort, the name of which escapes me. Here again we got favourable treatment being shown to, wait for it, the Bridal suite, but as it had a double bed obviously unsuitable! The poor man was quite nonplussed when Pam told him that I wasn't her husband. Then we were shown another room but it only had one single bed. Pam put on her best paddy and insisted that we were given a double bedded room. I don't know how she does it but she seems to attract men at the flutter of her skirt

Highlights of the fortnight. Pam and I booked up for a trip underwater in a yellow - it really was a yellow submarine, to the coral beds, (the picture of Pam on my wall, is of her on the boat waiting to board the sub). Just as I went off on a privately booked plane whilst in Kenya, so Pam and I booked for a flight to Cairo for a day's sightseeing. This was particularly interesting to me because I had spent some time in Cairo in 1946/7. Of course we had to go to the pyramids but

both Pam and our tour guide wouldn't let me actually go inside the pyramid of Cheops. I didn't mind, I had done all that sort of thing forty or more years before. Worthwhile was a visit to the Museum of Cairo to see the treasures of Tutankhamen. When they had brought them to London some years previously there had been very long queues and now, here we were looking at them with no queuing whatsoever.

Other than these two trips most of our time was spent lazing on the beach and having meals. At one evening meal I managed to please both Pam and an elderly German couple. I know the words, parrot fashion, of two or three German songs and the man and I sang them to each other at the table. Pam told me that she was proud of me and the next day the old fella told me, "You are a vonderful mann" How's that then? There was one afternoon when all the blokes went off scuba diving and I was left in charge of the ladies. The stick insect wouldn't go into the sea for fear of fishes tickling her toes! I persuaded her to go in but it was at the cost of having to go in with her arms wrapped so tightly round my neck that I could hardly breathe. When we got a little way from the shore I was allowed to swim only within her arm's length. Back home I was in trouble with Pam: we had decided that I would pay everything on my card and we would settle up back in the U.K. When she found that I had not been keeping the receipts, O dear...!

I've spent too long on holidays so I will skip over the rest. Gerry and I went on a weekend to Amsterdam and had a very interesting time walking around and having a boat trip along the canals. We wanted to see Anne Frank's's house but it was closed, on our way back, with the rain pouring down, we got hopelessly lost but at least we did see a lot more of the streets of Amsterdam. Highlights, finding a good bookshop

which sold Sylvia Plath's diaries which at that time were unattainable in the UK.

And of course, you can't be in Amsterdam without trying a spliff. Encouraged by my companion I went into one of the coffee houses, knowing of course, nothing about anything. I was expecting to be able to just go in and buy ready made cigarettes. In a corner of the cafe was a young long haired lad, with a tray, on which he had samples of different weeds such as marijuana, skunk and grass. Again, in complete ignorance I bought a packet of something or other for the Dutch equivalent of forty pence. I had already bought a packet of cigarette papers from the bar but what with the low lighting and not having my spectacles I had no success in rolling a spliff. Fortunately an American standing at the bar offered to roll them for me and presented me with a perfectly formed cigarette. Did I enjoy it? Yes, very much and could easily make a habit of it.

Next up, a three day trip to Rome, again with Geraldine. Again we were presented with a double bed which was an impossibility. We went of course to see all the sights with Gerry mostly interested in going to a street with all the fashion shops. She and I had previously been to the Alhambra in Bradford to see Tosca and it was really fascinating to see the Castle something or other which was the setting of most of the story. Then we went on a coach trip to the ruins of Pompeii passing Monte Casino and the Bay of Naples. While in Pompeii, a Korean lady seemed to show an interest in my flight bag so I passed it to her and she immediately gave it to her husband to carry for me! So that's it, all my wanderings and now back to my story.

CHAPTER 20: LEFT OVER LIFE

You two, of course, were the reasons why I managed to hold on to my sanity, I honestly do not know how others who don't have two such as you managed to keep going. What would be the point, alone without children? Then, too, I had some support from others, Mum's colleagues, my colleagues. Wanting to do something to thank them, I took some of them out for a meal. The 'eating out' feature in the T & A commended a restaurant, Green Top in Clayton heights. It was on one such occasion that I was made aware of the difference in your temperaments. So as not to go on my own with couples like the Beckets and Chris & Bob Jones I invited Alison Edwards, one time fellow careers teacher to make up a four. One particular night these friends were home with me having coffee and Ian comes in, mumbles something and speeds shyly upstairs. Later, Ruth comes home, takes one look, plumps herself down besides me and takes over the conversation!

For quite a while I was very much at a very loose end and haunted the Bronte school staff room, they must have got very fed up of me but didn't say anything. Some one who did come to see me was Gil Riley and on one occasion mentioned that Frances Dawson the Cookery teacher had purposefully

stripped bits of wallpaper on one staff room wall so that there would have to be re-done. Would I like to put the paper on? It was a godsend, for a whole day I put up the paper, sharing in the staff's coffee breaks, even getting a free school dinner!

Doing this got me off my backside and I decided to do some voluntary work and chose to be an advisor in the Citizens Advisory Bureau. I was accepted and started the ten week training course spending one day each week in Leeds and on all other days acting under supervision in the Keighley bureau. It was very interesting, I wasn't, of course, allowed to answer the telephone but sat in on interviews. Going to the course each week provided a lot of pleasure, the train ride into Leeds and the taxi ride to the CAB offices in, I think, Vicar Lane.

What was funny about the course was that after a few weeks I found the younger ones coming to me for advice especially a West Indian girl and a very young girl from Huddersfield. This girl, whose name I don't remember was a fanatical Jehovah's Witness who said that she wasn't going to university, "Because there isn't time, the world was soon coming to an end and I have so many souls to save." We became quite friends. At the end of the course she took a photo of us all and surprisingly wrote to me with a copy. One day we met up in Huddersfield for a meal, she was really interesting company. I rang her home once and when her Mother answered I quickly put her mind at ease by telling her that I was an old man and not some young lad. "It's all right Ray", she said, "We know all about you!" Though we didn't meet up again we kept in touch with each other by writing but this came to an end after I had sent her copies of a couple of cartoons from Punch magazine making fun of Jehovah's Witnesses. One showed a couple coming back to their house after a holiday and finding a queue of sober suited, black-

hatted, men outside of their door with the husband saying, " Oh dear, we forgot to cancel the Witnesses!" She didn't reply, so I assume she was offended. A pity, because I did like her.

I found the work very interesting, all of it confidential of course, but one or two things stick in my mind. A never ending nuisance was a chap who came in every day, always with the same query. His Mother when she died left her estate, mostly the house, in trust for him. This meant that he would have an income from the sale of the house but he would not be able to touch the capital, this was because she didn't trust him to take care of his money. This didn't suit him so he was continually applying fruitlessly to the courts to have her will set aside.

Everyday he would come in bringing a couple of shopping bags filled with papers to do with the matter. If I was dealing with him, I would listen, make inconsequential sounds and as he passed the papers to me put them back into his bag. I would have banned him but Gillian Ward the manager was more tolerant and let him keep coming. One thing in his favour, his wife had a serious mental illness and would continually abuse him, sometimes physically, but he would never leave her or have her "put away". So much of a nuisance was she and so continually upsetting their neighbours that the Council often had to rehouse them. Eventually they were found a house in a cemetery where the neighbours were uncomplaining! I still see him around, sometimes on his own, but more often with another very odd person and always with bags stuffed, I presume, with papers. I wonder that the Courts have not declared him a 'Vexatious Litigant' and barred him from coming to court.

Perhaps my finest hour came when I won a case for a client before a Benefits Appeal Tribunal. Not sure of all the details of the case, a woman had her application for

unemployment benefit turned down. There were three people on the tribunal and as I argued the case, it was obvious that while two of them seemed sympathetic, one, a severe looking man seemed very hostile to me and asked unfriendly questions. We were sent out for a while and then asked back in and told that there was a two to one decision in the claimant's favour: I had done it. Could well imagine who had cast the unfavourable vote. The lady was very grateful and invited me to have free meals in her roadside café,. Back at the office Gillian was very pleased with me.

Of course, I was quite experienced at representing people, in my Union days I had represented members being disciplined by their Heads. One I remember was getting someone off the hook, much to the chagrin of his own union rep who was hoping that the bloke would be sacked! Two other visits to tribunals were not at all successful although in fairness to me in both I was brought in too late. One for the CVS was for an elderly man asking for extra benefit. Really, all I could do was to accompany him, a lost cause. CVS, the initials of Council for Voluntary Services, is a voluntary body acting as a link to all the various voluntary organisations in the district. Their office was on the same floor as the CAB and it was there the organiser Mrs Shirley recruited me. In this capacity I did various things like driving people to their hospital appointments, shopping, and sometimes simply visiting them. It was certainly better than mooning around the place like, as my old Mum would say, a fart in a thunderstorm.

Mrs Shirley left and her place was taken by Julie van Kemenade, a thirty four year old woman, married to a Dutch man - hence the van. One of the things I noted was that she had a disability and used a half walking crutch, I was to learn later that this was the result of a motorcycle accident when she was sixteen. We soon got on well together and I enjoyed many

a cup of coffee in her office. One thing that surprised me, after I came back from France - of which more earlier - I told her that I had visited the tombs of Abelard and Heloise in the Pere La Chasse cemetery in Paris and she confessed that she never knew that they were real people. It must have interested her because she told me that her husband had bought a copy of Helen Wadell's "Abelard and Heloise". Another time she asked me to find out who Hero and Leander were.

There's a lot more to say about Julie and that will come later when she left for a job in Craven Advocacy. During a meeting in what was then called the Oaks she came up to me and told me she was leaving. I asked her to sit down and told her that I was sorry she was leaving, that she had been lovely, and thanks. She surprised me by putting her arms round me and kissing me so hard, and for so long that my lips were sore! On resuming the meeting I passed her a piece of paper on which I had written part of a poem by Leigh Hunt. "Say I'm weary, say I'm sad. Say that health and wealth had missed me, say I'm growing old but add: Julie kissed me."

After Julie, came Gil Coles, a young unmarried woman and she and I got on like a house on fire. Our first outing was to the pictures at Birstall, I wanted to see Braveheart but as you know, I don't like going to a cinema on my own. Gil had already seen it but very kindly told me that she would come with me.

It was decided that I would pick her up at her home, 13, Fairy Dell, Cottingley. When I got there they invited me in. Oh dear, I felt so uncomfortable, here was I an old man collecting a young woman (Gil was 33) and her parents were younger than me! Didn't matter, we went and I enjoyed the film. Much later on, Bernard and Sheila came to stay and I took them out for a meal at the Harlequin restaurant in Cowling, not wanting to be an odd one out I asked Gil if she would make up a fourth. She

agreed but said that I had to introduce her as a friend not as a volunteer organiser. Fair enough!

We went out several times after that, two I remember particularly. She rang me once saying she wanted to have what she called a "snuffly" day, which is when we would do only nice things. So we started off by having breakfast in Betty's in Ilkley, I had poached eggs with smoked salmon then on to Shipley to see her grandfather followed by a pub lunch: can't remember but I should think we ended up at the pictures, we usually did. Another time we went to Leeds calling in first at the Corn Exchange for coffee and ordering a rock bun so big that we had to share it. Then two remarkable things happened, Gil wanted to go to Harvey Nichols, which had just opened a branch in Leeds. Not knowing the way, she stopped to ask a very attractive, young female Big Issue seller. Having told us the way, she suddenly surprised me by throwing her arms round me, told me I was lovely then kissed me on the cheek! The Big Issue seller that is, not Gil. Not bad for an old man. Another surprise was to follow, having looked round Harvey Nicks I suggested we go to their cafe for some tea. Setting off we heard a little voice say behind us, "Please may I come?" It was one of the shop girls, we said that she could come but obviously she couldn't, Gil told her that we would bring her a cup but again, that was impossible. I can't help it if I'm a magnet for women!!

When Julie van Kemenade had settled into her new job at Skipton she rang me and asked whether I would become a volunteer with her which I was pleased to do. Besides my own work as an advocate I became something of Julie's chauffeur taking her to meet some of our partners and to her meetings. These journeys took me to many places in North Yorkshire. One I remember was the two of us going to Bentham and then on to Ingleton for a pub lunch - my first

taste of deep fried brie! I remember this particularly because it was such a lovely sunny day and Julie was so very happy.

On the way back we listened to Simply Red and Phil Collins on the car disc player. Another journey was to Settle where she had a meeting. While she was in the meeting I had a look round the place finishing up in a cafe. She picked me up from there and as we were leaving I said, "You realise what those people are saying? Poor old lad, he was enjoying his coffee and then along came his bossy daughter and hoicked him out!", She and I became quite good friends, she coming here often, once, she even asked me to take her out to restaurant.

Another evening we went to the Alhambra to see the ballet, Romeo and Juliet, having first called into a restaurant for moussaka, washed down with a bottle of retsina. Unfortunately - and all due to my stupidity, she fell out with me and I haven't seen her since. This was a great loss to me for in Julie I had a like-minded friend with whom I could talk with on all kinds of subjects.

Still, I have other, very good friends, friends such as Cathy Furness and Ruth Crannage. Each time I have been in hospital they have visited me, even when I was on a psyche ward. Cathy I have known each other since she came to teach at Bronte around about 1972 and since Anne's death she has been an extraordinarily good friend to me. Cathy still teaches but she finds the time to come on outings with me and when she has been on her computer course at Keighley College she comes across and joins Ian and myself on Friday lunch time. Cathy is one of the group of retired teachers who also go for a pub lunch each Thursday. the others being Ruth 'AKA' Hazel, and Leah Skirrow.

These pub lunches started with Leah Adkins, ex Senior Mistress at Bronte, who was widowed at about the same time

as I was ' widowered'. She and I used to go swimming at the Long Ashes leisure centre and then go for a meal at the now closed Wilsons Arms at Threshfield. Later on we asked Trefor Day, a past Deputy at Bronte, though that meant that due to his greater age, we no longer swam. When George Skirrow's wife Eunice died we asked him to join with us. An odd result of his joining us is that he and Leah are now husband and wife although since writing this George has sadly passed away. The fifth pub lunchee is Ruth with whom I became friendly having worked with her at the C.A.B. and as a Manorland's volunteer. Another friend has been Emma Furness elder daughter of Cathy. Cathy rang me one day out of the blue to tell me that Emma wanted to take me for a pub lunch. Not long afterwards Emma did ring saying that she would drive and that I was not to pay for anything. As I put the phone done I heard her shout, "Hey Mum, I'm going to be one of Ray Garner's women!"

We had quite a few outings after that, once even taking her to Alsager to stay with Bernard and Sheila Gilhooly. That journey was a bit of a farce, she insisted that we go in her own car with her driving. Having had lunch at the Hare and Hounds at Lothersdale we set off for the M65 which took us via the M66 to the M62 heading for the M6. Now, as anyone knows who has used the M62 you have always to keep an eye out for your turn off. When I spotted the sign pointing to the M6 she took no notice and we went merrily along the M63! Remembering that when Anne and I took the caravan to Chester we reached the M6 by way of the M56 I told her to follow the Manchester Airport signs. Before we reached the M6 I spotted a turn off to the A50 which I knew would some how take us to Alsager. Oh dear, we came to a crossroads with the road pointing both ways. At a guess we turned left but had absolutely no idea how far this road would take us - or even if

we had chosen the right way to turn at the crossroads. On and on we went blindly, until we stopped at a petrol station: we were heading in the right direction but we had a good few miles still to do.

So that's about it, eighty years, and while not exactly going strong, I'm alive and have reasonable command of my faculties. Now, to finish off, a run down of the present, a sort of state of play.

Ian is working as a technician at Keighley College and seems to be making an excellent fist of it. He has set up a mobile text messaging procedure which allows lecturers to send messages to each student. He's also set up and runs the college's walking club and until recently taught a Line Dancing course. He has met up with a very charming young woman, Julie, of his own age who along with her eighteen year old son now lives with him. He couldn't have found a nicer and more attractive lady. When she first moved in with Ian, I was ill and very much down with a bout of my perennial depression, yet she took care of me wonderfully, visiting me each day, tidying up my bed. She truly is a very kind lady. Thank you Julie for everything.

Ruth, now separated from her husband, has been living in the Philippines as a Country Manager of an Asian Resettlement Company, but is now moving to Hong Kong having been appointed Regional Manager of an international company. All the branches located in the Far East will be responsible to her. In the last week or two I have got calls and messages from her from Shanghai - boarding a plane to Beijing - Hong Kong - boarding a plane to Singapore and Manila boarding a plane to Bangkok. Obviously a very busy young woman. Since I wrote this, Ruth has left her job in the Philippines and has been appointed a Regional Manager with an American Company supervising 24 branches throughout

the whole of the Far East. Have just had a text message from her telling me that her boss has resigned, and she has been offered the job. So, I have two attractive and very successful children both of whom have shown me a totally undeserved love and loyalty. Finally, my Mother died a few years ago and my younger brother Derrick as well. I was staying with Ruth in Manila..

So there you have it, I've had an interesting life and having been blessed with a darling wife and two very loyal and caring children. I think what a lucky man I am!

Since this was written Ian & Julie have married in Settle on a beautiful warm day in May 2006, his birthday. An added bonus was Ruth flying home for a few days. After the wedding the happy couple went off to Turkey for the honeymoon. So now I have a lovely daughter-in-law.

All I know of the three people in the photograph is that they were members of my late wife Anne's family. Anne's father's name was Gibbs and her mother's Ounsworth. I would guess from what I know of the family that it was taken in Margate or Gillingham around the late twenties. The lady in the black coat on the right of the photo is probably the Aunt Polly whom I met in the 50's when she would have been in her nineties. If I'm right about Polly, then the man in the picture is one of Anne's grandfathers. What drew me to the photo is the happiness that shines out from their faces. When I showed it to my son Ian, he was so taken with it he immediately had it framed. They are all dead now. Anne nearly twenty years ago, her father CPO Robert Gibbs having gone down at Dunkirk in HMS Wakeful. Both Anne and her mum's ashes were strewn in the sea above where Wakeful is believed to lie.

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