Dr F. W. (Bobby) Roberts

(27 January 1911 to 2 February 2005)

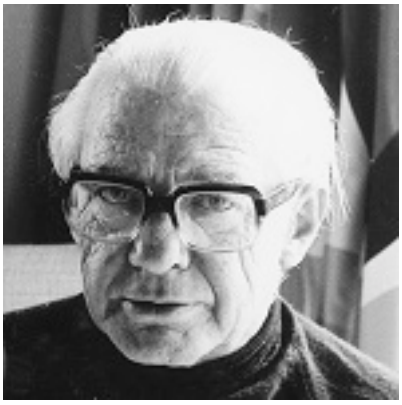
Memoirs

(1911 to 1973)

Illustrated edition: 30 April 2017










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Introduction

In the early 1990s, my father was about 79 years old when he first bought a computer. He used it primarily as a word-processor to start writing his memoirs, and over the course of several years, he beavered away typing assiduously, eventually compiling a manuscript that was 230 pages long.

Some years after my father's death in February 2005, my brothers and I paid to have his memoirs re-typed as a Microsoft Word document. All we had until then were photocopies of his manuscript, and none of us knows what happened to the original typescript my father had printed out on flimsy paper using a small dot-matrix printer.

Neither do we wholly know why my father's memoirs came to a sudden stop. The last page he wrote recalls preparations for a trip to Portugal in December 1973 – when my father was only 62 years old, which was more than 31 years before he died. My father once told me while he was writing his memoirs that he was struggling to put the more recent events in his life into perspective: that was probably the primary reason why his memoirs simply petered out. I feel sure, though, that another reason for the sudden ending stems from the time he was writing his memoirs. In the mid 1990s, the actions and behaviour of one of my father's children caused my parents a great deal of stress and sorrow. The whole affair was disheartening and dispiriting, and my parents barely wanted to talk about the matter, let alone – I feel sure – write about it.

At the end of my father's memoirs, I have, therefore, added an epilogue to give a brief account of what my father and mother did during the final three decades of their lives. When he set out to write his memoirs, my father said he was doing so primarily to let his children and grandchildren know about some of the things he'd done, people he'd met, and places he'd visited. As I am now more than ten years older than my father was when his memoirs abruptly ended, I find that I too am conscious of the need that my father felt to let his descendants know more about his and my mother's lives.

My father never thought that the document he spent countless hours typing – primarily in his garage-converted-into-a-study in Kingston, Tasmania – would be published. However, more than ten years after he died, I extracted my father's accounts from his memoirs of working in Lambarene in 1957 with Dr Albert Schweitzer and of the 1967 Hobart bushfires, and I put them up on my website. As a result of my doing so, several medical historians – most notably, Professor Mart van Lieburg and Dr Marten van Wijhe in the Netherlands, and Professor Tony Wildsmith in Britain – came across my father's recollections and realised there might be more material in his memoirs that could be of interest and possibly even of use to them. I thus sent material from the chapters about my father's work in Utrecht in 1947-48 to Dr van Wijhe, and I also agreed to copy-edit the entire manuscript in order to assist Professor Tony Wildsmith's research into the contribution of British-trained doctors to the worldwide development of anaesthesia. The document you are now reading is the copy-edited version of my father's memoirs.

The typists who converted the photocopied pages of my father's original typescript into a Microsoft Word document took their task very literally. They did not try to work out what a missing letter may have been or try to correct any errors in the manuscript. For

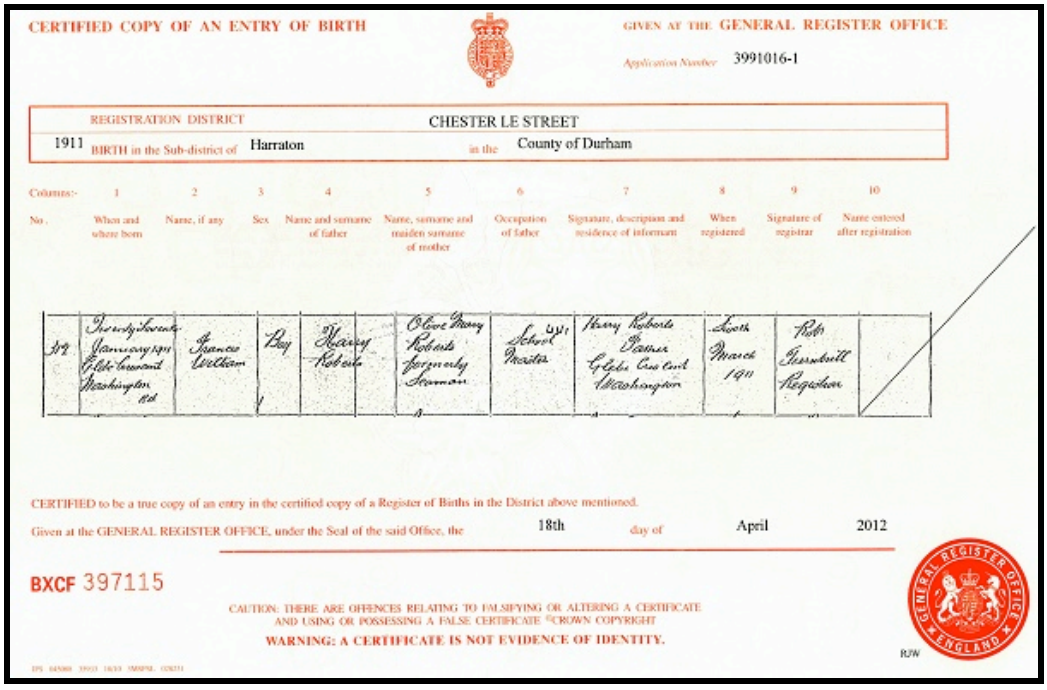
example, on the first page of my father's typescript there is a sentence that begins, 'One of the first real memories that I have is …', but the letter 't' in the word 'the' was obscured by a hole-punch. As a result, the Microsoft Word document that my brothers and I were given reads: 'One of [unclear]he first real memories that I have is …'! My aim in producing this document was, first of all, to get rid of all the '[unclear]' notations in the manuscript. In addition, a small number of factual errors have been corrected (such as the name of the Union Castle liner Bobby, Lilian, and the family sailed on to go to South Africa in 1949), and spelling and typing errors have been rectified (not that there were many). Where I think it could be helpful, I've occasionally added brief footnotes to supplement several of the things my father said. My father's grammar has been largely left alone, even though I disagree with or dislike some of his stylistic preferences (he was, as will become clear to readers of these memoirs, a 'which' man, whereas I tend to be a 'that' man). I should stress, too, that I have made no attempt either to alter or to tone down Bobby's opinions. I hope that the overall result – comprising my father's original work and my minor changes – is a readable and interesting manuscript.

Illustrations have been added to this edition of Bobby Roberts' memoirs. As a result, it is a *very* large file – far too big to be transmitted by email. However, if you want a copy without illustrations, it's a far smaller file and is easily able to be mailed electronically to you. As Bobby explains in Chapter 15 of his memoirs, the house that he and Lilian, Stuart, Charles, and Linda lived in on the slopes of Mt Wellington on the outskirts of Hobart was totally destroyed in the February 1967 'Black Tuesday' Tasmanian bushfires. The family lost all their possessions. As a result, the family has very few pre-1967 photographs. One small set of exceptions to this consists of the 35mm transparencies that Bobby gave me prior to my departure for the United States in August 1962 so that I could show them to my American Field Service host families in Ohio and tell them something about our lives in South Africa. Luckily, in view of what happened to my parents' home, I never returned the slides. They survived the conflagration and several of them have been reproduced in this illustrated edition of Bobby's memoirs. Nevertheless, despite that, I still had to make extensive internet searches in order to find appropriate illustrations for these memoirs. I am extremely grateful to all those people whose photographs and documents I have used, for making them available via the internet. To acknowledge my debt to them, the final section of this edition of Bobby's memoirs gives the source of every photograph and illustration that appears in the first three-hundred pages of this document.

Nigel S. Roberts
Wellington, New Zealand
30 April 2017

Chapter 1: Early Days

According to my birth certificate, I was born in Washington in the County of Durham, a small coal-mining village in the District of Chester-le-Street.



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 3991016-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT CHESTER LE STREET

1911 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Harraton in the County of Durham

Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
32	Twenty-Seventh January 1911 Glebe Crescent Washington Rd	Francis William	Boy	Harry Roberts	Olive Mary Roberts formerly Seaman	School Master	Harry Roberts Father Glebe Crescent Washington	Tenth March 1911	Robt Tweddell Registrar	

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 18th day of April 2012

BXCF 397115

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE © CROWN COPYRIGHT

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE ENGLAND

RJW

Francis William (Bobby) Roberts' birth certificate.

In 1911, my father, Harry Roberts was a schoolteacher there. He had met my mother, Olive Mary Seaman, at Durham University where they both graduated and trained to be teachers.



When Bobby was born in 1911, his parents – Harry and Olive Roberts – were living at 55 Glebe Crescent, Washington, County Durham.

I was born on 27 January, Mozart's birthday. The doctor who attended was a friend of my father and pulled his leg and said, 'Well he's all right physically, but I don't think he'll have enough intelligence to be a teacher like his parents.' My father replied, 'Oh well, we'll just have to make a doctor of him then!'

When I was about six months old, my parents decided to immigrate to Canada, and Harry got a job as a teacher way out in the bush in Alberta. By some mischance their luggage went astray and their first impressions of Canada were no doubt highly coloured by this misfortune. Whether it was the remoteness or the approaching winter, I do not know, but when after a few months a telegram arrived to say that their luggage had, after all, been found and was in Quebec, my father replied 'Keep it there, we'll collect it on our way back to England.' On our return the family lived in the Stockton-on Tees-area, and my brother Peter was born there in March 1913.

Norman Roberts
England and Wales Birth Registration Index

Name	**Norman Roberts**
Event Type	Birth Registration
Registration Quarter	Apr-May-Jun
Registration Year	1913
Registration District	Stockton
County	Durham
Event Place	Stockton, Durham, England
Mother's Maiden Name (not available before 1911 Q3)	Seaman
Volume	10A
Page	136
Line Number	81

The birth registration index for Bobby's younger brother, Norman Peter Roberts.

My father taught at the Bowesfield Lane School in 1913 but in early 1914[1] we moved to Great Yarmouth.[2] I only have the vaguest memories of Yarmouth: the only thing I can remember is being hurried along the sea front, where to or what the hurry was I have no idea. When the First World War broke out my mother did some volunteer nursing at a military hospital and I have been told that I was very concerned to think that my mother would have to take those big soldiers on her lap as that was the only sort of nursing I knew about.

After the German Navy shelled Great Yarmouth my father's parents were worried about the safety of their only family and we went to live in Stockton-on-Tees where my

[1] A Friday, 6 February 1914, logbook entry by the Bowesfield Lane School headmaster notes that 'Mr Harry Roberts left this school on the 30th inst. for the Priory School Great Yarmouth. He received on leaving a present of a Silver Cigarette Case.'
[2] Going back as far as the early 18th century, generations of Bobby's mother's relatives, the Seaman family, came from Great Yarmouth.

paternal grandparents lived near the northeast corner of Ropner Park. We lived not far away in a *cul-de-sac* called Austin Avenue off Hartburn Lane in the end house with a triangular garden, the northern apex of which was flanked on both sides by railway lines. One of the first real memories that I have is of being roused from sleep together with Peter and carried out into the garden in the middle of the night to watch a Zeppelin coming down in flames over Middlesbrough way.



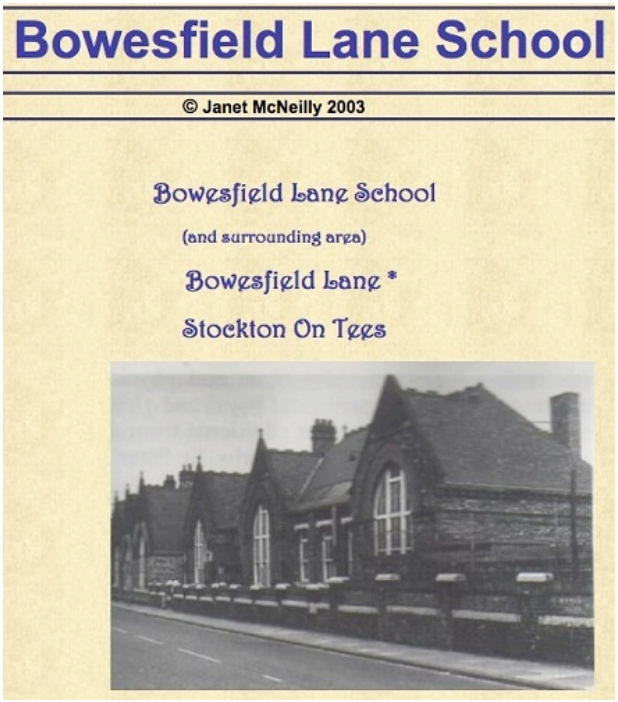
Bobby's father's parents lived near Ropner Park in Stockton-on-Tees.

My grandfather worked at a brickyard and as a child I thought he was the owner, but on mature consideration of the house and street they lived in I suppose he was a foreman. Living so close to our grandparents, Peter and I spent a lot of time at their house and I remember two childhood accidents that took place there. Peter somehow managed to pull down the kettle that sat permanently on the hob and scalded my arm and I can remember the painful dressings done by the District Nurse. In return for this piece of grievous bodily harm inflicted on me, I later got my own back by pushing Peter out of the sitting room window into the paved backyard. This assault was not, of course, deliberate but caused by us both standing on the sofa under the window and in order to have a closer look at a passing cat walking along the backyard wall, somehow Peter leant a bit too far out and went out headfirst. By a stroke of luck right under the window was a small padded footstool and Peter fell on his shoulder on that and broke his collarbone, infinitely preferable to hitting his head on the paving.

The first school I went to was the Queen Victoria High School for Girls where they took children, boys and girls, of pre-school age. Other vague memories of that time are of holidays, by the sea at Runswick Bay and on the North Yorkshire moors at Osmotherley. I can remember searching for pieces of jet, a semi-precious stone reputed

to be abundant in the Whitby district, and also collecting winkles at low tide on the rocks below the cliffs at the Kettleness end of the bay. I don't think we ever found any jet but we certainly had many a shellfish meal with the aid of a pin. Near Osmotherley on the road east of the village towards Rievaulx and Helmsley across the moors was a pub called The Chequers run by two old ladies where they had a fire burning in the big open fireplace that was reputed to have been burning continuously for well over a century. I remember that fascinated me and on a fine day it was a favourite walk of the family to go and see it. The Chequers was so remote that I don't think it could have had many regular customers, only passing wayfarers, and I suppose the fire as a talking point must have been an attraction for tourists.

During a holiday at Osmotherley, I suppose it must have been in the Easter vacation of 1917, when I was six years old, my parents had a serious quarrel and I can remember my mother storming out of the rented cottage and riding off on her bicycle back to Stockton. That quarrel was never resolved and a short time later my parents separated and so were Peter and I. My mother took me and we rode off on her bicycle, with me on the carrier, and we went all the way to her parents in South East London. When I look back on that event it occurs to me that that must have been quite a feat for a woman to undertake. I can't remember how we carried enough luggage, nor do I know how long it took us. The distance from Stockton-on-Tees to London is about 240 miles or just under 400 kilometres. I do remember one place we stopped in a suburb of Coventry with some friends, a Mr and Mrs Parncutt who had at least two little girls, younger than me. Peter stayed with my father who was – once again – a teacher at the Bowesfield Lane government school,[3] a position he held until he retired from teaching in 1943.



Detailed records of the history of Bowesfield Lane School are contained on this website.

[3] A logbook entry by the headmaster of the Bowesfield Lane School on Monday, 3 May 1915, noted that 'Mr Hy. Roberts (Trained Certificated) commenced duty as assistant here today and was placed with Standard IV.'

My maternal grandparents lived in Lee, south of Blackheath between Catford and Eltham, in a large Victorian house in Newstead Road with three floors above ground and a semi basement and that was to be my home for several years. My maternal grandfather was Charles Joseph Seaman, I think my grandmother's Christian name was Sarah but I am not sure, I do know that her maiden name was Francis, because that is why my first given name is Francis.[4] C.J. Seaman was an engineer with the firm of Brinjes and Goodwin who were specialists in bridge building.[5] I have an idea that they were in some way involved in the building of the bridge over the Zambesi at the Victoria Falls. Even when my grandparents moved house it was only to a very similar house just round the corner in Burnt Ash Road and we went with them, and my mother and I lived on the top floor of that house almost as in a separate flat. I lived in Lee right up to the time when in 1933 I qualified in medicine and went to a resident house surgeon appointment at the Middlesex Hospital.

To go back to 1917, I went to school at the house next door in Newstead Road run by Miss Garrett, a co-educational preschool of which I only have happy memories. Miss Garrett taught all subjects, including music and I had piano lessons. During this time there were a few Zeppelin air raids and I can remember being brought down from the top floor to sleep in the Breakfast room in the basement. I do not remember hearing any bombs but I do recall watching the searchlights looking for and occasionally locating an airship.

At some time during the last year of the War, I suppose it must have been either late 1917 or during 1918, my mother went to be a school mistress at a boys Grammar School to replace one of the masters who had been called up into the army. The school was in Brewood (pronounced 'Brood'), a few miles north of Wolverhampton, near the famous Royal Oak of Boscobel in which the future King of England, Charles II hid after the battle of Worcester in 1651 where the royalist army he had raised in Scotland against Cromwell was defeated.

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[4] Bobby's maternal grandmother was Sarah Ann Frances (who was born in Stockton on 31 March 1858 and died in London on 30 January 1936). Her maiden name was more often spelt with an 'e' than an 'i'. When he wrote his memoirs, Bobby did not know that his maternal grandfather, Charles Joseph Seaman, was a direct descendent of Francis Seaman (who was born in Norwich in 1699 and died in Great Yarmouth in 1761) and it was also possible Bobby was named Francis because of this.

[5] Grace's Guide to British Industrial History contains the following 1941 obituary for Charles Joseph Seaman: CHARLES JOSEPH SEAMAN, M.B.E., was chairman and managing director of Messrs Bringes and Goodwin Ltd., of Reading and Poplar at the time of his retirement in 1931, and he had been managing director since 1911, in which year he purchased the business and converted it into a limited liability company. He received his early training in technical classes at Stockton-on-Tees, and during his apprenticeship, which he served from 1870 to 1875 at the Thornaby Ironworks of Messrs. W. Whitwell and Company. He then became draughtsman to Mr Thomas Whitwell, consulting engineer and the inventor of the hot blast stove. Two years later he went into business on his own account as an agent for engineering material, and in 1889 he became managing director of the Stockton Forge. The firm was concerned with the production of castings, forgings, and bridge building, and was subsequently sold to Messrs. Head, Wrightson and Company. Subsequently Mr Seaman was appointed general manager for Messrs. Heenan and Froude in Manchester, and became joint managing director in 1908 when the firm became a limited liability company. He was also chairman of Messrs. John Stones, Ltd., engineers, of Ulverston, for forty-eight years. In 1933 he was awarded the M.B.E. in recognition of his services in Poplar in connection with public assistance. Mr Seaman, whose death occurred on 17th February 1941, at the age of 86, was elected a Member of the Institution in 1892, and was also an Associate Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Olive, as I called my mother as soon as I left school, did not wish to leave me in the care of my grandparents and was allowed to take me with her to Brewood and I became a boarder at the age of seven. I was of course the youngest in the school.

Memories of my time at Brewood Grammar School are sketchy, of course. I cannot remember any of the school classrooms or any of the other teachers except one other woman, Doreen Dent, who later became Mrs Asprey, who was a close friend of Olive's and whom we often used to visit in later years. What I do recall about Brewood are the Shropshire Union canal that ran along the school boundary, a steep spinney[6] on the banks of the canal where we used to play and where the older boys indulged in smoking, a meadow with gorse bushes also on the banks of the canal in the school property where in the summer of 1918 the school Dramatic Society put on some Shakespeare play, I think it was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and some skating during the winter. The outstanding memory of that time is, however, the Armistice and a huge bonfire in the field adjoining the school buildings to celebrate the occasion. I suppose that that was an easy introduction to boarding school, knowing that my mother was actually in her own room in the same building, but when I next went to boarding school in 1920 I suffered pangs of homesickness for the first two days of each term. Only when I went at the age of 13 to an English 'public' school as a boarder did I not mind the separation and in fact actually looked forward to returning to school.

I am not sure now when we left Brewood, probably at the end of the summer term of 1919, because whereas the Armistice precisely fixes us there in November 1918, I have a feeling that there were two Shakespearean plays in the gorsy meadow, because I can also remember *Twelfth Night* being staged and it is unlikely that a school amateur dramatic club would attempt more than one play per season and only the summer term would provide the right weather. We returned to Newstead Road, Lee, and I went back to Miss Garrett's next-door 'dame' school. This time I went for singing lessons and that involved going by tram from Lee Green to New Cross where I went to the house of a Mr Dutton. I was at this time only eight going on nine, and I am surprised in retrospect that such a small boy could be allowed to travel unaccompanied that distance. I enjoyed those tram rides and travelled on the top deck and made a hobby of memorising the names of all the public houses along the route. I knew them all and could recite them in their correct order, but now I can't remember any except the Tiger's Head at the beginning of the course at Lee Green and the Marquis of Granby near the end. I hope that the reason I cannot now recall them is because my head has been filled with more useful facts.

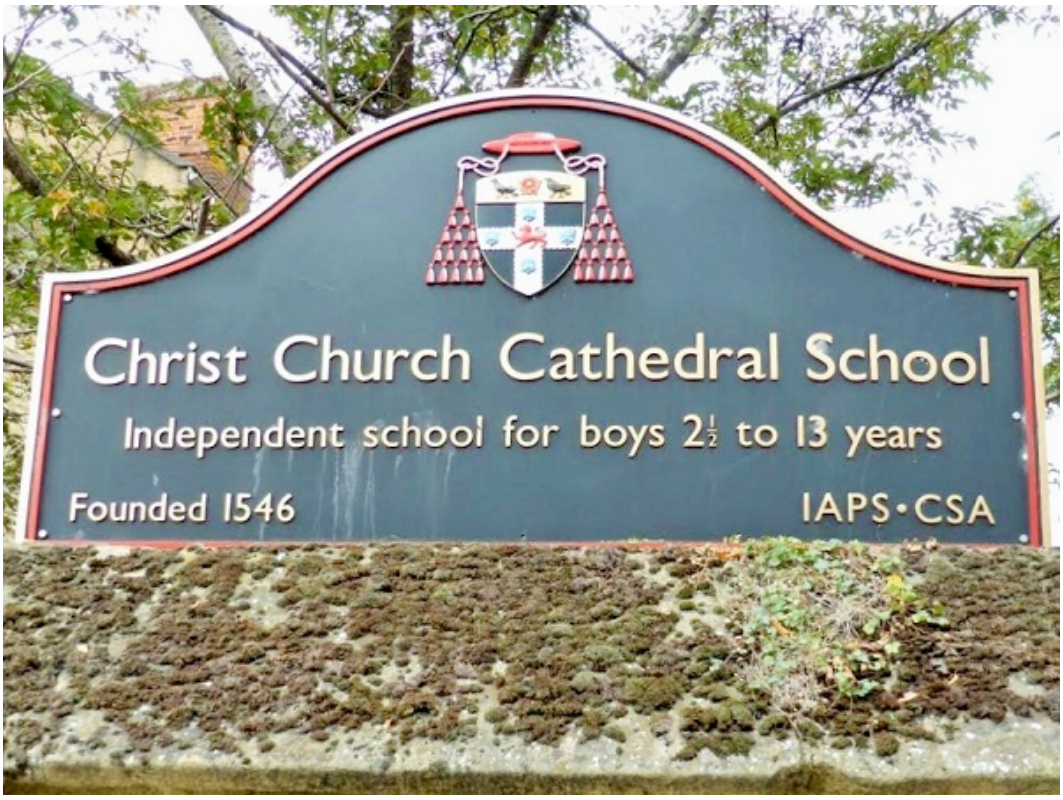
I was given singing lessons because Olive had discovered that cathedral choir schools gave singing scholarships and she did not have, as a woman school teacher, enough income to pay for me to go to an ordinary preparatory school. Having been a teacher herself in the State school system and my father, Harry, still was in that system, she had little faith in the system and was ambitious for me to get the best private education she could manage. So, in 1920, I sat for various scholarships to cathedral choir schools.

There were written examinations in English, Arithmetic, History, Geography and Scripture and a singing test for those who passed the usual school subjects. For some unknown reason the singing test was always known as the 'Trial'. I had no trouble

[6] Spinney: A small area of trees and bushes.

passing the scholastic side of the exams, although the standard expected of an eight- or nine-year-old cannot have been very demanding. I remember Olive being most amused when I told her that in answer to one of the Scripture questions I answered quite truthfully that I didn't know the answer to that as we hadn't got as far as that yet in our scripture lessons at school. That reminds me of the story of the Divinity student who when asked to discuss the relative merits of Elijah and Elisha, wrote as his answer 'Far be it from me to dare to criticize either of these great men, but the kings of Israel and Judah were as follows.' I failed the 'trial' for St Paul's Cathedral choir and the next one on the list was for Christ Church Cathedral choir at Oxford and once again I passed the written general studies but the examiners for the 'trial' weren't sure if I was good enough. I gathered that they weren't worried about the quality of the voice but didn't think I was quite good enough at the technical side, being able for instance to pick out and sing the middle note of a chord played on the piano. However they decided that I would be allowed to start at the school without singing in the choir until the next 'trial'. I don't know how much they deducted from the usual non-choir school fees but it must have been sufficient for Olive to agree to send me to the school. There was, of course, this further trial hanging over my head, (or over Olive's purse) and so when another trial was advertised for some other choir Olive requested the school authorities to allow me to go and try that one. Christchurch Oxford must have been a bit worried about the possibility of losing me because the choirmaster and organist Henry Ley came to the school and proceeded to give me a personal 'trial' before the time I had to go to catch the train to wherever the other cathedral was and he decided then and there that better the devil he knew than the devil he didn't and I was accepted into the choir. I know that whenever I annoyed any of the other choirboys this unusual 'trial' was held against me. I hadn't had a proper trial in competition with other candidates!

Neither Olive nor I cared about that and I was now destined to remain in the choir school of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford for the next four years.



The boarding quarters for the choir school were at the back of the Headmaster's house on the south side of Brewer Street facing the stone walls of Pembroke College, and the class rooms were a little way down the entry into Christchurch Meadows on the opposite side of St Aldates on the right hand side with the walls of Christ Church College opposite. The school was a very small one, there being only 16 choristers and about a dozen non-choir boys. The classroom building had a lovely old walled garden where each boy was given a little plot to cultivate. Over the wall on the south side of the garden ran a little stream that we called the brook Kishon[7], which was out of bounds to the pupils, but we sometimes managed to climb over undetected. The school staff consisted of the Headmaster and one Assistant master and a matron. In 1920 the Headmaster was a Reverend Peake who was near retirement and the Reverend Green succeeded him.

Mrs Green was a rather strict woman and her sister, Miss Jelley, was the matron. The Assistant master was a part-time undergraduate Ellis Roberts to whom I owe a lot. He was an excellent teacher and a very kind person who took a great interest in every aspect of the school. I remember he was a very enthusiastic coach for soccer which we played in the winter term and for hockey which we played in the spring term. Mrs Green used to play in some of our hockey games in goal. At that time it was a foul to lift the stick above the shoulder and any infringement of this rule was usually greeted with the cry of 'Sticks!' Old people like Mrs Green, (she must have been at least 35 years old as the Greens had two daughters and the elder was about 14 or 15) used to wear long skirts even when playing hockey and Mrs Green had an excellent method of saving goals by bending her knees so that her skirt touched the ground and the goal was often saved by a sort of 'skirt before wicket'. This manoeuvre would cause a cry from the boys of 'Skirts'.

At that little school in Oxford I made three lifelong friends: Eustace Piers, Leslie Franks and Ivor Spencer-Thomas.

Eustace was a boy about my own age. His mother, a widow, lived with her two daughters and Eustace in Abingdon, a small town about five miles south of Oxford. Soon after I started at the school an outing for the school was arranged on one of the Oxford and Kingston Steamers that plied the river Thames between those two towns as pleasure cruisers. The idea was that the boys should go downstream a certain distance and the catch the next boat back up to Oxford. Eustace asked permission to get off in Abingdon and visit his family and catch the same boat back to Oxford as the rest of the party. He asked me to accompany him and we went to spend the day with Mrs Piers and the girls. While we were there I became ill with a fever and Eustace's mother did not think that I should return to the school so she rang up the Headmaster and said that I would stay with her until I was fit to travel, so my visit was extended into a stay of a few days. I think the diagnosis was German measles. Eustace and I kept in touch off and on until he died about 60 years after that incident.

Leslie Franks' family lived in North Oxford. He was not a dayboy and he visited his widowed mother only a few times during the term time. She was the postmistress in Summertown. Leslie was about a year older than me and we became friendly through

[7] This is a reference to a river mentioned in the Bible. See, for example, I Kings 18:40, which says 'and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.'

some amateur theatricals. A don at Keble, W.H.V. Reade (Billy Reade as we called him) was a friend of the organist and choirmaster at Christ Church, Dr Henry Ley, known to the choirboys as 'Old Henry' (he was all of 33 when I joined the choir, that's pretty ancient for boys of eight to 13).

Every year in the winter term Billy Reade would write a little play, usually with a Christmas theme about a choir school and he would audition the boys and cast them. One year Leslie Franks had the leading role and the next year I was chosen. Billy Reade had a rented cottage on Exmoor and every Easter used to invite a few of the boys to spend the holiday there. Leslie and I were almost regular visitors every Easter holiday. We walked miles morning and afternoon over the moor, sometimes a whole day-trip taking our sandwiches. Leslie and I continued to visit Billy Reade on Exmoor for many years after we left the Choir School. At first the cottage was in Rockford, a mile downstream on the East Lyn below Brendon, below the footbridge and just above the ford. The noise of the river kept me awake on the first night I slept there, but later I got used to it.



A Keble College, Oxford, caricature of Billy Reade.

If there was a meet of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds nearby during our holiday we used to follow on foot and make a long days walk of it. Of course we did not literally follow the line set by the deer and pursued by the hounds but we attempted to see as much of the chase as possible by making strategic short cuts. The technique was to stand on high ground as near as we could to any of the local farmers seated on their Exmoor ponies, and near their comments. One old farmer, and he really was old, reputedly in his seventies, was Farmer Sanders from, I think, Cranscombe up on the edge of Brendon Common, and he was a very shrewd judge of the probable course the stag would take. I can hear him now, in his broad Devon accent, saying 'There 'er be, I sees un prahper.' which being translated means 'There he is, I see him clearly'. On hearing this we would look in the direction indicated and probably 'see un prahper' too. We would then follow wherever the old man rode and more often than not get another view of the quarry, sometimes even before the hounds or the mounted followers arrived.

During the second or third time that Leslie and I were on holiday on Exmoor we decided that we would like to try riding one of those Exmoor ponies ourselves. Neither of us had ever had any riding experience or tuition, but we approached Mrs Grove, whose farm was on the edge of the village of Brendon and who hired out ponies, to let us take a quiet one into a meadow just across the river Lyn from the Staghunters, the hotel in the middle of the village. So, unbeknownst to either Billy Reade who was *in loco parentis* or our parents, Leslie and I started horse riding.

We did not say anything to Billy Reade but before 24 hours had passed the bush telegraph had notified him that his two young lads had been riding a pony. The news had also been to the effect that we had been very careful, not trying our luck out on the road or the open moor but cautiously in an enclosed field, so Billy was not angry and even allowed us to repeat the performance. I don't think that Leslie was very thrilled with horse riding but I certainly was, and it became my favourite pastime until after the Second World War.

A few years later Billy Reade was able to lease an old farmhouse between Brendon and Countisbury, and gave up his lease of the house in Rockford where I had spent several delightful holidays. But both Leslie and I used to go for holidays to Wilsham, and on one occasion I went to a farmer to hire a pony and was told that it would cost me 2/6 for half a day or 3/6 for a whole day. I decided to go the whole hog and was determined to get the most value out of my 3/6. I accordingly turned up on foot after walking from Wilsham after breakfast and took the pony and some sandwiches and made a tour of Exmoor as much as I could cram into the time. I called in at Wilsham on my way to take the pony back and had a good tea of fresh rolls, Devonshire cream and jam and then sadly rode the pony to the farm. When I got in it was not long before sunset and the farmer said 'Eh! Tha's been a long time' I replied that I hadn't been riding all the time, I had stopped both for lunch and later for tea at Wilsham. The old farmer was not impressed. 'That don't matter, 'er be sweating. I'm afraid I shall have to charge thee fower bob, Sir'.

Ivor Spencer-Thomas was older than Leslie and me and I was therefore not particularly friendly with him at school as he left about half way through my four years at the Choir School. I met him again at school reunions and he invited me to visit him at his lovely old Queen Anne farmhouse at Braughing near Puckeridge in Hertfordshire. I became a

frequent visitor there shooting and riding his hunter on and around his farm. He and his wife Rosabel were wonderful hosts and his hospitality was extended during the war to other members of the staff of the Middlesex Hospital for a quiet few days to escape from the Blitz and blackout.

When I say Queen Anne, that refers to the most recent part of his fascinating house that had among other attractions a priest-hole, where Roman Catholic priests were secreted during searches at a time in the 16th and 17th centuries when Roman Catholicism was proscribed. How Ivor and Rosabel could ever bring themselves to leave such a home I cannot understand but they did and sometime after I had left England they moved to Harlington Manor near Dunstable. Now they have retired and live in, of all things, a modern house near Gnosall in Staffordshire.

To come back to the Choir School, life for a chorister in a Cathedral choir is quite different from that of the usual Prep School boarder. The *raison-d'etre* of the school is to provide choral services in the Cathedral and the presence of the choir at the important religious festivals such as Christmas and Easter is essential. After the usual end of term, when the non-choir boys went home and started normal school holidays, the choristers had to stay behind at the school. There were, of course, no more school lessons but choir practices and regular daily evensong and both matins and evensong on Sundays and Holy Days had to be maintained.Once the religious festival was over the choirboys went home for a shorter holiday than other schoolboys. During the lead-up to Christmas many good people tried to alleviate the hardship for the poor little boys, so as well as rehearsals and acting in Billy Reade's play, we were invited to parties almost daily by the Dean, the Archdeacons, the Bishop and so on, so that to go home might have been an anti-climax but for the fact that our parents were guilt-ridden at having deprived their offspring of a normal Christmas at home and felt obliged to make it up to us by laying on extra treats such as the circus, a pantomime, more parties and special favours.

Other perks for the chorister included being asked to sing at weddings for which the usual fee per choirboy was half-a-crown, a term not in use today so I had better explain that that was two shillings and sixpence or one-eighth of a pound. If we can assume that the rate of inflation since 1920 has been such that £1 in 1920 would buy as much as £40 now, a fair assumption as a dinner in a club in 1933 would only cost me 2/6d which I would have to pay at least £5.00 for now (I don't think that there was any appreciable inflation between 1920 and 1933), half-a-crown for a choirboy at a wedding would now represent £5.00 or $AUS10.00.

Other disadvantages for the choirboy included the greater likelihood of corporal punishment. Mistakes in singing in the cathedral or failure to pay attention during choir practice were punishable by a beating on the bottom administered by the choirmaster, who, as a man in his early thirties, had plenty of strength in his right arm. I was lucky enough only to be caught twice for an indictable offence.

We sang in the cathedral every evening at evensong during the week except Thursday and for Matins and Evensong on Sundays. We formed up in a 'crocodile' outside the choir school in Brewer Street, dressed in little black gowns and mortar boards, and the Head Choir Boy gave the order (which to this day is quite incomprehensible to me), 'Main Body Starting, Move on!', and the little procession would march seriously down

Brewer Street, across St. Aldate's, under Tom Tower, across the Quad, bearing to the left of the little artificial pond with a fountain and goldfish known as Mercury, up the steps to the paved walkway around the Quad and into the entrance to the Cathedral. Thence to the vestry where we donned scarlet cassocks and starched white surplices.



The interior of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

I experienced more bullying at that prep school than at the public school I attended later. A gang of the older boys, aged about 12 or 13, headed by a boy with a Portuguese name, used to hold a sort of Star Chamber court in the little change room just off the communal common room, called the 'Prep Room' and administer punishments such as making the victim stand on one leg, or hold a cricket bat out at arms length until unable to keep up the posture. When he and another boy who had ambitions to be the greatest orchestral conductor left, life was not only tolerable but also enjoyable. Strange as it may seem, I do not think that this had any deleterious effect on my character; on the contrary, I tended to stand up to my tormentors and defy them and by doing so I won the approbation of my fellow sufferers.

The choirmaster and organist, Henry Ley (whom I think may possibly have been knighted for his services to music when he was Director of Music at Eton College) was a small rotund kindly man, well, when not beating my bottom in the practice room, who took a great interest in the welfare and social life of the choir. I remember when he took a group of us in his open bull-nosed Morris Cowley to Swindon for a guided tour of the maintenance and repair works of the Great Western Railway and he very generously saw to it that we did not go hungry on the outing.

During those four years the winter and summer holidays were divided pretty evenly between being with Olive or with my father, Harry.

My brother, Peter usually spent part of the holidays with me wherever we were. Olive used to take us, sometimes nostalgically to Runswick Bay and sometimes to Caister Holiday Camp a few miles north of Great Yarmouth on the Norfolk coast. This latter place was run on the lines of, and may even have been a prototype of, a Butlin's Holiday Camp. On the beach, a short walk away through a cornfield with many poppies in the crop, there was sand and sea and fun and sand dunes which provided great opportunities for slithering or rolling down, getting rid of a lot of prepubertal surplus energy, while back at the camp there were always plenty of competitions, and other entertainments to keep the children occupied and provide a welcome respite for the parents.

Harry lived at Eaglescliffe, a suburb of Stockton-on-Tees just on the north side of the Tees across the bridge from Yarm. My holidays there with him and Peter were mainly spent playing with the other children in the neighbourhood or on excursions to the nearby Cleveland Hills, a part of the North Yorkshire moors or to the sea at Redcar or Saltburn. Because both our parents were schoolteachers they were able to take longer holidays than most people. At that time the average holiday for most lower and middle class people was two weeks a year, so Peter and I, in spite of the broken marriage of our parents were able to spend more time with them during school holidays than most children.

The tuition at Christ Church Choir School was excellent. Both the Headmaster, 'Old Green' and especially the assistant master, Ellis Roberts were good teachers, and in the year that I left, 1924, no fewer than four of the leavers won scholarships to Public Schools: John Hilary Lee to Westminster, Brian Key to Rossall, Eustace Piers to Hurstpierpoint, and I to King's School, Canterbury.

Chapter 2: King's School, Canterbury

There is a trite saying that one's school days are the best days of one's life. I certainly would not go as far as that but I must confess that I really enjoyed my school days at King's School Canterbury.

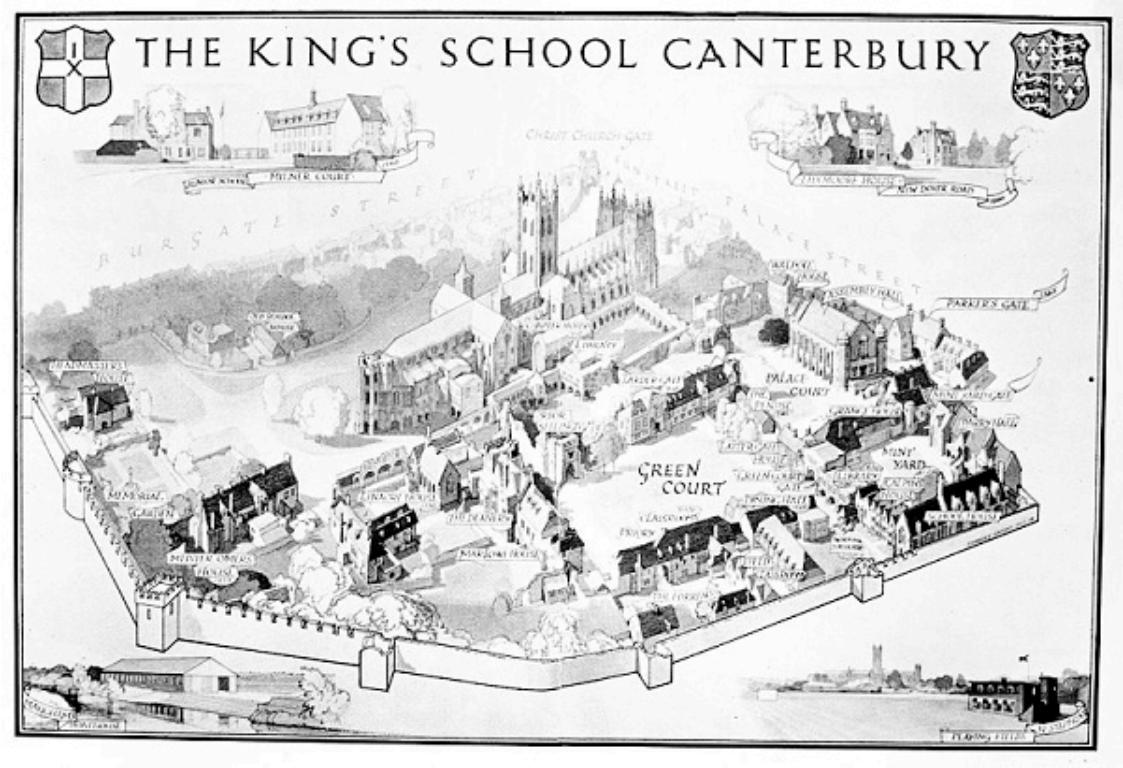
This school was, and still is of course, the oldest school in the United Kingdom and may well be the oldest school in the world. That is to say that there has been an educational establishment on those premises continuously for longer than any other. King's School Canterbury is set in the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral and there are records of a school on that site since the early seventh century. I think the actual date is 623 A.D., so that when I went there in 1924 the school had just had its thirteen hundredth anniversary. I cannot find a satisfyingly resounding word for that in the dictionary but it should be a tridecacentenary. This claim to be the oldest school was hotly contested by St. Peter's School, York, but I am pretty sure that Canterbury wins by a short head. What are two or three years in thirteen hundred?

The school was not, of course, always known as King's School Canterbury. This title was bestowed on the school by King Henry VIII when he decided that the school was worthy of retention at the time that he was destroying the local monastery. Part of the School grace said in Latin at mealtimes was a phrase *ab Henrico Rege benefactoribusque nostris*, reminding us that we were giving thanks not only for the food before us but for all the benefits bestowed on the school 'by King Henry and our benefactors'.

I arrived at the school at the beginning of the 1924-25 academic year in September 1924 at the age of 13½, the holder of the prestigious King's Foundation Scholarship, which not only relieved my mother of a considerable part of the fees but obliged the holder to wear during school hours a black gown which made the wearer very conspicuous and at first until one got used to it very embarrassed. The school uniform was a black vicuna jacket with striped black trousers, a white shirt with a stiff stand-up butterfly collar and a black tie (not a bow tie). A waistcoat was optional but nearly always worn during the winter and spring terms. If for any reason a boy went out into the town outside the school bounds he had to wear a speckled black and white straw hat with a blue and white band. This rule did not apply, of course if one was going to any of the playing fields to play cricket, rugby or hockey or to the river at Fordwich to do rowing, but boy spectators had to wear the full uniform with straw 'boater'.

The school was divided into three unequal houses, the largest being the School House inside the walls of the Cathedral precincts around an open asphalt courtyard called the Mint Yard. The other houses were Langley House about a mile away in the New Dover Road, and Holme House in the Old Dover Road about the same distance from the school. Because of the inequality of numbers in the houses it was not possible to have the same inter-house rivalry as pertained in other such schools, except perhaps for School House versus The Rest, so a completely artificial arrangement was made dividing the school into six so-called 'Tutor Groups'. At the beginning of each term all new arrivals were allotted to a certain Tutor Group ('Tugger' was the school slang for tutor group) so that the numbers in each remained as equal as possible, thus preventing a sort of gerrymander. The six groups were given names of mythical beasts such as

Gryphons and Martlets and thus there was a possibility of developing a competitive spirit especially in games and athletics.



Boys in the School House in the first two years or so did their 'prep' in two Halls, the Old Hall and the New Hall. Around the walls of these halls were lockers for each boy to keep his books etc. in. I was in the New Hall. The Old Hall was at meal times the Dining Room for the whole School House. An interesting feature of the Old Hall, a little gruesome and not very hygienic, was the custom of pinning with a drawing pin up on the massive arched beams that supported the cathedral-like ceiling the tails of any mice that were caught in the hall at large or in the lockers with a little caption giving the date of death. Older and senior boys were allotted to a study. Each study was in the older part of the building, on the ground floor of the building that housed the Old Hall. Most of the studies had four desks complete with bookshelves above and each boy had his own desk and was, of course, able to keep his books and papers around him all the time whereas the Lower School boys in the halls had to tidy all their things away each time after they used them. There was a 'pecking order' in the studies, the senior study housing the Captain of the School and two Monitors as the prefects were called and the most junior study had to accommodate six boys usually those at the bottom of the academic hierarchy.

Each day's work began with Prayers ('Nibs' in school slang) held in the School Hall, the entrance to which was off the Mint Yard up some stone steps. In this Hall also at the end of term the whole school assembled and waited for the formal procession of masters for which everybody stood up. The Headmaster then addressed the assembly and said 'I pray you be seated'. Then he would proceed to read out the names of each boy in the school starting at the lowest form with the lowest mark getter in that form. Towards the end of each form he would hesitate and say, for instance, 'Sixth Brown

Secundus and, promoted to 4A, Fifth Jones Tertius, Fourth Charlton, Third Parks, Second Fiddlebooks-Smith and Top Blackshaw'.

Talking of school prayers reminds me that at the evening prayers held every night in the Old Hall after 'prep', one which intrigued me ended with the petition that the Lord would 'send us to our restful beds, weary, content and undishonoured'. We used to comment that the only true bit about that sentence was that we were weary.

Beyond the School Hall was the oldest architectural part of the school still standing, the Norman Staircase. Very well preserved, this formed the background for a sunken courtyard with tiered steps on four sides. Opposite the Norman Staircase was a modern war memorial for the 1914-1918 war. This open air forum was an impressive arena for the ceremony of announcing any special award such as Colours for proficiency at any of the official sporting activities, cricket, rugby, rowing etc., and the announcement of monitor status. It was also used as a place for a ceremony on every Armistice Day to pay tribute to those on the Roll of Honour.

Into this tradition-steeped organisation I found myself 'dropped in at the deep end.' I think that the culture shock was even more for me than for most because not only was I not by birth and upbringing in the same 'class' as most of the other boys, but I happened to be more advanced academically than any other of the new boys joining with me. I found that my standard of education, thanks chiefly to the enthusiasm and active support of the assistant master at the Christ Church Choir School, E.E. Roberts (Old Bobs), was such that as a new boy I was placed straight into the Lower Fifth Form.

I can never understand the system of naming the grades, classes or forms in the British Public School system at that time. At King's School Canterbury the lowest form was the Third Form, divided into 3C, 3B and 3A, followed upwardly by 4B and 4A, then 5B and 5A and finally the Sixth Form. I was put into 5B, whereas all the other new boys were either in the Third or the Fourth Form. This immediate preferment and also having to wear my gown made me a 'marked man'. I suppose I should say a marked 'little boy'. This was something over and above just being a 'new boy' that I had somehow to live down.

At the school there was, as in so many of the Public Schools of the day, the system of 'fagging'. This was the custom that the senior boys in the school, called in some schools Prefects, but at KSC known as Monitors, had the right to appoint one of the new boys to be their personal servant.

This system has been widely criticised in various novels and autobiographies as bullying or even homosexuality. Having mentioned that subject I must say right now that during all my time at King's School I never was aware of any such practice. Such a statement must not be brushed aside either that of a liar covering up what he does not wish to talk about or of a naive tenderfoot. We were, at school, certainly aware that such a perversion existed, but as far as I knew then (and boys at school are terrible gossips) no such behaviour took place at King's School.

I was appointed by the Head of the School (a title given to the most senior boy in the school) to be his fag. It was not quite a sinecure but did not involve any demeaning

behaviour. All I had to do was to tidy up his study, clean his shoes and possibly polish the buttons on his O.T.C. uniform. Occasionally I would have to make a pot of tea and try not to burn some toast. In return the prefect used to visit the dormitory at night after the smaller boys had gone to bed, or rather while they were going to bed and stand at the foot of the bed and behave in a paternalistic way, chatting about the events of the day, asking if the fag had any worries or problems and attempt to solve any difficulties and generally give sound advice. In the dormitories the beds were all separated from each other by wooden partitions about 6ft high with a curtain at the foot of the bed. In each cubicle there was a washstand for washing the face and hands and cleaning the teeth. The 'fag-master' did not enter the cubicle, he merely stood at the foot of the bed and drew back the curtain enough to allow quiet conversation to go on between him and his fag. The short visit was over before 'Lights Out' and after the lights were out there was general conversation for about ten minutes between the boys in the dormitory, all conducted from the privacy of the individual cubicles until a monitor called out 'Stop talking, please. Good Night' which was answered by a chorus of 'Good Night' from the small boys.

I found that there were two other boys at the school with the surname Roberts, one older whose initials were J.G.O., but was always known as Paddy, and another boy who joined the school at the same time as I did and his initials were J.G.F.W. Paddy Roberts became Roberts I (or officially Roberts Primus), I was Roberts II or Secundus, and J.G.F.W. was Roberts III (Tertius). I mention the initials of the other two boys because mine are F.W. Now if Paddy's initials and mine were put together they gave you J.G.O.F.W. Discount the O as being zero and you have J.G.F.W. or I + II = III.

Paddy Roberts was an amazing character. He was a South African from Durban. He was a natural musician who could play almost any instrument in a very short time without lessons. He could strum any tune on the piano from ear, he played the bugle in the School Officers Training Corps band better than anyone else and was awarded the Silver Bugle. He composed both drum and bugle marches which the band played while on our weekly parades and was a fantastic drummer. I blew a bugle in the band but never tried my hands at drumming. Paddy also used to arrange some of the current popular songs of the day and the two of us used to perform in School concerts – Paddy at the piano while I sang. I also sang with a more classical quartet in concerts. I remember Sweet and Low, The Road to the Isles, and Matilda told such Awful Lies as part of our repertoire.

Paddy and I were both in the School P.T. Squad, and used to compete with other school teams at the Annual O.T.C. camps that were held in the first week of the summer holidays. At one of these camps, I can't remember which one, it was either at Mytchett near Aldershot or Tidworth on Salisbury Plain, our team from King's School won the competition. I used to enjoy those O.T.C. camps. One year we went to Strensall in Yorkshire and that camp was memorable only for the abominably cold and wet weather. After a Field Day when the area selected for the manoeuvres turned out to be almost a swamp with all the recent and current rain so that we had to wriggle on our bellies through pools of water, the authorities decided to cancel the rest of the camp and sent us all home four days early. Paddy will feature in these memoirs later.

O.T.C. parades were held every week on a Thursday afternoon. Sometimes it meant only drilling in the Mint Yard when we would be exposed to the methods of a regular

sergeant-major, retired from ‘The Buffs’ as the local regiment was called, stationed in barracks about a mile down the main road east out of Canterbury towards Margate and Ramsgate.



The Mint Yard at King’s School, Canterbury.

The Sergeant major was a strict drillmaster and used to count out the time at which each of his commands was to be executed so a command to slope arms sounded to us likes this –

‘Slooooooooope (Wait for it, wait for it) Haps! Hup-two-three, hup-two-three, Away Stand Still!’ If he thought we were not paying sufficient attention he would rapidly countermand an order all in one breath such as

‘Standateaseasyouwere!’

Other friends I had at school included George Emery who lived at Hoddesdon where I used to go for a few days sometimes in the holidays, Robin Hamp who lived with his parents and two sisters in West Kensington where I used to be asked during the holidays to dinner parties, to play Bridge and to partner one of the sisters to dances, and a boy whose surname was Alport but whose Christian name I cannot remember. This is not so strange as it might seem because in those days it was quite unusual to call any of one’s schoolmates by anything but his surname or perhaps a nickname. Alport was a little unusual in the School in that he freely admitted that his parents voted Labour and that he himself was a Socialist, behaviour classified later by Nancy Mitford as definitely non-U! None of these became lifelong friends. I continued to be friendly with Robin Hamp until the war when I lost touch with him. Robin became a solicitor and I

did run across his elder sister Margaret at times because she, like me, entered the medical profession. When I was a medical student I went with George Emery to a reunion at Canterbury. I had borrowed my mother's car, a Rover Eight, and when we were driving back to Lee from Canterbury at night the lights failed so the only thing we could do was to push the car off the road and sleep in it until it was light enough to drive without lights. I remember it was in winter and bitterly cold but we survived.

At the end of the first term at King's School I came top in the form, but the Headmaster, Algernon Latter, decided that I was not old enough to be promoted to 5A so I was kept down in 5B. After another term I was promoted and a year later I went into the Sixth Form. This exalted station in school life carried with it certain privileges and responsibilities. To start off with, all sixth formers had a special hatband, dark blue and not the blue and white striped band of the lower classes (literally). It was also obligatory for sixth formers to carry a walking stick when outside the school confines in the town. We were also allowed out in the town during any time of day when there were no lessons. The boys in the lower forms were only allowed freely in the town between the end of morning school at 12.15 p.m. to 1.00 p.m. (lunch time), and on certain days from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. At other times it was necessary to get permission from a monitor which was, however, hardly ever withheld. During these times of restricted exeats[8], the lower form boys used to ask a sixth former to do their shopping for them.

Other privileges included the right to use a walled garden at the back of the sixth form classroom. It was a pleasant garden with a well-kept lawn and some trees and flowerbeds on the three sides bounded by the wall. In the summer it was a delightful place to relax or to do some reading lying on the grass with a cushion or two and a bag of cherries or whatever fruit was in season, knowing that one would not be disturbed by the hoi polloi.

There were, I discovered, also penalties attached to the privileges. The period for prep in the evening (prep is for the boarder the equivalent of home work for the day boy) was divided into two parts. During the interval there was a light supper, a cup of cocoa and a piece of bread and butter, and after that the very young boys went to bed but the more senior would return to their hall or study for a second session of prep. Also during the interval there was the chance to walk about within the school boundaries to stretch one's legs. One evening during the summer term when there was an important cricket match being played, a Test Match I suppose, several of the boys wanted to get an evening paper to find out the latest score. Outside the gate from the outside world to the Mint Yard on the opposite side of the street a few yards down the road there was a news agency and usually one could attract the attention of the owner who would come over the road and sell some papers. On this occasion he could not be roused and of course at that time of the day the boys were not allowed out of the school grounds. I was not particularly interested in cricket and I could certainly have waited until the morning for the news, but I honestly thought that as a sixth former I had the right to go out if, of course, properly dressed. So, at someone's request I walked right across the Mint Yard to my study, got my straw hat and cane and boldly walked back to the gate, nipped across the road and bought a paper and came straight back. Alas I was spotted

[8] Exeat: Permission from a college, boarding school, or other institution for temporary absence.

by one of the monitors and reported to the Head of the School. It appeared that it was not allowed for me at that time to go out, so I had to be punished.

The usual punishment for being out of bounds would be six strokes with a swishy cane across the bottom administered by the senior monitor. So I duly presented myself for punishment and got into the customary position, kneeling on a wooden armchair and grasping the bottom of the back legs with my two hands. Then my 'executioner' announced that for sixth formers the penalty for any misdemeanour was double the usual. After 12 cuts across the buttocks I knew that I should not have gone out!

All corporal punishment was administered by the monitors except for very serious crimes when the Headmaster invited the culprit into his study and did the job himself. Such a punishment was only one step away from being expelled. I think that in the other houses the Housemaster used to wield the cane but in School House none of the masters ever did so. I don't remember ever feeling really aggrieved or resentful about corporal punishment and I don't think the monitors abused their power. These days those in authority must find it very difficult to maintain law and order, especially in State schools, and I am astounded at the present tendency to deny any rights of corporal punishment even by parents who can, it seems, now be sued by their offspring for assault.

Far more unpleasant punishments were handed out by the masters, especially one irascible and intolerant French master, who was actually an excellent teacher of French, whose habit was to hand out impositions at the drop of a hat that would take three hours to complete. His favourite one was *Six Feuilles* which meant take six foolscap sheets of double lined paper, fold each in half from top to bottom, on the left hand side of the fold write in copperplate handwriting an English proverb and on the right hand side opposite its French equivalent. Before each French lesson started all those boys who had been given impositions at the previous French period had to line up in front of the class and show their Six Feuilles to the master.

Woe betide any one whose writing was not absolutely within the double lines as he would be given *Encore six feuilles*, another three hours careful calligraphy. The Latin and English masters used to give us so many lines of Latin or English verse to learn by heart and repeat them at the next lesson.

An important part of the Public School curriculum was the organised sport. Everybody played rugby in the winter and spring terms and I enjoyed the sport. I used to play at scrum half and in my last year I played pretty regularly for the Second XV. Once, due I'm sure to injury or sickness of the regular incumbent, I played for the First XV. Cricket was not compulsory during the summer, and there was quite a bit of anti-cricket feeling in the school. One was given the option of playing cricket or rowing. I chose rowing and started off by being a cox but managed to outgrow that important position for which only the smallest boys were eligible and finished up being the Stroke of the First IV. We rowed on a small river, the Stour, at a place called Fordwich about two miles to the north east of Canterbury just off the main road to Margate and Ramsgate. The river was so narrow that there were only a few places where one could turn a Four, so the races were rowed with the boats one behind the other with two starting posts and two finishing posts. Practically everybody at the school had a bicycle and we used to

ride to Fordwich and back. I remember feeling during the last half of an important interschool race that it would have been much easier to be playing cricket!

One bonus that was very much appreciated for the School Fours was that after an interschool race we were allowed to go to the little pub on the opposite bank of the river to the boat shed in the little village of Fordwich and have a pint of draught beer. I did hear that up until the end of the 19th century beer was served regularly at school meals.

Attendance at School cricket and rugby matches was compulsory (unless one was actually rowing or playing elsewhere) to cheer on the School XI or XV. If weather or the state of the grounds precluded actual play we were often sent on two to three mile runs and sometimes on a paperchase. Has the anti-litter campaign stopped paper chases?

Not only sixth-formers had distinctive headbands for their straw hats. There was a different combination of blue and white striping on the hats of each of the different sports 'Colours', i.e. the members of the First Rugby XV and Cricket XI and Rowing IV who were deemed especially proficient would be given their 'Colours' at a ceremony at the Norman Staircase courtyard and they were thereafter entitled to wear these distinctive hatbands and neckties.

The Headmaster, Algy Latter was a tall thin man with a bushy moustache and a brusque manner, and perhaps because I was a new boy I felt very much in awe of him. During that first year he became ill. I never knew what the trouble was, in those days illnesses were a much more private and personal occurrence than they are nowadays, when everyone seems to delight in knowing everybody else's medical history. However, he had to be absent for a long time, I think probably about a year, although I would not be sure about that because time for a schoolboy goes very slowly and even a term is paradoxically almost interminable, whereas the older I get the faster the years pass. His place was filled temporarily by one of the assistant masters, 'Nat' Goss. I suppose his Christian name was Nathaniel because he was always known as Nat. He had a nervous habit of, while sitting, bouncing one thigh up and down rapidly. This habit, or nervous tic I suppose it was, was known throughout the school as 'natting'. Nat was a gentle man and probably shy, maybe a little awed by the greatness that had been thrust upon him. I remember him as kind and more approachable than Algy and the only time I can remember him being at all severe was when two or three boys were caught stealing fruit from an orchard. Nat called a School Assembly and told the entire congregation how they had compounded the offence because they had (spoken quietly and dramatically) 'taken bags,' (pause), 'bags to carry away the plunder'

Algy came back but only for one term, he had been told he had to retire for health reasons.

Mr Latter was succeeded by Norman Pellew Birley who was an assistant master at Marlborough and was only 36 at the time, quite a young man to be appointed Headmaster of an English Public School. He had a charming young wife and two small boys the elder of whom was nearly seven years old when they came to Canterbury and who later followed in his father's footsteps by becoming an Assistant Master at Marlborough.

Other masters I remember were Major Hoseley, the French master, Mr Lloyd Jones who was the form master for 5A and the Tutor master for our weekly assembly of the Gryphons Tutor Set. Then there was the Rev. Mayne, housemaster of Langley House and Mr Harris of Holme House. P.G. Reynolds was a popular master, from his initials he was always known as 'Piggy' Reynolds and what I chiefly remember about him was his dog, a little wire-haired fox terrier that had the amazing ability to dribble a rugby ball the whole length of the football pitch an amazing speed. The dog used to do its party trick at School matches during the half-time interval.

Lastly and from my point of view the most important was the science master, Harold Goodburn. He lived in a small house inside the cathedral precincts on the opposite side of the cathedral to the King's School, just inside the Mercery Lane Gate. Why Harold Goodburn influenced the whole course of my life will become apparent later.

While at King's School the pattern of my three holidays a year, for the first two years at any rate, 1924 and 1925, was that during the winter holidays I would spend part of the time with Olive and my Seaman grandparents at Lee and part with my father and Peter in Eaglescliffe, about two miles south of Stockton-on-Tees (just over the county border from Yarm which was in Yorkshire). I say 'was' because now that the authorities have altered the boundaries and attempted to rationalise the county set-up they have created a new county 'Cleveland' which incorporates part of Yorkshire and part of Durham making Stockton, Middlesbrough and Yarm all in Cleveland. The Easter holidays I spent mostly on Exmoor with Billy Reade and Leslie Franks, and during most of the summer holidays I went to a farm at Kirby Bellars near Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire. I was sent there because I had told Olive that what I would like to do when I was grown up was to be a farmer. In those days, or at least my mother thought so, it was only possible to be a farmer if you either inherited a farm or had enough money to buy one. Therefore she arranged with George Ridge, who had married a friend of one of Olive's sisters, Vera Vickers, to take me for the holidays, or a good part of them, and give me a lot of hard work to do to put the stupid idea out of my head. Actually what happened was that, although I was given all sorts of tasks such as 'mucking out' the stall where the bull had stood the whole winter and was about a foot deep in trampled and solidified packed dung, spending the whole day with a sickle mowing thistles, or taking half a dozen cows to market, I enjoyed the whole experience and all it did was to fortify my wish to be a farmer. Then there had to be a discussion with George Ridge and Olive, and George told Olive that I did enjoy the life and showed some aptitude and especially that I seemed to be fond of animals, so he suggested that a good plan would be for me to become a vet. Vets, said George, in a country practice would often be the first to know when a farm property would be up for sale and after a few years of veterinary work I might be able to save enough to buy a farm.

Thus it was that when in the summer of 1926 I passed the London Matriculation I thought I was destined to become a vet. I was only 15 and at that time universities would not accept undergraduates under the age of 17. So I had to spend another two years at school after Matric. We found out that London University would allow people to take the first exam in Veterinary Science as an external student, so when I returned to school in September that year I was allowed to spend all my time doing the Science subjects for that examination, namely Chemistry, Physics and Biology, which included Zoology and Botany. This is where Harold Goodburn came into the picture.

He was the science master and for the next two years I had what amounted to personal tuition in those subjects. Goodburn was not happy about my choice of career and thought that veterinary work was a second class profession and that I would be wasting my talents and he devoted a lot of time and energy persuading me to change my mind and do medicine. He pointed out that the first year course in Veterinary Science was exactly the same as that for Medicine, so for the moment I didn't have to alter my curriculum at all.



A photograph of Harold Goodburn that was taken around 1935.

I don't want to let these important decisive years to go past in this narrative without mentioning extra curricular activities. As a treat for having got my matric, Olive decided that we should go to France for a good part of the summer holidays. Olive, in those days had a motor scooter called a Ner-A-Car, and it was decided that we should go on that with me riding on the pillion and that we should carry all our luggage in rucksacks.



Two Ner-A-Cars photographed in London during the 1920s.

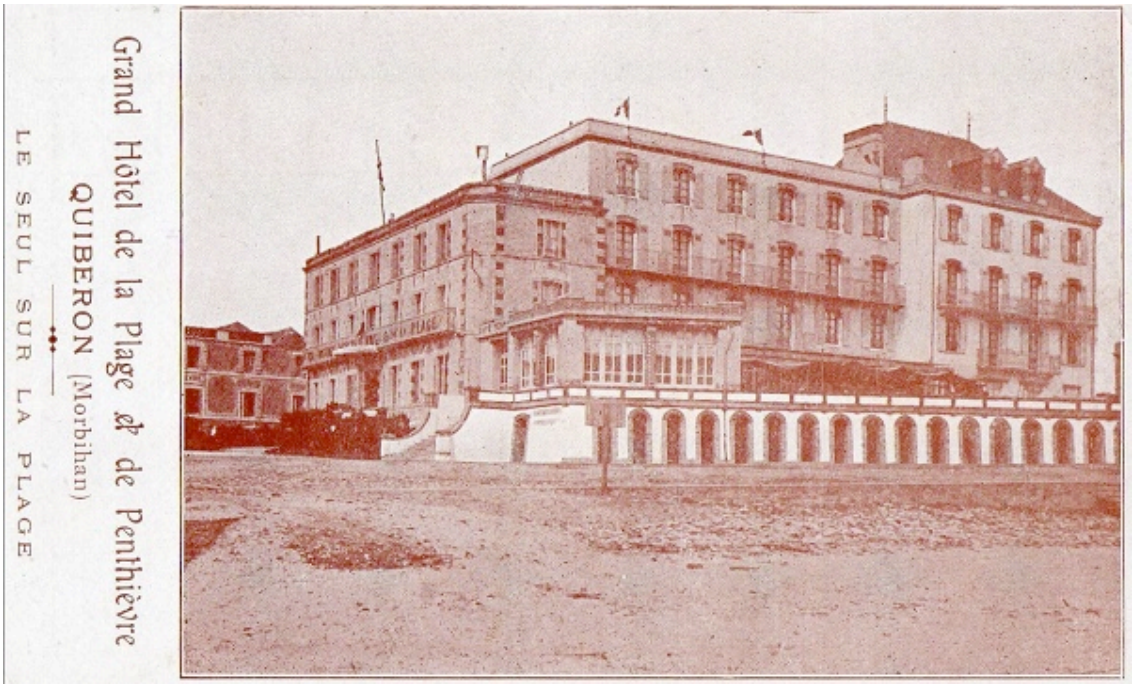
I was to be the interpreter and spokesman, after all, I had just passed Matric French and was bound to be able to do that easily, she thought. We crossed from Dover to Calais and I soon found that the natives spoke very quickly and it didn't sound exactly like my school French. We did not arrive in Calais until the afternoon and by the time we had got through the customs (who were very intrigued to see a woman riding such a strange vehicle and with a pillion passenger and, no doubt found all that confirmation, if any were needed, that the English were all mad anyway) and we had not gone far down the road south before we realises that we must soon find some sort of accommodation. We passed a likely looking farm and I was detailed to approach the farmer and ask if it would be all right if we slept in his hay shed. When he understood what it was we wanted he readily assented and pressed us to accept fresh milk to help with our breakfast the next morning. This I remember was near the village of Sangatte which we were intrigued to notice on the map was almost opposite the English town of Sandgate across the Channel. We must have made a great impression on the farmer because when the following year when we repeated the procedure he remembered us and again welcomed us with open arms.

Thanks to Major Hoseley, my accent was very good for a foreigner and after a few days I was beginning to understand spoken French better and to enjoy the challenge of speaking it.

We arrived in Paris and somehow we managed to find a cheap and comfortable pension where we stayed for about three days, there being a shortage of hay barns in the centre of Paris. On foot and by Metro we did some of the things tourists are expected to do in Paris but after a few days in a heatwave we decided that we should try and make for the seaside. Our original plan was to try to go to the Côte d'Azur, but looking at the map we decided that the distance to the Mediterranean was too far to travel in that heat, so we decided to head west for the coast of Brittany.

The roads in France at that time were in a deplorable state. It was, of course, not so very long after the end of the First World War, and the economic situation in France was hopeless but not desperate, whereas in Britain it was desperate but not hopeless. There was certainly no money to spare for the upkeep of the roads, except for the main roads, the *Routes Nationales* and even on these we often encountered stretches of potholes. To us these were a much more severe hazard than to a four-wheeled car and we often would greet a newly repaired stretch of road with whoops of joy. After a couple of days travelling we found ourselves at the base of the peninsula of Brittany. One of the set books for Matric French for that year was *Six Contes* by Honore de Balzac, a book of short stories. One story in that book, 'La Corneille au bec rouge', had been about some schoolboys on holiday in Brittany who decided to try and get an egg from the nest of a chough with a red beak, which apparently built its nest high up on rocky cliffs on an island called Hoedic off the peninsula of Quiberon on the south coast of Brittany in the Bay of Biscay. This story about a dangerous climb to the nest had impressed me with its description of the beauty of the coast and so, finding ourselves in that region I begged Olive to try to get to Quiberon.

So we found ourselves going along progressively worse roads until while going down the Quiberon Peninsula the surface was so bad that we could not ride on the motor scooter. We were reduced to walking along the road, I was pushing the scooter and we decided that we would stop at the very first place we came to where they could put us up. In this sorry fashion we arrived at a small village called Kerhostin just south of the narrowest place on the peninsula where the Atlantic on the right of us to the West was separated from the waters of Quiberon Bay on the left and East by only a few metres of land, just enough room for the authorities to place a level crossing of the road and railway line to Quiberon. Here, on the main road, was the Hotel Penthievre where we found a couple of vacant rooms.



That afternoon we went to the beach on the western side of the Peninsula looking out over the Atlantic in the Bay of Biscay, with the Ile de Groix on the horizon. The beach was a crescent of fine clean sand gently shelving with an old fort, Fort Penthievre at the

north end and a rocky headland at the south end beyond which lay the fishing village of Portivy. Behind the beach there were sand dunes and we decided to go in for a swim. On the beach there was a group of French holiday makers who were also went swimming at the same time. After the refreshing bathe (the Parisian heatwave had followed us to the Breton coast), we sat back and watched the French party playing a ball game something like rounders. Once or twice the ball came in our direction and I threw it back to them and then one of the men came over to us and said in reasonably good English to my mother 'Would your little boy like to join in our game?'

I joined in and learnt that the party consisted of two married sisters, their husbands and one son in each family and some holiday friends. The person who had spoken to me was Jean Rainer, an Austrian born naturalised Frenchman, his wife was Blanche and their 12-year-old son was called Michel. Blanche's sister Yvonne was Madame Barrault, I recall her husband's first name was Gaston and their 16-year-old son was a tall handsome boy called Robert. The other family, whose surname I have forgotten, came from Paris and had two teenage daughters, Louise and Odette.

When the time came for everyone to go for their evening meal, M. Rainer said that they hoped they would see us again on the beach the next day, and we agreed to be there. However the next morning Olive had some 'tummy upset', either from the rich French cooking at the hotel or from some infection to which she had not acquired immunity, so I went to the beach on my own.

Our new French friends were very concerned and insisted on visiting her and bringing various remedies. Confined to her bed all that day, Olive discovered that there were fleas in it too, and said that we would have to move on. As luck would have it, M. Barrault's holiday was over and he had to return to Tours. Both the families were sharing a rented cottage and when M. and Mme. Barrault departed leaving Robert with his cousin, there was a spare room in the cottage and the Rainers insisted that we move in with them. In this unlikely fashion there began a lifelong friendship.

During the second of my two years at school after Matric, Harold Goodburn was intensifying his pressure on me to switch from Veterinary Science to Medicine. In the pursuit of this aim he discovered that, in his opinion, the best Medical School in London was at The Middlesex Hospital. This was not an armchair opinion because he took the trouble to investigate the matter by perusing the various brochures and visiting those in London that he considered should be looked into. He also found out that a certain Sir Edmund Davis, who lived at Chilham Castle not far from Canterbury was on the Board of Governors of not only The Middlesex Hospital but also the King's School. He approached Sir Edmund and told him that he had as one of his students at King's a boy who showed talent but whose parents were not in a financial position to send him to Medical School and suggested to Sir Edmund that perhaps he might like to help in some way.

Sir Edmund said that he would consider the matter and that he would like to see the boy. Consequently during the next school holidays I had to be interviewed in his business office in the City of London. He must have approved of what he saw and heard because he announced that he would endow a scholarship giving free medical education for a King's School Canterbury boy at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School. Thus I became the first holder of the Sir Edmund Davis Exhibition.

With Harold Goodburn's tuition I passed the First M.B., the first year's exam of the University of London degree course in the Faculty of Medicine, so that when I started my course at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School in September 1928 at the age of 17, I was already a second-year student.

Before leaving this era I should mention the continuation of our friendship with the families Rainer and Barrault. They begged Olive and me to return to Britanny the following year and so we went back to Kerhostin, only this time it was on a basis of sharing the cost of renting the same cottage where we stayed with them and the cost of housekeeping.

The exchange rate between sterling and the French Franc was very much in our favour, and seeing that both Olive and I had long summer holidays from school we were able to go for six weeks or so. The cottage was a double storey building a little way out of the village of Kerhostin across the railway line that ran down the peninsula to Quiberon on the sandy unmetalled road to Portivy. That little fishing village was on the next bay south of the beach we usually frequented and was the site of a sardine-processing factory that at certain times emitted a very strong fishy odour which did not, however, ever reach as far as our cottage. Beyond Portivy on the western side of the peninsula were high cliffs interspersed with a few little beaches which one could reach down precipitous cliff paths. This whole area was known as the Côte Sauvage, and on stormy days a walk along the cliff top path offered magnificent views of the full fury of the Atlantic crashing against the rocky coastline. It was a very favourite walk of ours, especially the young teenagers. Apart from Michel and Robert there were a number of other young people, all French holidaymakers and we had quite a regular 'gang' who arranged to do things together such as swimming, walking, playing various games on the beach, and going dancing in the evenings at a small hostelry down a side road in Kerhostin leading to the beach on the east side of the peninsula in the calm waters of Quiberon Bay. Even on stormy days when the Côte Sauvage waves were at their most spectacular, the Bay waters were amazingly smooth. It was, of course, one of the recognised anchorages for the French Navy and the scene of a famous naval battle between the British and the French in 1759, during the Seven Years War where Admiral Hawke sent in fireships among the French Fleet gathering there in preparation for an intended invasion of England and the invasion plan was aborted.

At this small pub called *Au Bon Accueil* there were dances every Saturday night and our gang often attended them and we continued to do so for year after year during the summer holidays, in fact until the outbreak of the war in 1939.

Over the years we acquired small craft shaped like a surfboards without the little metal keel, called *perissoires* and used to sit on the flat deck and paddle on the waters of Quiberon Bay. On one occasion I and another young Frenchman made the journey across the bay to Carnac, and on calmer days on the Atlantic side we used to paddle out to a small island which was officially called Tiviec, but which we usually referred to as the Ile aux Lapins because someone in the past had released rabbits on the little island and they were very numerous. I feel sure they must have been released deliberately for hunting purposes because I cannot imagine that rabbits could swim about 500 metres from the mainland shore. We hardly ever bathed on the Bay side because at low tide the water near Kerhostin was very shallow and bathing would entail more walking than swimming.

One result of these frequent and long holidays in France was that I became very fluent in French and by the time that I was 21 a lot of French people who heard me speak would not believe that I was English. This was, of course, because I hardly spoke a word of English, except to Olive, for six or seven weeks on end.

During those years the Rainers and Robert Barrault visited us in London and we often went to their hometown of Tours in the lovely valley of the Loire, and paid several visits to the magnificent chateaux in the district of which, without a doubt, our favourite was Chenonceau.



Chenonceau in the Loire Valley.

Chapter 3: Medical School

A few days before the actual start of work as a medical student at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School in September 1923, there was an impressive ceremony held at the Queens Hall at the south end of Portland Place, to which new students and their parents were invited. The Dean of the Medical School, who was one of the senior surgeons on the staff of the Hospital, Mr Eric Pearce Gould, gave an address of which I remember only one part. There was, it seems, already in those early days a movement to open up the school to women students. The Dean made some excuses as to why this was unlikely in the immediate future and made a comment which I thought was very amusing but a bit risqué. 'The idea seems to appeal to many of the present students who are confusing the advantages of co-education with the pleasures of co-habitation'. I remember that Olive, who attended the opening ceremony with understandable maternal pride, was as amused as I was and relieved to know that a sense of humour was compatible with success and promotion in the field of Medicine. Some friends of my grandparents, knowing that I was a medical student, made it very clear to me that they did not consider it to be at all proper for a student to indulge in such flighty and trivial pastimes in the evenings as going to dances or to the cinema. I ought to have my nose buried in the textbooks and be swotting for my exams.



The Middlesex Hospital.

I continued to live in the top flat with Olive at the home of her parents in Burnt Ash Road, Lee, only a couple of hundred yards away from the Lee railway station on the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway line, later to be incorporated into the Southern Railway which was to be eventually merged with the Great Western, the London and North Eastern and the London Midland and Scottish Railways into British Rail.



A 1925 photo of the Seaman family. Back row, left to right: Olive Roberts; Tom Riddle; Marjorie Riddle (one of Olive's sisters); Tony Riddle. Middle row: Sarah-Ann Seaman (Olive's mother); Charles Joseph Seaman (Olive's father); Nellie Harrison (one of Olive's sisters). Front row: John Riddle; Dorothy Harrison; Norman Seaman (Olive's brother and the youngest of the Seaman siblings).

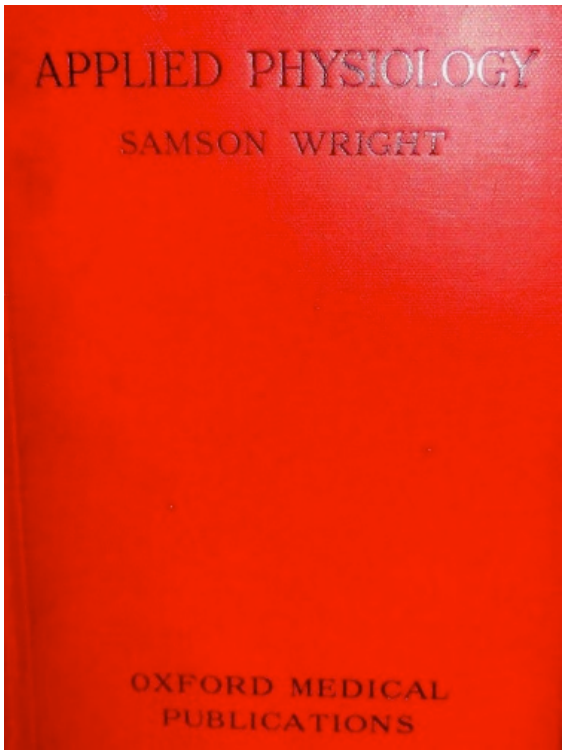
I travelled each day, on a monthly season ticket from Lee at about 8.10 a.m. to Charing Cross, a journey of about approximately 20 to 25 minutes and then I could catch an Underground train on the Northern Line from, curiously enough, not Charing Cross Underground Station but Strand Station the entrance to which was in the main line Charing Cross Station, while the Underground Station of Charing Cross was down Villiers Street on the Embankment, one of those delightful inconsistencies so typical of Britain and so confusing to strangers. On a visit to London in 1990 I found that this

particular inconsistency had been eradicated and the entrance to Charing Cross Underground station was indeed in the forecourt of the Charing Cross Main Line Station and the old Charing Cross Underground was now renamed Embankment, much more logical but on that occasion confusing to me who remembered the situation in the 1920s and 1930s. From there I could take a penny Tube ride three stations to Goodge Street, a mere two or three minute walk from the Middlesex Hospital. I say 'could take' because more often than not I preferred to walk unless the weather was too bad. This had the double benefit of getting exercise and saving a whole penny, for which I could find a far better use. I could get a very satisfying sandwich for lunch for threepence.

Starting off, as I did, as a second year student my subjects for study were Anatomy, Physiology, Organic Chemistry and Pharmacology. The professors of both Anatomy and Physiology at that time were renowned for their teaching prowess. Tim Yates was the professor of Anatomy, and the famous Samson Wright was professor of Physiology. A very high standard in both these subjects was essential for a pass in the post-graduate examination, the Primary Fellowship or first part of the examination to be admitted to the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Postgraduate students came from all over the world to the Middlesex to attend the courses that both these professors conducted for candidates for the Primary, especially from Australia and New Zealand. I suspect that it was Yates' and Wright's reputation that had impressed Harold Goodburn in his quest for the best Medical School for me to attend.

Tim Yates was an eccentric old Scotsman who held his tutorials for the Primary at one end of the Anatomy dissecting room while we second year undergraduates were busy dissecting the human bodies at various tables so we were able to see something of his methods. He had beautiful coloured drawings done by himself on the blackboard and passed round the group of Primary candidates various specimens, usually bones and asked searching questions. He did not have much to do with the undergraduates directly as he delegated most of the individual teaching to the two or three Demonstrators who were usually postgraduates wanting to brush up their own knowledge of anatomy. There is no better way of learning a subject than teaching it to others who seem to have a knack of asking all sorts of awkward questions which keep the instructor on his toes. Professor Yates off duty could be seen arriving at or departing from the medical school walking along the street with one foot on the pavement and the other in the gutter and muttering to himself, but his eccentricity did not detract from his knowledge of his subject nor his ability to teach it.

Samson Wright was by no means eccentric, but a quietly spoken man with a prodigious memory and knowledge of physiology. He had written a textbook *Applied Physiology* that was used universally and was being continually updated in new editions. After Samson Wright died, new editions of his book were brought out by his successor, C.A. Keele, who was his chief assistant when I was a student. One of my treasured possessions is a copy of *Applied Physiology*, 7th Edition, signed by Samson Wright and given to me in appreciation of an anaesthetic that I gave his wife in 1942.

Samson Wright and his textbook, *Applied Physiology*.

For anatomical dissection we were divided into groups of two or three students who were supposed to dissect together, taking it in turns to do the actual dissection while the partner read the directions from Cunningham's ... *Practical Anatomy*. My dissecting partners were Gordon and Bywaters. I don't remember much about Gordon except that he was a sensible worker and a congenial companion. Eric Bywaters was a friend and rival of mine throughout my student career. He was not a steady dissector often absenting himself for days at a time from the dissecting room and then turning up and demanding that Gordon and I should run through the book with him and demonstrate what we had exposed by our dissection. Eric had a phenomenal memory and after a brief look at our work would then remember more than Gordon or I did. What we two were concerned about was to keep Eric Bywaters away from the body with a scalpel in his hand. On the few occasions that he did any dissection himself, usually in an effort to keep up with what Gordon and I had done and when we were not there, he could almost be relied upon to cut or even remove structures that we had been at special pains to keep intact. This made it all the more galling when, at the end of our 18 months Anatomy course we had to sit for a small exam conducted by Tim Yates for the Anatomy Prize of the year, Eric won the prize and I had to be content with the second prize!

There were three ways of getting qualified as a doctor. The easiest or lowest ranking qualification was that of Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries. Very few students presented themselves for that examination as it was regarded as the last hope of the almost hopeless. In desperation, some students might resort to it if they had a miserable record of failure in other examinations.

The next easiest method of getting on to the Medical Register of the General Medical Council, an essential step before being allowed to practise medicine in Britain, was to take the examinations of the Conjoint Board of the Royal College of Surgeons and the

Royal College of Physicians. This qualification, known familiarly as the 'Conjoint', demanded a good standard of knowledge but was easier to obtain than a University Degree because the examinations were held more frequently, every three months, and one was able to take each subject separately, and also the minimum time between passing the preclinical subjects and qualification by passing the clinical subjects was shorter than for the University degrees. For this reason, many of the university undergraduates would take the Conjoint before the University Finals to enable them to be already registered and take work in a hospital while working for the degree finals. That, in fact, was what I did when I reached the clinical part of the course.

The University degree was the highest ranking of the three methods, but in order to enter the University the student had to have attained Matric. The prerequisite exam for the Conjoint was not of such a high standard as Matric.

By passing the Second M.B., the examination at the end of the preclinical course of the university, the student could get exemption from the corresponding exams of the Conjoint Board by just paying the exam fees, so being eligible to present himself for the Conjoint Finals.

I had got the London University Matric. and had already passed the First M.B. of that university when I became a medical student at the Middlesex. Students from Oxford and Cambridge took their preclinical exams at those universities and then entered one of the Medical Schools attached to the various London teaching hospitals.

During the preclinical part of the course there were the usual university terms and holidays, so that I was able to continue to visit Brittany for a long holiday in the summer, but during the clinical years I had to be content with two weeks.

A few kilometres to the east of the base of the Quiberon Peninsula was the small village of Carnac, famous for its long *alignements*, or rows of prehistoric menhirs, each stone about two metres high, and barrows and burial chambers. When visitors arrived to look at them a small group of small children would cluster round the sightseers and start to recite a long spiel about the number of stones, the length of the lines of stones and the theories about their origin and purpose. On one occasion when I was there a group of village children had besieged an American visitor and began their chant in unison. The American waited until the children had almost completed their ritual then he interrupted them with a question. This stumped the kids and with one accord they all started to recite their set piece from the beginning again. Next time they nearly got to the end the visitor fiendishly asked a question again and once more the whole singsong started from the beginning. Near the *alignements* there was an area in some lovely pine woods where entrepreneurs had built quite a few holiday homes that were expensive and trendy under the name of Carnac Plage.

Another rather gruesome sightseeing attraction in the region was the collection of human bones in the church at Ste Anne d'Auray. They were reputed to be those of monks in a local monastery. They were in a crypt under the floor of the church and viewed through a round hole like the opening of a water well through which a rope or chain with a lamp on the end of it dangled. I don't know whether the monastery was still in operation and whether the inhabitants were continuing to contribute their skeletons after they died.

Belle Ile is an aptly named island in the Bay of Biscay about an hour's boat ride away from Quiberon. Tourist coaches, which in those days we called Charabancs, (or should it be *chars-a-bancs*?) met the little steamer and whisked visitors around the island stopping strategically at a hotel about midday for a sumptuous lunch of lobster, the *spécialité du pays*. The drawback to the whole trip was that the sea passage was frequently very rough and many a lobster returned to the Bay of Biscay half digested. I remember one such occasion when I thought I could avoid seasickness if I managed to go straight to the bows of the ship as soon I boarded and stay there enjoying the spectacle of the stormy sea. All went well until we docked and then I had to wait until everyone else had disembarked and, having experienced no nausea at all during the rough crossing, as soon as I set foot on the quay the delayed-action *mal de mer* struck. The ensuing short train journey from Quiberon to Kerhostin was a most *mauvais quart d'heure*.

I never did manage to find any boatman willing, for a fare I could afford, to take me to either of the two little islands Houat and Hoedic mentioned in Balzac's *Six Contes*, the original reason for us to go to that lovely part of Brittany in the first place.

The most enduring friendship I made as a medical student was with Denis Brinkworth. He was about ten years older than I was, having qualified as a Biochemist before he decided to switch to medicine. He was in the same year as I was and we sat for most of our exams together. His parents I remember as an elderly retired couple who lived in a large old house with a delightful walled garden at Chippenham in Wiltshire. I spent several delightful weekends there with Denis and he was one of the first of my friends that I took on holiday to Brittany. When Denis qualified, after a couple of house jobs (six months' appointments as House Surgeon or House Physician, generally now known as Residents or by the American term Interns), he bought a practice in Wootton Bassett, not far from Chippenham, I think so that he could keep an eye on his aged parents. On one occasion Denis and I visited Lacock Abbey, near Chippenham, the home of William Fox Talbot who was the first person to print a photograph in 1839, the same year that Daguerre, in France, announced his method of photography known as daguerreotype. On show in the Abbey, which was the last religious house to be dissolved after the Reformation and was converted into a mansion, is one of Fox Talbot's earliest photographs.

Of the basic sciences Physiology is the most important. Anatomy, of course is important, especially to surgeons, although only relatively a fraction of what one has to learn as a student is of much use practically. In later years I used to tease some of the surgeons with whom I worked by saying that the only difference between a surgeon who remembered his anatomy and one who had forgotten it was that one of them could tell you the name of what he had just cut.

The least useful of the preclinical subjects in practice was Pharmacology, at least as we learnt it. That was, of course, in the days of the apothecaries' weights and measures when fluids were measured in minims, drachms and ounces and solids weighed in grains, drams and ounces, all with their own symbol in written prescriptions. We had to learn how to write prescriptions with instructions in abbreviated Latin and which drugs were incompatible so that one did not mix them in the prescriptions. We were also taught how to roll pills and how to wrap a bottle of medicine in white paper and close the package with sealing wax. In those days, of course, many general practitioners did

all their own dispensing and such knowledge was for them very useful. I experienced self-dispensing twice during two locums that I did in the year I qualified and I found that part of my duties to be the hardest and most time-consuming. Nowadays prescriptions are very rarely written for the pharmacist to dispense by carefully measuring out each constituent, mixing them and packaging the resultant concoction because the manufacturing chemists have done all that work and all the pharmacist has to do is find the prescribed medication on his shelves and label it with the doctor's instructions. In this way, I am sure, there are far fewer opportunities for error.

During the preclinical period I played some rugby and learnt fencing and tried to resume rowing but the bothersome journey to the Thames at Hammersmith and the lack of any corporate loyalty as the Hospital did not have a rowing club caused me to lose interest. I also tried my hand at hockey which I had not played since my Choir School days and even succeeded once in playing for the Hospital in an away match at Cambridge, the only time I have ever been to Cambridge and then I was not able to see the city and University and compare them with Oxford.

Travelling every morning up to the West End on the Dartford Loop Line, I met a youth about my age who had just started work in the City and we got into the habit of travelling together as far as London Bridge where our ways parted, he going to Cannon Street and I to Charing Cross. His name was Arthur Stidolph and he lived a few doors away from my grandparents' home. At, I think, his mother's suggestion we both joined the local branch of a young Conservative organisation called the Junior Imperial League, or the Imps for short. This was not from any political fervour but essentially as a means of meeting other people of our own age for social purposes. They ran dances and after a short time formed a tennis club which during the summer became the nucleus of our activities. We justified our political affiliation by delivering pamphlets at time of elections et cetera. The tennis club had its courts at Mottingham, an adjacent suburb between Lee and Eltham. The homes of two families living near the tennis courts became the venues of many a weekend or evening social gathering.

The Craddocks had four children, three girls and a boy. Ena, the eldest, I think was already married and then there were Effie, Lydia and Tommy. Their house was almost next door to the open ground, part of a small farm, where the tennis courts were and often after an afternoon of tennis a lot of us would drop in there. The other family were the Wynns who had four teenage daughters, Jenny, Vicky, Lilian and Marian and two younger children, Leslie about 12 years old and the youngest another girl, Gladys, about eight years old when I first met the family. Their house also was a great favourite haunt of many members of the Imps tennis club, especially all the boys.

About April 1930 I passed the 2nd M.B. Exam of the University of London in the pre-clinical subjects of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology. While the Anatomy and Physiology were still fresh in my mind, I thought that it would be a good idea to try for the Primary Examination of the F.R.C.S. as one was to be held very shortly. As I said before, this is a very testing exam and carries a high failure rate, so I was not surprised when I failed. I had passed in the Anatomy but not the Physiology and the requirements at that time were that candidates had to pass them both at the same examination. Three-and-a-half years later, after I had qualified and finished a house surgeon's job and was waiting for another house job to become vacant, I tried the Primary again. This time I took the precaution of getting some coaching in Physiology and passed that subject but

I had forgotten too much of the Anatomy and failed that so that once again I 'ploughed' the whole exam. Soon after that I decided to specialise in Anaesthetics for which the F.R.C.S. was not necessary, so I did not ever present myself for the Primary again. In later years I believe that the College of Surgeons relaxed the rule about having to pass both subjects at the one sitting, but they did not make the new regulation retrospective.



Bobby first met Lilian around the time this photograph of her was taken when she was 17 years old.

Now that I had passed the 2nd M.B. Exam, a completely new phase of my medical education began and for the first time I came into contact with live patients.

During the clinical part of medical training, the student was sent to work in the various branches of medicine for specified periods: three months in Casualty, six months

Surgery, six months Medicine, six months Gynaecology and Obstetrics, and so on. The minor specialties such as Skin diseases and Eyes might be worked simultaneously. In all the period of clinical training for the University degree course was three years, but the student could present himself for the Conjoint Finals after only 33 months. The first three months was in Casualty, and the department at the Middlesex was divided into Surgical and Medical Casualty. During this time the student faced in a concentrated form the sorts of problems that present every day in a general practitioner's consulting rooms. Obvious trauma from abrasions and bruises to possibly lethal injuries were channelled to the surgical side and aches and pains and general malaise to the medical. Patients who had already consulted their doctor and were referred by him for further investigation did not attend Casualty, but were directed to the appropriate Outpatient department.

I remember being in Surgical Casualty when a man was brought in who had pushed his right hand through the blade of a circular saw cutting off his thumb and index and middle fingers but with very little loss of blood. I had to help with the cleaning and dressing of the wound and was amazed at myself for not feeling faint, but as soon as he had been admitted to the ward and I had time to imagine how he had done it, I suddenly felt very weak and had to be resuscitated by putting my head firmly down between my knees.

The six months in Surgery were split into two periods of three months each with a different surgical 'firm'. The surgical side of the hospital was divided into four firms, each with a Senior and a Junior Honorary Surgeon at the head. Then there were the paid Resident staff, headed by the Registrar, usually a surgeon in training being qualified for about three years, and a house-surgeon, a newly qualified man appointed for a six-month term. There were four to six students allotted to each firm for three months and they were known as 'dressers'. Each firm had the charge of two wards, one male and one female, each ward having about 20 beds.

The wards were ruled by the Ward Sister, who not only had charge of the nurses allotted to that ward, but directed the duties of the dressers and saw that they were properly trained in the care as well as the treatment of the patients and that they learned all sorts of things such as the correct way to make beds. This latter skill was not only very useful in home life afterwards, but a source of irritation to one's wife when her husband started to correct her on points of domestic chores.

My first surgical firm as a dresser was that of Eric Pearce Gould as the Senior Surgeon and David Patey as the Junior. 'P.G.' as we called Pearce Gould was not a flamboyant surgeon prone to attempt heroic surgery but a calm, down-to-earth man who believed, quite rightly, that he would do more good for humanity by curing or alleviating common complaints such as hernias, appendicitis, tuberculous glands in the neck, which were quite prevalent in those days, and so on. To complement this combination of quiet, gentle surgeons, the ward sister was a small serene young woman who treated patients, nurses and medical students kindly but efficiently.



Eric Pearce Gould.

Apart from doing the dressings in the ward, the students also had to attend the formal ward round by the surgeons. This ritual was a regular fixture twice a week. Ten minutes before the appointed time the registrar, house surgeon, and all the students assembled at the front door of the hospital to await the arrival of the 'Chief', all dressed in their best suits. Those old surgeons must be rotating rapidly in their graves now if they can see the way students and residents dress nowadays in scruffy jeans and T-shirts. Each student had been allotted a number of the patients to look after, and on the ward round any error of commission or omission was likely to be exposed for all to see and hear. The highlight of the duties of the dresser was to assist at the operations on the twice-weekly operating lists, on the days following the rounds.

Each of the four surgical firms took it in turns to be on call for a week at a time, and during one's week on call life was very full and interesting. Emergencies, be they acute appendicitis or being run over by a bus, had to be dealt with at all hours of the day, so that the students were virtually right in the front line of the battle, being the first, after admission and examination of the patient by the house surgeon, to take the history, test the urine of and prepare the patient for surgery. In those days all abdominal surgery cases were preoperatively shaved from nipple line to below the pubis, then the whole abdomen was washed with ether soap and rinsed with pure ether and covered with a sterile towel which was kept in place by either a bandage or adhesive tape, and who did all that? That's right, the dresser, at any rate for the male patients. This way I became

quite adept in the use of the cut-throat razor ('Experimentum fit in corpore vilo', a Latin proverb meaning try it out first on something of little value or, as Evelyn Waugh says in a too literal translation, *Vile Bodies*). The nurses did the 'prepping' of the female patients, but of course they worked shift hours so they did not feel the same exhaustion as the medical students. During a heavy emergency week we would get very little sleep and the end of the week was very welcome.

Most students, at their first operation, would feel a little queasy but we all quickly got inured to the sight of blood and even death.

My second three months as a surgical dresser was with a very different surgeon, Mr (later Sir) Gordon Gordon-Taylor. He was a bold, 'heroic', surgeon who was interested in the more spectacular types of surgery. Had he been born 60 years later he would have been at the forefront of transplant surgery. He wore a butterfly collar and a bow tie and always a carnation in his buttonhole. Legend had it that he had once treated a patient so much to her satisfaction that she had left a legacy to send him a fresh carnation every day of his life.

I do not wish to belittle his memory by these comments because he was a most erudite classical scholar, a brilliant technical surgeon and a most charming man. One thing which struck us students was that he hardly ever undressed before operating except to take off his coat, and then scrubbed up, donned an apron and gown and gloves and proceeded to perform an afternoon's operations without seeming ever to feel the heat. In my opinion 'G.T.', as he was known, lacked sympathy with his patients, regarding them more as material for his surgical skill than as human beings needing help,

What we dressers found most impressive during our three months with his firm was the ward sister. She was the archetypical female nursing 'dragon'. We had heard about her before we were allotted to that firm and her reputation was not exaggerated. The longer I worked on her wards, the more I admired her. She was absolutely strict but also absolutely honest and understanding. After some inevitable clashes I got on with her very well and in after years as a resident in various appointments I could always communicate with her and without friction.

Next in my student career I had to do six months in a medical 'firm'. I was allotted to a firm whose chief physician was Dr 'Georgie' Ward, and Dr D. Evan Bedford was the Junior. This firm shared wards with another firm of which Dr T Izod Bennett was the junior physician. Our firm had one side of each of both the male and female wards, and the other firm presided over the other side. Duties in the medical wards were not so exhausting physically as in the surgical wards, but our keeping of the records of the patients' symptoms and signs and clinical findings were much more exacting. The medical rounds by the visiting physicians were more prolonged and more searching and I remember one instance when we had stopped at the bed of a patient who was suffering from a complicated kidney disease and at that time 'Tizzy' Bennett was paying a visit to someone on his side of the ward. Dr Bedford decided to call him in in consultation. Dr Bennett spent a long time slowly turning over the pages of the pathologist's report on the 24 hourly specimens of urine that had been sent over the two or three months' stay of the patient in hospital and then pontificated 'You know, Evan, in this type of case I always think that one of three things may happen. The patient may

get better, he may get worse or he may stay as he is.' A profound and, no doubt, true statement, but hardly enlightening.

Another anecdote about 'Tizzy' Bennett reveals his practical sense of humour. He had a patient who had a bleeding gastric or duodenal ulcer and was treating him with, inter alia, complete rest. The relatives regarded this masterly inactivity as neglect and kept saying to Dr Bennett 'But, Doctor, isn't there anything we can do for him?'

The reply was 'Yes, you can rub Vaseline into the soles of his feet every half hour!'

Dr Bedford, by the way, was one of the first at the Middlesex to realise the value of electrocardiography. He had a small windowless little basement cubbyhole, I can't call it a room, where he painstakingly looked at his E.C.G.s and as far as I know not many people were at all interested.

One other experience in the medical wards stands out in my memory. An elderly woman, a Miss Popplewell, was suffering from pernicious anaemia and needed blood transfusions from time to time. She happened to be one of the patients allotted to me and so, when her next transfusion was due, I had to assist the house physician to administer it.

In those days there was no blood bank and one had to ask her relatives to volunteer to donate the blood and crossmatch the blood from the volunteers to be sure the donor's blood was compatible. Drip transfusions were quite unknown at that time, the system of drip intravenous infusion was developed a few years later at the Middlesex Hospital by Drs Hugh Marriott and Alan Kekwick. The technique in 1931, when Miss Popplewell needed her transfusion, was to take the blood from the donor in an adjacent bed behind screens in the ward and then without delay allow it to run into the previously surgically opened vein in the recipient. At that time it was thought that it was unwise to dilute the blood with an anticoagulant such as Sodium Citrate so, in order to stop the blood from clotting one used the Kimpton's Tube. This was a cylindrical glass tube about 8 cm. diameter and about 30 cm. tall, with an open top that could be closed with a rubber bung fitted with a Higginson syringe to apply either pressure or suction. The lower end opened into a horizontal narrow tapered tube with the tip small enough to fit inside the veins. The Kimpton tube had to be prepared before the transfusion by dissolving a small lump of wax in ether and swilling it round in the glass tube so that the entire inner surface was covered with a thin layer of wax. This prevented the blood from clotting on the sides of the tube. When all was ready and both the donor and the recipient had had veins in their elbows exposed and opened but held shut by surgical forceps, the blood was sucked out of the donor by using a vacuum pump on top of the Kimpton's tube. When the tube was full the operator went quickly to the recipient and pumped it into her vein, by reversing the pump on the top of the tube. Unfortunately in the hurry to get the blood to the patient before it clotted, the pump was not reversed so when the blood was supposed to run in what actually happened was that some of Miss Popplewell's blood was extracted. As soon as the error was noticed, the whole procedure was abandoned and neither harm nor good was done to the patient.

It is amazing to think that only 60 years ago it was still customary to perform such manoeuvres, which today are easily performed percutaneously, by the crude method of cutting down under local anaesthetic on the vein in the bend of the elbow, expose the

vein and tie it off and cut into it and later sew up the incision, rendering that vein useless for further transfusions and leaving a scar.

After the end of the six months in the medical wards, the next appointment was with Gynaecology and Obstetrics for six months. During this time each student had to spend one month working in the labour ward and after delivering about six babies, he was expected to go with one of the trainee nurses out on 'the District'. That is to go and manage home births.

The Middlesex Hospital is on the edge of Soho with a very dense population of various ethnic origins, mainly Italians, Greeks and Cypriots living in almost slum conditions, often in tenement buildings several floors up with no lifts. We had to turn the other children and animals out of the bedroom and keep the husband busy providing newspapers (for spreading on the floor and bed) and hot water with jugs and basins. As a rule the deliveries were easy, as the woman had certainly had at least one child before. Women bearing their first child were always admitted to hospital. If the labour was in any way abnormal or difficult we had to despatch the husband to get help from the hospital and either a trained midwife or the Obstetric House-surgeon or the Registrar would come to the rescue.

One of the pupil midwives, as the nurses doing their midwifery training were called, Nurse Williams was often rostered to go with me when I was called out to cases 'on the district'. She went on to make midwifery her career and later became the Sister in charge of the Maternity Ward at the Middlesex and from there went on to be the Matron of the most important Maternity Hospital in London, Queen Charlotte's.

I enjoyed that part of my training and when during that year I won the annual prize for Obstetrics and Gynaecology, I decided that after I qualified I would specialise in that branch of Medicine.

The rest of the three years of clinical training were divided into three monthly periods covering Pathology and the various minor specialties such as Ear, Nose and Throat, Skins, Eyes, Paediatrics, Infectious diseases, etc. We learnt to give anaesthetics during our six months with the surgical firms during the operating sessions. If the patient undergoing the operation had been allotted to me, for instance, I would be expected to scrub up and act as second assistant to the surgeon and house-surgeon, but if it was not my case then I would have the opportunity to learn how to give the anaesthetic first by watching the anaesthetist and later when he thought that I had learnt enough, by actually giving the anaesthetic under the close supervision of the anaesthetist. In view of the fact that outside the big cities there were no specialist anaesthetists and therefore general practitioners had to give anaesthetics for either their partners or a specialist surgeon who might be called in, and that such a chore was usually delegated to the most junior and therefore the least experienced doctors, such abysmally minimal training was, in retrospect, quite inadequate.

After about two years of clinical studies, we were allowed to start taking some of the final exams of the Conjoint Board. There were four exams: Surgery, Medicine, O. and G., and Pathology. Each of these was held every three months and one could take them separately or together in any combination with the proviso that one could not take the

last one that would entitle one to be qualified until 33 months had elapsed since passing the Second M.B. or its equivalent at the end of the pre-clinical studies.

In order to overcome this hurdle, Brink (as we called Denis Brinkworth) and I joined with Stan Levine, an American student from New Jersey, who devised a plan for a refresher course. His plan was, no doubt as all good plans are, simple. We obtained copies of all the Conjoint Finals papers that had been set during the past five years and analysed them.

It became obvious that there was a pattern. For instance in the Medicine paper there was always a question on either Eyes or Skins, never on both, and when we were prepared to take that paper, for the last three examinations there had been a question on Dermatology so we were pretty sure that this time it would be the turn for an Ophthalmology question. Consequently in our intense pre-examination revision we neglected Skins and concentrated on Eyes. This prediction proved correct and we all three passed the Medicine paper. This is not to suggest that we were unprepared fully for the exam. On the contrary, we worked through every one of those questions that had been asked during the past five years, read everything we could about the subject of the question and then wrote answers just as if we were in the examination hall, not once but again and again so that we reckoned that if we could answer all the questions that had been set for the preceding five years, we knew enough to pass.

This intensive swotting we applied to all of the Final Conjoint papers, with the desired result that in January 1933 we all three passed and became entitled to be registered with the General Medical Council to practise Medicine.

I would not like to give the impression that life as a medical student was all work and no play. We entered into the usual sporting activities, such as rugby, hockey and, if one was so inclined, cricket. I not only played a bit of rugger but whenever there was a match between hospital sides, we turned out in force and rooted vociferously for the Middlesex. There was a Scottish Professor of Pathology, McIntosh, who had very strong views about the status of amateur rugby and was particularly upset by the thought that our greatest rival, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, offered scholarships to boys who had shown particular prowess in the game at school. Whenever we played St. Mary's he would be on the touch line and if ever a St. Mary's man fumbled a pass or missed an easy kick, he would shout out loudly 'Tak awa' his scholarship!'

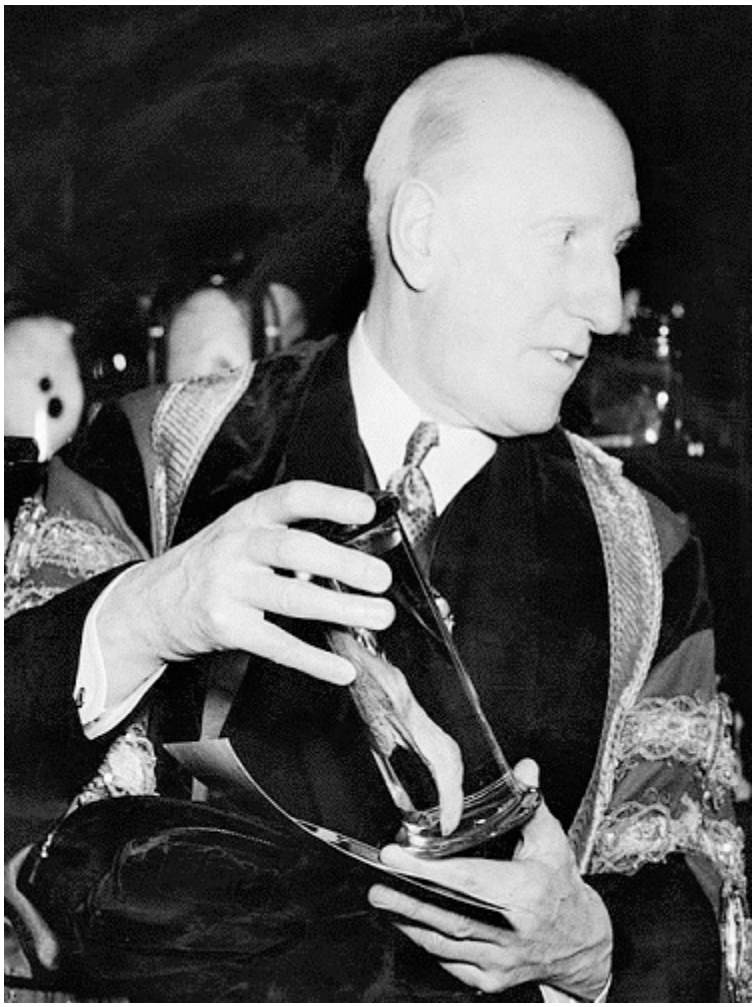
Hockey I played a little and once had the distinction, *faute de mieux*[9], of being included in a team to play against a team in Cambridge. We lost the match but (as I said earlier) the main reason the day sticks in my mind is that it was the only time in my life that I have ever been to Cambridge. I also learnt a little of the art of fencing, but without much success, and realised that, although my small body provided a smaller target, this point in my favour was more than counteracted by my shorter reach.

More convivial and less strenuous relaxation was provided by the Annual Smoking Concert. It seems strange today to think that a Medical School could associate itself in any way with anything with such a name. But, of course, nobody then thought that

[9] For want of a better alternative.

there was anything unhealthy or dangerous about smoking. The function was held annually at a large Music Hall in the vicinity and all the most prominent of Vaudeville stars were only too eager to give a performance for no payment because of the publicity of being invited to appear at this famous annual event. It was a full evening dress affair and all the important people connected with the hospital turned up with their partners.

One year I saved up the money to attend and even to take a partner. I had recently been staying with my aunt Nellie near Manchester and had met there the family of one of the local senior gynaecologists, a Dr Cowen. I asked Betty, one of his daughters, a very pretty and attractive young girl, to come with me and as she had some relatives in London with whom she could stay, her parents consented to her accepting. We arrived at the theatre and while I was buying a programme one of the senior surgeons at the Middlesex, Alfred Webb-Johnson, who later became Sir Alfred and later, after several years as one of the most successful Presidents of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, became Lord Webb-Johnson, and who had a keen eye for a pretty girl, came up to her and said 'Hullo, What's your name? My name's Alfred.' Before she could reply I joined them with my programme and introduced her to him and he said, 'Well, Roberts, enjoy yourself', gave my elbow a squeeze and walked off.



Alfred Webb-Johnson.

In Brittany, in the meantime, after several years of renting cottages each summer either in Kerhostin or Port Haliguen, a fishing village at the tip of the peninsula near

Quiberon, the Rainers and Olive decided to buy a small plot of land on the sand dunes close to the beach where we originally met. During the next winter M. Rainer, who was a cabinet-maker by trade, went to Kerhostin several weekends and laid concrete foundations and started to build a wooden house.

The plan was simple, one large room with four double beds which during the day could be folded up at the head end to stand flat against the wall. Between each bed were curtains to provide privacy. The bed space occupied half of the room but during the day the whole area was free for daytime activities. There was an upper floor under the tiled roof divided into two rooms reached by a ladder that during the day folded up out of the way. At the beginning of the summer holiday following the start of building, only the foundations and the wooden framework were ready and many willing helpers soon had the place habitable. A well was dug, not without difficulty because after the first six feet of sand, the amateur shaft sinkers struck rock and work had to be slow and heavy using primitive rock splitting tools. A tripod at the pithead carried a block and tackle and a bucket on a pulley was sent down to the volunteer workers to fill with pieces of rock and then hauled up and the empty bucket sent down again. On one occasion the winch man at the top of the well was a little too enthusiastic hauling up the bucket and it went over the top of the pulley sending down a bucket load of rock chips onto the unfortunate workers. Luckily no one was seriously injured, just a few bruises and abrasions.

The new holiday house was a great success and was named ‘Thark’ after the Ben Travers play at that time running in London. This was explained to the French as meaning ‘The Ark’ and M. Rainer acquired the nickname, as the builder, of ‘Noah’. During my days as a medical student, Olive graduated from a motor scooter to a car. I think the first car we had was a Rover 8. It was a good little car and lived up to the advertisement ‘You can’t overrate the Rover 8’.



A Rover 8.

I passed the last of my Conjoint papers on 20 January 1933 and had to wait one week until the 27th for the official permission of the G.M.C.[10] My first day as a practising doctor was therefore my 22nd birthday.

[10] General Medical Council.

Chapter 4: Postgraduate Studies

It was the usual thing to do, and nowadays it is compulsory, for newly qualified students to continue their training by spending at least a year working under supervision in a hospital before being let loose on the trusting public. Such was my intention but urgent necessity at that time made me go to help out in a general practice for the first 12 days of my life as a doctor.



When he was a young doctor (his first day as a practising doctor was his 22nd birthday), Bobby grew a moustache in order to look a bit older.

That winter in England was a bitterly cold one and there was, moreover, a 'flu epidemic raging. A practice in the Home Counties, on the Bedfordshire- Buckinghamshire

border, of three partners and one assistant was hard hit as one of the partners and the assistant were both down with the 'flu. One of the remaining partners was an old Middlesex man and he had applied to the Middlesex to send him someone as soon as possible as a locum. The senior of the full time medical staff at the Middlesex, known as the R.M.O., was Hugh Marriott, a friend of the distressed pleader and he promised to send me as soon as my official registration was valid.

So, on my 22nd birthday very early on a cold bright frosty morning I caught a train to the nearest station to the practice which was centred on Woburn, Woburn Sands and Aspley Guise where I was met by the recuperating but still very shaky assistant and driven to one of the surgeries where I was to face a waiting room full of people who had already been waiting half-an-hour for a doctor to arrive. Most of them had influenza but quite a few were victims of skating accidents as all the local ponds were frozen and every able person was taking the opportunity of breaking their wrists, spraining their ankles, bruising their bottoms or running over some other hapless person's fingers with their unmanageable skates.

The surgery, which was scheduled to last an hour but started at least half-an-hour late due to the L.M.S.[11] timetable, did not finish until about 11.00 a.m. instead of 9.00 a.m. partly because of the unusual number of early morning patients attending but mainly, I suspect, because as a complete new boy on my very first day in practice I had not the experience necessary to deal with the problems quickly. I was haunted by the thought that, unless I examined everyone as carefully as we had been taught to do in hospital, I would be reported to the G.M.C. as negligent. I had, of course, taken the precaution of taking out a malpractice insurance but the fear of the stigma remained. Consequently I was a little late setting out on my allotted home visits. The problem of finding Mrs Oddsbody at Husoorne Crawley and Mr Thingamybob at Eversholt, whose whereabouts were well known to the partners, was considerable but eventually I presented at the headquarters of the practice, the home of the senior partner where I was to stay, at about 3.00 p.m. for lunch to be presented with a list of the people who had requested home visits that afternoon. Off I went again and this time another problem arose. I was driving on an icy road on a slight downhill section in a little Austin Seven and had to brake for a corner. The next thing I knew I was driving back up the road I had just come down as I had skidded on the ice in a 180-degree ultra-rapid U-turn.

After finishing the afternoon visits I arrived back to take the 6.00 p.m. surgery at about 7.30 p.m. and when that was over I went 'home' at 10.00 p.m. for the evening meal timed for 7.15pm. I gobbled down what had been left out for me and than found that my duties were not only to write a record of all my home visits but also to make up in the dispensary all the medicines I had prescribed. At about 1.00 a.m. I went to bed after a most unusual birthday, knowing I had to start all over again at 8.00am.

For me it was really being thrown in at the deep end but I managed to surface and survive. The most memorable thing about those 12 days (for which I was paid 12 guineas, which sounds like peanuts today, but was a fortune for an indigent newly qualified doctor) was the occasion when the senior partner, who happened to be on call that night, called me out to go to a cottage miles from anywhere where a youth of about 16 years old had a septic knee joint. I was detailed to administer an anaesthetic while

[11] London, Midland and Scottish Railway.

the senior partner put a knife in and drained the pus out. The lad was lying in a sort of attic in the cottage under an open thatched roof where there was no light. We had to operate by candlelight and, because of the open flame, the only anaesthetic agent available to me was chloroform which is not flammable or inflammable (curious that those two words mean the same thing) – in other words will not catch fire. Imagine, if you can, a raw newly qualified medical young man faced with this problem. I had never given an anaesthetic before except under expert supervision and now I was faced with having to tackle a potentially lethal task. Chloroform, although it is non-flammable and acts very quickly, does have one serious drawback. It is very poisonous, especially to the heart, and has for the last 40 years, been regarded as unsuitable for anaesthesia.

So, in the dim light of a candle in the attic of a thatched cottage, I timorously and carefully poured chloroform on to a handkerchief held over the face of this lad and gave the nod to the senior partner who then stuck a knife into the knee joint and let out lots of pus. The lad's knee and life, as well as the reputation of both the senior partner and the young locum were saved. I had given my first completely unsupervised anaesthetic. I could not foresee that I would give many more in the following 50 years.

This short experience, so early in my professional life, taught me that the life of a general practitioner is a really 'down to earth' existence especially in the remoter areas where advice and help are not readily available. Having, since then, lived in Africa for 20 years, I realise now that remoteness is a very variable factor, but in 1933, Aspley Guise, some 30 to 40 miles from London, was as remote as somewhere deep in the Caprivi Strip or Ethiopia is today.

After 12 very busy days (and some nights) in the Aspley Guise, Woburn and Woburn Sands practice, the 'flu-stricken partner and his wife, the assistant, were well enough to resume work, so I returned to London the richer by 12 guineas according to the current rate of pay for a locum: one guinea a day and all found. I did, of course, have my train fare paid.

Back at the Middlesex I had already, during the week between the final exam and registration, applied for the next house surgeon position available. In England at that time, unlike the system in both South Africa and Australia, these jobs did not all fall vacant on the First of January and July each year but although they were six-month appointments they were staggered throughout the year. There was an appointment coming up for House surgeon to the same firm that I had been working on as a student three years before, that of Eric Pearce Gould and 'Jimmy' Patey, which was to start at the beginning of March. The applicants were short listed to two of us and Brian Harley and I underwent a clinical and oral test by the two Honorary Surgeons concerned. I was the lucky winner and so, knowing that I did not have anything more to do until the end of the month I took the rest of the month of February off and went on holiday, staying with an Aunt Dorothy, one of Olive's sisters in Buxton in Derbyshire, and her husband Edwin Challen, who had been an executive of a big department store in Kuala Lumpur and had now retired but was running a 'gourmet' grocery, modelled on Fortnum and Mason.

I only had, at the most, ten days but I spent them largely in walking by myself on the moors of the High Peak district. I also paid a visit to another of Olive's sisters, my Aunt Nellie who was married to Ralph Harrison, who lived in Heaton Moor between

Manchester and Stockport. Uncle Ralph worked for some cotton firm in Manchester. They had a daughter, Dorothy, who was a very intelligent girl who would have been at that time about 16 years old. I have always got on very well with Dorothy, who later went to Somerville College, Oxford, and obtained a degree, majoring in Modern Languages, which got her involved in Intelligence during the war and took her to Sweden and Finland.

In March I started my job as a house surgeon, and moved into the Residents Block at the Middlesex. I got free board and lodging and laundry, but there was absolutely no salary. These conditions applied to all the surgical and medical house jobs, and one might wonder how a young man could exist without any ready cash for entertainment, sport and ordinary social activities, as now that I was qualified Olive could no longer be expected to carry on with my previous allowance of £8 a month which had sufficed during my student days. The answer is that there were always 'perks' in the job, though in my particular one not as many as in some of the others.

Although the Honorary Surgeons gave all their services to the hospital for nothing, they did have to have a private practice to bring in their own income, and some of that was with patients in the Private Wing of the Middlesex, and for assisting at their operations the surgeons used to give the house surgeon a small fee. This was usually about two or three guineas and also there were fees for attending the post-mortem and inquest of any patient who died or was brought in dead without a satisfactory death certificate. Those fees were nominally one and a half guineas but the Coroner's Officer always deducted the odd shillings and pence before handing them over as a sort of commission and so we just got £3 instead of three guineas. There was also a similar fee for writing a Cremation certificate and variable fees for writing reports on patients for lawyers in any legal matters. All these mickles added up to a sort of mini-muckle. Thus we were able, not only to follow a reasonably comfortable, if careful, lifestyle in a world where beer cost 2d to 4d a half-pint, a good meal could be had for 2s 6d, a slap-up dinner at Simpson's in the Strand cost 4s 6d (Roast Saddle of Mutton, as many helpings as you could eat!), good seats at a West End cinema could be got for 2s4d, a haircut cost 9d to 1s, shirts cost a few shillings, a suit could be made for £5 (I later had an evening dress suit, tail coat and trousers made to measure for £12!) but also to save. At the end of six months, I had saved £30, enough to take me onto the Continent for three weeks, two in Germany and one in France, paying my own (3rd Class) fares, hotels and entertainment, remembering that in France I did not have hotel expenses as I stayed at Thark in Kerhostin.

My duties as a house surgeon were onerous but pleasant. Both of the surgeons on the staff were quiet, well-mannered, dedicated and excellent teachers. They were exemplary in their treatment of patients and were competent surgeons, completely devoid of arrogance or showmanship. I could not have had a better pair of surgeons to work for and to instil in me the ideals of medical ethics. The ward sister was Helen Jones, an efficient but not despotic ruler of the nursing staff, a helpful and friendly companion of the residents and a friendly supervisor of the students.

Half way through the morning work here was a recognised coffee break, and Helen would ask the Registrar, the houseman (me) and the Staff Nurse to join her in her little office just outside the door to the ward for not only coffee but a chat about current problems and to help with the *Daily Telegraph* Crossword. This was my introduction to

Crosswords, an addiction I have never been able to overcome (I haven't tried very hard to throw it off). On two afternoons a week, Pearce Gould did a ward round to review the patients who had had their operation, and to decide on investigations and time of operation for the newcomers. On the following afternoons he operated from 2.00 p.m. until about 6.00 p.m. David (but always known as Jimmy) Patey did his rounds on the days before he operated in the mornings, also twice a week.



David Patey, surgeon and academic: a memoir

I. P Le Quesne

London, UK

Keywords: David Patey; carcinoma of breast; parotid surgery; academic surgery; Surgical Research Society

David Patey was one of the most distinguished surgeons to serve on the staff of the Middlesex Hospital, London, distinguished not by his technical excellence but by the breadth and quality of his contributions to our knowledge in various fields of surgery. Reflecting his wide-ranging, inquisitive mind and the fact that he was a general surgeon, in those days covering a wide field, his publications similarly covered a wide field. But his main contributions lay in his work in the fields of surgery of the breast, in particular carcinoma of the breast, and the surgery of the parotid, in particular of parotid tumours; in a wider sphere, perhaps his most important contribution to surgery was in his leadership in the development of surgical research in Britain.

His career: a brief outline

Following a distinguished undergraduate career at the Middlesex, Patey spent some eight years in a series of junior training posts (see Table 1). During these formative years two periods were of particular importance to him. The first of these was the year that he spent as registrar to Sampson Handley; a leading surgeon of his day, Sampson Handley was deeply interested in carcinoma of the breast, and made important studies on lymphatic spread in this condition. Not only did Handley waken in Patey his lifelong interest in this condition, but

Table 1. David Howard Patey MS FRCS (1899–1977), summary of career

Date	*Position held/distinction achieved*
1919–23	Middlesex Hospital Medical School
1923	Senior Broderip Scholar and University Gold Medal
1922–30	Various training posts
1927	Association of Surgeons Scholar
1930	Streatfield Scholar, Royal College of Physicians
1930	Jacksonian Prize, Royal College of Surgeons
1930–64	Surgeon to the Middlesex Hospital
1952–66	Director of Surgical Studies, Middlesex Hospital Medical School
1931, 1964	Hunterian Professor, Royal College of Surgeons
1957	Colles Lecturer, Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland
1951–2	President, Surgical Section, Royal Society of Medicine
1958–60	President, Surgical Research Society
1964	Honorary Fellow, American Surgical Association
1974	Honorary Fellow, Royal Society of Medicine

Patey was also greatly influenced by his critical approach to surgical problems.

The second such period was the two to three years before obtaining a consultant appointment, when, during his tenure of two research fellowships, Patey worked in the Bland-Sutton Institute of Pathology, in the department of morbid anatomy, an experience which influenced his whole attitude to surgical problems. It was in these years that he began to develop his interests in carcinoma of the breast and parotid tumours; further, it was in these years that he published his first papers on these subjects, and for his essay on parotid tumours he was awarded the prestigious Jacksonian Prize of the Royal College of Surgeons.

In 1930 Patey was appointed to the staff of the Middlesex Hospital (see Table 1), and then in 1952, when the chair of surgery in the medical school fell vacant, he was invited to head the department, a post he held with great distinction not as a full-time professor but as a part-time director, for 12 years (Figure 1). Throughout those years it was my

This paper is based on a lecture delivered at the Middlesex Hospital, London, in December 1995

I am grateful to my former colleague, Professor Michael Hobsley, for his help in preparation of this memoir of our mutual chief

Those seeking further information about David Patey's contribution to surgery will find a complete list of his publications, together with a copy of his obituaries, in the keeping of Professor Irving Taylor (David Patey Professor of Surgery), the Middlesex Hospital, London W1

Correspondence to: Professor I. P Le Quesne, 8 Eton Villas, London NW3 4SX, UK

Journal of Medical Biography 1997; 5: 125–130

I think that Pearce Gould had a private income enough to live on without that derived from his surgical practice and devoted his time to good works. He did not indulge in sensational, heroic or spectacular surgery but his operating lists were full of mundane procedures, such as hernia, appendicectomy, varicose veins and tuberculous glands in the neck (Scrofula they used to call it in the nineteenth century). Such operations, while they did not excite comment in the media, did far more good to the community than the more dramatic operations that make the surgeon a superman, if not a little god, in the eyes of the laity. But the simpler operations did not command large fees so that the assistant's share was all the smaller. That is what I meant earlier by saying that in the matter of casual income I fared worse than the house surgeons to other firms. I gained a

better understanding of the troubles of ordinary people and a respect for the attitude of both Pearce Gould and Jimmy Patey in their quiet, courteous and sympathetic treatment of their patients and the staff with whom they worked

Every four weeks each surgical firm, in turn, was on ‘Emergency week’. All cases sent in by outside doctors for urgent treatment or cases admitted from casualty for surgical opinion and treatment were admitted to the wards of the firm on ‘Emergency’. During that week we could work day and night and we were always relieved when the following Monday midday came around and some other firm took over emergency work. .

The most memorable of the emergency admissions to our firm while I was the house surgeon was a senior member of the kitchen staff of a Soho restaurant who was injudicious to reprimand a young Cypriot trainee waiter. The ‘comi-waiter’, as he was described, took extreme umbrage and rushed out of the restaurant back to his abode, collected a gun and returned to shoot his offending superior in the chest. This was long before the days of open thoracic surgery and although we did what we could for the young man he died. The police had been called and had arrested the young Cypriot and he was thereupon charged with murder.

Any death by violence was legally bound to be investigated by an inquest which necessitated a post mortem, and I, as the nominal doctor in charge at the time of death, had to attend the post mortem and also the ensuing inquest. The post mortem was performed by the Home Office Pathologist, the redoubtable Sir Bernard Spilsbury, whose evidence had sent the notorious Crippen and many other murderers to the gallows.



Sir Bernard found that the bullet had passed through both the left bronchus, the airway to the left lung, and the left atrium of the heart, and declared that the cause of death was an air embolism from air carried from the bronchus into the heart. He said that this was a most unusual occurrence and should be written up in the medical journals and asked me to send him full details of the hospital findings from admission to death and he would incorporate them in a paper which he would publish under our joint names. I sent him all I could and if he ever did publish the case report, he certainly never even thanked me for my notes or acknowledged them in any way.

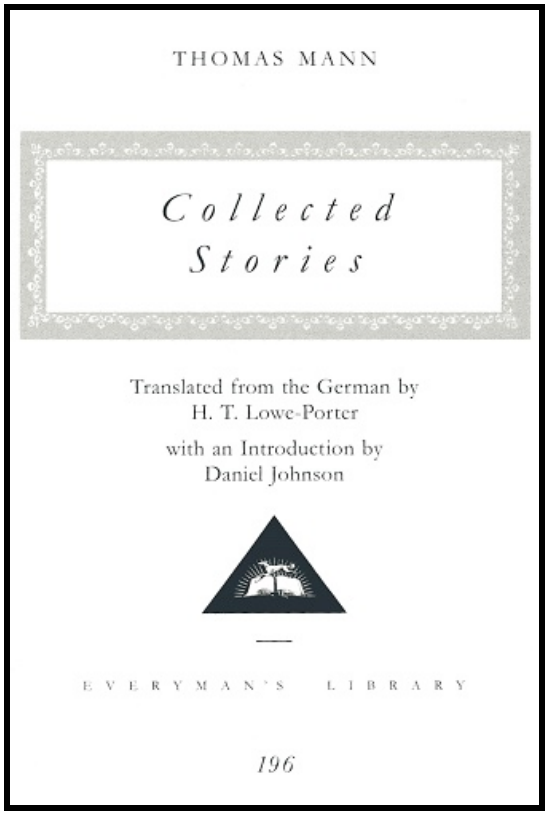
Sir Bernard had a reputation for infallibility and at murder trials the juries were prone to convict on the strength of his evidence alone. I am sure that in this case there was no doubt that the young waiter had deliberately gone back to his lodgings with the intent of collecting a gun to shoot the victim, but it was widely believed that some of the people who were hanged on the strength of Sir Bernard's evidence were, in fact, innocent. I do know that at another accidental death inquest which I also had to attend he had quite categorically stated a definite cause of death to the Coroner, whereas at the autopsy, which I also had to attend, he said to me 'I don't know what the cause of death is', but he could not afford to be shown to be unworthy of his reputation of omniscience.

I was subpoenaed to give evidence at the murder trial and I stayed on at the Old Bailey to hear the verdict. I found it to be quite unnerving to see the judge put on the Black Cap and sentence the young man to be hanged.

During that summer of 1933 I bought my first car. It was a very old bull-nosed Morris Cowley for which I paid £2.10s. I drove it up to Oxford (having been a choirboy there for four years I knew that the correct term was 'up' to Oxford and from there 'down' to London) and paid a visit to my old school and also to Eustace Piers who was an undergraduate at the 'House', as Christ Church College was familiarly known. Eustace asked me if I would like to attend the Christ Church 'Gaudy', or Annual Ball, and partner one of his sisters. This I was very happy to do and made arrangements to return to Oxford for the great event. The Morris Cowley got me safely back to London but after that it refused to work properly and as I had no money to spare for repairs to an old crock I had to get rid of it. I had no offers from eager buyers so I had to pay someone 10s to take it away, so I had to travel by train to Oxford for the Ball.

The Christ Church Ball was a great experience for me. I partnered Eustace's sister, Helen, and Eustace took a very attractive girl called Bice Lowe. I gathered that Bice was the Italian diminutive for Beatrice and was pronounced Beechy. Charles Hanrott, a friend of Eustace's, also an undergrad at the House took Bice's elder sister, Prue. The girls were the elder daughters of Professor Lowe, a palaeographer, a world expert on the script that the monks of the Middle Ages and before used to write such documents as the Dead Sea Scrolls (although those particular treasures were not discovered until 1947). Professor Lowe was Lithuanian-born but a naturalised American citizen who had married Helen Porter a 'blue-blooded' American – a descendant of the Pilgrim Fathers – who was the official translator into English of the works of Thomas Mann. The family were very cosmopolitan, having lived in Germany, America and Italy, and now Oxford. There were three daughters, Prue, Bice and a much younger girl whose name escapes me. Prue and Bice had been born in England and had dual nationality until they were 21 by which time they would have to make up their minds whether to be

British or American, the youngest girl had been born in the States and had no such option: she was American.



One of Thomas Mann's books that was translated by Helen Lowe-Porter.

The Ball was held in a big marquee in Peckwater Quad and went on until about 5.00 a.m., when our party, still in white tie and tails and the girls in long ballroom gowns, walked down to Magdalen Bridge and hired a punt and took a picnic breakfast, with champagne, down the Cherwell. Someone brought a portable gramophone and it was for me my introduction to classical music, as one of the records played was Mozart's 'Eine kleine nachtmusik'.



On my return to London I bought a record of that piece and played it so often in my room in the Residents' quarters that I could very nearly hum the whole thing straight through. After that introduction to the Lowe family, I went frequently to Oxford at weekends and their home in Oriel Street was very hospitable. Eustace and Charles Hanrott were also frequent visitors. Not only were Bice and Prue nubile and intelligent girls, but Professor Lowe and Mrs Lowe-Porter were always delightful hosts.

On one occasion Charles arranged for Bice and Prue to come to London to go to some dance as our partners. After the Ball was over, we still did not feel inclined to break up the party so we hired a car from Godfrey Davis and drove down to Brighton and at about 4.00 a.m. stripped and had a skinny-dip. When we came out of the sea we found a policeman who had been enjoying the free nude show and proceeded to caution us about such unseemly behaviour, saying that there were likely to be complaints from the landladies of some of the boarding houses along the sea front. When we said that we thought we were well away from any of the houses he replied 'Oh, you take it from me, they keep binoculars handy for that sort of thing!'

On my way out of the Hospital the evening before, arrayed in my 'glad-rags', I had been seen by my chief, Eric Pearce Gould and I only made it back to the Hospital about a quarter of an hour before he was due to come and do a round. This habit of his of doing an early morning round before breakfast was one of his less endearing traits. I just had time to have a quick shower and shave and present myself to meet him. 'Good morning, Roberts' he said, 'I hope you enjoyed yourself dancing last night, what time did you get back?'

'Oh, it was well after midnight, sir,' I replied but I didn't tell him how long after.

I was pursuing my intention to become a Gynaecologist and one of the Honorary Gynaecologists at the Middlesex, Freddie Roques[12] knew of my plan and had drawn up a schedule of work to achieve that end. I should do six months house surgeon, which I had nearly completed and then apply for a House Physician job at the Middlesex, also a six-month appointment, and then try for the post of Gynae and Obstetric house surgeon, to be followed by the Gynae Registrarship. I should also take the Primary Fellowship exam again as in those days an F.R.C.S. was mandatory for a Gynaecologist. Nowadays they have their own College. So, during my house surgeon job I tried the Primary again. This time I took the precaution of having coaching beforehand in Physiology and passed the Physiology but unfortunately I had forgotten more of the Anatomy than I thought I would have done and so I failed the Anatomy. I would have to have another go later.

As house surgeons it was our duty, every night after the night shift of nursing staff had come on duty, to do a round in the ward and find out how the patients were doing and prescribe any further treatment that we thought might be indicated or call for higher authority and guidance on all but the most trivial problems. Normally each surgical 'firm' would have only two general wards, male and female, but there were often patients in other specialised wards, for instance in the radiotherapy wards where patients that our surgical chiefs had operated on. The commonest type of radiotherapy

[12] In June 1955, doctors awarded the CBE included Frederick William Roques and Roger Bannister – the former for services to medicine, but the latter, of course, 'for services to amateur athletics.'

at that time was the insertion of hollow ‘needles’ containing different doses of either Radium or Radon. These were of different lengths as well as different dosages and were inserted into a malignant tumour under general anaesthesia and stitched into position. Each needle had an eye and a length of stout thread attached to it to enable the precious things to be removed after a specified time of exposure to the radioactive substance. The removal often also required a general anaesthetic. Apart from those patients, our firm was responsible for the paediatric surgery also, so I had to do a round in the children’s ward every day and night. One of the striking things I learnt very early on was that whereas in the adult wards one had to be very quiet at night in the wards out of consideration for the would-be sleepers, yet in the children’s ward it was not so necessary. Contrary to the usual belief, ‘SHH! There are children sleeping!’, it seems that children will sleep easily through almost anything whereas the adults are much more likely to be accidentally awoken.

Another of our duties, on roster, was to answer any calls from the surgical casualty department between 6.00 p.m. and 8.00 a.m. Patients requiring admission to the hospital were allocated to the surgical firm on emergency duty for the week. Minor cuts, abrasions, aches and pains of presumed surgical origin were either dealt with on the spot by the house surgeon with or without the help of his superiors up the surgical ladder or perhaps referred to the appropriate surgical out-patients clinic on the next available day.

Some of the more irritating calls from one’s bed at night to Casualty were for the really trivial complaints. I once had a young man drag me down there in my dressing gown to tell me that he had tooth ache and when I asked him how long he had had it he replied ‘Oh, two or three weeks, off and on, but I just happened to be passing so I thought I might as well drop in.’ When I suggested that in that case he had better just drop out, he started to demand his rights, ‘This is a free hospital, isn’t it? I’m entitled to treatment, I am, and now!’ This called for treatment now so I offered him the choice.

‘I am not a dentist but I am a qualified doctor. I am entitled to take teeth out, although I have never done it before, but I am quite willing to try right now. I shall not of course think it necessary to wake up the anaesthetist at this hour, so either sit down and open your mouth, show me which tooth it is and I’ll see what I can do, or, of course, I can give you a note to take to the dental department during their hours of work later today.’ He took both the referral and his leave.

The next hurdle, the house physicianship, would not be available for another two months after August so I thought I could give myself a good three weeks’ break.

Chapter 5: An Interval in Europe

My house surgeon appointment finished at the end of August and I was ready for a holiday after working hard and leading a hectic social life, and some time in August I was visiting Oxford and Mrs Lowe-Porter asked me what I was going to do about a holiday. Bice had, among her admirers, a young newly qualified German doctor and had gone to Germany to spend some time in his company. Mrs Lowe-Porter proposed that she and I should and go to Germany to see Bice, an idea that I found very attractive. I had never been to Germany and apart from the anticipated pleasure of seeing Bice again, I enjoyed travel and Germany was a most interesting place not only scenically but also politically as Hitler had just come to power. I borrowed some German Linguaphone records and attempted to learn a smattering of the language, just enough to get by.

I had managed to save about £30 and even in those days that would mean I would have to look after the pennies, not to mention the pfennigs and centimes as I intended to follow up two weeks in Germany with a week in Brittany at 'Thark' in Kerhostin. Mrs Lowe-Porter and I travelled Third Class on the railways going from London to Dover, then on the cross channel steamer to Ostend and by train again across Belgium to Aachen where the Customs officials entered the train. We had to change trains at Cologne and went on our way south towards Freiburg-im-Breisgau.

It was already getting dark before we crossed into Germany, and we travelled all through the night arriving in Freiburg at about 6.00 a.m. For the journey from Cologne we were lucky to get a compartment to ourselves and were able to strech out full length on each of the two wooden seats. I don't think it was very comfortable and what little sleep we were able to snatch was broken by a very officious ticket inspector who looked at our tickets at least three times. The last time it happened Mrs Lowe-Porter was really angry with him and berated him in very fluent German saying that only in Germany could anyone be so thoughtless as to come and inspect tickets so many times while we were trying to sleep. I can still hear her opening phrase in her rebuke *Nur in Deutschland, nur in Deutschland …*

In Freiburg it was a lovely September morning and after freshening ourselves up we sat on the patio overlooking a beautiful garden in our very clean and also very cheap Pension and had rolls and coffee and waited for Bice who was coming to spend a couple of days in Freiburg with us. Her German doctor friend was doing a locum in a village not far from Schaffhausen in a little bulge of Germany into Switzerland. The frontier in that part is the Rhine and it makes a big loop so that there is only one road into it from Germany and several roads going north, east and south across the river into Switzerland. The Germans did not think it was worthwhile maintaining Customs posts at each of the roads into Swiss territory so they just had one on the road from the west into the bulge. The meant that the whole of the bulge was a duty free zone or *Zollausschlussgebiet*. Freiburg-im-Breisgau is a beautiful and very clean little city with a University and a cathedral on the edge of the Black Forest.



Freiburg-im-Breisgau.

I was fascinated by the decorated pavements in the main streets, one of which had recently been renamed Adolf Hitlerstrasse as were streets in most German towns in the same way as in South Africa one finds a Voortrekkerstraat in practically every *dorp*.[13]

While on the subject of nomenclature, it strikes me as in bad taste and even pretentious for a ruler to order streets to be named after him, in fact I do not agree with naming streets after any living person. In South Africa municipalities and governments delight in honouring Prime Ministers by naming roads and airports after them. Thus you have in Johannesburg not only Jan Smuts Avenue, one of the main roads leading north out of the city, but Jan Smuts is the name of the International Airport. I do not object to honouring Jan Smuts, on the contrary, he has played a very big role in the history of the country, but I feel, probably illogically, that, when wishing to honour a living person in such a way it would be more seemly to wait until the great man is dead and then one may be in a position to evaluate his whole life and works. To give credit to whichever authority was responsible, a leader of the Opposition in South Africa, Sir de Villiers Graaff, was also honoured in Johannesburg by having the central part of the elevated Freeway through the city named after him. Smuts died in 1950 but not before Jan Smuts Avenue was so called and Graaff is still alive in 1990. I somehow can't imagine a Bob Hawke Street in Sydney or a Margaret Thatcher Drive in London!

The decoration of the pavements took the form of a coloured mosaic motif every few metres, and another striking characteristic of the streets of Freiburg was the constantly running water in the wide gutters channelled there from the streams from the surrounding hills. Municipal employees roamed the town with brooms sweeping the

[13] *Dorp*: Small country town.

dirt from the roadways and pavements into the gutter to be carried off presumably eventually to add to the pollution of the Rhine.

Bice had some friends who were students at the University and one evening she took me out to meet some of them and have a few glasses of beer. There I made my first great *faux-pas* in my attempt to speak German. I knew that Schiessen was to shoot and I tried to say that someone had shot something and I did not know that schiessen was an irregular verb and what I did say implied that the person had defecated. This was greeted by an uproarious bellow of laughter and a lot of teasing by the students.

At that time there were strict currency regulations to prevent the outflow of German money. Only a very few marks could be taken out of the country. Tourists, as we were, were given a very favourable rate of exchange to encourage the inflow of foreign capital. Such money was called Travellers Marks and they were much cheaper to buy than marks bought outside the country. The foreign visitor had only to go to a bank and show his passport and he could then buy Travellers Marks.

We were intending to go to the village, Jestetten, where the young doctor was doing his locum. This was in the duty-free zone outside the German customs area and we discovered that there were no banks there. As we would not be allowed to take German currency through the German Customs we were puzzled as how we could go and stay at the small local pub. A very helpful bank teller told us how to do it. We had to draw as many Travellers Marks as we calculated we would need at the bank in Freiburg and then go to a post office and send ourselves a money order to Jestetten, *poste restante*. This we did and when we arrived in Jestetten all we had to do was go to the post office and collect our mail and cash the enclosed postal order. We were amazed to be told a legal way of smuggling German currency out beyond the customs by a bank official!

The train journey from Freiburg took us first to Basel and then we went on a small local line through marvellous scenery east along the southern edge of the Black Forest with occasional views of the Rhine. One memorable little halt was at a place called Hirschsprung where there was a bronze statue of a stag commemorating a fabled leap of a hunted animal across a seemingly unjumpable chasm.



The statue of a stag at Hirschsprung.

At a small station just short of Schaffhausen we were met by the young doctor whom I will call Klaus in his boss's car. When we arrived at the Customs we found that they were very thorough in making sure that we did not have any German currency and then we were safely in the Jestetten enclave. We collected our money from the post office and then Bice, her mother and I got rooms at the small pub; Klaus, of course, lived in the doctor's house. His was a very different experience of general practice from mine earlier that year. His duties seemed to be minimal, it was a warm and sunny September, and there was no current epidemic and Klaus had plenty of free time to spend with us. He spoke a little English and of course both Bice and Mrs Lowe-Porter were fluent in German and could interpret for us. Talking to Klaus, I found that he had no knowledge of advances in blood transfusion which were by now standard practice in Britain, namely the use of a drip method, initiated at the Middlesex by Hugh Marriott and Alan Kekwick. I sent Klaus some papers on the subject after I returned to England.

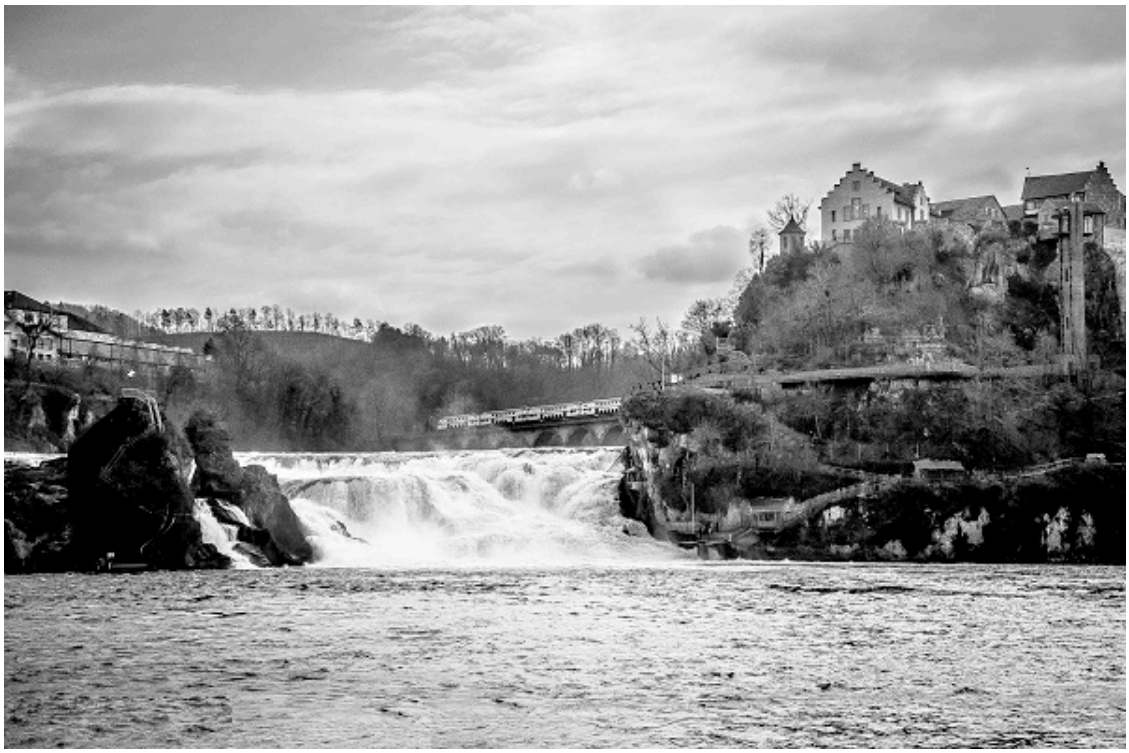
I read in a local German paper that someone in Basel had a *faltboot* for sale and we rang up the person and arranged that I would buy it and collect it in Basel. So, all alone without an interpreter, I retraced my steps and caught the train to Basel and brought the *faltboot* back to Jestetten. A *faltboot* is a folding boat, a canoe with a rubberised canvas skin and a framework of wooden parts which could be interlocked and inserted into the covering hull.



An advertisement in a German newspaper for a *faltboot*.

Before I bought the *faltboot*, Klaus, Bice and I had one or two swims in the Rhine, which was in full spate carrying the extra water from the melting of the previous winter's snow. The current was so fast that after getting into our bathing costumes we had to walk up stream about half a mile and then there was a conveniently fallen tree jutting out into the torrent which we ran along to dive in. Then we had to swim hard for the middle of the river to avoid being battered against some rocks a few hundred yards downstream and, safely past those, we had to turn and swim hard for the German shore again. When we reached it we were about half a mile below where we had left our clothes in the care of Mrs Lowe-Porter and had to grab at some overhanging foliage and

clamber ashore and walk back to our base. On one occasion Klaus decided to swim across into Switzerland. He landed a good kilometre or so below where he went in and then we saw him trudging back on the Swiss side until he was far enough upstream to land back in Germany somewhere near us. We made one or two expeditions in the doctor's car into Switzerland including a visit to Schaffhausen and also to see the Rheinfall the spectacular waterfall near Schaffhausen where the Rhine, after leaving Lake Constance, or Bodensee, makes its biggest plunge. All the other sudden falls in level are more rapids than waterfalls. (Incidentally, the Rheinfall should not to be confused with the Reichenbach falls which were the scene of the fictional encounter between Sherlock Holmes and his deadly enemy, Professor Moriarty, and where they both fell over the cliff and were supposed to have died but popular demand for more stories led Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to resurrect Sherlock Holmes ten years later.)



The Rheinfall near Schaffhausen.

In the evenings at Jestetten we used to play cards and drink the beer. The card game we played was Skat, a complicated German game which I have never played since. I was introduced also to the traditional German practical jokes associated with beer drinking. One was to drink from a vessel shaped like a jackboot called a Stiefel. When the victim held it by the handle in his right hand the toe of the boot was pointing upwards away from him and as the level of beer fell in the boot it eventually reached the front of the ankle and the air would suddenly rush into the toe and the beer from the toe would suddenly rush out and splash into the face of the drinker. I learnt that there was a simple way of avoiding this fate by slowly turning the boot over to the side so that the airlock was very slowly released from the foot of the boot and the flow was reduced to a manageable rate.

The other trick that was played on me was to dare me to drink a quantity of beer quickly, a challenge I naturally accepted, thinking British honour was at stake. After drinking the beer I realised that the local German beer was very fizzy, whereas the

British beer to which I had grown accustomed was almost flat, much to the disgust, I found later after moving to Australia, of the fizzy strong beer drinking fans there. As soon as I had drunk the beer my stomach felt fit to burst and I had to excuse myself from the current game of Skat and make a dash for the local loo, there to put my finger down my throat in an attempt to bring up the beer and wind. The effect of this emergency treatment was to release an enormous belch which nearly blew me backwards out of the toilet by jet propulsion. If I had been an engineer and thought about this phenomenon I could perhaps have beaten Sir Frank Whittle to the discovery.

After about a week or so at Jestetten it was obvious that the Rhine was far too rapid a river at that place and at that time of year for me to be able to launch my *faltboot* there with safety, so I decided to leave Mrs Lowe-Porter, Bice[14] and Klaus for a few days and go to the calmer waters of Lake Constance. I cannot remember how I got there, but it must have been easy, otherwise the trauma must have stuck in my mind, but I found a delightful little guest house called the Gasthof zum Frieden. Here I was completely on my own, as none of the people there spoke any English, but I must have managed satisfactorily because I had some delightfully relaxed days there paddling my own *faltboot* around the western end of the lake.



A *faltboot* on a lake in Germany.

Bodensee or Lake Constance is really a very large pool in the course of the Rhine which arises in Switzerland and flows into the lake at its eastern end and then out at the western end between Germany and Switzerland.

[14] After Bobby left Bice, she went to become on – among other things, of course – Boris Johnson's grandmother.

The weather was perfect, the water calm and I very reluctantly bade my hosts 'Auf Wiedersehen'. That much I knew. My German was, in fact, becoming so much a part of my thinking that when I arrived in Basel I got into some slight trouble. That city is in three countries, Germany, Switzerland and France, and I arrived in the German *Bahnhof* and had to proceed to Brittany from the French *Gare*. At that time I was normally very fluent in French but I had been striving for the past two weeks to be as German as possible so when I tried to talk to the French railway officials all that would come out of my mouth was halting German. Germany was not very popular with France at that time so my efforts were not appreciated. It would have been very much better for me if I had spoken nothing but English, but eventually I and my luggage, including the *faltboot*, arrived at Kerhostin on the Quiberon Peninsula.

I spent about a week in Brittany, plying my *faltboot* on the calm water of Quiberon Bay and on a calm day braving the Atlantic as far as the little island of Téviec off the Plage de Penthievre as our local beach near the cottage 'Thark' was called. I regained my familiarity with French and exchanged the fizzy beers of Germany for *la biere francaise* or at mealtimes *du vin blanc ou rouge ordinaire*, and after a week there Olive drove me across Brittany to St Malo for the steamer to Southampton.



An aerial photograph of 'the little island of Téviec off the Plage de Penthievre'.

Chapter 6: An Unexpected Turn of Events

On return to London my first task was to stow my luggage somewhere and look for 'digs': I was no longer being given full board, and lodging and laundry, in fact I was being given nothing. I was temporarily unemployed and had to await the next convenient appointment as a house physician. I had already applied for one and awaited the selection of the candidates by the prospective Honorary Physicians.

I managed to dump my luggage, including the *faltboot*, in the room of one of the current Residents and while in the building I heard that a locum was wanted for a week in general practice in North Devon. Manna from Heaven! I signed up and took myself off to Barnstaple where I was met by a comfortably corpulent *bon viveur* widower all ready to take off for a week's fly-fishing, who took me back to Torrington.

It was already dark by the time I got there so he just showed me briefly round the house, surgery and (oh dear) the dispensary, said goodnight, and left before crack of dawn the next morning.

I was awoken at about 6.30 a.m., if I ever got back to sleep, after the doctor's car drove off, by an urgent knock at the door. When I answered it, in a dressing gown, I found a distraught young man asking me to come quickly as his infant baby seemed to be very ill. I dressed hurriedly and followed him to find the baby quite dead. As I had never seen the baby before I was in a bit of a quandary. In theory I could not really tell the cause of death and should not, therefore, be prepared to sign a death certificate. Such action would involve a post-mortem and a coroner's inquest, a most unpleasant procedure for, to my mind, a tragically bereaved young couple, so I had to contact the local coroner and tell him that as far as I could see there were no suspicious circumstances and he directed me to provide a death certificate showing the most likely cause of death in my opinion. I filled in the certificate as 'pneumonia', and have often wondered since whether this was not my first acquaintance with the 'cot death' or 'Sudden Infant Death Syndrome' known as SIDS, which had not at that time become a recognised syndrome.

The rest of the week passed in lovely autumn weather without undue incident and on his return the doctor pressed seven guineas plus my train fare into my hand and bade me farewell.

On my return to London I managed to find a very lowly room above an Italian shop in Charlotte Street. I cannot remember how much I had to pay in rent but it must have been extremely cheap, because I could hardly afford anything. To make matters worse, I did not get the job that I was hoping to get at the Middlesex of a house-physicianship. At this stage I decided to stay in Charlotte Street because it was only a couple of hundred yards from the Middlesex and I still had the Medical side of my London University degree finals to pass. I had passed the surgical half of the 3rd M.B., B.S. as it was called, during my six months as a house surgeon. Now that I had to wait another couple of months for the next house physician's job to come up, I decided on preparing for that exam. Consequently I was seen daily in the Path. Lab. examining the specimens and comparing them with the literature because Pathology was a vital part of the Medical side of the exam. I was also spending many hours in the Hospital library, and

revising the work that Denis Brinkworth, Stan Levine and I had done to defeat the examiners in Medicine in the Conjoint Finals.

To the layman, I am sure, this distinction may be getting a bit confusing. The whole of Medicine as a profession and skill, or art, or what have you, is divided, in medical people's minds, into two main parts, Surgery and Medicine. The surgery is more easily understood. It is that branch of medicine wherein something active can be done by obvious manual activity, such as cutting into, cutting out or off, sewing something up or manhandling in some way the affected organs. The 'medical' problems involve such things as coughs, vague pains, fevers, malaise, infections and a whole lot of other symptoms relating to malfunctions of the body which do not seem to be able to be helped by manual dexterity.

A cynical form of differentiation maintains that surgeons do everything but know nothing, physicians know everything but do nothing, psychiatrists know nothing and do nothing, and pathologists know everything but too late. Another definition says that medical patients are ill when they go into hospital and, they hope, well when they come out, whereas surgical patients, at least those for elective surgery, are well when they go in and ill when they come out. General practitioners, like Casualty officers, have to deal with them all but if beyond their resources call in specialists. Surgical specialists are surgeons and 'medical' specialists are called physicians.

While in my little upstairs room in Charlotte Street, my space, finances and opportunities of doing anything else than sleeping, making a bowl of soup or a pot of coffee on the gas ring (one shilling in the meter) were severely limited. Consequently, all I did, after rising and making coffee, was to go to the hospital and study for the exams. In the evening, after the Library and Path. Museum shut up, I used to go and get the main meal of the day. I had often been helped through lunchtime by either a visit to Woolworths, who ran a snack bar, for a huge egg and ham sandwich for 3d or an invitation to be a guest in the 'Resident's' by one of the incumbents. For dinner I would often go to an Italian restaurant called 'Poggioli's'[15], where I found I could have a three-course meal for less that a shilling. Soup was 2d, the main course (the least expensive) 6d and cheese for 3d: total 11d, but I usually left a penny tip. Schmidt's German restaurant, almost next door, could nearly meet this in price and provided a variety from Italian cooking.

After about a month of this regime I was in the hospital one day when I was approached by Hugh Marriot, the senior of the people living in the Resident's quarters, who performed a job rather like the Medical Superintendent in some hospitals today and was known as The Resident Medical Officer, or R.M.O. He said to me 'Bobby, Why don't you put in for the job of Junior Resident Anaesthetist?'

'But why should I? I'm not the least interested in anaesthetics, I am going to be a Gynaecologist, and am waiting to get a house physician's job on the way to that and anyway at the moment I am busy swotting for my Medicine in the Final M.B.'

[15] It is interesting to note that the 3 December 1940 edition of *The London Gazette* contained a notice requiring 'Luigi Poggiolo and Luigia Poggioli trading together as Poggioli's Restaurant, 5 Charlotte Street, London W1 … to be wound up' under the terms of the Trading With The Enemy Act, 1939, and Defence (Trading With The Enemy) Regulations, 1940.

‘Oh look, a knowledge of anaesthetics would be a great help to you anyway, even for a gynaecologist. There’s very little work attached to the job, you’d have plenty of time for studying, you would get not only free board and lodging with laundry but also this job is paid £80 a year. But the main reason you must put in for it is because there is only, so far, one applicant and that is old ‘Stinker’ Whatyoumaycallem. As you know, he is absolutely impossible, and if you were to put in for the job, why, even you would get it.’

I was not entirely swept off my feet by this glowing testimonial, but the pleasures of a monotonous Poggioli diet, gas-ring coffee and abject penury were beginning to pall, so I thought that although it might be a setback to my plans, it was only a six-month appointment and I was, after all, young enough to endure another six months of comfort. I, therefore, accepted graciously this offer to rid the hospital of the terrible Whatyoumaycallem and sacrifice, temporarily, my ambitions. Not only would this job give me free board, lodging and laundry, but also for the first time in my life I could look forward to receiving a regular salary. The rate for the Junior Resident Anaesthetist was £80 a year or £6 13s 4d a month, which was considerably better than the pay for a house surgeon or house physician which was nothing.

It was true, as Hugh Marriot had told me, that I would have plenty of time for study. There were two Resident Anaesthetists, a Senior Resident who was appointed, usually after having had some anaesthetic experience, for 12 months and the Junior appointed for six months. The senior at the time was Toby Littledale, who qualified at the same time as I did with the Conjoint in January 1933 and with whom I had been quite friendly as a student. He had, in fact, for six months or so early on in our student careers, come to my grandparents’ house as a lodger in the top flat with Olive and me. His father was a country G.P. in Charing a village in Kent on the main road from London to Canterbury. I had been to stay with Toby there for the occasional weekend and thoroughly enjoyed his parents’ hospitality. While I was house surgeon to Pearce Gould and Patey, Toby had been the Junior Resident anaesthetist. Our duties were to give anaesthetics that cropped up casually, that is not on the organised Operation Lists, such as in Casualty, in the Dental Clinic, in the radiotherapy or radiodiagnostic departments, and to ‘relieve’ the Honorary Anaesthetists who were doing the set operating lists at about 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. at their request. The major operations would be carried out by the Honorary Surgeons with the Honorary Anaesthetists working with them at the beginning of the operating session. After about three or four hours of operating, the surgeons and anaesthetists would hand over the rest of the list to their full-time paid juniors, namely the surgical Registrars or the Resident Anaesthetists. So for the bulk of ‘office hours’ the work of the resident anaesthetists was mostly sporadic, but the work often went on well into the late evening. Also, of course, we were responsible for anaesthetising the emergency cases during the evening and night. If we felt that the task was beyond our capabilities we were supposed to ring up one of the Honorary anaesthetists to come and either hold our hands or to take over the case.

Before Christmas that year I sat for and passed the medical paper of the London University degree so now I had both the Conjoint and the University qualification. When I had been for four months in the Junior resident job, Toby Littledale’s father had a heart attack and had to stop work for several months, so Toby had to resign from the senior resident post and go and run his father’s practice. I had to assume the senior post

and was appointed for another 12 months at a salary of £120 p.a. My visions of becoming a Gynaecologist were beginning to fade, but, on the other hand, I was getting really interested in the subject of anaesthetics and settled down to do my best to master it.

With my sudden and unexpected affluence I was able to buy a car. I acquired an old De Dion Bouton, 12 h.p., I think the vintage was 1920, for £10. It was licensed to the end of the year and was a magnificent vehicle. It looked a bit like a hearse but the engine was sound, the body leak-proof and free from rattles, it could seat five people easily and more at a squash and very often did. During 1934 I went all over the Home counties in it and on one occasion took a party of colleagues and nurses to Ascot (not into the Royal Enclosure). We also went to the Aldershot Tattoo, and on that occasion I took Lilian Wynn, one of the Junior Imperial League tennis club girls and a friend from my student days, as my partner. I managed to get a fortnight's holiday and decided to go to Kerhostin again. Olive, my mother, was just about finishing her holiday there, so we arranged that I would drive the De Dion Bouton down to Southampton and leave it there and take the night ferry to St. Malo where I met Olive who had her car already in Brittany. I gave her the keys of the De Dion Bouton and she took the ferry the next night to Southampton and ran my car for the next two weeks. Olive had already paid for her Rover 8 to return on the Calais-Dover ferry and at the end of my holiday I drove from Brittany to Calais and returned her car to her.

At the end of the year I could not afford to relicense to De Dion Bouton because the registration in those days was £1 per horsepower, and the car was 12 h.p., so I parked it in a back yard of the hospital outside the mortuary and let it be known that I had a car for sale. Six weeks later, in the middle of February a prospective buyer turned up and asked to see the car. I took him to the Mortuary Yard and showed him the car, covered with snow. He then wanted to know if it was difficult to start, and I said 'Oh no, it has a self-starter, you know!' He had been expecting to have to swing a starting handle, so then he asked for a demonstration. I thought that after standing there since the end of December the battery might be flat or at any rate it would be too cold to respond but I got in and pressed the self-starter and immediately the engine started. That clinched it and I thought I was lucky to get £8 for it. I suppose that if I had been able to keep it until now I would get at least $20,000 for it!

This was a very interesting period in the history of Anaesthetics. For the previous nearly 90 years general anaesthesia had been dependent on three anaesthetic agents: nitrous oxide (laughing gas), ether, and chloroform. Nitrous Oxide was first used as an anaesthetic in 1844, Ether apparently was used first by Crawford Long in 1841 but did not publish his achievement and so the credit goes to Morton who gave a very convincing demonstration of its clinical use in the Massachusetts General Hospital in 1846, while chloroform was first used in Scotland in 1847.

I still think that the close proximity of these dates shows that the world was just waiting for some such advance in medicine. Nowadays such discoveries are always hailed as 'Breakthroughs' so that the phrase is hackneyed and immediately turns me off. Those were the three agents on which I was brought up in the field of anaesthetics. As a student I had learnt how to induce anaesthesia with nitrous oxide and for any but the shortest of procedures merge into ether, or induce with drops of chloroform poured gently onto a piece of lint. Indeed these were the methods I used as a Junior Resident

and then when I found myself having senior residentship thrust upon me there were rumours of a new approach. An intravenous induction using a soluble barbiturate was being suggested.

Through the manufacturing chemical firms we were beginning to be offered some samples of these drugs and as a young and enthusiastic beginner I was keen to be allowed to try them out on the hospital patients. The Honoraries, my chiefs, Drs Raymond Apperley, Harold Crampton, A.E.W. Idris, and Bernard Johnson, were inclined to be more conservative: 'Be not the first by whom the new is tried, nor yet the last to cast the old aside.' However, I did manage to get them to allow me to try Hexobarbitone for a minor operation with Bernard Johnson, who was only five or six years older than I was, holding a 'watching brief'. In the following year thiopentone ('Pentothal') was introduced to London by Ronald Jarman and I was the first person to use that agent at the Middlesex.

During my years as a resident anaesthetist, I witnessed many dramatic surgical happenings. The one that sticks firmly in my mind was an operation performed one Saturday afternoon by Sir Gordon Gordon-Taylor with Harold Crampton giving the anaesthetic. Saturday afternoon was not, of course, a regular operating session but 'G.T.' wanted to have plenty of time and no admiring or critical audience. He was a great rival of the famous Newcastle upon Tyne surgeon Grey Turner as to which of them could perform the most successful oesophagectomies. That operation involves taking out the gullet, and was, of course, only performed for cancer.

In those days open chest surgery was not attempted because as soon as one side of the chest is opened under a spontaneously inhaled anaesthetic, the lung on that side collapses. So an attempt was made to free the gullet first from above, in the neck, as far down as could be reached without opening the chest and then by opening the abdomen and separating the oesophagus from the surrounding organs as high up as possible, in the hope that 'the twain should meet'.

Harold Crampton asked me if I would forego my Saturday afternoon off to give him moral and practical support in anaesthetising for an oesophagectomy. That I was only too happy to do and all went well with the operation and the anaesthetic until the great man pulled down into the abdomen what he hoped was the cut end of the gullet and found that in the manipulations up into the chest from the abdomen, the aorta had been severed. The surgeon took one look at the organ in his hand which he had hoped would be the oesophagus and saw it to be the aorta, dropped it back into the abdominal cavity, and took off his gloves and walked away. Sudden death on the operating table is always a profound shock to all concerned and in this case one could only feel that the operation was in any case only a last ditch attempt to save a life which had failed but certainly the patient had been saved a slow lingering painful death from starvation: a case of unintentional euthanasia.

Another incident, in lighter vein, concerned a young junior resident when I was the senior who was anaesthetising an old man for Jimmy Patey who was going to do some improvements to his face after a series of excisions of skin cancers and skin grafts. The skin on his face was largely not originally there but had been moved there from various other parts of his anatomy and was therefore not as sensitive as normal facial skin. The young resident was not proficient at endotracheal intubation, which was not essential

for the operation so had decided to put down the nose into the nasopharynx a short rubber catheter and would give the anaesthetic through that, but would shut off the rebreathing bag on the Boyle's machine so that a steady flow of anaesthetic gases would be delivered at the back of the throat. All very good, but he allowed the concentration of anaesthetic gases to be too low so that the patient showed signs of regaining consciousness. The resident asked Jimmy Patey to desist from operating for a bit while he rectified matters and Patey naturally stood back and waited. It was at this stage that the junior resident asked for my help. When I arrived in the operating theatre Patey was looking at the rebreathing bag, which with the more usual method of endotracheal intubation would have been moving with respiration, and said, 'Shouldn't the bag be moving in and out?' From under the sterile towels surrounding the patient's head came a response, 'I beg your pardon, Sir'!

On another occasion I was anaesthetising a man for a hernia operation to be performed by my old surgical chief Eric Pearce Gould. In the main operating theatre suite a corridor ran across the entire suite from East to West, with doors leading to each of the four theatres off the north side of the corridor and opposite each of the theatres on the south side of the corridor were doors leading into the anaesthetic room for that theatre. The patients were brought from the ward on a trolley guided by one of a group of voluntary helpers who were usually elderly ladies (whom we secretly and disrespectfully referred to as the 'Barrow Hags') and a nurse from the patients' ward and wheeled into the appropriate anaesthetic room. There the nurse would hand over to the anaesthetist the patient's clinical notes and any special messages regarding that patient from the Sister of the ward, and then return to the ward. The voluntary helper on that occasion was a delightful old lady, a Miss King who in her youth had been a keen mountaineer in the Alps.

This was before the days of intravenous induction with a soluble barbiturate such as Pentothal and the method of getting the patient to sleep was by applying a rubber mask to the patient's face and letting him breathe in nitrous oxide ('laughing gas') and gently adding a more potent anaesthetic agent such as Ether to the mixture inhaled. In this form of induction there was always a short period of 'excitement' when the anaesthetic unconscious and not responsible for his actions but still dreaming and potentially active physically. Ideally this inevitable stage of anaesthesia should be made as short as possible and it was the duty of the 'Barrow Hag' to stay and hold the patient's hand and gently restrain him until the deeper anaesthetic took effect and the patient was unresponsive. For some reason Miss King left the anaesthetic room at this critical stage and the man put up his hand and grabbed the wide bore hose bringing the anaesthetic to his face and kinked it, thereby cutting off the flow of gases. He therefore started to come round and he jumped off the trolley and stood up and his only garment a thin cotton gown deliberately left undone at the neck fell off leaving him naked except for a small sterile towel over the operation site held there by two little pieces of adhesive plaster rather like band-aids, making him look like a gladiator wearing only a small loin cloth. Still not fully conscious he started to threaten me saying, 'You silly little bugger, I'll get you for this'. I dodged about, managing to keep the trolley between the two of us and then quite suddenly he realised where he was. He was profoundly apologetic and very ashamed of himself, and he readily got back on the trolley and when Miss King reappeared we started again and this time he was successfully subdued.

Another amusing incident occurred when I was giving anaesthetics for 'P.G.'. At the Middlesex in those days we used to wear canvas overboots with rubber soles over our shoes during operations, and it was the custom for the student who had been allotted a surgical patient in the ward as his special case for study and dressing the wounds after surgery to be asked to act as a second assistant at the operation. The first assistant, the house surgeon, stood opposite the surgeon and the student on the same side of the patient as the surgeon.

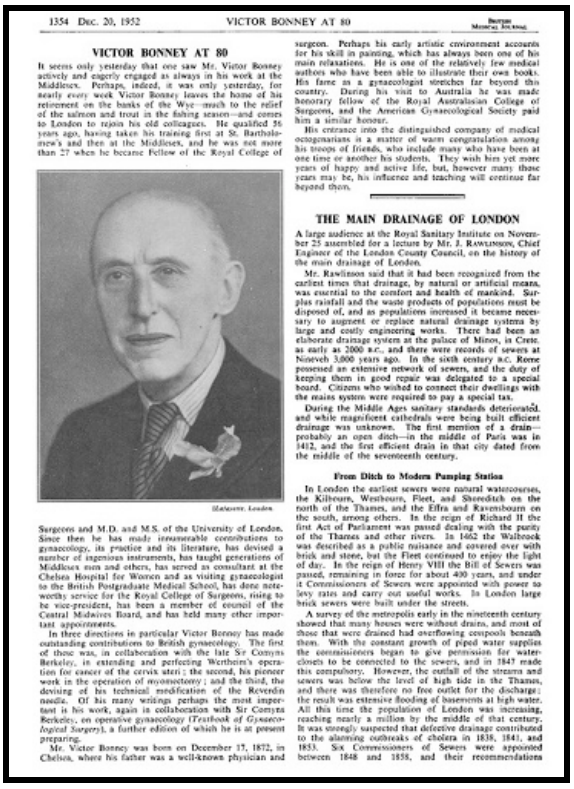
On one day a student named Austin was assisting 'P.G.' to remove a gallbladder. All the dissection had been done and the blood vessels and the cystic duct had been tied with double ligatures and all that had to be done to remove the offending organ was for P.G. to cut between the ligatures. Before this 'coup de grace' P.G. invited Austin to look more closely into the abdomen and see what had been done. Austin was a person who always reminded me of a bird. He did things rather quickly and jerkily and he duly peered into the open belly and saw what he was meant to see and then jerked his head back upright. As he did so a tape from the mask he was wearing got entangled with the handle of the forceps holding the gallbladder and also there must have been some water on the theatre floor because Austin's rubber sole on one of his overboots slipped and he fell to the ground, pulling the gallbladder with him.

With remarkable sangfroid, P.G. just said 'I think you had better change your gown and gloves, Austin.' The sequel to this occurred at the next operating session when by chance Austin was also due to assist at another cholecystectomy and when the operation started P.G. said to him, 'I'll take this one out, if you don't mind, Austin.'

At that time the Middlesex Hospital did not have a specialist plastic surgeon on its staff, and on one occasion there arose some necessity for such a person to be invited to come and operate on a patient in the hospital. The famous Sir Harold Gillies was asked to come and operate and as luck would have it, I was detailed to give the anaesthetic. In honour of the big man, the senior Theatre Sister, the renowned Sister Thomas, decided to take the case. I cannot remember the details but all went well with the anaesthetic but for some reason Sir Harold became impatient with the theatre sister and was extremely rude to her. He may have had grounds for his dissatisfaction but discourtesy to someone who is not in a position to answer back is unforgiveable. Sister Thomas became a nationally well-known figure because of an incident in one of the operating theatres at the Middlesex when an oxygen cylinder suddenly started to shoot flames from its junction with the reducing valve. At any moment the whole cylinder could have exploded, but Sister Thomas, with admirable courage and presence of mind, calmly walked over to the cylinder and, with the special spanner for the job, turned the cylinder off. For this heroic action she was awarded an O.B.E. which was later changed to a George Cross when King George VI instituted that medal for conspicuous bravery in civilian life corresponding with the Victoria Cross for bravery in military action. (Incidentally, the Middlesex Hospital did not have a specialist Plastic Surgeon until 1940, when Rainsford Mowlem, a New Zealander and ex-partner of both Sir Harold Gillies and Sir Archibald McIndoe, was appointed to the Honorary Staff.)



The Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology was headed by, who with his colleague on the staff, Victor Bonney, had written the current most acceptable textbook on Diseases of Women. Also on the staff were Louis Carnac Rivett and 'Freddie' Roques. The Registrar was Ralph Winterton with whom I was particularly friendly. Old Sir Comyns spoke with a squeaky rather whining voice and on one occasion at the rather grand Annual Middlesex Hospital Dinner held that time at the Savoy Hotel, Sir Comyns was unavoidably detained by an obstetric emergency and arrived after the fish course. The waiter said to him 'I'm sorry sir, but the salmon is finished'. Sir Comyns replied testily 'Oh dear, oh dear, can't they open another tin?'



1354 Dec. 20, 1952 VICTOR BONNEY AT 80

VICTOR BONNEY AT 80

It seems only yesterday that one saw Mr. Victor Bonney actively and eagerly engaged as always in his work at the Middlesex. Perhaps, indeed, it was only yesterday, for nearly every week Victor Bonney leaves the home of his retirement on the banks of the Wye—much to the relief of the salmon and trout in the fishing season—and comes to London to rejoin his old colleagues. He qualified 56 years ago, having taken his training first at St. Bartholomew's and then at the Middlesex, and he was not more than 27 when he became Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and M.D. and M.S. of the University of London. Since then he has made innumerable contributions to gynaecology, its practice and its literature, has devised a number of ingenious instruments, has taught generations of Middlesex men and others, has served as consultant at the Chelsea Hospital for Women and as visiting gynaecologist to the British Postgraduate Medical School, has done noteworthy service for the Royal College of Surgeons, rising to be vice-president, has been a member of council of the Central Midwives Board, and has held many other important appointments.

Hallsworth, London.

In three directions in particular Victor Bonney has made outstanding contributions to British gynaecology. The first of these was, in collaboration with the late Sir Comyns Berkeley, in extending and perfecting Wertheim's operation for cancer of the cervix uteri; the second, his pioneer work in the operation of myomectomy; and the third, the devising of his technical modification of the Reverdin needle. Of his many writings perhaps the most important is his work, again in collaboration with Sir Comyns Berkeley, on operative gynaecology (*Textbook of Gynaecological Surgery*), a further edition of which he is at present preparing.

Mr. Victor Bonney was born on December 17, 1872, in Chelsea, where his father was a well-known physician and surgeon. Perhaps his early artistic environment accounts for his skill in painting, which has always been one of his main relaxations. He is one of the relatively few medical authors who have been able to illustrate their own books. His fame as a gynaecologist stretches far beyond this country. During his visit to Australia he was made honorary fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, and the American Gynaecological Society paid him a similar honour.

His entrance into the distinguished company of medical octogenarians is a matter of warm congratulation among his troops of friends, who include many who have been at one time or another his students. They wish him yet more years of happy and active life, but, however many those years may be, his influence and teaching will continue far beyond them.

THE MAIN DRAINAGE OF LONDON

A large audience at the Royal Sanitary Institute on November 25 assembled for a lecture by Mr. J. Rawlinson, Chief Engineer of the London County Council, on the history of the main drainage of London.

Mr. Rawlinson said that it had been recognized from the earliest times that drainage, by natural or artificial means, was essential to the comfort and health of mankind. Surplus rainfall and the waste products of populations must be disposed of, and as populations increased it became necessary to augment or replace natural drainage systems by large and costly engineering works. There had been an elaborate drainage system at the palace of Minos, in Crete, as early as 2000 B.C., and there were records of sewers at Nineveh 3,000 years ago. In the sixth century B.C. Rome possessed an extensive network of sewers, and the duty of keeping them in good repair was delegated to a special board. Citizens who wished to connect their dwellings with the mains system were required to pay a special tax.

During the Middle Ages sanitary standards deteriorated, and while magnificent cathedrals were being built efficient drainage was unknown. The first mention of a drain—probably an open ditch—in the middle of Paris was in 1412, and the first efficient drain in that city dated from the middle of the seventeenth century.

From Ditch to Modern Pumping Station

In London the earliest sewers were natural watercourses, the Kilbourn, Westbourne, Fleet, and Shoreditch on the north of the Thames, and the Effra and Ravensbourn on the south, among others. In the reign of Richard II the first Act of Parliament was passed dealing with the purity of the Thames and other rivers. In 1462 the Walbrook was described as a public nuisance and covered over with brick and stone, but the Fleet continued to enjoy the light of day. In the reign of Henry VIII the Bill of Sewers was passed, remaining in force for about 400 years, and under it Commissioners of Sewers were appointed with power to levy rates and carry out useful works. In London large brick sewers were built under the streets.

A survey of the metropolis early in the nineteenth century showed that many houses were without drains, and most of those that were drained had overflowing cesspools beneath them. With the constant growth of piped water supplies the commissioners began to give permission for water-closets to be connected to the sewers, and in 1847 made this compulsory. However, the outfall of the streams and sewers was below the level of high tide in the Thames, and there was therefore no free outlet for the discharge; the result was extensive flooding of basements at high water. All this time the population of London was increasing, reaching nearly a million by the middle of that century. It was strongly suspected that defective drainage contributed to the alarming outbreaks of cholera in 1838, 1841, and 1853. Six Commissioners of Sewers were appointed between 1848 and 1858, and their recommendations

Victor Bonney was a dapper little man who had entered, with Gordon Gordon-Taylor, in 1903 for the first examination for the University of London's newly established Honours degree in Anatomy. Both obtained first class honours. By the time I was a

Resident Anaesthetist, Bonney was the Senior Gynaecologist on the Honorary Staff of the Middlesex, and it was my duty, pleasure and honour to give anaesthetics for him on several occasions. He was a brilliant surgeon and always polite, almost a contradiction in terms. He had a habit of addressing everybody, patients, colleagues, assistants, nursing staff and even anaesthetists as 'Darling'. I well remember him on one occasion saying to the theatre sister who had made some mistake in handing him the instrument he wanted 'Oh, Sister darling, you are a bloody fool!'

He and Sir Comyns had perfected a skin antiseptic for use on all obstetric patients prior to delivery that was a very deep blue colour and was known as 'Bonney Blue'. So effective was it that when the new obstetric theatres were designed and built the floors were coloured dark blue so that the cleaning staff would not spend fruitless hours trying to get rid of the blue stain which would inevitably be spilt during the 'prepping' of the parturient female.

At one of the Residents' Christmas Concerts, which were always a time for only partially restrained comments by the junior resident staff about their seniors, one of the Residents, named Harris, parodied thus:

'I don't prep with anything but Blue, Darling,
Maybe known as Violet-Green to you, Darling,
This poor lady's in an awful mess, Darling,
I must do a Wertheim none the less, Darling,
Make it so her husband couldn't guess, Darling,
She can give him anything but love.'

This was a reference to the fact that Comyns Berkeley and Bonney had championed the major surgical operation of total hysterectomy, described by Wertheim and called after him. A few years after this, at a meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine (The R.S.M.), there was a debate on the relative values of Wertheim's Hysterectomy and Radiotherapy and the consensus seemed to be in favour of radiotherapy whereupon Bonney is reputed to have said 'Oh well, Darlings, I suppose that even radiotherapy is better than bad surgery.'

Another of Harris's parodies was about another of the obstetricians on the staff, 'Freddie' Roques. This time it was the famous American singer, Al Johnson, who was mimicked, and it also immortalised the famous 'Bonney-Blue'. Freddie Roques was a bit overweight, which provided yet another target for the lampooner, so the song ran:

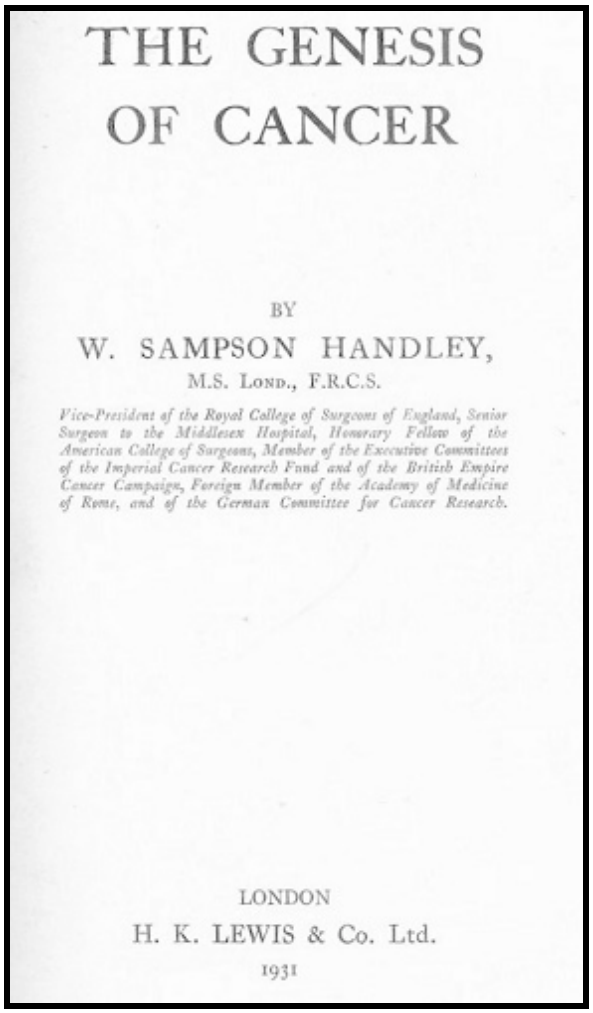
'All the field is Blue, Sonny Boy,
Here stands your Freddie, corpulent and ready,
I'll pull you through, Sonny Boy'.

Not only were the Honorary Medical Staff the butt of ridicule but also the Nursing staff. In that concert I was cast as 'Sister Buttercup' a take off of the Senior Outpatients Sister Butterfield. I had to sing a parody of 'I'm dear little Buttercup'. Dressed in a Sister's uniform I did my bit, but all I can now remember are a few lines such as:

'I'm dear Sister Buttercup, sweet Sister Buttercup,
In charge of Out-patients am I,

With specimens tested, I'm most interested,
Dear Sister Buttercup, I.'

The senior surgeon on the Honorary Staff at that time was Sampson Handley, who was very interested in the surgery of breast cancer and was reputed to be the promulgator of the theory that cancer spread along the lymphatic vessels which he called 'Permeation'. When I gave anaesthetics for him for radical mastectomy he used to insist that the only anaesthetic used was open chloroform, which had the reputation of diminishing the bleeding. He did not want any of the 'new-fangled' methods such as endotracheal intubation to be used or the now antiquated 'Boyles machines' which gave nitrous oxide and oxygen supplemented with chloroform and/or ether. In those days anaesthetists were regarded by the surgeon, if not by most of the hospital staff, as ancillary hacks and subordinate to the surgeon who called the tune.


THE GENESIS
OF CANCER

BY
W. SAMPSON HANDLEY,
M.S. Lond., F.R.C.S.

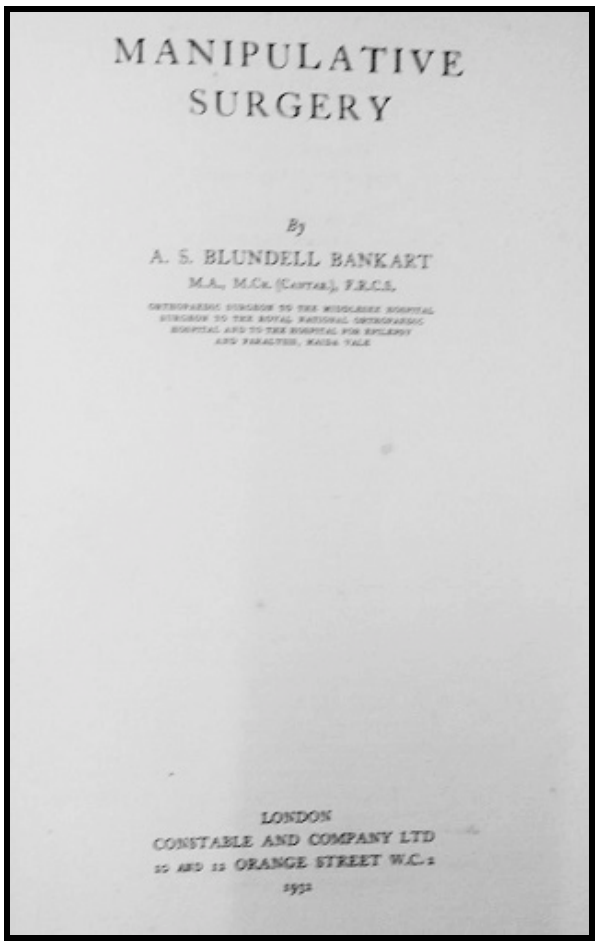
Vice-President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Senior Surgeon to the Middlesex Hospital, Honorary Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, Member of the Executive Committees of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and of the British Empire Cancer Campaign, Foreign Member of the Academy of Medicine of Rome, and of the German Committee for Cancer Research.

LONDON
H. K. LEWIS & Co. Ltd.
1931

Chloroform is a powerful anaesthetic agent, but potentially toxic, especially to the heart if used in strong concentration, and the operation of radical mastectomy might take up to an hour-and-a-half or so and if the concentration of chloroform was not kept strong enough, a painful stimulus, although unfelt by the unconscious patient, could easily provoke a reflex laryngeal spasm. Deep anaesthesia with chloroform was not essential for the operation or the patient, so in order to comply with my own criteria and the demands of the surgeon I used to cheat a bit, by inducing the patient out in the anaesthetic room, with a Boyles Machine out of sight of the surgeon, pass an

endotracheal tube, which effectively prevents the spasm of the larynx, and then put a Schimmelbusch mask, which had a layer of lint over a metal frame, over the patient's face and enter the operating theatre, giving only pure chloroform from a little bottle, drop by drop. At the end of the operation, my only problem was to remove the endotracheal tube without the surgeon noticing. Nowadays chloroform is regarded as too unsafe to use unless a very strong case can be made out for its use rather than any of the more modern agents that have normally replaced it.

A brief survey of the surgical staff with whom I worked would not be complete without a mention of the senior orthopaedic surgeon, the renowned Blundell Bankart. He was a thin athletic taciturn man who did everything at speed. When he did a round of his patients in the ward he was met, by tradition by his registrar, house surgeon and all the students allotted to him in the main Entrance Hall of the hospital. He would drive into the front courtyard in his open yellow Rolls-Royce, leap over the door of the car without opening it, stride rapidly into the Entrance Hall, barely recognising the reception committee, rush past them to the staircase of the West Wing where if possible, one of the students had held a lift for the party at the ground floor. If the lift was not there, Bankart would not wait but would rush up the stairs to the sixth floor where his wards were arriving usually well ahead of the rest of the 'firm'. His round was conducted at lightning speed and if patients wanted to ask him a question, they had to be quick about it or he would have already gone to the next bed if not out of the ward! A cartoon of him in the student run 'Middlesex Hospital Journal' depicted him on a round with each patient with a head looking both ways, a copy of the well-known advertisement for 'Shell' petrol, with the caption, 'That's Bankart, that was!'


MANIPULATIVE
SURGERY

By

A. S. BLUNDELL BANKART

M.A., M.Ch. (Cantab.), F.R.C.S.

ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON TO THE MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL
SURGEON TO THE ROYAL NATIONAL ORTHOPAEDIC
HOSPITAL AND TO THE HOSPITAL FOR EPILEPSY
AND PARALYSIS, MAIDA VALE

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD
10 AND 12 ORANGE STREET W.C.2
1952

He operated on Saturday morning and always had a long list, sometimes as many as 17 cases, including four or five major operations and the rest relatively minor, such as manipulations under anaesthesia of stiff joints or backs. To cope with such a load, the only thing to be done was for Bernard Johnson and me to anaesthetise alternate cases and we always had the next case ready to be wheeled into the theatre from the anaesthetic room as soon as the previous patient was wheeled out.

The doyen of the Ear, Nose and Throat Department was a bluff Labour Member of Parliament, Somerville Hastings, who had a loud voice and did not tolerate fools gladly. I remember his dramatic treatment of Functional Aphonia (hysterical loss of voice) in Outpatients. He would ask the unfortunate patient, nearly always a woman as I remember, to put out her tongue, that he would hold firmly with a swab wrapped round it and say to the woman, 'Say Eee!' When no sound came out he would then take a metal spatula, ram it down the woman's throat and stir it around and then the woman would scream out loud. 'There!', he would say, 'You can easily make a noise if you want to!'. Highly effective treatment as far as the aphonia went, but I wonder what modern psychiatrists would think of such measures which probably only pushed the hysteria deeper into the psyche only to erupt into some other part of the body

I had one memorable encounter with Mr Hastings. An ex house surgeon to the E.N.T. Department was a first class golfer and had recently been accepted as a medical officer in the R.A.F. with a proviso that before enrolment he must have his tonsils removed. He had recently had an acute attack of tonsillitis and normally it was not considered wise to have the operation for at least six weeks after an acute attack, but there was in the offing a very important golf match the R.A.F. versus The Royal Navy and the young man was very importunate and managed to persuade C.P. Wilson, against his better judgment, to take out his tonsils. I was asked to give the anaesthetic and all went well with the actual dissection and removal of the tonsils but C.P. had a lot of trouble trying to stop the bleeding.

The extra vascularity that accompanies an acute infection was the reason for the usual reluctance of surgeons to operate too soon. Try as he may, C.P. could not stop the bleeding and we had to set up an emergency blood transfusion. In this type of operation the anaesthetist used to stand on the patient's right side and hold up the Boyle-Davis gag. The blood transfusionist had elected to put the drip into the right arm and I was pushed up above the arm and was standing in a very uncomfortable position above the right shoulder, near where the surgeon was sitting at the patients head, and I was leaning back and with my right hand holding up the gag at an awkward angle behind me from the middle of the patient's breast-bone. Wilson decided that he should call in his senior, Somerville Hastings, for help. Hastings arrived and, not appreciating that I had been standing in a very awkward position for the best part of three hours and that my right arm was very tired, sat down and after adjusting his head-mirror said in a booming authoritative voice 'Now Mr Anaesthetist, if you will concentrate on keeping the gag still and not try and see what I am doing we will get along a lot better!' All I could do was to say 'Yes sir, I'm very sorry, sir!', but I felt more like assaulting him physically. Hastings sewed some cotton wool plugs into the tonsillar fossae and secured haemostasis, but the young man did not recover in time to win the day for the Royal Air Force at the golf match.

After completing my year as Senior Resident Anaesthetist, I had by that time become very interested in the specialty. Anaesthesia was just emerging from a long chrysalis stage (lasting, as I have said, for about 90 years) into a more scientific butterfly. All sorts of new anaesthetic agents were being produced which could take over from the established routine of chloroform, ether or nitrous oxide. Intravenous anaesthetic agents were on the horizon, the older generation of anaesthetists were not anxious to change their ways and the field of pioneering with the new was being left to the younger disciples, of whom I must have been one of the youngest. It was also obvious to me that the Middlesex Hospital was becoming understaffed at the higher levels with anaesthetists. I therefore decided to continue in the specialty and abandon my original plan to become a gynaecologist, so I applied to be kept on for a further year.

During that year, 1935, the Conjoint Board of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians decided to offer a Diploma in Anaesthetics by examination. This was the first step towards recognising that Anaesthesia was a specialty in its own right and no longer a dogsbody branch of surgery. The diploma was given as an honorary recognition to the established older anaesthetists, the criterion being that the recipient must have been on the Honorary Staff of a teaching hospital for at least ten years. As a result the senior anaesthetists at the Middlesex, namely Drs Apperly, Crampton and Idris all received an honorary 'D.A.'

I decided to sit for the examination and so did Dr Bernard Johnson who was on the Honorary Staff but had been so for less than ten years. The result of the examination was a little embarrassing as I, a mere resident passed, but Bernard Johnson, the Honorary failed. I must make it clear that such a result was not because 'B.J.' was in any way ignorant but because he had failed to comply with the instructions at the head of the Exam Paper which stated clearly that all candidates must attempt all the questions and B.J. had spent all his time answering four of the five questions but had not even started on the fifth. Needless to say, at the next examination, six months later, he passed.

Another event in 1935 was the Silver Jubilee of King George V. This was marked by a Public Holiday with all sorts of parades, flag waving and jollification. For some reason, perhaps he had to give an emergency anaesthetic Dr Harold Crampton was not able to fulfil a promise he had made to his 12-year-old son, Paul, to take him to Buckingham Palace and Whitehall and wherever the spectacle was to be seen so I volunteered to take him along. I was only too pleased to be able to do that because not only did I want to enjoy the show myself but I was also very fond of Harold Crampton. He was a very kind, gentle person who loved to chatter all the time he was giving anaesthetics. I remember on one occasion when I was with him while he was anaesthetising for Gordon Taylor, when he thought that perhaps his chatter was disturbing 'G.T.' as he could see that a very delicate part of the operation was in progress and he stopped talking to allow the great man to concentrate. This caused Sir Gordon to say 'For God's sake, Crampton, keep on talking. Then I know all is well from the anaesthetic side and I needn't worry about that aspect as well as my own surgical problems'.



In 1935 Bobby took Harold Crampton's 12-year-old son, Paul, to see the King George V's 25th jubilee celebrations.

Crampton used to invite me to dine at his home in Frognal, in Hampstead about three of four times a year, as did also the senior Honorary Anaesthetist, Raymond Apperly. Apperly had an old spaniel of whom he was extremely fond, which had one regrettable habit of letting off quite unpleasant smells. An apocryphal story relates that at one of his dinner parties this offensive malodour became so obvious that Dr Apperly himself was driven to do something about it. He jumped up from the table, opened the dining room door and said 'Out!, Out!, Timmy!, Out!' and Timmy walked in.

One more event that year was memorable for me personally, namely the wedding of one of the Wynn girls in whose home and general company I had spent many happy hours as a medical student. Lilian, the third eldest of the four older girls, who had been the one who had always attracted me most in the days when I was living in the south-eastern suburbs before I moved into the Residents Quarters at the Middlesex, married a Flight Lieutenant in the R.A.F., 'Sandy' Banks. I attended the wedding at which there was a guard of honour of R.A.F. officers including Sandy's brother Courtney, and I thought how lucky a fellow Sandy was to have such an attractive and pretty bride.



A photograph from a newspaper article about Lilian Wynn and Sandy Banks' 1935 wedding.

During those pre-war years so many of my friends were getting married and the *de rigueur* dress for a young man was a morning suit that I seemed to be for ever going to Moss Bros. to hire one. The hire charge in those days was two guineas and after two or three occasions I asked the salesman in Moss Bros. how much it would be if I were to buy the suit for which I was being fitted and he said 'Ten Guineas', so I splurged that, to me, large amount of money and acquired the suit. I still wore that suit to weddings until well into the fifties and eventually gave it to my stepson, Anthony, and he wore it at his wedding in 1960. The correctly dressed young man also was expected to wear tails, white tie and waistcoat to formal dances, anything more than the local tennis club hop at the church hall. I used to be very fond of ballroom dancing and of the opportunity of meeting and being with attractive girls and so again I saved my pennies and had a dress suit made for the sum of 12 guineas.

At the end of that year the need for more anaesthetists on the permanent staff had been recognised by the hospital authorities and already there were advertisements in the medical press for applications for a position as Honorary Anaesthetist to the Middlesex Hospital.

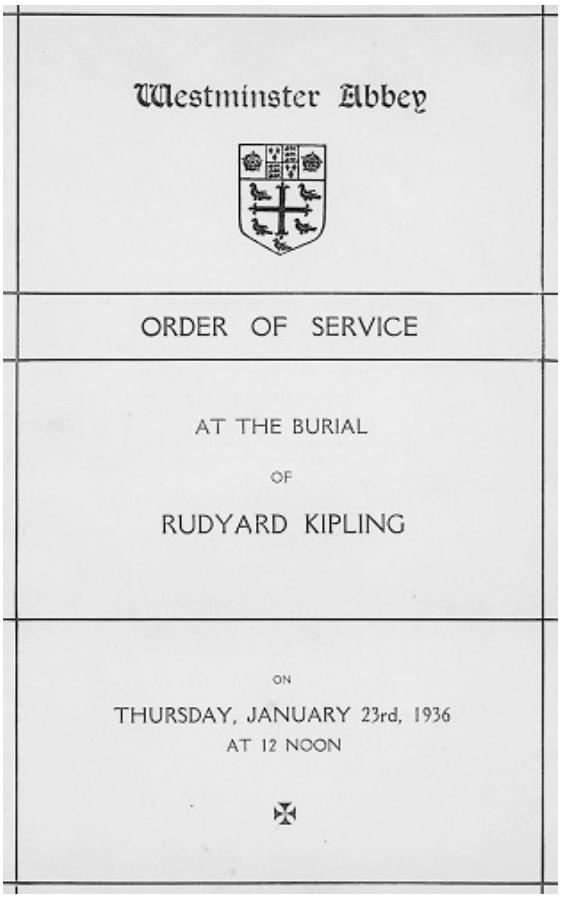
Early in 1936, while I was still a resident anaesthetist, the famous writer and Nobel Prize winner, Rudyard Kipling, was a patient in the Woolavington Wing under Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson with some abdominal trouble, and was suffering from a complication known as ileus. This is a condition wherein the muscular activity of the bowel wall, which normally by peristalsis moves the bowel contents onwards down the alimentary tract, goes 'on strike', resulting in complete standstill of the contents. This,

if unrelieved, is a fatal condition and all measures were taken to restart the muscular activity. None of the medications given had any effect and as a last resort Sir Alfred asked me to give Kipling a spinal anaesthetic which was reputed to work the miracle sometimes.

Sir Alfred did not want to move the patient to the operating theatre, so I was asked to give the spinal in the bed, thereby increasing the difficulty of the manoeuvre. The bed is not at the right height, the lighting is inadequate and there is difficulty keeping the patient in the right position and still. However I managed to perform the necessary lumbar puncture and inject the local anaesthetic agent.

Sir Alfred, unfortunately, was suffering from the exact opposite type of bowel trouble. He had an attack of diarrhoea and had to keep leaving the bedroom and reappearing. All this drama was taking place in the middle of the night and the bizarreness of the situation was increased when Sir Alfred suddenly, under tension, started to giggle, luckily for decorum, sotto voce. The spinal failed to relieve the ileus and Rudyard Kipling died during the ensuing day.

The relatives were very grateful for our attempts to save his life and Sir Alfred was invited to attend the State Funeral in Westminster Abbey and to bring with him his house surgeon and me. The house surgeon was Ossie Lloyd, who had been a dresser on Pearce Gould's firm when I was his house surgeon and I had been very friendly with him. He later became a renowned gynaecologist practising in Cambridge. The funeral was a most impressive ceremony, attended by royalty and many important people of the day.



Westminster Abbey

ORDER OF SERVICE

AT THE BURIAL

OF

RUDYARD KIPLING

ON

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23rd, 1936

AT 12 NOON

I renewed once more my job as Senior Resident, and applied for the Honorary Anaesthetist appointment. Although I was the youngest applicant I did have the advantage of being the man on the spot, known to all the members of the Medical Committee who made the appointment, and so in March 1936 I was appointed, but not to the full Honorary job that was advertised because I was deemed (no doubt rightly) to be too young. My appointment was to a newly conceived position, that of Assistant Anaesthetist, with an honorarium of £100 per year. I had all the duties and responsibilities of the Honoraries except that I did not have a seat on the Medical Committee.

Now I was really on my own. No longer would I have the board and lodging in the Residents Quarters which had been my home for the last three years, and I would have to earn my living, apart from £100 pa, entirely by giving anaesthetics in private practice. I was, therefore, very relieved when Dr Bernard Johnson, who was my immediate superior on the Middlesex Hospital Anaesthetic staff came to me and asked me if I would be interested in joining as an assistant, with a view to partnership, in a practice in the West End of London which was well known and had the nickname of the Mayfair Gas Company.

Chapter 7: The Mayfair Gas Company 1936-1939

'Mayfair Gas Company' was, of course, only the nickname of a practice in the West End started by Dr R.R. Macintosh, an Honorary Anaesthetist on the staff of Guy's Hospital. He joined up with another anaesthetist on the staff of Guy's, Dr W.S. McConnell, to form what I believe was the first partnership in Anaesthetics. Most specialists, in those days, ran a one-man practice which is very satisfactory for a practitioner who can arrange the times he works to suit himself, always excepting emergencies. This would apply to most specialists, such as surgeons, physicians, pathologists etc., and also to general practitioners.



Dr R.R. Macintosh (later Sir Robert Macintosh and seen here with Lady Macintosh).

Anaesthetists, on the other hand, can only give anaesthetics when some other doctor, usually a surgeon, asks them to provide that service. If two surgeons want to operate at the same time, or even at an interval which is insufficient for transport and necessary preparation, the anaesthetist has to refuse one of the cases, and will probably have time on his hands when he could be more usefully occupied. Two anaesthetists in partnership can cope with more than twice the amount of work, without haste or skimping, than the sum of the work that either of them could do on his own. Another advantage is that during holiday periods or sick leave one's income does not immediately come to an abrupt halt. It therefore makes very good sense for anaesthetists to work in partnership. The size of the partnership is only limited by the available work and the competence of the secretarial staff.

Macintosh and McConnell, after a few years, found their practice needed the help of another partner and they took in Bernard Johnson who was on the staff of the

Middlesex. Now, in 1936, they needed to expand still further and so B.J. was deputed to ask me if I would be their salaried assistant. The salary offered was £430 a year. Out of that I would have to find somewhere to live in the West End of London in the Harley Street area, buy a car, feed and clothe myself as well as have enough over to have some social life and a holiday now and then. Trivial as such a salary might seem today, we me must remember that inflation especially since 1973 has made all monetary comparisons of today with more that 50 years ago almost meaningless.

As Sir Douglas Ranger in his book on the Sesquicentenary of the Middlesex Hospital Medical School from 1935 to 1985 has pointed out, the pound sterling in 1985 would only buy what one could get for one shilling (now 5p) in 1935. In other words, the retail price index during that period rose twenty-fold. Since 1985 it must surely have doubled again so that by 1990 standards £480 a year would be today equivalent to about £20,00 or in Australian dollars upwards of $40,000.

I did find accommodation of one room on the third floor of a house in Bulstrode Street, a small street off Welbeck Street. My neighbour, in another bed-sitter on the same floor was Oswald Lloyd-Davies, who had qualified at the Middlesex some four years before me and was, during my resident years, a surgical registrar there. As such I had known him very well and on my elevation to the Staff of the Middlesex, he helped me find the place to live.

Another surgical registrar while I was senior resident anaesthetist was Edward Muir who later became President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. He actually gave me my first chance to give an anaesthetic in private practice. Although residents were not officially supposed to indulge in private practice, they did occasionally have the opportunity to implement their meagre income by giving an anaesthetic for a private patient of one of the Honorary Surgeons, especially if the operation was performed in the Middlesex which had private wards, the Woolavington Wing.

Surgical Registrars, however, were not given board and lodging and were paid £300 a year and had to supplement that by a little private practice, so Edward Muir asked me if I could give an anaesthetic for him for a hernia operation at the Willesden General Hospital. I could, on my afternoon off, and all went well with the patient, but he never paid my modest account of Five Guineas! So, before I was ever really in private practice, I realised that a lot of the money one earns is never actually received. In my case before 1936, the deficit was 100 per cent of what I had earned.

I bought a Standard 8 car, for something around £100, and it lasted me a year. All the running expenses of the car were paid for by the practice, so all I had to pay was the monthly instalment of the hire purchase.

Macintosh lived at 9a Upper Brook Street, Mayfair with the memorable telephone number of Mayfair 0803. The practice was conducted from there and that is how it got its nickname. A more derogatory nickname was also used occasionally from the name of the chief company supplying domestic gas for heating, cooking and lighting in London, the Gas, Light and Coke Company and this was parodied to ‘Gas, Fight and Choke Company’.

Private hospitals, or as they were called in England, nursing homes, did not provide any anaesthetic equipment or agents. Nor did they provide surgical instruments so that surgeons had to take all their own instruments to the operating theatre, choose those they expected to use and give them to the theatre sister to sterilise while the patient was being anaesthetised and the surgeons scrubbed up. Anaesthetists had to take everything including nitrous oxide and oxygen cylinders, any apparatus, syringes, needles, laryngoscopes, airways, endotracheal tubes etc., as well as all supplementary drugs with them from place to place. I still have a dropped right shoulder from carrying heavy equipment, as tailors have invariably pointed out to me when measuring me for jackets.

To overcome these difficulties the 'Mayfair Gas Company' decided that each partner, and the assistant would have his own chauffeur. His duties included not only driving, washing and caring for the car, but also helping to carry the equipment from the car to the operating theatre, assembling the anaesthetic apparatus and ensuring that the cylinders were full. After the operation he would wash and, where necessary, sterilise the smaller utensils such as syringes, needles and laryngoscopes, pack up everything and take it back to the car. Suction was not laid on in Nursing Home theatres (it was in only a few hospitals), and we used to take a portable sucker as well if it was deemed necessary for the anaesthetist, surgeon or dentist. The chauffeurs also helped with lifting, transporting and positioning the patient before and after surgery. They were, in effect, operating theatre technicians before such a craft was envisaged and were an essential factor in the success of the partnership.

Apart from private general surgery work, usually with the surgeons with whom we worked as Honoraries in our respective hospitals, there was a large dental anaesthetic practice, generated by Macintosh originally most of which was carried out in the dentists' own surgeries in the West End of London. These were mainly in the Harley Street and Wimpole Street area, but some south of Oxford Street in the prestigious Mayfair district.

These dental cases were mainly extractions under nitrous oxide and oxygen in the dental chair. The tough or anaesthetic resistant patients were quelled with a judicious squirt of ethyl chloride onto a piece of gauze held in front of the propped open mouth. Intravenous anaesthesia was in its infancy. As a bold resident, I was the first person to use thiopentone (Pentothal) in the Middlesex Hospital. If we thought that a patient would be resistant to nitrous oxide we induced with a small dose of Pentothal, then dashed round to the back of the chair and maintained anaesthesia with nitrous oxide-oxygen. The fees for an ordinary nitrous oxide anaesthetic were one and a half to two guineas. For a thiopentone-induced anaesthetic, the fee was three guineas.

While on the subject of fees I should point out that in those days before National Health and any attempt on the part of government to regulate fees, the tariff was left to the individual doctor who assessed his own fees according to his own conscience and standard of ethics.

Such a system may seem open to abuse and leading to overcharging but the vast majority of doctors had a very acute sense of fair play and if the patient felt he had been overcharged his simple remedy was to refuse to pay the account leaving the doctor to have to resort to the civil courts to obtain settlement, gross overcharging would then become evident and the magistrate would not be likely to rule in the doctor's favour.

We were our own almoners and tried to assess the correct fee for each patient according to the service rendered and the patient's means. If the patient's own general practitioner, the surgeon or dentist, who might be presumed to know more about his financial status than the anaesthetist who may never have seen him before, asked us to reduce the fee we would invariably do so.

It was a matter of honour that we never charged any fee for doctors, nurses, other paramedical practitioners, clergy of any religion or their dependants. By dependant I mean anyone for whom the doctor etc., would actually pay the bill, such as his immediate family but not his second cousin twice removed. I remember once I sent an account to the wife of a young doctor, not knowing that her husband was in the medical profession, and the husband sent me a very terse note saying that it was not customary to send an account to the wife of a colleague and that he would not pay me but if I insisted on payment he would send a cheque to any charitable organisation I cared to nominate. A letter of apology and explanation that the medical connection had been unknown to me sufficed to settle the matter. In return we expected similar treatment from our colleagues and hospitals. We never expected to pay other doctors, pharmacists, dentists, physiotherapists etc., or hospitals for treatment of ourselves or our dependants. Now, having worked on those principles for more than 50 years, I am affronted when I receive an account from such people or organisations.

Dental chair anaesthetics were booked on a tight time schedule. In the ordinary was 15 minutes was allotted for each, with proviso that not more than three consecutive quarter-hour appointments were made. If it was known that Pentothal was to be used, half-an-hour would be allowed.

The logistics of our dental chair service depended on the use of the chauffeurs. Each doctor's car had the front passenger seat removed and in its place stood two identical portable gas and oxygen machines in a carrying bag. One side of the bag let down to the floor and carried two small oxygen and two small nitrous oxide cylinders. The anaesthetist stood on these cylinders and operated the cylinder taps with his right foot. Behind a leather partition was the double reservoir bag for the two different gases. Above that was a mixing valve within reach of the anaesthetist's hand so that he could adjust the percentage of oxygen in the mixture, leading to the two rubber tubes attached to either side of the nosepiece. On top of the case underneath the lid was a tray holding props, sponges, gags, ethyl chloride, syringes and other essentials.

The chauffeur drove the car to the front door of the house where the dentist had his rooms. The doctor took one of the bags, went in and gave the anaesthetic and left after assuring himself that the patient was all right. He then put the bag back in the front of the car and told the chauffeur if any of the cylinders were empty and needed replacing. Then on to the next case, where the procedure was repeated, while the chauffeur changed the empty cylinders and maintained the stock of accessories in the tray.

During my first year with the practice, apart from doing my own preoperative rounds for assessment of the patient and ordering premedication, I was sometimes asked to do Macintosh's 'pre-meds' for him and at that time 'Avertin' (rectal tribromoethyl alcohol) was his favourite premedication. I used to make up the Avertin solution at about 40°C. and leave it in a 'Thermos' flask with detailed instructions for the nursing staff to administer at the correct time and then I had to go and tell Macintosh what I

thought of his patients from an suitability for anaesthetic point of view. I remember that once I tracked him down to the R.A.C. clubhouse where he was combining swimming with ultraviolet tanning. Mac always looked bronzed and in the best of health.

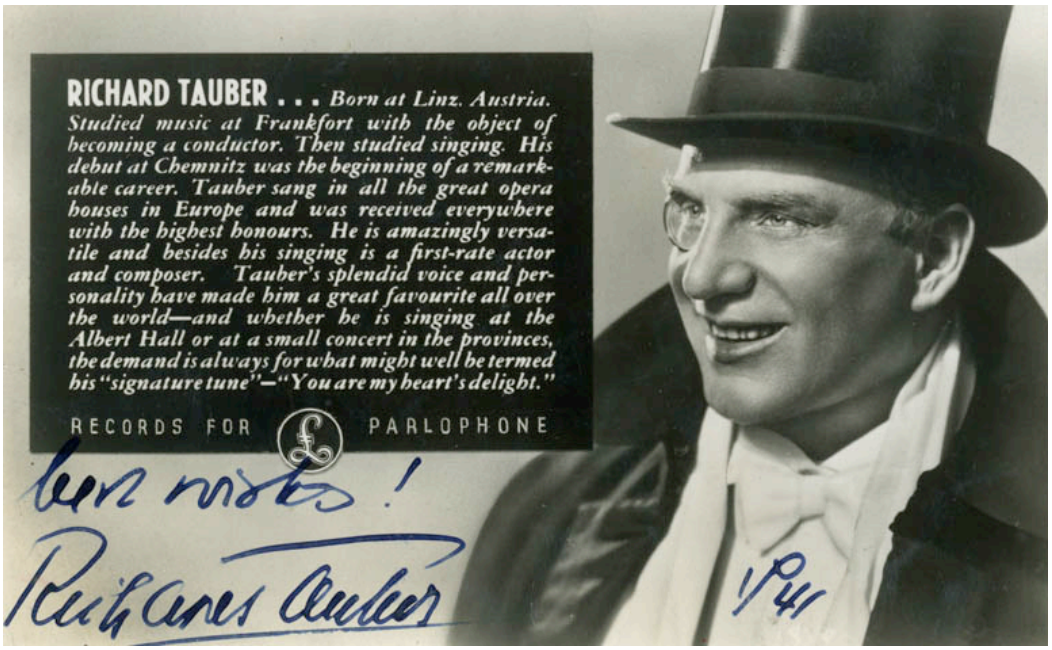
On one occasion I was asked to anaesthetise a patient in her bedroom in Claridges Hotel for Sir Gordon Gordon-Taylor. In those days ether was the staple agent and it caused quite a stir when I insisted that before I began the hotel staff had to extinguish the open coal fire in the bedroom.

One night when I was on duty for emergencies in the practice I was called to anaesthetise a patient whom I found to my slightly apprehensive delight to be Queen Marie of Romania.

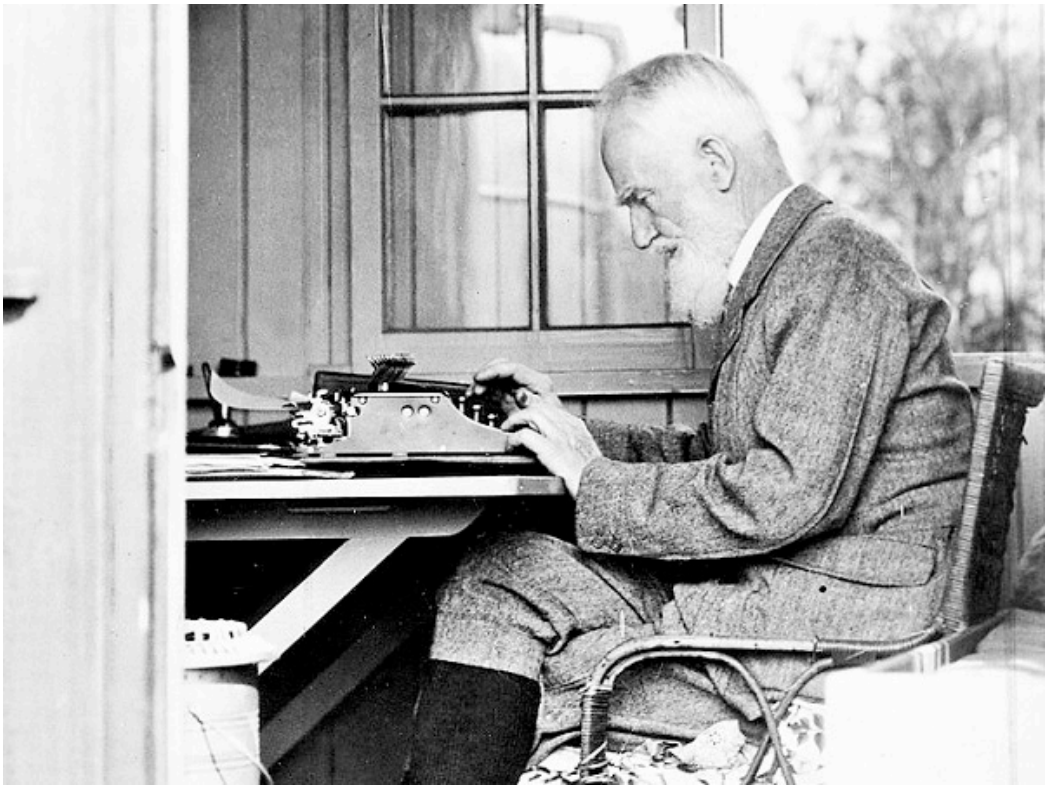


Queen Marie of Romania.

In view of my very junior status in the practice I thought that I had better contact Robert Macintosh and he disappointed me by taking over the case and my hopes of anaesthetising royalty had to be deferred. Among celebrities I did anaesthetise during my time with that practice were Richard Tauber and George Bernard Shaw, both for dental extractions. Tauber was one of the most apprehensive patients that I can remember but eventually submitted to thiopentone induction.



For Bernard Shaw's operation, which I think was for his last remaining tooth, the dentist and I had to go to his home in Ayot St. Lawrence near Welwyn and I sat the old gentleman up in one of his upright high-backed dining room chairs and put a strap around his pelvis to make sure he didn't slump down while under the anaesthetic. After the operation he entertained us both to tea and a few stories of his life in Ayot St. Lawrence. He also insisted on writing out cheques for each of us before we left and I have always regretted that I gave that cheque into the practice. I should have paid the fee to the practice out of my own money and kept the cheque as one of my memorabilia.



George Bernard Shaw typing in his study at his home in Ayot St. Lawrence.

A few months before I joined the practice a group of girls from the Bedford College of Physical Education, as part of their training to become Phys. Ed. teachers visited the Middlesex hospital to watch some orthopaedic operations. One of these was Barbara Young whom I dated and began to see frequently. In about the May of 1936 we became engaged and we got married at the end of August. We had found a flat in Marylebone High Street just south of the end of New Cavendish Street, above a bank. I suppose technically it was not a flat because it was on two floors, I think maisonette was the correct description.



Girls from the Bedford College of Physical Education.

In 1937 Macintosh was appointed as the first Nuffield Professor of Anaesthetics at Oxford. As far as I know he was the first Professor of Anaesthetics anywhere in the world. This appointment meant that he had to leave the Mayfair Gas Company and go to Oxford. That coincided with the end of my year as an assistant in the practice and as the numbers in the practice were depleted, I became a partner. At the same time Vernon Morgan was taken in to bring the number of partners to four.

We now also needed to find new premises as the house in Upper Brook Street had been Mac's and was to be sold. We moved to 47 Wimpole Street, three doors away from the house where Elizabeth Barrett live before she escaped from her tyrannical father to elope with Robert Browning.



47 Wimpole Street.

This was a more convenient location than Mayfair had been because most of our dental practice and the majority of the Nursing Homes were in the area bounded by Marylebone Road, Great Portland Street, Wigmore Street and Thayer Street-Marylebone High Street. The nickname 'Mayfair Gas Company' though not strictly now applicable was firmly established and stuck with us. We had lost our Mayfair telephone number but we managed to get another easily remembered number Welbeck 0044.

During the summer of 1937 Barbara and I went to the South of France for our annual holiday. We took the little Standard 8 and drove down through France to a small resort called Le Lavandou on the Riviera between Hyeres and St. Tropez with a view of the three Iles d'Hyeres. One day together with several of the other guests at the Pension

where we stayed hired a local fisherman to take us out in his boat to the islands and I shall never forget the beautiful clear transparency of the deep Mediterranean around the islands. We stopped in a little bay and fished and one could actually see the fish at the bottom come and take the bait.

After swimming from the boat and being towed around on an aquaplane, we were put ashore to explore the little island and on our return to the beach we found the fisherman and his son had made, with the fish we had caught, a magnificent dish of bouillabaisse served in a dish made of the bark from a cork-oak. Another memorable event on that holiday was seeing for the first time the newly introduced sport of water-skiing. On the beach it was possible to try and do it oneself at a cost of 40 francs for a quarter of an hour. The way the motor boat owner suggested starting was by sitting on the end of one of the little gang planks that were built out from the beach to enable people to get into a boat where the water was deep enough for the boat. There being practically no tides in the Mediterranean these structures were permanent fixtures. Sitting on the end one was given the towrope and the when the line became taut as the motorboat went forwards one was supposed to ski off easily on the surface. The first time I tried I leant too far back and the skis went from under me and I had to let go. When I was again in position I tried again and this time I overcorrected and leant too far forwards so then I did a neat dive between the points of the skis. By that time my quarter of an hour was over and all I had achieved was to provide some amusement for the people on the beach.

Thinking it over that night I decided that one should have some means of avoiding the sudden pull on the towrope and decided to try again the next day. This time I insisted on sitting in the water on my skis and the ruse worked and I was actually skiing! There was a millionaire's yacht at anchor quite a distance from the shore and once the driver of the boat realised that I was reasonably stable on the skis he took me right out round the yacht (to quote Noel Coward from *Private Lives*, I think, the yacht 'was the Duke of Westminster's, I suppose, it usually is.'). Towards the end of my quarter of an hour my arms were so tired from the unaccustomed effort that I just had to let go and wait for the motorboat to come and pick me up. I knew he would as the skis were his!

On the way back through the Massif Central two disconcerting events interfered with the pleasure of the drive. First it began to get dark and when I put on the headlights I found that they did not help very much, but after struggling in the failing light for several kilometres I soon rectified the whole trouble simply by taking off my sunglasses! The second trouble was not so easily remedied. We ran into a thunderstorm while going up a winding fairly narrow pass and had torrential rain. At that moment the electric windscreen wipers decided to stop working. There was a little handle inside the windscreen which one could turn manually but it was tiring to keep working it back and forwards with the left hand while driving on a tricky road. Unfortunately the rain had set in to a steady downpour and looked likely to continue for hours and as we did not want to spend the night in a car on a remote mountain pass in the rain I just had to proceed in short episodes taking a break every now and then until my left hand had recovered sufficiently for me to start again. We made it to the next hotel.

Unfortunately this was only the beginning of the disintegration of most of the electrical fittings on the car, though not until after returning to England, but the drive through France continued to be a nightmare as we had wet weather for the rest of the journey

and a tight time schedule to be able to catch the cross Channel ferry, so we could not afford the time to have the windscreen wiper repaired.

Back in England, I decided that I must change my car. In our sort of practice a reliable car was an absolutely vital piece of equipment, so I lashed out and bought a new 1937 Oldsmobile 6-cylinder sedan. It cost me £440 and my partners were absolutely horrified, saying that I could have got an excellent smaller English car for less than £200, that American cars were shoddy and only designed to last one year, that I would never be able to do a 'U' turn in Upper Wimpole Street and, anyway, where was the starting handle?



A 1937 Oldsmobile.

The Oldsmobile proved to have a smaller turning circle than any of my partners' smaller British cars, the self-starter only failed once when I inadvertently left the parking lights on all night, but I persuaded a London taxi, the bumpers of which were the same height as the Oldsmobile, to give me a push and after driving it round the Outer Circle of Regents Park it was as good as new. I sold it in 1946 for more than I paid for it and it was one of the best cars I have ever had the pleasure of owning. Once again, if only I had been able to keep it until now it would have been a valuable vintage car. The 1937 Oldsmobile, I believe, was an exceptionally good model.

One evening when I was alone in the flat in Marylebone High Street, I lifted up with my left hand a pile of plates. Unfortunately the lowest plate in the pile was cracked and the weight of the others on top broke it in my hand and cut me across the middle, ring and little fingers. The wound to the middle and ring fingers were only superficial but the cut on the little finger was deeper and to my dismay I saw blood spurting from it all over the kitchen wall, showing that I had severed the digital artery. All I could do was to grab the little finger with my right hand and make my way out into the street and call a taxi, which luckily came along very shortly and ask to be taken to the Middlesex Hospital Casualty Department. When we arrived I dared not leave go of my little finger so I had to ask the taxi driver to feel in my pocket and find his fare.

When the resident on duty, who I remember was Alan Kekwick, later to be Professor of Medicine, saw me he asked me to curl up my fingers and to my horror the little finger remained straight out showing that not only the artery was severed but also both of the flexor tendons. This, of course, necessitated immediate admission for emergency surgery. Rupert Vaughan Hudson, one of the Honorary Surgeons came and Bernard Johnson, my partner, gave me the anaesthetic. I was discharged the next day but I could not use that hand for the next three weeks.

A prudent clause in the partnership agreement insisted that each partner take out a sickness insurance policy, and moreover that less than one month's absence counted as sick leave and did not preclude the sufferer from taking his share of the practice dividend. Thus I not only had to be away from work for three weeks but I would actually profit by the amount of the sickness benefit paid. I wondered what to do during the ensuing three weeks and decided that, as I had never been to Scotland that this was the ideal opportunity. Vaughan Hudson wanted to see me to dress the wound and remove the stitches in two weeks time, so in effect I had only ten days to spare in Scotland. Barbara could not come immediately, she had some other social engagements, so I went off on my own on the night train.

As I had my left arm in a sling, I was a little hampered trying to deal with the excellent meals served on the train, but the dining car stewards cut up all my food so that I was able to manage with only a fork. I stayed at the only hotel in Dalmally and had a wonderful time. I was physically very fit apart from the enforced inactivity of my left arm, I could use the thumb and index finger, but the sling was restrictive. During the days I walked all over the moor and even managed to stalk to within about 50 yards of a herd of red deer before they caught my scent and, without appearing to hurry at all, within two minutes were quite out of sight.



In the evenings I went down to the bar where the local crofters, gillies and other workingmen came to fraternise. I learnt one thing there which I had not known before,

that the national drink, whisky, was customarily drunk from a small glass, neat, in one swig and then followed slowly over the next half hour or so by a pint of Scotch Ale.

Barbara arrived after a few days and then we hired a car and explored the surrounding countryside, visiting Loch Awe, Oban, and the fateful Valley of Glencoe where the Macdonald clan was massacred by their traditional enemies the Campbells in 1692 on the pretext of disloyalty to the King of England. To this day, I believe there are places where the feud is perpetuated to the extent that some Macdonalds will have nothing to do with anyone called Campbell.

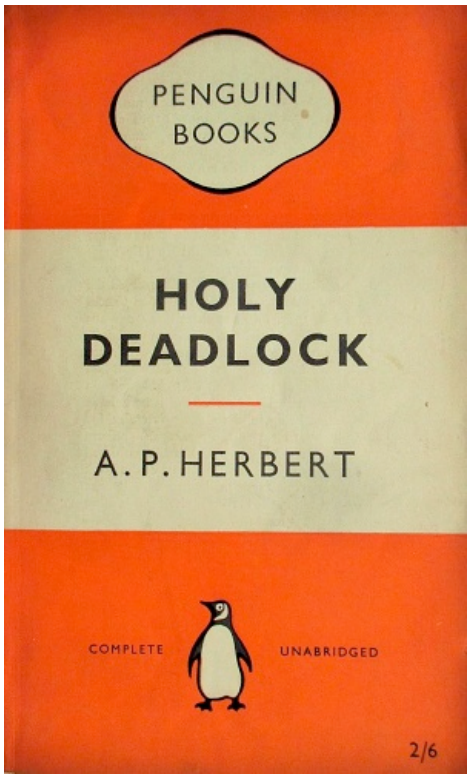
The day before we were due to leave we decided to see if I could use a fishing rod. I felt that as all the casting would be with my good right arm and all I had to do with the left would be to pluck the line out before casting, which I felt I could do with thumb and forefinger. So I hired a gillie for the day and we set of along the local river, the Orchy. It had been raining a lot over night so the water was very dirty and after hours of trying in all the places and using all the methods suggested by the gillie and getting no return, eventually the gillie said 'weel, I think we ought to try the wurrm'. I am sure this was definitely unsporting, if not illegal, but the gillie knew that it was my last day and so we discarded our inhibitions and tried the 'wurrm'. At almost the first cast I was into a salmon, and more by the help of the gillie than my own skill we landed a seven-pound fish. I regret to say that that is the only salmon I have ever caught in my life.

Sometime during that autumn of 1937 we decided to drive up to Stockton-on-Tees to see my father who was still teaching at Bowesfield Lane Boys' School and living at Eaglescliffe, two or three miles to the south of the town just north of the River Tees, the border between Durham and Yorkshire in those days with Yarm over the bridge in Yorkshire. Since the authorities have changed a lot of the English counties, abolishing some, cutting others down to size, altering boundaries and creating new counties, Stockton, Middlesbrough, Eaglescliffe, Yarm and many other places are all in a new county called Cleveland.[16] Ironically most of the Cleveland Hills from which the name arose are still in Yorkshire.

While we were there we went to the R.A.F. base at Thornaby where Lilian Banks (nee Wynn) and her husband Sandy were stationed. They had had a son in 1936, christened Anthony Hamilton.

Olive had been adamant in her decision not to divorce Harry so he was unable to marry his friend Dora, who was one of the gentlest and kindest persons I have known. At that time A.P. Herbert was crusading for a reform of the divorce laws with his book *Holy Deadlock* written in 1934 and now that he was an Independent Member of Parliament for Oxford University he was able to introduce a private member's Bill which was passed eventually in 1937, The Matrimonial Causes Act.

[16] Cleveland County was created in 1974 but was abolished in 1996 (*i.e.*, a few years after Bobby stopped writing these memoirs).



The boot was now on the other foot and Harry divorced Olive on the grounds that she had deserted him in 1917. Harry then married Dora Petrie after waiting for 20 years, and I then had both a mother and a stepmother.

TO OLIVE MARY ROBERTS of 24, Burnt Ash Hill, Lee, London S.E.12.,
TAKE NOTICE that you are required within eight days after service hereof upon you, inclusive of the day of such service, to enter an appearance either in person or by your Solicitor at the Divorce Registry, Somerset House, Strand, in the County of London, should you think fit so to do, and thereafter to make answer to this Petition, and that, in default of your so doing the Court will proceed to hear the Petition and pronounce judgment, your absence notwithstanding.
THE PETITION is filed and this Notice is issued by TARRY SHERLOCK & KING of 17 Serjeant's Inn, London, E.C.4., Agents for Cohen Jackson and Scott of Stockton,on.Tees, Solicitors for the Petitioner
DATED AT LONDON the 10th day of January 1938
H.F.O.NORBURY
REGISTRAR.
NOTE Any person entering an appearance must at the same time furnish an address for service within three miles of the General Post Office London
Fos 10/JR. ----------

HIS MAJESTY'S HIGH COURT OF PROBATE & DIVORCE

The divorce papers that were served on Olive in January 1938.

In order to augment the pittance which schoolteachers received Harry and Dora ran a Travel Agency in Stockton, 'Roberts Tours', and Peter after a stint working in the steel works, mainly because he wanted to play rugby and some of his rugby friends were in that team, helped with the Travel Agency. He had been far from industrious at school in England and Harry in desperation had sent him to a boarding school in Belgium. This was to stand him in good stead afterwards and, in fact, determined his whole lifestyle. At this time he was able to go to Belgium and France and arrange accommodation for package tours and also was able to act as tour leader occasionally.

It may be argued that these events and the accounts of various holidays etc., have nothing to do with the Mayfair Gas Company. True, but when I read biographies I find it very confusing if the author keeps dodging backwards and forwards in time. I am trying to relate things in a more or less chronological order to spare any reader that confusion.

The surgeons with whom I worked in private practice were mainly those who were colleagues of mine on the staff of the Middlesex. They, for preference worked in the private wing of the Middlesex known as the Woolavington Wing. I used to do five half-day sessions at the Middlesex as the duties of my appointment. All the Honorary Anaesthetists gave four or five half-days of their time to hospital lists on a regular weekly basis. Their recompense, as did mine, came from the private work that the surgeons with whom they worked on hospital cases asked them to undertake. The surgeons I worked with most often were David ('Jimmy') Patey, Eric Pearce Gould, Blundell Bankart, Louis Carnac Rivett, 'Freddie' Roques, C.P. Wilson, and J.P. Monkhouse, as well as all the Honorary Dental Surgeons.

The advantages of working in the Woolavington were that there all the apparatus and instruments were part of the hospital equipment, and neither the surgeon nor the anaesthetist had to take anything along. Also quite often the surgeon would do a private operation during his normal hospital session if the number of cases on the hospital list did not fill the allotted time. If they did then one often followed on after the hospital cases by going over to the private wing.

All the money that I earned in private fees as well as the £100 the hospital paid me annually as Assistant Anaesthetist went into the general kitty of the Mayfair Gas Company. For the first year, 1937-38 both Morgan and I received 3/16 of the total to be divided and McConnell and Johnson got 5/16 each. Both Morgan and I had had to buy our share from McConnell and Johnson and to do this I had had to borrow money from an Insurance company against a Life Policy which had to be paid back in monthly instalments. After that year Morgan and I protested that as we were now doing at least equal work we ought to be getting equal shares with the others. For any disputes between the partners, we had all agreed on joining the practice to abide by the ruling of an arbitrator, an honest, rather ponderous solicitor called Stebbings. He decided in our favour and thenceforth we were all four on equal shares.

In 1937 or 1938, an old school friend made his reappearance. Paddy Roberts, who had been Roberts I when I was Roberts II, he of the Silver Bugle and school concert fame, who had left school rather suddenly as the result of a misdemeanour involving dating the Headmaster's pretty young housemaid, returned to England. In the meantime he had gone back to South Africa where his parents lived, qualified as a solicitor, become

disenchanted when some black African whom he had defended in a murder trial was found guilty and hanged, and decided to return to England. He lived in Durban and had a friend who had an ocean going yacht who offered him a lift to U.K. provided he brought along his guitar and helped to dispel any periods of boredom. In England he made the acquaintance of two writers of popular music (called Box and Cox, believe it or not![17]) and joined then. Paddy was in his element and wrote many songs and was on the way to becoming well known when the war broke out. Before that, however, he married a delightful girl called Sylvia Shephard, and Barbara and I met him quite by chance at the Albert Hall New Year's Eve ball, and became friendly once more.

During the summer of 1938, I stayed at a farmhouse in Sussex with Charles and he and I tried to explore in my *faltboot* the small river Arun which ran on the boundary of the farm on its way to the sea at Arundel. The farm was between Billingshurst and Wisborough Green and I often used to go there to stay. One day the farmer told me that a somewhat dilapidated old cottage on his property was standing empty. I wanted to buy it. That the farmer would not agree to, but if I would consider making it habitable he would let it to me at a very modest rental.

This we undertook to do and with the considerable help of a local builder, we lowered the floor of the kitchen to allow normal sized persons to stand upright and had to warn all our guests that most of the doorways necessitated ducking to avoid bumping one's forehead. Both Barbara and I were small in stature but we wanted to keep our friends as friends. The average height of a farm labourer in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, whenever the cottage had been built must have been under five foot two. At some hotel in Salisbury, Rhodesia, with just such a low beam the management are reputed to have put up on the lintel a notice 'Duck or Grouse!'

The traditional name of the cottage had been 'Grigg's Gate' and this became our weekend country retreat. Now that we were equal partners, each partner only was on call for emergencies one weekend out of four. I must point out that the English weekend was not as long as the Australian, in that we always worked on Saturday mornings, so the weekend away usually meant Saturday afternoon to Sunday evening unless one got up vary early on Monday morning, but that was a little risky because undue traffic or a puncture could make one late for the first case of the day, and, of course, for hospitalised patients the anaesthetist should see the patient the night before operation to assess general health and order sedatives and premedication as necessary.

In February 1939, we went for our first skiing holiday to Col de Voza in the French Alps not far from Chamonix. The Col, meaning mountain pass, was between Chamonix and Megeve, both rather trendy resorts, but the hotel on the pass was not at that time a place where fashion conscious winter sports fans were apt to gather. Rather it was a place for people like us, complete novices who were very anxious to crowd into our two weeks holiday as much instruction in skiing as was consistent with having a good time *après ski*.

[17] The principals of Box and Cox Publications were Elton Box and Desmond Cox, and their greatest hit was 'I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts.'



The Col de Voza.

The resident instructor was a Polish ex-champion skier, who drilled us mercilessly every morning on the nursery slopes. He did not at all approve of the current British method of teaching beginners to do stems or 'snow-plough' turns but insisted that from the first day we kept our skis together and learnt the 'Christie' turn. In the afternoons we were allowed to go up on the ski-hoist and come down the simple slope back to the hotel. We got on very well with the instructor and he told us that next year he would not be working at the hotel but was hoping to work on his own as a private instructor in Chamonix.

A month or so after returning to England I was delighted when the Medical Committee at the Middlesex decided to elect me to be a full Honorary, thus saving the hospital £100 a year, and freeing me from any fear that I might suddenly lose my job there as Honoraries were not reappointed every year but could assume that their position would only be terminated by any serious misdemeanour on their part or on reaching the statutory retirement age of 65.

For the August Bank Holiday in 1939, which in those days was the first weekend in August, not as it is now the last, Barbara and I went to Paris as the guests of some people we had met at Le Lavandou, a lawyer called Bazin and his wife. Already the war clouds were gathering and during the weekend, although our hosts were very hospitable, an aura of gloom managed to dampen our enjoyment. We had made arrangements to see them again at Le Lavandou in September but, of course, Adolf Hitler made us cancel that holiday.

Back in England preparations for the inevitable war were progressing rapidly. The Middlesex Hospital was being made ready for the massive air raids that everyone thought would accompany its outbreak.

Chapter 8: Blackout, Blitz, Boredom and Bridge

Back in England preparations for the inevitable war were progressing rapidly. The Middlesex Hospital was being made ready for the massive air raid that everyone thought would open hostilities. All the civilians had been issued with gasmasks in cardboard boxes and instructed how to use then and strongly advised to carry them wherever they went. All the medical staff of the hospital were told that as from the declaration of war they were to cease any private practice and consider themselves as Public Servants in the Emergency Medical Service (E.M.S.). All the Honorary Staff, no matter what their specialty, were paid the same Government salary, £800 per annum.

To make room for the expected flood of air raid casualties, and for their own safety, all the patients were evacuated to hospitals away from the centre of London. A good deal of planning had produced a plan whereby the whole of the area for about 30 to 40 miles around London was divided into segments like triangular slices of an enormous cake with a teaching hospital at the innermost angle of each Sector.

The Middlesex Hospital Sector extended in a narrow fan shape north westerly as far as Aylesbury including Willesden, Harrow, Wembley, Rickmansworth and had the outlying hospitals of Mount Vernon at Northwood and the Royal Bucks Hospital at Aylesbury as its two major base hospitals where the patients from the Middlesex were sent. Other suburban hospitals in the sector were the Central Middlesex County Hospital, Willesden General, St. Andrews (Dollis Hill), Wembley and the Harrow and Wealdstone Hospitals.

The Honorary Staff Anaesthetists were distributed throughout the sector, with the more senior people in the peripheral area as they were deemed to be safer. I, as the most junior member of the staff, was placed in the front line that was assumed to be at the Middlesex Hospital itself, right in the West End. For this, now that the war is over, I must be grateful because if I had been out in the suburbs or the Home Counties I would not have had the experience that I gained during the next five years.

In the days immediately prior to the actual declaration of war, there was feverish activity filling sandbags from a dump of sand which the authorities had placed in Regents Park. The weather in the last few days of August was very dry and hot, and under the supervision of Hugh Marriot, who was also by now on the Honorary Staff as a physician, but still very active in the affairs of running the hospital, volunteers, myself among them, worked hard filling sandbags and bringing them back to the Middlesex and stacking them in front of the main entrance hall, blocking out all the natural daylight and making the whole place very claustrophobic. Another activity was putting strips of adhesive tape over the windows, as it was already realised that one of the greatest dangers of a bomb blast would be flying bits of broken glass. Hugh Mariott made us all drink plenty of dilute salt solution to replace the salt loss through sweating.

As soon as the news broke about Germany invading Poland we were all called to action stations. I had to go and live in the hospital, where of course, because of the evacuation of all the patients there was plenty of space to accommodate the skeleton staff who remained, in the front line, to man what was essentially only a Casualty Clearing Station. I was allotted a very nice room on the first floor of the crosspiece of the

hospital, or perhaps I should call it the Central Block as the hospital was designed in an H shape with a central crosspiece and two wings. This was to be my *pied-a-terre* for the next five years. It had a bed, a bookcase and a large desk. Bathrooms etc., were available in either the East or West wing, 15 yards away. Because the fear of immediate bombardment was prevailing, Barbara went into the country to our cottage at Grigg's Gate in Sussex.

We spent the intervening two days between the invasion of Poland and Chamberlain's declaration of war making sure that we had all the necessary equipment available to carry out our expected duties and sticky-taping the windows as well as trying to cheer ourselves up with an occasional, visit to the 'Cambridge', the local pub just across the road from the hospital where the 'grande dame', Gladys Marshall, was almost part of the hospital staff.

On Sunday, 3 September 1939, when the ultimatum which Neville Chamberlain had sent to the Germans was due to expire we gathered around the wireless (we didn't call it radio then), and at 11 a.m. Chamberlain announced that we were in fact at war. Although it was expected, the realisation that it had actually happened had a most dampening affect on the assembled group listening to the announcement. Not for long, because within about ten minutes there was an air raid alarm siren wailing away in its sinister undulating note. 'Action Stations' indeed, but it turned out to be a false alarm. However it proved to be very useful because it showed up any deficiencies in our precautions and after another false alarm and a few practice alarms we felt more at ease with the situation.

The surgeons allotted to work at the Middlesex were Rupert Vaughan Hudson and David Patey in one team, and C.P. Wilson and Brian Windeyer in the other. The 'powers that be' realised that two surgeons working together could not be expected to work continuously, so they had organised two teams of surgeons. But the same consideration did not extend to the anaesthetic side of things! I was the only qualified anaesthetist available, with only a trainee registrar, Peter Dinnick, to help me. However for the time being there was no call for our services. Hitler was fully occupied with mopping up the Polish campaign and had decided that perhaps the effect of that would undermine the morale and will to fight of both the French and the British, so we were left alone to wonder when anything would happen.

This was the beginning of the 'phoney war'. Jokes went around to the tune that Hitler's war was supposed to be a 'Blitzkrieg' or Lightning War and lightning is supposed never to strike in the same place twice, but his Blitzkrieg didn't even strike once. We were lulled into a false sense of security (or is it a sense of false security?). So here we were four surgeons, one anaesthetist, and a Commandant, Hugh Marriot, all cooped up in the hospital with nothing to do and the Government paying us a pittance to do nothing. The Mayfair Gas Company had had to cease work but we still had our running costs to meet. We decided to keep on both the rooms in Wimpole Street and the two secretaries. The gradual payment of outstanding accounts, and there were plenty of those, helped to keep us out of the red.

Even the British Government became relaxed and in January Chamberlain issued a statement to the effect that 'His Majesty's Government has no wish to place any restrictions on travel between Great Britain and France'. We took this announcement

literally and booked to go and stay with our old friend the skiing instructor in Chamonix in February.

We went by train to Dover where the Customs and Immigration officials were astounded when they asked us what was the purpose of our journey and we said 'A skiing holiday'. I produced the cutting from the 'Times' relating Chamberlain's statement and we were allowed to proceed. We went across from Dover to Calais in the Cross Channel Steamer accompanied by a couple of destroyers going 'Whoop, Whoop', and travelled across France in dimly lit trains, although the French 'black-out' was not anything like as strict as the British. We had to change trains and stations in Paris and to us the city was just a little dim in a soft blue light. We saw lots of trains conveying troops in carriages marked *Hommes 40, Chevaux 8*.[18]



The journey took us to places I had never been before including Annecy where in the very early morning between connections we had a chance to see the famous lake. We stayed in Chamonix in the home of our skiing instructor and had a wonderful ten days. Also there were some Polish girls, wives of Polish Air Force Officers, who had managed to escape the German invasion and were now attached to the French Air Force. Both the young officers and their wives had had some very complicated journeys each going their separate ways via all sorts of unlikely routes to arrive in France generally through Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, North Africa and Spain in a big loop to avoid going through enemy territory or that of possible German sympathisers and to take the shortest sea crossing, the Straits of Gibraltar. We did not meet the husbands who had been assimilated into the French Air Force, but a couple of the wives had

[18] 40 men and eight horses.

decided to spend some time on the ski-fields while their husbands were away undergoing retraining.

The snow was deep and crisp (if not even) and we visited not only the local ski runs but also Megeve and last year's haunt of Col de Voza. I remember one day when we had terrible hangovers after drinking unaccustomed vodka to the 'Liberation of Poland'. Little did we think that 50 years would pass before Poland would attain that ideal. Our Polish host and his wife were very hospitable and we had a welcome break from the boredom of sitting around in London with nothing to do.

Shortly after our return to London the government relaxed its rule that there was to be no private practice by members of the E.M.S. and the Mayfair Gas Company was able to resume practice and also a few patients were allowed to use the facilities of the Middlesex Hospital for surgical treatment, so the surgeons started to operate again. The patients were transferred from the Middlesex as soon after the operation as possible, usually the following day, to hospitals on the periphery of the Sector.

The Middlesex itself, as were all the other teaching hospitals in Inner London, was expected to act as a Casualty Clearing Station should the expected air raids eventuate, and for that reason as well as for the safety of the patients it had to be kept as empty as possible and they had to be away from what was imagined would be the worst hit area.

Thus, during the Phoney War, life was as far back to pre-war conditions as possible, given the restraints that rationing, the blackout and the nuisance of having to carry that gas mask about everywhere would inevitably impose. People living in the suburbs with gardens were urged to construct an Anderson shelter, a hole in the ground with a roof over it and approached by steps down to the door, to which the inhabitants were supposed to go during air raids.



An Anderson shelter.

An alternative indoor shelter, especially meant for people without a garden, was the Morrison shelter like a large dining table with sturdy metal legs and a strong steel top. This was placed on the ground floor and the protection it was expected to give was from falling masonry and glass. Neither the Anderson nor the Morrison was expected to protect anyone from a direct hit, of course. Failing either of these home measures people were advised to make their way to the nearest public air raid shelter if within a short distance from home or wherever they might be when the sirens sounded.



A Morrison shelter.

At the Middlesex there was a sub-basement intended originally in the construction to take the various water, drainage, sewerage and gas pipes and the electrical cables and to provide access to them for maintenance and repair. This, pre-war, had been used also as a storage area for equipment which might be needed in the future. This was cleared out, the area was cleaned up, fitted up with an emergency operating theatre with adequate lighting and made ready to be an air raid shelter for all off-duty personnel, together with patients who could be moved from the more exposed areas. To limit the extent of such areas, the top three floors of the wards were emptied and the theatres moved from the top floor, where they had been situated to obtain the best use of lighting as well as away from the main traffic flows to minimise infection, to improvised theatres in two large wards on the second floor crosspiece. Each of these was equipped with two operating tables, enabling one anaesthetist, if necessary when short staffed, to supervise two operations at the same time. When the air raids eventually started this arrangement proved to have been very necessary.

Unable to indulge in private practice and having no work to do at the Middlesex, the first three months of the phoney war were tedious and it was decided to put on a concert in the sub-basement to give us something to do and improve morale. We wrote a special play for the event and I managed to persuade Paddy Roberts to come and entertain us with some of his songs. At the outbreak of the war, he had joined the Police

and on his beat he passed one of the barrage balloon sites that were numerous in London. Barrage balloons were part of the R.A.F. defence against low flying aircraft that would not dare to fly low enough for their wings to strike the steel hawser tethers of the balloons. The airmen stationed there were habitués of the local pub and Paddy got into the habit of dropping in there on his off duty evenings and entertaining the balloon pushers, by singing not only his own songs but the popular tunes of the era, such as 'We're going to hang out our washing on the Siegfried Line' and 'Run, Rabbit, Run.' When we had our sub-basement party, it was a huge success mainly due to the efforts of Paddy.

During the first half of 1940 we developed a routine of doing a little work at the Middlesex, which was as much as we were allowed to do, and rebuilding the dental side of the practice. Public confidence was beginning to return, people didn't mind coming up to the West End of London for a dental appointment. A certain amount of general surgery was being done in the Nursing Homes as well as the more major dental work such as impacted wisdom teeth. There was at that time, in Harley Street an ex-South African, George Exner, who was an absolute wizard at dealing with impacted wisdoms, and the Mayfair Gas Company gave many off his anaesthetics.[19] When he did not use our firm for his anaesthetics, he used the doyen of anaesthesia at that time, Ivan Magill, who had made his name in the specialty during the First World War working with the plastic surgeon Harold Gillies. He was a great proponent of the use of endotracheal tubes and had specially designed curved rubber tubes for easier nasal introduction and also a laryngoscope for seeing the vocal cords for the oral route. Later in the war when there were not many anaesthetists remaining in London, Magill and I shared Exner's practice and I often saw him in and about the local Nursing Homes. He was then a man in his early fifties. He was knighted in 1960 and died only a few years ago well into his nineties.

All this comparatively peaceful existence in time of war came suddenly to an end when Hitler unleashed his Blitzkrieg in May 1940 against Holland, Belgium and France after invading Denmark and Norway early in April. The rapid collapse of all resistance in the Low Countries meant that the full force was directed against France who still relied on the supposed impregnability of the Maginot Line. How impregnable it may have been was never put to the test, because the Germans simply went round the north end of it and rendered it useless. The British Army was isolated from the French and the remnants of the Expeditionary Force had to be evacuated from Dunkirk leaving the French to crumble fairly rapidly and sign an armistice on 22 June, dividing France between German-occupied France and a quasi-independent state presided over by the 84-year-old hero of Verdun, Marshal Petain, which, from the seat of its government, became known as Vichy France.

Britain was now the Front Line, and on her own against the whole might of Germany, apart from the valiant Resistance movements in all the occupied countries.

When France fell one of the Polish Air force officers whose wife we had met at Chamonix flew his plane to England and was taken into the R.A.F. I cannot remember their names but I shall call them Jan and Sonya Klimek. After Jan had arrived in

[19] An article in the *British Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery* in 2003 notes that when Sigmund Freud had oral cancer, he 'entrusted his care in London to George Exner, a brilliant oral surgeon.'

England Sonya also somehow managed to find her way to England and as we had given them our address in London she managed to get in touch with us. Barbara prudently evacuated herself to Sussex and I took up continuous residence in my room at the Middlesex.

Private practice began to drop off again, not surprisingly, as everyone expected Germany to invade England as soon as its forces had settled-in in their new French forward outposts.

In the immediate pre-war years there were in the West End a lot of small social drinking clubs. That is to say places with a limited clientele, pleasant and uncrowded rooms including a bar and usually a dining room, sometimes a billiards room or cards room. The entrance fees were small usually only £1, and the cost of a reasonable two-course dinner about half a crown (2s. 6d.). I belonged to such a place at the lower (south) end of Portland Place opposite the old Queen's Hall where the new B.B.C Headquarters are today, called the Thermionic Club. It was on the west side of Portland Place on the corner of a little street leading into Chandos Street, which separated the club premises from the de-luxe Langham Hotel. The entrance to the club was in Chandos Street but the windows and balcony outside the bar area gave a view of both the front of the Langham Hotel and across Portland Place. The name of the club comes from a term used in radio jargon and was appropriate seeing that a majority of the members were recruited from the B.B.C. Under the floor used by the club members, which was up a few steps from the street, was a semi-basement floor that was used as a storeroom.

I suppose I went to the club once or twice a week to get away from the monotony of life in the precincts of the hospital. A doctor's life tends to be bound up with other doctors and the end result would be, if no outlet from this one-sided view of the world were available, restricted and uninformed about the real world outside. I know that my critics will say that I am trying to excuse myself and all those other young medical students and newly qualified doctors for not devoting 100 per cent of our energies to learning the art of, and practising, healing the sick. 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' is not only a saying, it is also the truth. After more than 60 years spent in the medical profession, my opinion is that those who steadfastly keep their noses to the grindstone, without any 'let up', turn out usually to be boring academics, without any understanding of what ordinary people feel and think.

On one Saturday in September 1940 I was not on duty at the Middlesex, I can only suppose that Peter Dinnick was, and the Golders Green Hippodrome was showing Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*. There was to be a matinee performance, so I thought I would ask Sonya Klimek, whose husband was now at some R.A.F. station training, to come with me. We travelled by Underground and were seated in the theatre when the air raid sirens sounded. The Manager came on to the stage and said, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, the air raid warning has sounded, I must tell you that if you wish to leave now or at any time during the performance your money will be refunded but the show will go on.'

We and 95 per cent of the audience stayed on and enjoyed a very good performance. Needless to say, the 'All Clear' siren sounded a few minutes after the start of the performance. When we came out we decided to go to the Thermionic Club for a drink

and perhaps a meal. While we were having our pre-prandial aperitif the air raid sirens went again and the word went around that from the balcony one could see the enemy planes up in the sky to the east. Clutching our drinks we went out to the veranda and watched the dogfights between the German bombers and the R.A.F fighters over the London docks. The 'All Clear' siren sounded soon after and after a hurried snack we left and I saw Sonya back to her flat in the 'Albany', just north of the Marylebone Road, and returned to duty at the Middlesex.

This was the beginning of what we called in England the Blitz. The date was 21 September and for the next six months, at least, London was subjected to the most intensive aerial bombardment that the Luftwaffe could supply.

Of course I was now bound to be on call all the time awaiting any air raid casualties. Private practice dried up almost completely as few people were willing to come into London unless it was necessary.

The pattern began to emerge that almost every night we had an air raid alarm soon after dark. Only rarely did the Luftwaffe attempt daylight raids so that after a few weeks there were a few calls for anaesthetics in the dental surgeries, and unless I was still dealing with the casualties of the previous night I was free to oblige. So was Morgan who had not been drafted into the E.M.S., but Bernard Johnson, who was for a short time out in the Sector, soon managed to resign from the E.M.S. and join the Army. McConnell was originally down in Kent somewhere in the Guy's Sector and also got his release from the EMS to join the Army. Morgan and I managed to keep the practice going with the help of the secretarial staff, though how we managed to pay the rent and the staff throughout I cannot imagine.

My treasured friend and chauffeur, George Patterson, joined the army and for a time I was without the help of a chauffeur-technical assistant, although from time to time I managed to get some help from men who were unfit to be called up for war service.

At the Middlesex we developed a routine. Every evening most of the younger staff would go to the Cambridge or the Blue Posts and have a glass or two of beer and buy some sandwiches. The Blue Posts for an amazingly long time after strict rationing could manage to provide excellent smoked salmon sandwiches and they were our favourites. We did not consume the sandwiches in the pub but brought them back in our pockets to the Middlesex for use later in the night. The main entrance hall of the hospital was turned into a casualty reception area and ambulances were the only vehicles allowed in the front courtyard on Mortimer Street looking down Berners Street. At the back of the entrance hall was the Boardroom and to one side of that was an anteroom which we made our card room. As soon as the sirens sounded the air raid warning we settled down to play Bridge, which we continued until about 11.30 p.m. unless casualties started to arrive when we all would go to our respective posts of duty. For me that meant to the second floor crosspiece to our temporary operating theatres.

Two of the regular bridge players were Rodney Smith and his wife Judy. Rodney had been a St. Thomas's Hospital graduate and had recently been appointed as a surgical registrar. They lived in a flat in a street very near the hospital so when the alarm went they would both come to the hospital. Rodney was one of those people who are good at anything they take up. Apart from being an expert surgeon who later became President

of the Royal College of Surgeons, was knighted and then given a life Barony with the title of Lord Smith of Marlow, he had been in his school First XI for cricket while still in his first year at school. In the Residents' quarters he could give anyone a 50 start and beat them to 100 at billiards, and he was an expert Bridge player.[20] I am very grateful to him for the valuable instruction he gave me during those winter evenings of 1940-41. Rodney and Judy had played a lot together and barring very bad cards usually managed to win when they played together.



Rodney Smith later became Lord Smith of Marlow.
This portrait appropriately depicts him with playing cards.

[20] Plarr's Lives of the [Royal College of Surgeons] Fellows notes that Rodney Smith – who 'was endowed with an enviable array of talents' – was also 'an accomplished violinist and had contemplated music as a profession.'

On one memorable night I was playing against Rodney and Judy, and Judy must have misled Rodney with one of her calls and Rodney had bid a small slam in Hearts. I doubled and Rodney immediately redoubled. I said 'Can I re-redouble?' 'No!' said Rodney, 'but we can have a side bet if you like!' 'How much?' 'Whatever you like', said Rodney. I suggested five shillings, which was a sizeable bet in those days (we were playing for a penny a hundred). 'Done'. Thereupon I put down the Ace, King and Queen of Hearts on the table. Rodney was furious, mainly with Judy, but also his pride was hurt badly and he said he would refuse to pay the five shillings on the grounds that I was betting on a certainty. To this I countered that a certainty was the only thing worth betting on and that I did not want his money but only that he should pay for his unjustifiable assumption of infallibility.

My partner and the onlookers all agreed, motivated not merely by my argument but by Judy's tears to which Rodney's tirade had reduced her, and we forced Rodney to put his five shillings into the charity box which still stood, in spite of the transformation of the Entrance Hall into a front line casualty reception area, in the Hall. I don't think we played any more Bridge that night but on the morrow all was forgiven (if not, I'm glad to say from the point of one writing these memoirs) forgotten.

Having mentioned the smoked salmon sandwiches, I had better state that they were consumed either as soon as the 'all clear' siren sounded or at some convenient pause during the treatment of air raid victims.

So far I may have stressed unduly the lighter side of London during the Blitz. If so, I apologise. Life was not easy, and as an Australian Prime Minister was to say much later and to be credited with it as an axiom, 'Life was not meant to be easy'.[21]

The staffing of the anaesthetic side of the Middlesex Hospital was woefully deficient but as this was war we accepted that as unavoidable. Later deficiencies in Hobart long after the war and caused by governmental parsimony, I found unacceptable. The only other medically qualified person to help me with all these air raid casualties was the incumbent Senior Resident anaesthetist, Peter Dinnick. We decided that it was physically impossible for me to be the only anaesthetist on duty 24 hours a day every day, so Peter and I were on first call every day, or perhaps in the circumstances I should say every night, but that should either the decisions or the load of work become excessive, the second on call would be asked to assist.

The authorities decided that owing to the shortage of qualified medical staff we should use senior medical students to help out. The lay-out of the temporary theatre block was that in two ex-wards on the north side of the corridor across the central block were the two operating theatres, each with two operating tables in them, and on the south side of the corridor there happened to be a larger ward which I asked to be left like that and I would make that into a communal anaesthetic room. I also arranged that we should have, in the anaesthetic room, two operating tables and that the patients admitted for immediate emergency surgery should be brought into the anaesthetic room and transferred straight from the trolley on which they had been admitted and placed ready for anaesthesia on one of these tables. This move I thought necessary because

[21] Malcolm Fraser (Prime Minister of Australia from 1975 till 1983) was – possibly unwittingly – paraphrasing George Bernard Shaw's line in *Back to Methuselah*, 'Life *is* not meant to be easy, my child; but take courage: it can be delightful.'

unnecessary lifting of shocked and anaesthetised patients would constitute an avoidable extra risk.

On alternate nights Peter and I would work assisted by one of the two senior students allotted to us. I made a further request that these students should each stay with the anaesthesia department for at least three months and that their terms of duty should overlap so that we would not, suddenly every three months, be faced with two raw recruits. When air raid victims arrived in the anaesthetic room I examined each one, briefly I will admit, but time was 'of the essence', and I did all the inductions, intubating every patient regardless of the sort of surgery to be undertaken so that, at any rate, I would be sure of the patency of the airway. Then, when the patient was stabilised under anaesthetic, I would hand him over to the student with strict instructions to call me if he had any worries at all. I impressed on them that I would never be upset by being called to help unnecessarily, but that I would be very angry if I were not called if the student had any worries whatsoever.

When one of the patients in the operating rooms was ready to leave to go to the ward he would be transferred to a trolley and transported to the ward and the empty theatre table would be brought into the anaesthetic room and our next patient ready for surgery would be wheeled in on the operating table on which he had been anaesthetised.

I will apologise here and now for all the uses of the masculine 'he' or' him' where it should encompass the feminine gender too. It is too tedious to try and write' he or she', or 'him or her', or 'his or hers' every time and I hope that my feminist readers will accept the apology. If they won't, I can only concur with that prolific medical novelist and playwright, Richard Gordon, who, in *Doctor on the Ball* says through one of his characters, a country town general practitioner, 'I am not impressed with the women's liberation movement. A lifetime in medicine develops a sensitive nose for the whiff of bullshit in the winds of change'.

The majority of patients were suffering from the effects of flying bits of broken glass, and, depending on where the glass hit them, could be either comparatively slightly injured or very seriously indeed. During the whole war the only person to be killed in the Middlesex Hospital as the result of an air raid was hit in the neck by a flying fragment of the bomb (shrapnel) that severed his jugular vein. In the same raid a student in his room in the Residency was cut in the arm by a piece of broken glass, which severed his brachial artery. He must be very grateful for the timely action of the Sister in charge of the Resident's quarters, Sister Clark, who after the explosion went on a tour of inspection of her domain and saw bright red blood running from under the door of his room. An emergency operation with a massive blood transfusion saved his life.

That particular raid was not a part of the regular nightly Blitz but was a daylight raid by a lone bomber which suddenly swooped down out of low cloud, and dropped two small bombs, one on the West Wing which did very little damage, and the one that claimed the life of a member of the Friends' ambulance unit and nearly that of one of our students.

I must here acknowledge the debt I owe to Sir Douglas Ranger, who later was an Honorary Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon at the Middlesex and a Dean of the Medical

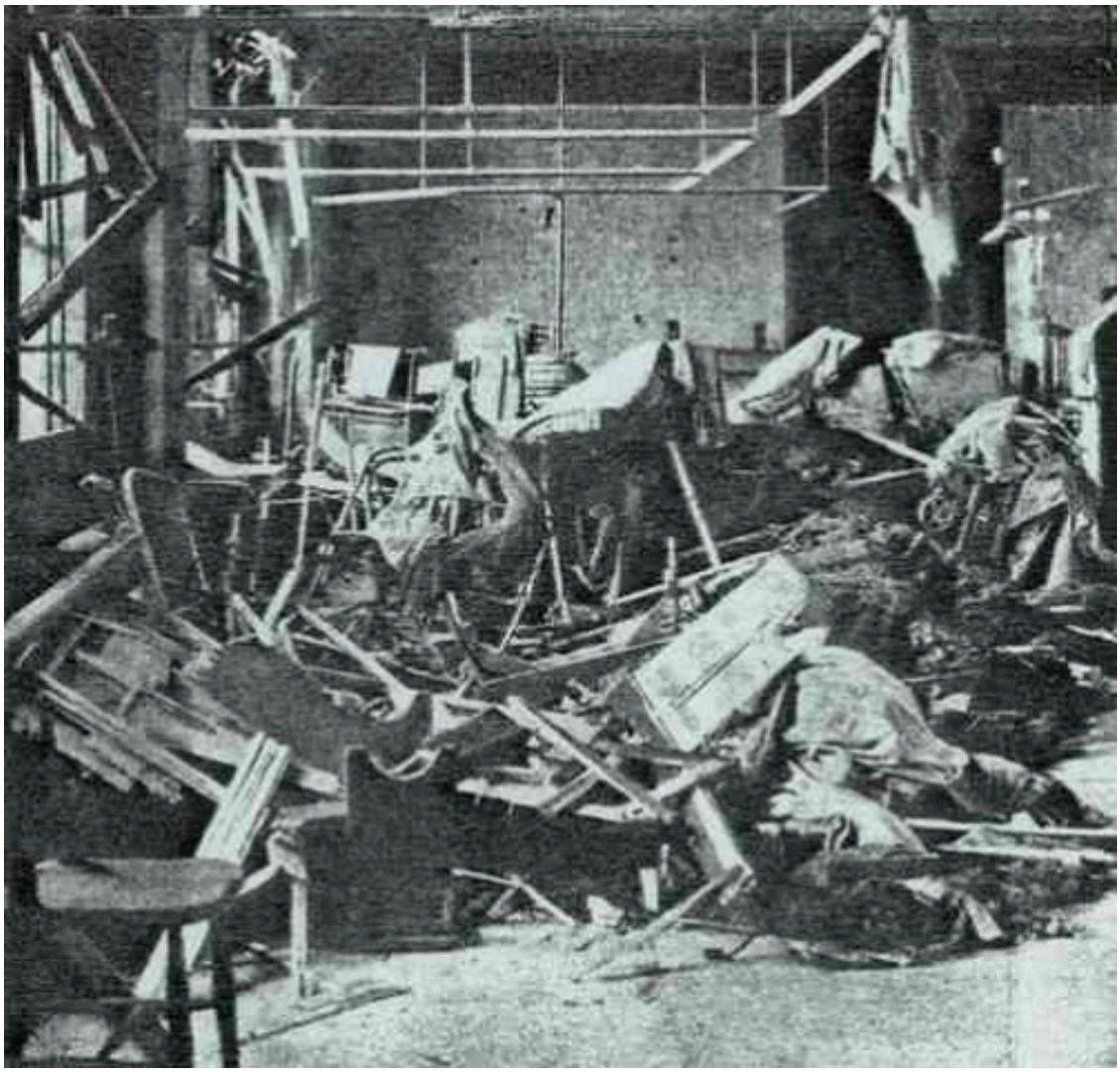
School for his book on the period between 1935 and 1985, from the centenary to the sesquicentenary of the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, which has been a wonderful aide-memoire for me.

There were, of course, many more seriously injured patients coming to the theatre during the nights of the Blitz. Those were mostly the victims of collapsing buildings and suffered broken bones and, more dangerously, the sinister 'Crush Syndrome', which results from the breakdown of body tissues as the result of a prolonged crush of muscles while lying helpless under the weight of fallen masonry.

My main memory of those nights in the anaesthetic room was the appalling dirt, which characterised nearly all of the victims due to the dust from the crumbling rubble of destroyed buildings. On had to wash the bodies of the patients in order to assess the extent of the damage to any part. A deep covering of mixed blood and dust could hide a severe injury or only a superficial scratch. There was also a curious smell, a combination of sweat, blood, dust and burning. A lasting impression is the incredible fortitude of the sufferers. Admittedly they were in shock, but the difference between their attitude and that of many peacetime patients awaiting trivial surgery was notable.

Now, at a convenient pause in the rush, was the time to savour those smoked salmon sandwiches from the Blue Posts, if we had not already finished them after the end of the Bridge session. Most of the raids took place between dusk and midnight, understandably as the bombers had to get back to their bases, so that if, during the period of the alert, no casualties had come the way of the Middlesex the Bridge players would eat their sandwiches as a late night supper and make tracks for bed. Occasionally a straggler in the Luftwaffe, who presumably had lost his way, would jettison his load of bombs before hurrying back to home comforts in France, Belgium or Germany and should they fall our way we would have some late admissions

The only time that I know that I was near a bomb explosion was during the night of 17 April 1941, when as soon as possible after the siren sounded I went up to the theatres to get a syringe full of Pentothal to take to the Woolavington Wing where an Etonian schoolboy who had a very painful septic arthritis of his knee was lying in bed and it was one of my duties to go and give him a short anaesthetic to enable the staff to lift him painlessly from his bed on to a trolley to take him to the safety of the sub-basement. To get to the Woolavington I had to go through the East Wing and then turn north. As I was doing so a 500 kg bomb fell on the East Wing and caused severe damage on the sixth, fifth and fourth floors while I was walking, syringe in hand, on the second floor. 'That one was pretty close.' I thought and continued on my mission of mercy. We were so busy all that night and well into the following day dealing with the casualties, that it was not until the next day that I realised how close it had been to me. This incident demonstrated how wise the authorities had been to evacuate the top three floors of the hospital.



The aftermath of the 17 April 1941 bombing of the Middlesex Hospital.

Barbara, down at Griggs' Gate in Sussex, was well out of the front line. Apart from the stray bomb jettisoned by a German raider who had missed the target and did not want to carry unused bombs back to his base and land with them, in the country life was not far removed from what it was in peacetime. True, driving at night with the special hoods fitted to the headlamps to ensure that they cast all the available light down on to the road so that they could not be spotted from above was not as easy, but rationing did not hit as hard as it did in the towns and especially in the big cities. Eggs were usually obtainable from a people who kept hens, butter was more available and the loss of a pig or lamb slaughtered for meat could often be explained away as death due to natural causes.

She did not lack for companionship because a large contingent of the Canadian Army was stationed in the district. Both the officers and other ranks were far from home, frustrated by inactivity now that there was nowhere they could immediately be sent to fight and anxious for feminine company. They, like the Americans who came later were, 'Overpaid, oversexed and over here'. Small wonder that the young women whose boy friends or husbands were unavoidably unable to be with them were induced to go out with these soldiers. I soon got the impression that my occasional visits for a night away from London were not exactly looked forward to with loving desire.

I took to avoiding going down to Wisborough Green and instead, on my nights off, accepted the invitation of an ex-school friend, from the Oxford choir school, Ivor Spencer-Thomas who was farming in Hertfordshire at Braughing, a few miles north of Ware. I had met Ivor again at a reunion of a number of Old Boys from the school in Oxford in 1934 when Leslie Franks was the prime mover in founding the Old Boys Association, and we usually had annual reunions with old friends like Eustace Piers, Brian Key and John Hilary Lee. Ivor very kindly, when he heard how we were cooped up at the Middlesex during the Blitz, extended an open invitation to any other members of the hospital medical staff who might like a break from the bombing. One person who took him up on the invitation was 'Jimmy' Patey who thoroughly enjoyed one or two weekends there.

Ever since the time when Leslie Franks and I surreptitiously hired an Exmoor pony to ride in the field just across the East Lyn river at Brendon, I had been keen on horse riding and Ivor had a big hunter that he did not have enough time to exercise so he was pleased when I used to borrow it and ride around that part of the country. C.P. Wilson, one of the surgeons in our team at the Middlesex during the Blitz, had a weekend cottage at Much Hadham and one weekend I rode over there and paid him an unexpected visit. On another occasion the big horse was very frisky and raring to go and I doubted if I would be able to handle him but Ivor gave me a bit of good advice. He had a field which had been recently ploughed and it had been raining very heavily overnight so Ivor suggested that I took the horse there and made him gallop up and down in the thick heavy soil until he was tired and then he would be more amenable.

One morning in early 1941 I had an appointment to give an anaesthetic for a dentist who had his surgery in a large block of flats at the north end of Park Lane at Marble Arch, and at the time I was without a chauffeur so I could not just be dropped at the door and not have to worry about parking, so I had gone across Oxford Street giving myself plenty of time to find a parking in a small street in the north east corner of Mayfair and walk from there carrying my dental anaesthetic bag. In Oxford Street I met Lilian Banks (nee Wynn) with a young man going to have coffee at the Marble Arch Lyons Corner House. I hadn't seen her since the time that Barbara and I had visited her at the R.A.F. Base at Thornaby in 1937.

Since that time she had had a great tragedy in that her husband, Sandy, had been killed while he was instructing junior pilots in night flying in April 1938. Lilian had had to take their 20-month-old child, Anthony, to live with her parents in Mottingham. Then long before the war she enlisted in the women's Auxiliary Territorial Service, or A.T.S., and had risen to be a sergeant major. She had been stationed at Framlingham in Suffolk when Anthony got pneumonia and she had to get compassionate leave to go and be with him. She decided that the child was too much of a responsibility to leave with her mother, so she had applied for a discharge from the service. This had been granted[22] and now as a civilian she was being escorted to coffee by a South African doctor, Alfie Gould, who had joined the R.A.M.C. and had been stationed with the same unit in Framlingham.

[22] When Lilian was discharged, her 'military conduct' was described as 'good', and she was later awarded the 1939-45 war medal.

I said I had to go to give an anaesthetic but that I would be free in about a quarter of an hour and could I join them in the Corner House?

From the dentist's rooms I phoned the secretary and asked her not to book me for the next half hour or so and went to the coffee date. Lilian told me that now she was out of the army she was unemployed and could I help her in any way to find a job? It so happened that one of the dentists with whom I regularly worked, Freddy Warner, on the Honorary Dental Staff of Guy's[23], had told me that he was about to lose his secretary-nurse because she was being called up into one of the women's forces, so I promised I would speak to him about Lilian. I did so and he interviewed Lilian and although she had had no training in dental nursing, she could learn and could anyway make his appointments and deal with his accounts.

Two other of the Wynn girls joined the women's forces, Marian went into the W.R.N.S. or 'Wrens', and the youngest, Gladys, into the W.A.A.F. While in the W.A.A.F., Gladys developed bronchiectasis and had to have a lobectomy. This took place at Hill End Hospital shortly after I had re-met Lilian and one day Lilian asked me if I could take her out to St. Albans to visit Gladys. I arranged to do that on Saturday, 19 April, but there was a very heavy air raid during the night of 17th to 18th and we had 84 patients admitted for operation. I was giving anaesthetics all night and all the following day and did not get to bed early on the night of the 18th either. Nevertheless, I was due for a weekend off, and so on the 19th I drove Lilian to Hill End. As we went along what then was called the Hendon Bypass, which went along the perimeter of the Hendon Aerodrome, a plane came in to land at very low altitude right above us. Hearing this sudden noise on top of a lack of sleep made me duck suddenly under the dashboard. Luckily we did not hit anything and I soon regained composure and control.

After losing part of her lung, Gladys was discharged from the WAAF and I was happy to be able to get her a job also with a dentist in the West End, Sam Blairman. Another heavy raid on Saturday, 10 May, destroyed the house in Harley Street where Freddy Warner had his practice and when Lilian went to work on the Monday morning, having been away in the country for the weekend, she found a mass of rubble. He got some more rooms in Beaumont Street and Lilian went to work again for him there.

That raid was the last on London for a long time, in fact until what we called the 'Baby Blitz' began in February 1944, and so the first phase of the war came to an end.

[23] After the war, F. S. Warner became, *inter alia*, a dental dean at Guy's Hospital Medical School.

Chapter 9: Bride, Baby, Burglary, Buzz-Bombs and Block-Busters

By now it was obvious that Barbara had formed a quasi-permanent relationship with one of the Canadian officers and that my marriage to her was on the rocks. When I spoke to her about it, she agreed that the best thing would be to get a divorce. She quite realised that I was not the 'guilty party' but would not be in a position to start divorce proceedings against her, so some time later she provided the evidence for me to take the initiative. I approached a friend of mine, Tommy Halsall, a solicitor, and he set the legal wheels in motion.

In June 1941, I went with Lilian to visit my father and my stepmother Dora in Eaglescliffe. Harry being a schoolteacher and in a reserved occupation had volunteered to be a plane spotter. This was an organisation with the support of, and associated with, the R.A.F., manned by civilian volunteers, who kept watch in shifts at observation posts all over England, to report on the movements of aircraft within their range of view.

The volunteers were given some training and cards showing silhouettes for identification of aircraft, either British or German, and they reported every plane they saw flying, suspected type, estimated height, direction of flight etc., throughout their shift of duty.

Harry was attached to a unit that had an observation post on the local golf course. I went and sat with him through his shift and was quite impressed with the efficiency with which the team worked and their devotion to duty. But the reason we had gone up north was not, of course, to inspect the local plane spotters, but to find some place where Lilian might be able to evacuate her child, Anthony, from the London area during the coming winter of 1941-42, when we all confidently expected the Blitz to start again. We did not know then that the R.A.F. had demonstrated enough superiority over the Luftwaffe to dissuade Hitler and Goring from a replay of 1940-41, so Lilian was determined that the boy, now nearly five years old, should not suffer another winter of being woken up in her parents' home practically every night, dragged out of bed, taken out into the garden and down into the Anderson shelter until the 'All Clear' siren sounded. Harry and Dora had found that a farm about five miles west of Osmotherley on the North Yorkshire moors, called Snilesworth, where the farmer and his wife, who had two small children, would be willing to take Anthony when she wanted to send him.

The four of us, Harry, Dora, Lilian and I, set out to go and inspect Snilesworth. The weather, for June in England, was atrocious. I remember us all huddled in the inadequate shelter of a hawthorn hedge, hiding from a bitter east wind, waiting for the bus to take us to Yarm, from where we caught another bus which took us to Osmotherley. From there we had a five mile walk to the farm and met the farmer and decided to send Anthony there in September. While waiting for the return bus we had our spirits uplifted by a most welcome dish at the local pub of ham and fried eggs. (Yes! Eggs, not an egg, and real ham, not Spam.)

Talking of rationing, in the urban areas it hit the hardest, made all the harder to bear because these areas, especially London and later the larger cities, were subjected also to

the bombing and the blackout. Butter and cheese, eggs, fish, meat, clothing, textiles and petrol were all strictly rationed. Other things were in short supply such as fruit, except for locally grown stuff in season, cigarettes and tobacco, wines and spirits. For these items one had to be known to the retailer who kept the best for his regular customers. I always remember a cartoon, in *Punch* I think, of a young man saying to the girl in a tobacconist's shop 'How often do you have to refuse me before I become a regular customer?'

In the country things were easier. Ralph Winterton, a gynaecologist, and his wife and daughter went to North Wales to stay on a farm during the summer of 1943, when the war had been on for four years, were fed sumptuously and the farmer's wife remarked to them in that delightful Welsh lilt, 'They tell us there is rationing in the towns!' In the Soho restaurants one could get meat at meals but very limited in size of portion and choice, usually Spam, sausages, whale steak or horse meat if you knew where to go and were lucky. I don't think I ever actually went hungry during the war, but just became fed up with the monotony and scarceness of good food.



Snilesworth, the farm to which Anthony was evacuated in 1941.

Anthony did go to the farm at Snilesworth in September, much to the annoyance of Lilian's mother who had got used to having the child in the house while Lilian was away, either in the A.T.S. or later during the daytime at work in Harley Street or Beaumont Street with Freddy Warner. Anthony was by this time just five years old and the farmer had two small children a boy and a girl about the same age, with whom Anthony got on very well. After about six weeks Lilian and I went with Harry and Dora out to the farm again to see how he was getting on. The farm was quite a long way from the road, over two or three fields and as we approached we saw the three children

playing in the field nearest to the house from across a small valley. When Anthony saw us coming he exclaimed in a broad Yorkshire accent 'Ee! Me Mummy's cum!' We were amazed how quickly he had picked up the North Country accent. He learnt other things from the children too, about the sex life of the farm animals. We were all, Harry and Dora, Lilian and Anthony and the two farm children looking out of the sitting room window at a flock of sheep on the other side of the small valley and Dora, to engage the children in conversation said 'Look at all those sheep running across that field!' The little girl, who could not have been more than four years old, said in a blasé manner 'Aye, it's only owd tup after ewes!'

In December it seemed that Mrs Wynn had been right when she had objected to Anthony going away on the grounds that we were not going to have a repetition of the Blitz, so he came back to London in time for Christmas, and Mrs Wynn and I gradually resumed friendly relations as it became obvious to her that we had only had Anthony's safety at heart in taking him to Yorkshire and that my intentions towards Lilian were, in Victorian parlance, 'strictly honourable'. The fact that Anthony on his return, if he disapproved of being disciplined by either his grandmother or his aunts, called them 'Mucky Buggers' (sounding more like 'Mooky Boogers') did nothing to hasten the rapprochement.

In February 1942 the divorce case came up for hearing and I got my decree nisi, and for the next six months Lilian and I had to be careful not to be alone in what might be regarded as compromising circumstances or else the King's Proctor might rule against the granting of the decree absolute. The 'Permissive Society' was still three decades away. In August, exactly six years to the day after my first wedding, the decree absolute came through and Lilian and I were married on 5 September. Anthony's paternal grandmother 'Biddy', after Sandy's father died, married a Church of England parson by the name of Dams, and he would have been willing to marry us in his parish church at Gillingham in Kent, but the bishop of the diocese would not allow us to be married in church as I had been involved in a divorce, albeit as the 'innocent party', so we decided to be married at St. Marylebone Town Hall in a Registry Office.

The witnesses were my solicitor friend, Tommy Halsall and his wife Wilma and Peter Dinnick who had been my Senior Resident Anaesthetist and right hand man at the Middlesex during the Blitz. He had since joined the R.A.F. and was stationed, I think, at Halton, the main Hospital in the R.A.F. medical service. He arrived almost too late for the ceremony on a motorbike wearing as well as his uniform a long woollen scarf and a pair of motorcycle goggles. Tommy Halsall was a most amusing fellow and had invented a wonderful word that deserves to be incorporated into the English language. It was 'consorpient' which he used frequently to denote pleasant or very agreeable. Its antonym was inconsorpient denoting unpleasant or disagreeable. Many things during the war were 'highly inconsorpient'. If one did anything Tommy approved of he would say 'That is very consorpient of you!' Lilian's youngest sister, Gladys, also attended. After the brief ceremony the guests all went along to a restaurant above Baker Street Station to a room we had booked for lunch and waited while Lilian and I took Lilian's Ration Book to the appropriate department of the Town Hall to be changed from Banks to Roberts. We could hardly turn up on our honeymoon as Dr Roberts and Mrs Banks. After the lunch we all went to a matinee of some play. I can't remember what it was but we all enjoyed it. I suppose I would have enjoyed anything on such a happy occasion.

After the show the guests all went their own way and Lilian and I went to the Cumberland Hotel at Marble Arch.



The Cumberland Hotel at Marble Arch, where Bobby and Lilian spent the first night of their 60-year married life.

After a celebratory dinner on our own I realised that after dispensing so much on the day's festivities I did not have enough ready cash with which to go away for two weeks into the wilds of Exmoor on the next day, a Sunday and with no banks open until the Monday and then about five miles away so I had to think how to get some money. I decided to ring the Middlesex where, among other Middlesex personnel living there, was the deputy Secretary-Superintendent, Mr H.M. Wilkinson, known as 'Wilkie'.

Hearing my plight he said he had some cash in the hospital safe and would bring some round to me at the Cumberland. I told him what time we would be leaving on the Sunday morning and expected he would come to the hotel before we left. However he did not want to leave things until the last minute so he decided to come that evening, and when he arrived unexpectedly Lilian was already in bed and I was in the bath. It was a strange place to receive a visitor on my wedding night, but he didn't want to wait until I was out of the bath and so he came into the bathroom and handed me some money (£20 I think), got a receipt from me and left.

The next morning we caught the 'Riviera Express' or the 10.30 Ltd from Paddington and our coach was slipped off at Taunton. There we had to change into a little local line that ran through the Vale of Taunton Deane between the Quantock Hills on the east and Exmoor to the west, to Minehead.

We had some time to wait, about two hours or so and as our luggage had been booked right through to Minehead we went out into the town and had a light lunch at some nearby hotel. When we got back to the station our train to Minehead was standing waiting although there was still the best part of an hour before it left and we saw our luggage standing with a lot of other pieces on the platform between the main line and the Minehead line so we got into the local train and only when we got to Minehead we realised that one of our two suitcases was not on the train. It was however plainly labelled and the Station Master assured us it would be sent on to our destination. We had to take a taxi to Brendon where we were booked in at the Staghunters Inn, run by a venerable old hotelier a Mr Todhunter.



We explained that we did not have all our luggage and that the case that was missing contained Lilian's walking shoes, and the only shoes Lilian had were the high-heeled pair she had been married in. We did not divulge the fact that we were on our honeymoon although the management suspected it but were too polite to ask outright. Mrs Pike, Mr Todhunter's daughter lent Lilian a pair of walking shoes until our missing case arrived about two days later. In the dining room we were sat at a table for four with a middle-aged couple who heard us talking about Anthony and asked who he was. Lilian told them that he was her six-year-old son and then they said 'We thought you were on your honeymoon!' We did not enlighten them until the last day of our stay there.

We had decided to make the most of our two weeks away from London and so we set ourselves a very busy schedule of walking every morning and horse riding every afternoon or vice versa. This further confounded the other guests who had suspicions about the duration of our marriage.

Lilian had not ridden before but she took to it very well. Exmoor is an ideal place to learn to ride. The ponies are quiet, there are very few gates to be manoeuvred and plenty of open space with nice soft heather or peat turf to land on should one fall off.

Back in London we had been fortunate to rent a house in Hampstead Garden Suburb in Meadway. It belonged to an army officer who was posted abroad and his wife did not want to live in it all by herself. It was lovely home, three storeys with seven bedrooms and two bathrooms. The entrance hall had a huge window going up to the ceiling of the first floor and the main corridor of the first floor running along a sort of minstrel's gallery. Providing blackout curtains for this enormous mullioned window was a major problem.



Bobby and Lilian were living at 2 Meadway, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London, when Nigel was born in April 1944.

A month or so after we got married Lilian gave up her job with Freddy Warner but we were able to supply him with a replacement in the shape of Gladys, a very nubile shape too, if I may say so. We soon managed to get a housemaid to help run the huge house, a 16-year-old girl, who had worked as a general runabout dogsbody at the reception desk at the Middlesex, called Daisy was only too pleased to raise her status from Girl Friday to domestic help. She lived in and was a very cheerful chirpy little cockney girl, quite bright and willing.

My Senior Resident Anaesthetist, successor to Peter Dinnick was Brian Sellick, and he and his wife Florence were great friends of ours and still are. Both Peter Dinnick and Brian Sellick, as well as Brian's successor Jan Hewer, became Honorary Anaesthetists on the staff of the Middlesex after the war.

During the lull in air raid activity the Mayfair Gas Company practice became very busy and I did a lot of work with dentists taking out wisdom teeth in private homes in the Home Counties. Quite understandably those who could afford it would prefer their teenagers to undergo their operations in the safety of their rural homes rather than be exposed to possible air raids in the metropolis. These out of town operations usually took place at a weekend and could command a fee of about 25 guineas. I think the furthest away from London that I went was one day when the dentist and I went by train to Shaftesbury where we were met by a chauffeur in a Rolls Royce, taken to a magnificent country house given lunch and then after the operation a drink and then returned to the station to catch the train back to London. About this time it was deemed unpatriotic to run a big six-cylinder car, so I put the Oldsmobile up on blocks and bought a smaller car. It was a small automatic gear change Daimler and a very convenient car to run.

Paddy Roberts, whom we last heard of reluctantly agreeing to become a navigator for B.O.A.C., had kept in touch with me and he was regarded as the best navigator to be entrusted to the flights that took Churchill to the various summit meetings with Roosevelt and Stalin, at Teheran and Yalta. We spent many weekends with Paddy and his wife, Sylvia, at Turville in the Chiltern Hills, not far from Henley on Thames, where they had a cottage. When Sylvia was pregnant and expecting to have to go into the Middlesex any time soon she came and stayed with us in Hampstead Garden suburb. Paddy used to bring presents for Sylvia from the exotic places where his duties took him, and once brought her a lovely pair of shoes (coupon free). He promised to bring Lilian some shoes on his next trip and kept his word, but to Lilian's disappointment he brought, not fashionable high-heels but a pair of walking shoes. He also brought Anthony a banana, but it was so long since Anthony had seen a banana he did not know how to begin to eat it!



Lilian, Gladys, and Anthony horse riding on Exmoor in 1943.

In 1943 we took Anthony on holiday to Exmoor and Gladys also came with us. This time it was Gladys and Anthony who were learning to ride but we managed to see quite a lot of the moor. We stayed at a guesthouse, called Millslade just along the road from the Staghunters run by Mr and Mrs Pike.

About this time I went one day to give an anaesthetic for a dentist, Harold Christian, who had rooms in Hampstead and we discovered that we were both keen horse riders. He asked me if I had ever been fox hunting, and I said that I had not had that pleasure, so Harold suggested that on the following weekend I should accompany him to Midhurst in Sussex, where he had a friend, Lloyd Veysey who had a farm just on the outskirts of the town and who had stables where he kept hunters at livery for the people who liked to hunt with the Cowdray Hunt but obviously could not get down every weekend to participate. They, he said, would be grateful if someone could ride their horses to keep them exercised while they were absent. He made the necessary arrangements with Lloyd Veysey and the following Saturday we went by train, fully dressed up to go fox hunting, very early in the morning to Haslemere. We had to go by train because at that period of the year we were not allowed to use petrol except for official purposes. Lloyd met us at the station, as a farmer he could always find a good reason for having to go from Midhurst to Haslemere and back.



The Cowdray Hunt.

We all three had a very enjoyable day with the Cowdray. I remember that the horse I rode belonged to Professor Cyril Joad who was well known on the radio as one of the members of the 'Brains Trust', which featured a panel of experts who answered all questions put to them. Joad was particularly memorable because he would almost invariably start his answer with the phrase 'Well, it all depends on what you mean by

that', a very sound beginning to any argument as most of them are fuelled interminably by the opposing parties talking about different things.

Lloyd had, conveniently, some urgent business in Haslemere that evening and so was able to run us there to catch our train back to London. On the way he remarked to Harold Christian that in a village just off the road back to Haslemere there were two farm labourer's cottages for sale and he thought that Harold might be interested, so he took us to look at them so we made a slight detour to Henley in Arden, where we looked at the two semi-detached cottages. They were, Lloyd said, to be sold at auction in Haslemere on the following Tuesday.

Henley in Arden was a small cluster of houses hardly big enough to warrant the name of a village, a hamlet would be a more appropriate term, consisting of about a dozen labourer's cottages mainly for workers on Lord Cowdray's estate, one large house occupied by a widow who kept very much to herself and a rustic pub called The Duke of Cumberland Arms. It was situated on the old Roman road going from Haslemere to Midhurst and rising sharply at the southern end of the hamlet to top the rise near the King Edward VII Sanatorium. The steep part of the hill went in an S bend and the left hand side of the road going up was a gradual slope but the left side going down was in a series of wide but short rise steps so that coaches would not gain too much momentum going down hill and push the horses over. With the advent of the motorcar, a new road making a wide loop to the west bypassed Henley meeting the old road at the top of the hill.



'A rustic pub called The Duke of Cumberland Arms,' to quote Bobby.

On the train journey back to London Harold told me that he really wasn't interested in the property, and would offer no objection if I decided I might be. I definitely was interested and early on the Monday morning I asked the secretary of the Mayfair Gas Company to cancel all my bookings for the Tuesday, if any, and back I went by train to Haslemere on Tuesday morning, attended the auction and bought the cottages with one-third of an acre grounds for £1175.

The cottages were without electricity, gas or proper sewerage and supplied only with cold water on the mains. Over the next year or so we had a bathroom installed in what had been the kitchen of one of the cottages with a hot water supply, installed a septic tank and knocked down a dividing wall to link the two into one dwelling, and we went down whenever I could get away travelling by train to Haslemere and then catching the bus to Midhurst and getting off on the main road and walking the rest of the way. Every Saturday that I could manage it I went hunting during the winter season, and became good friends of Lloyd and his wife Algar.

In January 1944 when Lilian was expecting our first child we went to Exmoor again. This time Anthony did not go. He was at a boarding school run by the same Miss Garrett who had taught me when I was six and seven years old. It was a boarding school only because Miss Garrett had wisely decided to evacuate the whole school from suburban Lee to the calm of rural Kent near East Grinstead. Lilian and I went to stay at Cloud Farm, in the Badgeworthy Water valley in the heart of Lorna Doone country, run by a great character, Bob Nancekivell.



Cloud Farm.

Bob was not only a farmer at Cloud but also had a building and undertaker's business in Lynton. He was a big bluff hearty man with a good stable not only of Exmoor ponies but also hunters. He was a keen rider to hounds with the Devon and Somerset Staghounds and also the Exmoor Foxhounds. A story, possibly apocryphal, tells that he

once rode his horse into a commercial bank in Lynton and while there the horse lifted up its tail and dropped some very fresh manure. When the manager protested, Bob, who was a friend of the manager, replied that it was no doubt the most valuable deposit the bank had had all day.

Lilian was not this time ready to go horse riding but Bob took us into the spinney where he produced a few ferrets from a sack and we took part in rabbiting. Neither Lilian nor I were too keen to handle the ferrets but Bob soon got us accustomed to it by suddenly throwing a ferret to one of us and saying 'Catch!' and reflexly we did as we were told.

We just got that holiday in in time as the mini-Blitz began again in February.

During the next two months Lilian spent many a night on the kitchen floor under the Morrison shelter. Florence Sellick was also pregnant at the same time and she came to stay with us for a bit of company while Brian and I were busy once more in the E.M.S. at the Middlesex. The two wives slept together in the kitchen and Daisy slept under the staircase in the hall. One night while under the Morrison they felt a mouse run across their faces and their pillows. They decided that they would rather face bombs than mice and returned to their comfortable bedrooms on the first floor!

Both Lilian and her sister, Marian Dussek,[24] were pregnant at the same time and both were booked to go into the Middlesex Hospital to have their babies. There was a very good reason why Lilian should go there of course and Marian went because they had a ward there especially for officers' wives. Eric Dussek was a Lieutenant in the R.N.V.R. and was on active service in command of a corvette in the Atlantic convoying merchant ships to and fro between U.S.A. and Britain, so Marian had applied very early on in her pregnancy to go there for her confinement. The demand for maternity beds was so heavy that it was said that a woman should really book a bed as soon as she knew that her husband was coming home on leave.

Marian and Lilian had beds side by side in the ward and both had the experience of being wheeled down to the sub-basement during air raids.

On 12 April both Lilian and Marian had their babies, both were boys, so Nigel Roberts and Julian Dussek were twin cousins born in the same hospital. Parenthood was no novelty for Lilian but for Marian, Eric and me the two boys were our first-born. The Ward Sister of the maternity ward was my old friend Sister Williams, with whom I had gone to a lot of my maternity cases 'on the district'. One of the nurses on the ward in the nursery thought that she could see a great resemblance between Nigel and me and remarked to Sister Williams 'There's no doubt who the father of this baby is, Sister'. Sister replied, rather crushingly 'Was there ever any doubt, nurse?'

While Lilian was in hospital I went to live in my room at the hospital and I used to go up to Hampstead daily to collect the mail. One day when I arrived I put the key in the front door and found that the door was bolted from the inside so I went round to the back door and found it wide open and in the kitchen were two suitcases with all our shoes in them. I had obviously surprised burglars who had taken the precaution of

[24] Although Lilian's sister's name was spelt 'Marion' on her marriage certificate, she was 'Marian' on her birth and death certificates.

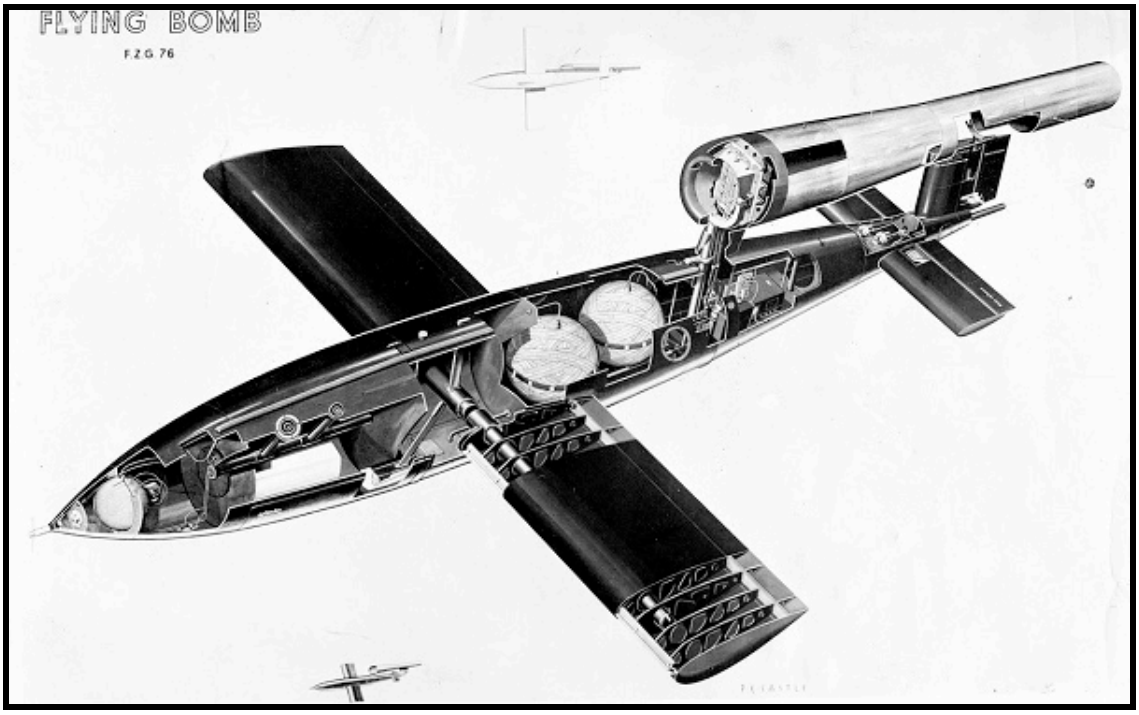
leaving an escape route open and left hurriedly as soon as they heard the attempt to open the front door. They had already taken, also in our own suitcases, all our clothes, which was a bit of a blow in wartime as clothes were rationed severely and Lilian had only taken to the hospital the maternity wear she had on her and nighties and toiletries. I was slightly better off in that I had a change of clothing and underwear in my room at the hospital.

Lilian also lost all her jewellery and a jewellery box belonging to my cousin Dorothy Harrison who had left it with us for safe keeping while she was working in Scandinavia decoding intercepted enemy messages for the Ministry of Information. We had to apply to the rationing authorities for extra coupons to start a new wardrobe and I'm afraid they were not generous at all. Poor Lilian had been so looking forward to being able to wear once more clothes that fitted her normally slim figure.

The nurses in the ward let Lilian go home with the baby without telling her that Nigel had a habit of vomiting most of his feeds, and the next week or so was a very worrying time for us. We took Nigel back to the hospital to consult the paediatrician, Dr Alan Moncrieff, who was impressed with the projectile nature of the vomiting and suspected a Hypertrophic Pyloric Stenosis. This is a congenital condition that usually manifests itself in the first few weeks of life and a prominent symptom is this type of forceful vomiting. Usually with this condition the doctor is able to feel the enlarged muscular exit from the stomach into the small intestine with a hand on the infant's tummy as a small hard lump. This Alan Moncrieff admitted he could not feel, but the type of regurgitation was so typical that he decided that that was the diagnosis. This, he decided, demanded immediate emergency surgery, so at the age of three weeks Nigel had his first operation. Brian Sellick gave the anaesthetic and Jimmy Patey operated. They found absolutely nothing, no hypertrophy of the pylorus, and closed him up again. The diagnosis was now changed to 'Over-anxious medical parents, and both Lilian and I felt a bit ashamed of ourselves, but the condition was not cured. True, in the first week or so after the operation when the regime was frequent small feeds, Nigel did not vomit, but as soon as he started having normal feeds the trouble recurred, so we went back to 'little and often' and he thrived.

We took up residence again in Headway and shortly after that the Allied invasion of Normandy began. Hitler then let fly (literally) his first secret weapons – the V-1. These became popularly known as 'Buzz-Bombs' or 'Doodle-bugs'.

These were small bomb containers, shaped like a model aeroplane and fitted with an engine and launched from their sites in France and Belgium with a calculated amount of fuel so that they would fall, after the fuel was exhausted, on suitable targets. The chief target was London, which is a pretty big target. There was no attempt at accurate bombing of military objectives and they were mainly a psychological weapon, and a fairly effective one too. At the receiving end one heard the pop-pop-pop of the engine, rather like the noise of one of those dreadful mopeds and as long as the noise was heard one felt safe, but as soon as the engine cut out from lack of fuel one knew that the bomb was now falling in the vicinity. The R.A.F. sent fighter aircraft up to try and intercept them with considerable success but, of course, a lot got through.



The Government did a marvellous job of maintaining silence about where the buzz-bombs were actually falling, partly so that the Germans would not know how successful their aiming was and partly to reduce the anxiety felt by the civilian population. I do not know to what extent the German High Command was kept in the dark but certainly people who wanted to come to London from outside for Dental appointments were not entirely put off. Vernon Morgan and I continued to be asked to give dental anaesthetics.

As many of the buzz-bombs were falling spontaneously or being brought down before they reached London, Miss Garrett decided that she could no longer take the responsibility of looking after the children at her school at East Grinstead and asked the parents to remove them. When we heard this I decided to ask Leslie Franks if he would let us send Anthony down to Wilsham on Exmoor. Leslie had taken over the lease of the Old Farmhouse after Billy Reade died and used to go there on holiday from Oxford where he was a busy builder and a City Councillor. Leslie very kindly offered to let us have the place so I asked Olive if she would take Anthony down to Wilsham. This she kindly agreed to do and took leave from her school work at one of the London County Council Evening Institutes, where she supervised courses of adult education. Miss Garrett asked her if she would also take a few more of the children whose parents were unable to have them at home.

Dental surgeries were nearly always furnished so that the chair was close to a large window to give maximum lighting and therefore exposed the patient, dentist, nurse and anaesthetist to the danger of being cut by flying glass should a buzz-bomb fall in the vicinity. When we were about to do some dental extractions in the chair, if we heard the unmistakeable sound of a buzz-bomb on its way we used to suggest to the patient that it would be wiser to vacate the chair and move behind a solid wall until the danger had passed. On more than one occasion the patient would say something like ‘Oh, I’m not afraid of aircraft, I live quite near an aerodrome’ and would be quite surprised to learn that the noise they heard was not an aircraft but a German V-l. Then they would say

that they were surprised to know that some of them were actually reaching London, they thought that they were all falling near the South Coast.

On one occasion I was on my way to a dentist's rooms In Mayfair and as I was driving along I was unable to hear the sound of a buzz-bomb from inside the closed car but I saw a familiar sight. People looking up, trying to spot the bomb and then suddenly all making for shelter. I decided that, as it was equally likely to fall where I was or where I would be if I kept going, I ought to carry on. I heard the explosion all right but neither saw nor suffered any damage so my decision was justified.

When the Allied invasion was launched, it was decided to set up some hospitals outside London to deal with the numerous casualties that were expected among the invading forces. My right hand man, Brian Sellick was taken away from duty at the Middlesex, to go as anaesthetist to one of those bases. There he was on shift duty three days at a time and then three days off. Thanks to the efficiency of the pre-existing arrangements for the evacuation of wounded from the front they had very little if any work.

One day in August the Commandant of the EMS at the Middlesex, Brian Windeyer called all the medical staff together and told us that they had received warning that Hitler was about to bring into action another secret weapon which was believed to be much more dangerous than the buzz-bomb. From that day all leave would be stopped and he strongly advised those of us who had families in London to get them out of the metropolitan area immediately.

I got in touch with Brian Sellick whose wife, Florence was expecting their first child shortly, and he told me that he could get away from his hospital duties and conduct Lilian and her baby, Nigel, as far as Taunton, so then I went home to Hampstead Garden Suburb and informed a very surprised Lilian that she would be leaving that night on the train to Taunton with Brian to look after them. After an understandable period of resistance Lilian agreed and we hastily packed and I drove them to Paddington Station and there we met Brian who took charge and saw them safely as far as Taunton. Brian had to return to his posting that next morning so he could not help further, but Lilian, with Nigel and luggage, got a taxi from Taunton to Wilsham, to re-join Anthony and a group of young children being supervised by Olive.

A few days later Brian was able to exchange his rostered times on duty and get nine days free time and he and Florence also went to swell the population of Wilsham. Shortly after this the authorities realised that the special units to which Brian had been attached were not necessary and they were disbanded, so Brian returned to the Middlesex.

In September, with Brian Sellick back at the Middlesex I was able to take two weeks' leave and I naturally went down to Wilsham. My father and Dora were now living in Barnstaple. Harry had decided to take early retirement at the age of 59 and a cousin of Dora's lived in a lovely old house about a mile south of the centre of the town, with a beautiful walled garden. The house was too big for Alice Hamlin and her friend Dorothy Crosskeys and Alice suggested that Harry and Dora should come and live in half of it. It was easily divided into two complete units by merely closing one door, and Harry and Dora moved in.



Wilsham Farm.

They both loved the place and Harry had to admit that that part of Devonshire was better than Yorkshire or Durham, an amazing admission for a Geordie. Harry was kept busy mowing the lawn and doing all the jobs around the house that in the days before Women's Lib became fashionable were popularly supposed to be a man's job. In a remarkably short time Harry got to know so many of the local inhabitants that to walk with him into the town centre took twice as long as one would expect because we were continually stopping and passing the time of day.

When I got down to Wilsham I thought it would be a good chance for us to see Harry and Dora again as they were only about 20 miles away and suggested that they should come and stay with us for a few days. This plan did not, of course, suit Olive who had no wish even to meet Harry and Dora, let alone live under the same roof, so she decided to return to London and the other children from Miss Garrett's school went to their own homes too.

I was able to pursue my favourite sport of horse riding and one day I went stag hunting with the Devon and Somerset, paying my 'cap' of £1. I was fortunate to be up with the hunt all the way and was one of the very few to be in at the kill. I returned to Wilsham with not only a 'slot', the term used for the foot of the deer, but also the liver. This I had to wrap in a large handkerchief and just managed to get in the large pocket of my hunting jacket. Our enjoyment of the unexpected meat dish without having to surrender meat coupons was marred only by the fact that I could not get any onions.

For those of my readers (if any) who may be vehemently anti blood sports I must explain that stag hunting is not, like fox hunting, 'the unspeakable in full pursuit of the

uneatable'. The red deer on Exmoor are completely wild and the herd only exists there because, paradoxically, they are hunted. They do a great deal of damage to the local farmer's crops, and if they were not hunted the farmers would shoot them and the herd would become extinct. Not only that, but shooting does not always kill immediately, and some deer would be wounded and escape possibly to die a more lingering death.

Any farmer whose crops are being eaten or, even worse, just uprooted and left uneaten, can let the Hunt Secretary know and a meet will be arranged to hunt that particular animal. Hunting also is more selective than shooting, in that no stag is hunted until it has a full head of antlers, Brow, Bay and Tray and at least two on top. This shows that the stag is at least five years old. The hinds are only hunted during a short season of about six weeks in winter so as not to interfere with the breeding season. The hunt pays compensation to any farmer for loss from feeding deer, thus continuity of the herd is assured and the farmers are happy and not tempted to indulge in shooting. During the hunt the deer, after being roused out of the wood where it has stayed overnight by a few specially trained hounds that are obedient to the command of the huntsman to desist from following the deer and the huntsman then takes the 'tufters', as these select hounds are called, back to the place where the rest of the pack has been kennelled and then the whole pack is led to the place where the deer was seen to break cover and the hounds have then to pick up the scent and follow it. At this point at least half-an-hour and sometimes as long as an hour-and-a-half will have elapsed since the deer went away and it may be several miles away. At least one third of the hunts do not end in a kill. The deer can easily out distance the hounds over a short time and they only catch up with the hunted animal if they haven't lost the scent when it begins to tire as the hounds have more stamina. The stag or hind always takes to water when it feels tired and there it is brought to bay.

Woe betide any hound rash enough to try and approach the stag which can defend itself very well. At this juncture the huntsman takes a sawn-off shotgun from its sheath on his saddle and shoots the stag from very close quarters so that the death is instantaneous.

The soil on Exmoor is of a very poor quality and only the valleys, or coombes as they are called there, are arable. It is however excellent hunting country and the rich hunting set come from far away and leave their horses at livery with the local farmers. They also help the local economy by spending money on their equipment and accommodation. Forbidding hunting to please the animal liberationists would thus result in annihilation of the deer herd and poverty among the farmers, livery stable owners, saddlers, outfitters, blacksmiths and hoteliers on Exmoor.

Harry and Dora came to stay with us and were able to make Nigel's acquaintance. Nigel had resumed vomiting after large meals and could not keep any solid food down at all. Even honey caused him to salivate profusely and cause prolonged fits of coughing. We decided to have him christened at Oare Church, the site of Lorna Doone's wedding and attempted murder. During the ceremony Nigel was coughing up quantities of saliva and so we decided that Lilian, Anthony and Nigel would return with me to London to seek further medical help.

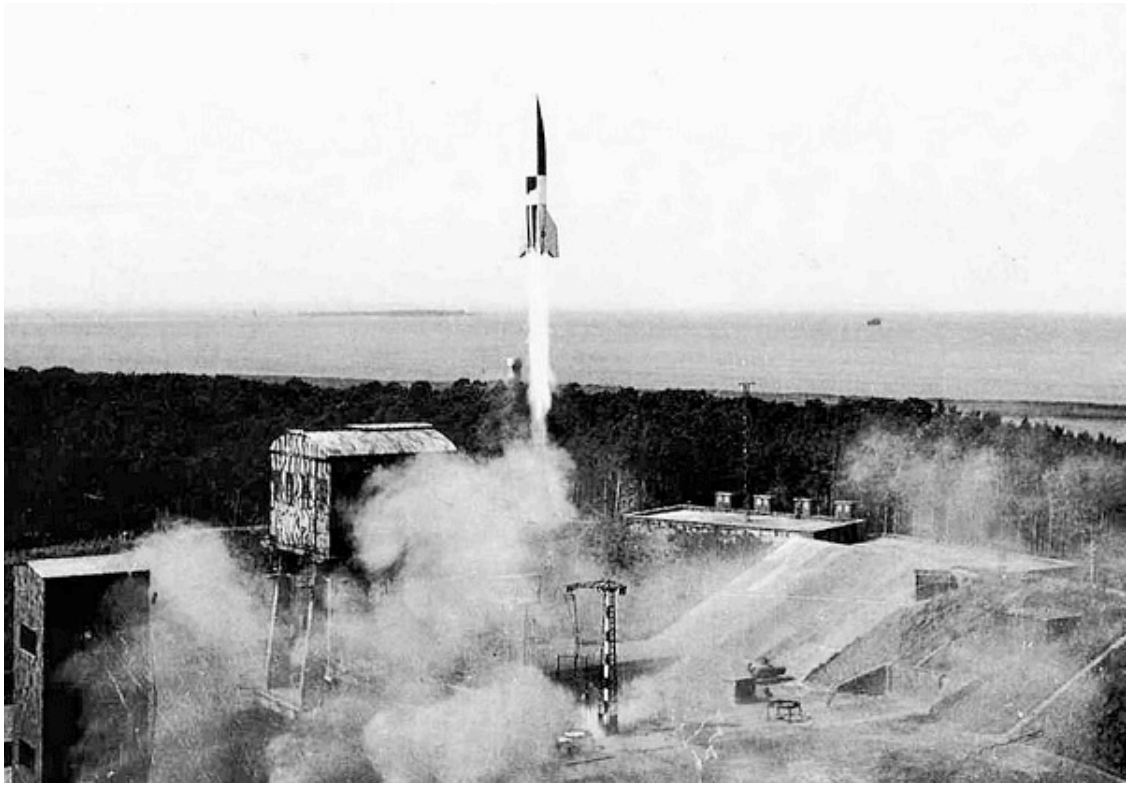


Oare Church, Somerset (where Lorna Doone was shot by her half-brother, Carver, while she stood at the altar to marry John Ridd, and where Nigel was christened).

This time it was decided to X-ray the upper intestinal tract and a stricture of the oesophagus was demonstrated. It was easy to see in retrospect that that should have been done before the unnecessary operation for presumed pyloric stenosis. It was amazing how many people came and said how sorry they were for having thought that we were over fussy parents. We were advised to delay operating until the child was four years old and so we settled down to a routine wherein we studiously avoided giving him any solid food and giving him fluids 'little and, often'.

We even had to take a small sieve with us when away from home and strain such things as orange juice, because even the little bits of the fleshy part of an orange would cause a complete obstruction. Nigel soon learnt to stop eating when this happened and go away and put his finger down his throat and the oesophageal contents above the stricture would be regurgitated. Immediately afterwards, he would be able to resume his meal.

As a result of the failure to secure a bridgehead across the Rhine at Arnhem, the war in Europe, which it was hoped could be finished in 1944, dragged on into 1945. The Germans continued to send over the V-2s, rocket powered ballistic missiles to bombard London, which had started to fall while I was away on Exmoor. These were carrying a much larger explosive charge than the V-1s and caused much more extensive damage. They were however not such an effective psychological as the V-1s because they travelled on their downward part of their trajectory faster than sound and so gave no audible warning of their approach. I saw two or three land at night and the first thing I noticed was a huge flash and then later, depending on the distance away from me, heard a terrific bang, followed by a rumble like an express train going by, caused by the noise of the rocket, falling, but only heard seconds after the explosion. There was therefore literally no time for fear because if you heard the bang everything was over and you were still alive.



A photograph of a V-2 rocket being launched from Peenemünde.

During that last winter of the war I got an attack of 'flu and spent a couple of days in bed. At about 6.30 a.m. on the third day I was awakened by the telephone. It was from Olive who was the Headmistress of an L.C.C. Evening Institute in Lewisham in South East London, right across the town from Hampstead which is in the northwest and had a room there so that she did not have to travel alone at night back to her home. She said that she had been bombed out during the night and could I please come and get her from the school? I told her that I would be about an hour as I still had to get up and then drive right across London, and she said that would be all right, she was being looked after by someone who had taken her into her house for the time being but that she would be at the school at about half past seven.

When I got to the school I was amazed to see that the entire school building was completely demolished except for a small corner wing where Olive had had her room on the third floor. Where the school had been was just an enormous crater. The caretaker's cottage had gone; the caretaker and his wife had been blown to smithereens. Olive's story was that she had not been sleeping well and had suddenly had a most weird feeling of impending disaster and pulled the bedclothes up over her head.

Then the rocket V-2 fell on the school, obliterating the building except for the wing in which Olive stayed. Miraculously that remained as a lone tower overlooking a huge crater of devastation. Olive, in the complete dark, threw off all the bedclothes sending all the broken glass and all the dust and debris flying over the remains of the room. Somehow, in the pitch black she managed to find her clothes, shake all the broken glass off them and dress. How she managed to clamber down the stairway, obstructed as it was by fallen masonry, no one will ever know. When she reached the ground floor the fire brigade, who had arrived with all the ancillary air raid relief people, looked with astonishment at an old woman (actually she was only 60) coming down the stairway

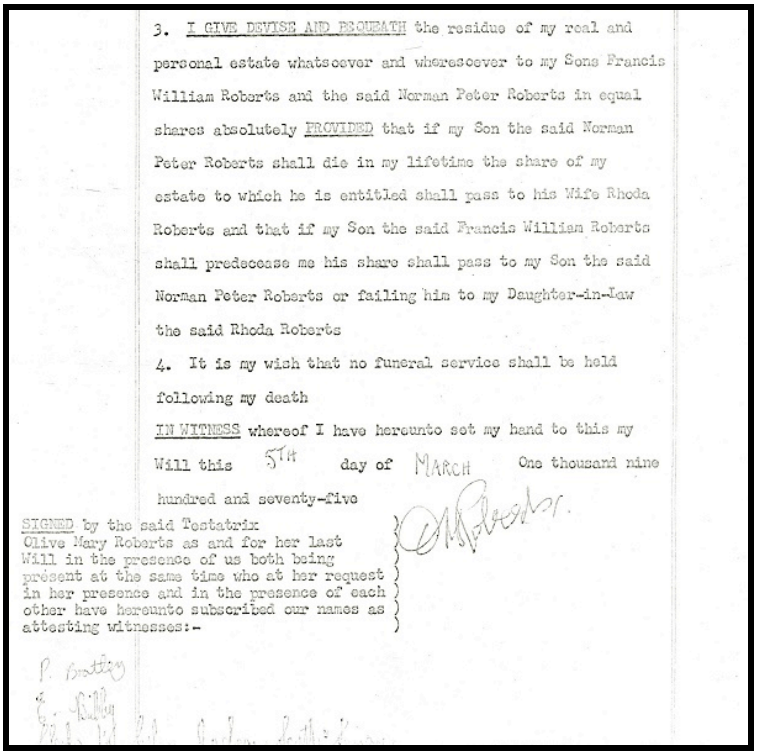
when they thought that no living person could possibly still be in the area. Some kind onlooker took Olive home and she refused to ring me before a more reasonable hour, such as 6.30 a.m.



An example of the damage in London caused by V-2 rockets.

Back in Hampstead Garden Suburb with us, Olive soon assumed her dictatorial 'school-marm' air and suggested that she take Nigel completely off our hands, an offer that Lilian found impossible to accept. After a few weeks the mental tension in the household became intolerable and eventually I had to intervene in an argument between Olive and Lilian and say that, come what may, I was going to take Lilian's side in our own household to maintain a secure domestic relationship.

Olive took immediate umbrage and demanded that I take her at once back to her home in Lee. On the way down Haverstock Hill Olive demanded that I take her side in the argument and when I refused, she suddenly opened the door of the car while still moving and started to get out. I was able to brake in time to prevent her injuring herself and then drove her back to her home. I am sure that she meant well, but I could not allow her dictatorial manner to ruin our marriage. After that, for the next nearly 30 years, Olive frequently invited herself to stay with us in various places for periods of up to three months, although she never really forgave Lilian for the imagined slight and when Olive eventually died, in 1976, at the age of 92 she left a most vicious will excluding Lilian from any benefits and reneging on her promise, made several times to me, even in writing, to leave me her two houses in Dorset. These she left to her bachelor brother aged 75, who promptly sold them and retired into an old age home.



3. I GIVE DEVISE AND BEQUEATH the residue of my real and personal estate whatsoever and wheresoever to my Sons Francis William Roberts and the said Norman Peter Roberts in equal shares absolutely PROVIDED that if my Son the said Norman Peter Roberts shall die in my lifetime the share of my estate to which he is entitled shall pass to his Wife Rhoda Roberts and that if my Son the said Francis William Roberts shall predecease me his share shall pass to my Son the said Norman Peter Roberts or failing him to my Daughter-in-Law the said Rhoda Roberts

4. It is my wish that no funeral service shall be held following my death

IN WITNESS whereof I have hereunto set my hand to this my Will this 5TH day of MARCH One thousand nine hundred and seventy-five

SIGNED by the said Testatrix Olive Mary Roberts as and for her last Will in the presence of us both being present at the same time who at her request in her presence and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as attesting witnesses:-

Olive's will 'excluding Lilian from any benefits'.

After the failure of the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes, known as the 'Battle of the Bulge', at the end of January 1945, it was obvious that the end of the war in Europe could not be delayed very much longer.

In early March the Allies crossed the Rhine and began the inevitable advance into Germany while the Russian army was similarly engaged on the eastern front. On 29 April Mussolini was captured and summarily executed, on the same day Hitler married his mistress, Eva Braun, and the next day she took cyanide and Hitler shot himself. On 2 May the Russians reached Berlin, and 7 May was the day the German armed forces surrendered to the Allies. That day, the day of Victory in Europe, became known as V-E Day.

Eric Samuel and his wife Vera asked us to go to their house for a celebratory drink. Eric had been a student as a surgical dresser when I was a house surgeon and was now an eminent Radiologist and had at a very early age been a senior consultant to the army on radiological matters. I think he was at the time the youngest colonel in the R.A.M.C. Vera had been a nurse at the Middlesex and when I first knew her was a shy young Welsh girl.

Lilian and I walked round from the Middlesex to their house in, I think, De Walden Street, a small street right in the Harley-Wimpole Street medical district. The jollification in the streets outside was too big an attraction to be missed so the four of us walked down Regent Street to Piccadilly Circus. I have never seen anything like that spectacle and I don't suppose I ever will. It was mafficking[25] to an extent undreamt of in the days of the relief of Mafeking. The whole of the West End was packed with merry-makers taking up not only the pavements but the entire roadways as well.

[25] Maffick: To celebrate boisterously.

Vehicular traffic was absolutely impossible. The four of us walked arm in arm down to Piccadilly Circus and there we saw two American officers looking a bit bewildered. We surrounded them and made them join our party and we returned to the Samuel's house for refuelling. Any attempt to get near a bar in any of the pubs was hopeless so we had to settle for Eric's hospitality. Lilian and I remained friendly with the two Americans until we all left England in different directions but before that they came several times to the cottage in Henley-in-Arden, near Midhurst, and when our next son, Stuart, was born in June 1946 we gave him, as a second Christian name, the surname of one of them, Alden.

We used the cottage for weekends more and more as petrol restrictions were eased and I used to go fox-hunting most weekends when I could get away from London during the season, from September to March, on horses kept at livery with Lloyd Veysey whose farm was on the edge of the town of Midhurst. During the summer we worked or lazed in the garden which was one-third of an acre and isosceles triangular in shape, with one of the long sides bordering a large dense wood.

I mentioned earlier that there was a little pub in the hamlet, called the Duke of Cumberland Arms. This was a quaint little stone building without electricity and with a very low ceiling and had an enclosed forecourt, cobbled, with a low stone wall on the eastern side in front of the pub. The building itself was on the western edge of the village on a slope up towards the motor road which made a loop concave towards the east so that on a fine summer evening one could stand out in the courtyard with one's pint of beer resting on the top of the stone wall and gaze out over the few houses towards the big wood and beyond that to the country between Petworth and Haslemere. My R.A.C. map of Britain show the whole of the surrounding area as 'of great outstanding beauty' and I can endorse that classification.

In the winter evenings the pub was a cheerful place with a log fire and oil lamps on the counter. In order to show up the Darts Board the landlord would place a concave reflector behind the lamp so as to direct a beam on to the board. A local hazard in playing darts was the low ceiling and unless taller people than I am spread their legs out wide and bent the knees slightly the player could bump his head against a low beam, a great advantage for the home team!

Nigel was now just over a year old and we learnt a lot about the eating habits of crawlers and toddlers because of Nigel's disability. If he had taken anything solid, the gullet was completely blocked and saliva built up on top of the obstruction until it reached the larynx and then, of course, he would cough and choke a bit and whatever was causing the obstruction would be regurgitated. Thus we found out that infants crawling around a garden are liable to put almost anything into their mouths, from last week's flag-day emblem to snail shells. We never discovered whether he has managed to dissolve the snail's body or had only eaten a discarded shell.

Nevertheless he grew strong and healthy and in the August of 1945 there was a village fete in the local village of Fernhurst on the way to Haslemere, and Lilian entered Nigel in the Baby Show. The judges asked each mother what the child was fed on and were astonished to learn that Nigel could not eat anything solid and at 16 months was still on fluids and yet he was so fit. Lilian did not mention the diet of snails and bus tickets and the judges were so impressed that he was awarded Second Prize. That was on the

August Bank Holiday which in those days was the first Monday in August. The date was 6 August, and not only was it Lilian's birthday but also the day that the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Within a few days the Japanese surrendered and the Second World War came to an abrupt end. Critics of the Americans for dropping the bomb on a city suggest that if it had been dropped on an uninhabited place where the Japanese could see the dreadful results they would have surrendered. I do not believe that that theory is valid, as even after losing 100,000 people at Hiroshima, they still refused to surrender and were only induced to stop the war after a second bomb had been dropped on Nagasaki with the further loss of 36,000 lives.

Now that petrol rationing had been abolished and there was no longer a moral restraint against using larger cars, I took the Oldsmobile off its blocks and started to use it again. Unfortunately after a short time it started to leak water from the water pump and on a journey from Hampstead to the Middlesex, about five miles, I had to carry a large jug of water and stop about half way and fill up the radiator. It appeared to be a very minor fault requiring only a spare part of a 'gland'. However as it was an American car and the part could not be obtained except from the makers in America and this was impossible because of the demand for freight space for bringing essential commodities to Britain. Two local mechanics offered to make a new gland and each of the improvised replacements only worked for about a week, and finally I had it done once more by a third.

I was now convinced that this replacement would probably also fail so I decided to sell the car and revert to using the smaller one I had patriotically acquired during the hostilities. I was pleased to be able to sell it for £500, more than I had paid for it eight years before. A year later I was walking in the street and I saw the old car and wondered whether I dared to approach the buyer who was sitting in the car as I feared that the newly repaired water pump gland might have collapsed in the same way as its predecessors. I nervously approached the car and said to the driver 'Do you remember me? I'm Dr Roberts who sold you this car' 'Oh yes' he replied, 'Of course I remember you. I've always wondered why you sold me this wonderful car so cheaply!'

Shortly after the end of hostilities both Bernard Johnson and 'Little Mac' (Dr W.S. McConnell) returned to the Mayfair Gas Company, and in time the practice was back to peacetime strength with all our chauffeurs back again. I was very pleased that Patterson returned to ask for his old job back. Those doctors who had not been able to enlist in the armed forces because they were in essential occupations were told that their time in the Army would come. All those who had served in the R.A.M.C. during the war and were not regular soldiers were demobilized but the Army still needed doctors especially specialists to serve in the army of occupation, the British Army of the Rhine, as it was called.

I was told that I would be called up in due course as a Major giving anaesthetics in military hospitals in Germany, on a short service commission of 18 months. I was very pleased at the news because, after six years of blackout, bombing and rationing, I was tired of London life and badly needed a break.

That winter of 1945-46 I was only on duty for the practice one weekend in four, so Lilian and I were able to go skiing at Col de Voza.



Bobby and Lilian skiing near Chamonix in early 1946.

I was also able to go fox-hunting with the Cowdray Hunt much more frequently. I became a full subscribing member of the Hunt, at, I think, an annual fee of only £10. Lloyd Veysey always had hunters that needed exercising and he and I usually rode together. Lloyd was a real madcap and daredevil, far too impatient to wait while the field of riders slowly went through a gate if there was the slightest chance of getting ahead by jumping a hedge. I had learnt my riding on Exmoor where there are very few hedges and hunting there involves no jumping at all, so I was a complete novice at the art of jumping. I usually followed Lloyd wherever he went in the hunting field and so I took many jumps, and fell off several times but I always managed somehow to avoid injury, more by good luck than horsemanship.

After the hunting season finished at the end of March many of the hunts had point-to-point races. Lloyd's wife, Algar, was an excellent horsewoman and they had a horse which had been trained and fed on all the right things, such as oats, to give it energy and so they entered Algar in a point-to-point somewhere near Southampton and they invited me to go with them on the Saturday.

We were, as a family, all down at the cottage at Henley for the weekend, Lilian, Anthony, Nigel and Lilian's youngest sister, Gladys, was staying with us. I went with Lloyd and Algar towing the steeplechaser in a horse-box. When it came to the race for which Algar was entered she somehow turned up too late for the weighing in and was disqualified, much to their sorrow and annoyance, so we drove back with the horse in tow to Midhurst. Lloyd said to me that I had been very lucky in the previous hunting season, taking all those jumps and falling off several times and not being hurt and suggested that on the next morning, 7 April, I should go with him and have a jumping lesson while Anthony had his ordinary riding lesson given by the groom. Algar invited us all for the Sunday lunch, so Lilian dropped Anthony and me at Midhurst and then returned home to the cottage to join Gladys and Nigel, now nearly two years old. Lilian

was expecting our next child due in June. I had received my calling-up papers and was due to go to the R.A.M.C. Headquarters at Millbank Hospital on the Monday morning for my medical.

Anthony went off with the groom for his lesson and Lloyd produced the oat-fed steeplechaser for me to ride, saying, when I protested, that he had specially chosen that horse because he knew that being so keyed up to go it would not refuse a jump. So off we went, Lloyd on foot and I on the feisty horse, up a hill to a field where Lloyd had some jumps arranged. On the way up the hill, the horse, satiated no doubt with oats, tried several times to eat the lush young grass that was growing in a fine warm spring. I had to pull continually on the reins to keep his head looking where we were meant to be going rather than at the delicious new grass.

When we arrived at the jumping ground I was wearing a heavy black hunting jacket, riding breeches, knee high riding boots and a velvet cap that is really a camouflaged safety helmet. The day was a superb warm spring day and I decided to ride without the jacket, but kept on the cap.

The first jump over which I had to ride was only about two feet or 60cm., just enough to make the horse pick up its feet and jump. I went over this jump about five times but Lloyd was still not happy about my position for the take-off and asked me to dismount and let him demonstrate what he wanted. This I did and when I remounted the poor horse, longing for a nibble of the succulent April grass, was bored with the whole procedure, going over this piddling little jump again and again.

So the next time I attempted the jump, as we approached it, the horse put down its head and started to graze the tasty herbage and, contrary to all it was supposed to do, refused the jump. It was a clear case of misunderstanding: the horse knew we were not going over the jump; I thought we were. The result was that we each did what we thought was going to happen, the horse stayed on the near side of the jump and I went over. I did a neat dive between the horse's ears and my first thought was that the horse was coming over and would kick me, so I put both my hands in front of my face. I landed on the crown of my riding cap, felt and heard a crack and rolled over onto my back with my arms flung out at right angles to my body.

I did not lose consciousness, but I felt as if I were lying in a warm bath, from the neck down all the body was warm and tingling, but I could not move at all. Lloyd came up to me and said 'Come on, get up, Bobby.' I replied that I couldn't as I was paralysed from the neck down. He then told me to put my head down and relax. I said 'Does that mean that my head is up in the air?' and he said it was, so I begged him to get my jacket which I had discarded and fold it so that it would fit under my head to keep it in the same position.

Having been medically qualified for the last 13 years I realised that this was a serious state of affairs and began to think about all sorts of problems. I thought I had broken my neck and that as a quadriplegic my life span would be very limited. My first worry was for Lilian and I wondered if I had left her enough life insurance to see her through. I was sad to think that I probably would not survive long enough to see the child that Lilian was carrying, as she was nearly seven months pregnant. But in retrospect the amazing thing is that I was not really afraid, only resigned and worried about the

family. Lloyd said he would help me get up and would carry me back down to the farm, but I managed to dissuade him. As it was a nice warm day and I was comfortable he went off to get what help he could and returned with one member of the local first aid people who wanted to lift me, with Lloyd's help, on to a gate to carry me down to the farm.

About ten minutes after the fall I tried very hard to move my arms and to my delight I could bring my hands over on to my chest, but that was all. No fine movements of even the wrist, let alone the fingers, were possible. After about half-an-hour I tried to move my feet and heard my riding boots creak, so I knew that there was still a track down the spinal cord from the brain to my feet and that there was a chance of recovery. Now I really was afraid that some well-meaning helper would alter the position of my head in relation to the rest of the body and completely sever the spinal cord. Therefore I refused the good offices of this man and decided that I would wait where I was until the regular local ambulance men could be gathered together and have enough people to lift me with five people, one for each leg, one for each arm and one for my head onto a proper ambulance stretcher. This meant a delay of some three hours as, being a Sunday, they were either at church or at Sunday lunch.

Meanwhile Lilian and Gladys had arrived with Nigel and Lloyd told them that one of their menfolk had had an accident. Lilian immediately assumed that Anthony had fallen but then Lloyd brought her up to the field and she sat next to me until the ambulance people arrived. Lloyd had telephoned the Middlesex Hospital and they were ready to receive me when we arrived. I did not know until many days later that outside the door of my room stood an 'iron lung' in case my respiration failed completely. I was finding it hard to breathe because the damage that had been done had paralysed all the intercostal muscles that lift the chest when one takes a breath and I was only able to breathe by virtue of the fact that my diaphragm was still working. As I described the symptoms on arrival at the hospital it felt as if an elephant were sitting on my chest.

Of course someone had to phone Millbank and tell them that I would not be able to attend for my medical examination on the next day. They postponed the interview for six months. I was in the hospital for six weeks and then allowed to recuperate for another six weeks. I made a steady improvement and gradually acquired the finer movements of hands and fingers. I had to relearn to write, do up and undo buttons and tie shoelaces etc.

When I left hospital Lilian and I went to Barnstaple to stay with Harry and Dora, and Dora's cousin Alice Hamlin suggested that if I were to do some weaving it would be good occupational therapy. She and Dorothy Crosskey had a large loom set up in an outside room and there I struggled with some red and white wool making various patterns in what turned out to be a scarf about eight feet long by eight inches wide. I am sure that the manual dexterity gained by this exercise was most beneficial and we were able later to cut up the result and make some dinner mats.

One other incident in that stay in North Devon was a visit to Clovelly, a quaint seaside village perched precariously on a steep slope down to a small harbour on the Bristol Channel. The main street of the village itself was, like part of the road through Henley-in-Arden, in steps and the main transport system, maintained now merely for the news value of the quaintness, was by donkey. Donkeys with saddle bags carried goods

between the cliff-top and the wharf, and tourists could ride on a donkey, at a good tourist price, up and down the main street. I think that, even in those days, the only trade carried on in Clovelly was tourism. Seeing that I was still only able to walk with the aid of two sticks, and had developed a sudden (temporary) aversion to riding, all I did was to struggle a few steps down the High Street and back again.

Shortly after our return to London, Stuart Alden Roberts was born, also in the Middlesex Hospital. Stuart was a very healthy baby without any of the complications that had beset Nigel's early years.

During 1946 both Peter Dinnick and Brian Sellick were appointed as Honorary Anaesthetists at the Middlesex. This was a cause of great satisfaction to me because they had been of the utmost help to me during the war as Senior Resident Anaesthetist, first Peter and then, when he joined the R.A.F., Brian followed him. Both were not only colleagues during very stressful times but also very good friends, and still are, and I feel very proud of the fact that I had started both of them off in their career as anaesthetists. The only other Senior Resident I had during the war years was Jan Hewer and in March 1947 just before I went to Holland he was appointed to a newly created post of Research Anaesthetist and after holding that for one year he was appointed to the Honorary staff of the Hospital. Thus all three of 'my trainees' very quickly got on to the Honorary staff.

In July I started practice again with the Mayfair Gas Company and shortly after I was again summoned to Millbank for my army medical. The doctor who examined me said that although he could find no neurological abnormalities, as by now the demand for doctors in the army was no longer so intense, the army would not be prepared to take the risk of employing me in case anything should happen to me later and they would find themselves having to pay me a pension for the rest of my life. Bang went my chance of 18 months of respite, at the government's expense, from the stress of London and so I started looking in the medical journals for some other means of escape. I found a job advertised as an Honorary Anaesthetist to the Devon and Exeter Hospital and applied for it.

I was short-listed and eventually presented myself before the selection committee. I was, by far, the best qualified for the job. The other two short-listed finalists were a young man with a little experience in the army of anaesthetics and a local general practitioner who was currently doing the work that the position demanded. I was interviewed and told that as an expert from London, without general practice to support me, I could not possibly make a living. I said that I had confidence that I could and was prepared to take the risk. So confident was I that with my qualifications I must be offered the position, that Lilian and I had looked at various houses for sale or to let in the surrounding neighbourhood, including a cross between a castle and a manor house on the banks of the Exe at Bickleigh, but had delayed signing any commitment until after the result of the selection committee's decision was made known. In the event the job was given to the young man, whose father just happened to be a peer of the realm and chairman of the Conservative Party.[26]

[26] The 'young man' (in fact, he was only a year younger than Bobby) was Dr the Hon Edgar Bolton Hacking. His father was Douglas Hewitt Hacking, who had been MP for Chorley and was created the 1st Baron Hacking of Chorley in 1945.

I returned both sadder and wiser about the really important qualifications for a provincial hospital appointment, but my hopes were raised again when the newly appointed anaesthetist resigned without ever going to take up the position and went to South Africa. Now, I thought, they must either appoint me or re-advertise the position. Not so, the committee appointed the general practitioner, with little if any qualifications for the job other than living and being already in practice in the city. Even sadder and even wiser than before, I returned both to practise in London and search for some other escape from the 'Great Wen'.[27]

In about October, there was an advertisement in the medical journals for someone willing to go and teach anaesthetics in Holland. This had come about after a visit sponsored by the Dutch Government of about 40 senior medical practitioners of all types in Holland to England to find out where the Dutch had fallen behind in medicine as the result of the German occupation from 1940 to 1945. The absence of penicillin, known only to the allies, was a glaring example of the deficiencies in the medical knowledge of the Germans and the countries they had occupied during the war.

These investigators had all reported back about the state of things in their own field, but there was a consensus that one thing was very obvious, namely that anaesthesia was very much more advanced than they had imagined, and that they recommended that immediate steps be taken to remedy the situation. The Dutch government decided that, of all the options open to them, the best solution was to invite some specialist over there for a period of up to two years to teach selected postgraduate students, rather than to spend money sending these trainees over to England to learn and then to return and slowly spread the gospel. Not only could several trainees be trained at the same time but the Dutch would be able to use the services of the teacher in Holland during the training period.

I applied for the job and, in December, was asked to go over to Holland with Lilian to spend a weekend in Utrecht and have an interview with the most pressing advocate of the scheme, Professor J.F. Nuboer, the head of the surgical department of surgery in the University there. We were put up in the five star Hotel des Pays Bas and were invited to dine at the professor's home on the Saturday evening. Until the time that he arranged for us to be picked up we wandered round the streets and were amazed at the plight of the inhabitants, some of whom were riding on bicycles without any tyres on the bare metal rims of the wheels over cobbled streets.

The professor was an excellent host and I am sure we committed a number of faux pas contrary to the very strict code of manners observed by the educated upper-class Dutch. For instance we were offered a pre-prandial drink and I thought I would like to try jenever, the Dutch gin often referred to loosely in England as Bols, or Hollands Gin. Bols is the name of a widely known firm that produces the spirit, but is often used in a generic sense in the same way that in England all petroleum jelly is called Vaseline, which is a patented trade name. Lilian asked for the same and was given it. Only later did we find that, in polite society, ladies did not drink jenever. Sherry was about the strongest drink that they were expected to imbibe. After the meal we were given coffee and a small saucer with one chocolate on it. We both ate the chocolate and imagined

[27] The Great Wen is a disparaging nickname for London and is a phrase William Cobbett used *Rural Rides*, which was published in 1830.

that the saucer was a miniature ash-tray. However such solecisms did not obviously count against us as, after a truly magnificent dinner such as we could not have had in England and a long and earnest interview between the Professor and me, I was offered the job. The professor and his wife and two teenage children all spoke very good English, and I found out that all educated Hollanders were multi-lingual, speaking as well as Dutch, English, French and German. I imagine that that is attributable to the fact that Holland lies at the mouth of both the two great rivers of Europe that flow into the English Channel, the Rhine and the Meuse (Maas in Dutch), in fact the two rivers meet just before they form a delta at their mouths and it is difficult to know which is which especially as different bits of the rivers are given different names, and all the merchandise for export all over the world conveyed on these rivers to the sea has to pass through Holland.

The Dutch are very good businessmen and the population is small and their language is not spoken anywhere else, so for business reasons the Dutch have to be able to speak the languages of the various countries to which the goods are being exported. On that very first evening Nuboer quoted to me the couplet:

'In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch
Is giving too little and asking too much.'

Lilian and I returned to England to make up our minds, whether to stay on in London or to take this chance of up to two years of a completely new environment and opportunity. To get leave from the Middlesex Hospital for two years was not at all difficult, but my partners in the Mayfair Gas Company were not so accommodating. All I asked for was two years unpaid leave, in the same way that both McConnell and Johnson had had for the last four years at least, but they were adamant that they had had to go according to the call of duty for patriotic reasons and that the same leave would have been granted to me if I had been called up into the R.A.M.C. as they had been. But, they said, this was entirely my own choice and if I wished to leave the practice I would have to do so for good. Nor would they either allow me to sell my share to anyone or buy me out. This decision I found very unfair, especially when I found that they had already sold, before I left England to go to Holland, a share in the practice to a Dr Roche. What they sold was, in my opinion, my share and I should have received the money from the transaction.

I decided to leave the Mayfair Gas Company after working for them and with them for 11 years and gave in my notice to leave at the end of February 1947. I attended a refresher course in anaesthetics, not as a teacher as many of my contemporaries were, but as a student, in order to be sure that I was au fait with the present 'State of the Arts' in anaesthesia so that I could spread the gospel with confidence. I also took the opportunity of attending operating sessions in various hospitals where thoracic surgery was practised. We had no thoracic surgical unit at that time in the Middlesex, so I attended the Brompton and other hospitals where I had invaluable advice from Ruth Mansfield and other specialists in that branch of anaesthetics. I knew that this side of the specialty was most important because Nuboer had intimated that one of his reasons for wanting to be the front runner in the users of 'modern anaesthesia' was that he was desperately keen to start doing thoracic surgery.

I should perhaps here explain that opening the chest to do surgery is not as simple as opening the abdomen. As long as the patient is breathing spontaneously he sucks gases, generally air, into his lungs by increasing the volume of his chest and air rushes in to fill the vacuum by the only way in, via the respiratory tract. If, however, there is a hole in the chest wall, air can rush in that way outside the lung into the pleural cavity. The lung on that side, hitherto kept fully expanded to fill that half of the thorax by the negative pressure in the pleural cavity, will now collapse leaving the patient breathing only with one lung on the other side. To overcome this, 'modern anaesthetists' stop the patient breathing by paralysing the muscles of respiration and force gases, mainly the oxygen essential to maintain life but also any anaesthetic agents deemed necessary, into the lungs by positive pressure. In this way both lungs are inflated and the gaseous exchanges affected by normal respiration are maintained. At the end of the operation the paralysis is reversed, and the patient is allowed to breathe once again spontaneously. Without this 'know how' on the part of the anaesthetist the mortality of attempted thoracic surgery approaches the unacceptable 100 per cent.

Another problem facing me in Holland was the provision of the necessary equipment. I had outlined to Professor Nuboer what I thought would be necessary and had the authority to order that to be delivered to the 'Stads en Academisch Ziekenhuis' in Utrecht. That means the Municipal and University Hospital. My contract was with a joint board from both the hospital and the University.

Immediately after the war Britain was in an 'Export Drive' and I fondly imagined that an order to supply the surgical department of a teaching hospital in the newly liberated country of Holland would be fulfilled immediately if not sooner, so I hoped that when I arrived I would be able to walk straight in and carry on as if I had gone from one operating theatre to another in the same hospital. However, I did think that I would need help so I asked Patterson if he would consider coming to Holland with me to get things started. At first he was unwilling but he eventually consented to come with me and I agreed to pay him more than he could expect to earn in England and also to give him accommodation if he would come, just for a month, to see me started. I have rarely made a better deal in my life.

We had moved from the house in Meadway that we had originally taken when we got married because the owner, who had been overseas in the army, had come back to England and although the regulations at the time meant that no-one could evict tenants from rented property, we felt that we could not keep him and his wife from living in their own home and luckily a house just round the corner in Meadway Gate became vacant and for lease at the same rental (£100 per annum). Not quite as grand or imposing as the one in Meadway, it was still a spacious home. It was as I said literally just round the corner and when the removal van came and loaded up our furniture, all it had to do was to take off the brake and coast round the corner as it was downhill all the way. We actually moved some of the smaller household items by passing them over the backyard fence.

The house in Meadway Gate had belonged to Barney Barnato, the South African multi-millionaire, rival and later partner of Cecil Rhodes, and now belonged to his heirs who wanted to sell the house.



Bobby and Lilian were living at 2 Meadway Gate, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London, when Stuart was born in 1946.

Seeing that I was the sitting tenant and could not under the current regulations be evicted I made an offer on the house below its real market value in the hope that the owners would be pleased to get rid of it. Alas the Barnato family were much too shrewd to accept my offer. As an anti-climax I relinquished the lease just before we went to Holland.

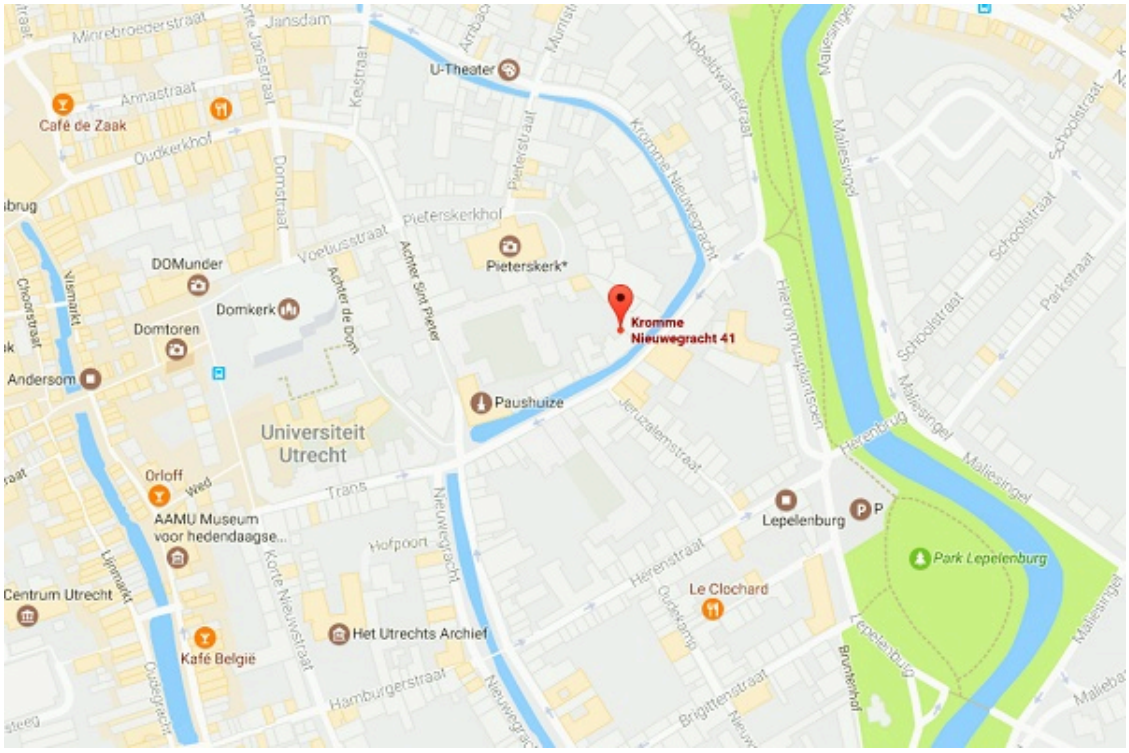
Without the money I had expected to get from the practice I could not afford to transport my family and household goods to Holland, so I had to sell the cottage at Henley, and in a hurry. If I had been able to buy the house in Hampstead Garden Suburb all would have been well, but that had fallen through. The only purchasers for the house at Henley were an Australian dentist and his wife and the best price I could get in the short time available was £2,000 for the house fully furnished. This was ridiculous because we had bought it for £1,175 and had spent a lot of money as well as time and labour improving it, but 'Needs must when the Devil drives', so we accepted the offer.

We took all our furniture, including the carpets, gas stove, gas refrigerator etc., to Holland and towards the end of April 1947 we went over on the boat from Harwich to the Hook of Holland. We took Nigel, aged just three and Stuart, ten months, but we left Anthony for the time being at his boarding school in Teignmouth in South Devon. Anthony at this time was nearly 11 and was doing quite well at the school, the 'Beacon', and his headmaster thought that it would be better to leave him there until the end of the school year at the end of July.

Chapter 10: De Narcoseleer

Professor Nuboer was away in the United States, no doubt learning all he could about opening the chest (Thoracotomy), and his absence was a blessing as quite a lot of the essential apparatus had not arrived from England, despite the so called export drive, so we were met at Hoek van Holland, which does not really mean The Hook of Holland but more appropriately the Corner of Holland, by Cuni de Haas, the attractive and very efficient secretary to Nuboer.

She drove us to Utrecht and took us to the apartment that had been found for us in a quaint curved street alongside one of the two main canals in the city, the Nieuwe Gracht, or New Canal. The houses along one side were across the canal, with access by a series of small footbridges. Our address was 'Kromme Nieuwegracht 41bis', which translates as '41 A on the curve of the New Canal' and was reached by a small concrete bridge which we shared with the inhabitants of the ground floor of 41 and those in 39. Once on the far side of the canal we came to the front door that led immediately to a steep narrow concrete staircase with a right angle turn near the top. The accommodation consisted of two living rooms and a kitchen and toilet on the first floor and three bedrooms and a shower room on the second with a further attic type of room above. It was very convenient for our family including Patterson, and later Anthony had his own room. It was very central almost in the shadow of the great *Domtoren*, the tower of the cathedral, with shops nearby and all for the sum of 650 Guilders a year, about the equivalent at that time of £65, a guilder being the same as the English florin, or two shillings. In fact the symbol for a guilder is Fl., meaning florin.



To quote Bobby, Kromme Nieuwegracht 41 is 'very central almost in the shadow of the great *Domtoren'*.



Utrecht Cathedral and the *Domtoren*.

Our furniture was due to arrive the same day but had not as yet turned up. Cuni spent as much time with us as her other duties would allow and the furniture arrived in the afternoon.

There was no way that our furniture could be taken up the narrow stairway, so the removers came in and removed the whole window frame from the front living room, set up a block and tackle and we watched with trepidation as each article was lifted from the van, swung over the canal and in through the gaping hole where the window had been. We nominated the front room as the lounge and the back room the dining room. The removers put each piece of furniture in the appropriate area and just got everything in before darkness fell and they had to depart, after replacing the window. I cannot remember how, where or what we ate that night, probably Cuni sent in some food for us.

She also arranged for the various workmen to arrive next morning to lay the carpets, join up the fridge and stove to the gas supply, etc. We had not the energy to make proper beds but we found some blankets and slept in the lounge on mattresses on the floor. What we were not prepared for, after knowing only British workmen, was that they arrived at 7.00 a.m. while we were still unready for them. They worked prodigiously and by nightfall the whole place was in full working order.

There remained one thing which had to be rectified as soon as possible. The sash windows of the lounge, overlooking the canal and street, were low down on the wall and outside them was a vertical drop straight into the canal and thus a real hazard with young children in the apartment so we had to arrange for a builder to come and fit iron bars across the window, not to stop burglars getting in but to stop Nigel and Stuart from falling out.

Cuni had also arranged for me to get a car, as that would be essential. There was very strict rationing in force in Holland and that included motor vehicles, a much better system than that appertaining in the U.K. where it was 'First come, first serve', which meant that in the order in which you had applied for a new car, so your request would be dealt with. All the entrepreneurial types had applied for at least one new car. My recently ex-partner, Vernon Morgan, had applied ages ago to several manufacturers and soon after the production of new cars started again in England he took delivery of a small car, a Hillman I think, after a month or so his request for an Armstrong Siddeley came through and such was the demand for cars in England after non-production for six years, he was able to sell the Hillman for much more that he paid for it and the Armstrong Siddeley cost him nothing more. After that the British Government stepped in and made it illegal to sell a new car in less than 12 months, which meant that Morgan had to wait for a whole year before he could take delivery of his next car, a Rolls Royce, again at no extra cost because of the market value of used cars.

To return to Holland, I was only able to obtain a car because I was working for the Government, in the Department of 'O.K.W', standing for 'Onderwijs, Kunst en Wetenschap' or 'Education, Art and Science', as a member of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Utrecht. All the formalities Cuni de Haas had taken care of and after two or three days I was presented with a large American Ford sedan. I was not allowed to drive it straight away because of a regulation that all cars must be fitted with traffic indicators, not those blinking lights we have now but little illuminated arms that swung out from the side of the vehicle. Next day the improvements had been fitted and I was able to drive to Hoek van Holland to meet Patterson.

The terms under which I had been able to acquire the car were that if, when I left the country, car rationing was still in force, I would have to hand back the car to the Dutch Government for the current official market price.

Then followed a few days settling in period during which we got to know the geography of the city and surrounding district and Patterson and I were involved in a lot of hustling up the necessary anaesthetic apparatus, a process which required a lot of telephone conversations between Utrecht and London and visiting the agents in Utrecht, both the Loos and Lameris firms.

I was put in touch with another British anaesthetist, Doreen Vermeulen-Cranch who had married an executive of a Dutch Shipping line, George Vermeulen who had, luckily for him, happened to be on business in England when the Germans had invaded Holland in 1940 and stayed there. She was employed at University College Hospital as an anaesthetist. When the war was over George had returned to his old job in Amsterdam and Doreen, of course, accompanied him and she set about trying to put her skills to good use. The professor of surgery in Amsterdam was Noordenbos who had met Doreen at work in U.C.H. on the visit of the cream of the Dutch medical profession in January 1946, and had invited her to visit his clinic when she was next in Holland. In June 1946 Doreen started teaching anaesthetics at the Wilhelmina Gasthuis. Doreen was a great help because she was already fairly fluent in Dutch and knew the technical terms for the goods I was seeking, and also we both had the same object, to improve the standard of anaesthesia in Holland.

Medical education in Holland was based on the German pattern. This system was rigidly hierarchical and each branch of medicine had a pyramid of power with a Professor at the apex. His word was law, he could hardly do any wrong and his power came mainly from tradition and the system by which he obtained his assistants. There was no recognised examination, passing which would demonstrate that any person was a surgeon for instance, but the Specialists Registration Board would accept anybody who could come with a 'briefje' (a little note) from an already acknowledged surgeon showing that that person had attended more or less as an apprentice for a minimum of two years. This would suffice for a surgeon to practice in the country towns but to get an appointment to a good hospital one needed a briefje from one of the professors of surgery at one of the Universities. The professors would have the pick of the applicants and made it quite clear that they would not give a briefje after only two years but demanded six years service. Each professor would take on about two assistants each year so there we have the hierarchy. After six years the professor could invite a select few to remain on salary in a senior position on the hospital staff, thus ensuring for himself a well skilled team who could if necessary run the surgical clinic in the professor's absence. As there was always a waiting list of young newly qualified doctors all wanting to become surgeons any vacancies in the team of assistants could be instantly filled. Any trainee, at any stage of his six years, could suffer instant dismissal if he failed to please the professor so the whole outfit became a group of 'Yes men'. Any professor under this system was under great temptation to regard himself as an infallible god and manage the unit despotically.

As Professor Nuboer was abroad when I arrived, I started to work with the assistants, with a Dr van der Vuurst de Vries temporarily in charge. He had more or less specialised in Urology and another senior was George Chapchal who was an orthopaedic surgeon. With these two, and in fact, with all the assistants I got on very well. I had been allotted two young doctors as the nucleus of my training group, Dr H.H.F. Hobbel and Dr Jan van 't Oever. Hobbel had been a popular sporting figure as a student at Utrecht, but an attack of Polio left him severely paralysed in the legs. He had to walk with two walking sticks everywhere but he was always cheerful and a willing trainee. What a cruel fate landed someone with a name like Hobbel with such a disability!

Jan van 't Oever was a graduate from Rotterdam and the municipality of that city sent him for training on the understanding that he would return and work in the municipal hospitals there.

A short time later two more would-be anaesthetists came into my group, Drs Gunsberg and Bosman. The latter, older than any of the other trainees and much older than I was, came after several years as a general practitioner. Later still an English woman, Julia Gibbs, who was engaged to a Hollander, Wim Tiggeloven, brought the number of post-graduate students attached to me to five.

During that month of May before Nuboer returned from his overseas trip, Cuni de Haas came to me one day and announced that I had been requested to give an anaesthetic to the youngest member of the Dutch royal family, the princess Marijke, who had bilateral congenital cataracts.

Her mother, the heir apparent, Princess Juliana had suffered from German measles (rubella) during the early pregnancy and this infection had recently been shown to be the likely cause of various congenital abnormalities in the foetus. The scientific evidence was very strong but the theory had not been universally accepted in medical circles. The more modern physicians in Holland at the time urged that pregnancy should be terminated, but the older more conservative doctors who had the final say had not wished to undertake such a step, and the pregnancy had gone to full term with the resultant cataracts. This was Juliana's fourth child; all the three elder children had been girls. If this child had been a boy he would have been in the direct line to the throne. As in Britain the crown passes to the eldest male child of the reigning monarch and daughters only come into the line if there are no male heirs. I wonder how long that tradition will survive in view of the onslaught of Women's Lib. for equal rights? But for one missing gene the present monarch in Holland would be a very visually impaired king.

In the autocratic way in which continental surgeons decided things in those days the operation had already been fixed for the following morning. I presented myself at the Ooglijders Ziekenhuis, (Eye Hospital), and requested to be allowed to examine the infant, intending to assess the general health and know the weight of the baby in order to determine the dosage of any premedication and anaesthetic agents. I was not allowed to see the child as they said it was inconvenient as Princess Juliana was feeding her and would I please defer my preoperative examination until the following morning immediately before the operation?

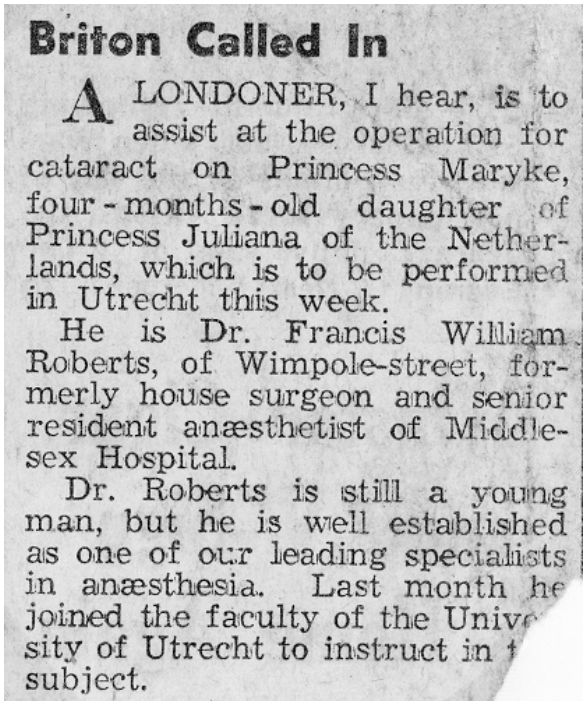


The team that gave Princess Marijke her operations for her bilateral congenital cataracts From left to right: Drs. H.J.M Weve, J.H.C. Carstens, De Groot, and F.W. Roberts.

When the child was brought to the operating theatre, in Holland known as the Operatie Kamer or colloquially 'O K.', I found to my dismay that she was suffering from a head cold and in no fit state for a general anaesthetic for an eye operation. I had a great deal of difficulty in persuading the doctors and staff that this was the proper course, but I

stuck to my ground and explained to the Professor that I would not give an anaesthetic to any other baby in such a state, that if it were my infant I would not allow her to be anaesthetised until the cold had cleared up and so the operation was reluctantly postponed.

A few days later the first of three operations went ahead, three because each eye was done separately and then a final review of one side was deemed necessary. The local newspaper, the *Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad*, made a feature of the news and included a photograph of the professor and his assistants and me with the erroneous caption to the effect that I had come over especially for this operation. Even the London *Evening Standard* carried a small paragraph in the gossip column 'Day by Day' saying that an eminent young British specialist had been called to anaesthetise the infant princess.



Briton Called In

A LONDONER, I hear, is to assist at the operation for cataract on Princess Maryke, four-months-old daughter of Princess Juliana of the Netherlands, which is to be performed in Utrecht this week.

He is Dr. Francis William Roberts, of Wimpole-street, formerly house surgeon and senior resident anæsthetist of Middlesex Hospital.

Dr. Roberts is still a young man, but he is well established as one of our leading specialists in anæsthesia. Last month he joined the faculty of the Univ sity of Utrecht to instruct in t subject.

When Nuboer returned we settled in to a routine. Patterson and I went to the hospital to the surgical department which was housed in a separate pavilion in the quite extensive grounds at 7.30 in the morning and changed into white trousers and shirt and over that the traditional garb of the doctor on the continent, the long white coat buttoned up high in the neck. Then we went to the operating suite. There was one large 'O.K.' with two operating tables, an arrangement I had only seen before in the emergency operating theatres we used at the Middlesex during the war. Here the reason was so that the professor, while operating at the major table could supervise what one of the assistants was doing on the other.

At the Middlesex we had always worn canvas overboots to prevent us bringing in dirt from the outside world, but that did not happen in Utrecht, or indeed, at any hospital in Holland. All the assistants, both the professor's and mine were present similarly attired. I was indeed lucky that Nuboer had been away for the first month, in that, not only had we got all the apparatus ready and working with a lot of help from the director of the surgical instrument firm that bore his name Willem Loos, but also I was able to instruct my trainees in at atmosphere of calm. Nuboer was very demanding and critical of

everything so that everybody was under considerable stress. By the time he came, both Hobbel and Jan van ‘t Oever were able to give a reasonable anaesthetic without undue intervention on my part. Patterson, from his long association with me, was able to instruct and help the assistants with various manoeuvres such as laryngoscopy and endotracheal intubation. He was also expert at lifting and positioning the patients on the table. He also checked the nitrous oxide and oxygen cylinders before each operating session.

Patterson had only contracted with me to stay one month but at the end of that time he did not suggest that he ought to be returning and I was very grateful. After a few weeks Professor Nuboer realised what a valuable job he was doing in the operating theatres and offered to contribute towards his wages, paying a reasonable amount for work at the hospital during the mornings. I had the right to private practice, between the hours of 1.00 p.m. and 7.30 a.m. next morning, and for any such work I would need the help of Patterson as in London, and so in addition to his hospital salary, I promise to give him a small percentage of my private earnings, thus anticipating by many decades the idea of employee participation which is becoming advocated in modern industrial relations.

Urbane and charming socially as Nuboer was, in the operating theatre he was an intolerant, impatient, hectoring tyrant. Any difficulties he encountered during operating he always attributed to the incompetence of his assistants. He usually had three assistants scrubbed up to assist with any operation and if he found fault with any one of them he would send that man away into the anteroom where were, always waiting already scrubbed up, replacements ready to enter the fray, just like players being sent off in an ice hockey match. At times he would become so infuriated with the assistants that he would send all three off at once, screaming at them ‘De bedoeling van de Assistenten is de operatie gemakkelijk te maken, julle maak dit moeilijker! Weg!’ (‘The reason for having assistants is to make the operation easier, you make it more difficult. Get out!’), and all three would troop out to the Koffiekamer and the replacements would move into the front line and try to avoid a similar fate.

If he thought that one of the assistants was not pulling hard enough on a retractor to give him access to the operation site he would grab the handle of the retractor from the assistant and give it a violent tug in the required direction and shout ‘Trek!’ (‘Pull’). However much they were bullied the assistants did not dare to protest for fear of being dismissed before they had the desired ‘briefje’.

In the Koffiekamer there was a running buffet of coffee, buttermilk, and a fruit-flavoured drink such as lemonade and a few sandwiches were served about 10 a.m. At the end of the morning operating session lunch was available in the hospital staff dining room. The sight of my assistants, with Patterson and me arriving en bloc for lunch brought anaesthetics to the notice of the other specialties, such as Gynaecology, Ear, Nose and Throat surgery and also the physicians. One of the latter group, on learning who we were, made a rather profound if rather cynical remark that anaesthetics must be a pleasant specialty to work in if only one did not, of necessity, have to associate so much with surgeons!

Eventually I was invited by the professor of E.N.T. to help him with an operation to remove post-nasal fibromata. These are non-malignant tumours at the back of the nose

in the naso-pharynx above the soft palate that cause obstruction to nasal breathing. They are very vascular and friable and during their removal bleed profusely.

I agreed to help and at my pre-operative visit I found a healthy young man, not anaemic and posing no difficulty for the anaesthetist. I ordered two pints of blood to be available for transfusion during the operation to counteract the expected inevitable blood loss and took with me Patterson, van 't Oever and Hobbel. Before the operation started I put up a drip infusion and had the matched blood at hand. After anaesthetising the patient I paralysed him with an injection of curare, a muscle relaxant derived from the South American plant chondrodendron tomentosum, from which the natives in the region of the upper reaches of the Amazon obtained the poison that rendered their arrowheads deadly. The flaccidity of the jaw muscles allows the anaesthetist to visualise the larynx and pass an endotracheal tube. A small balloon cuff near the lower end of the tube in the trachea stops any gaseous leaks round the tube and prevents the entry of blood or other foreign matter into the lungs. Until the paralysis wears off the anaesthetist has to inflate the lungs rhythmically through the tube with the required mixture of anaesthetic gases and oxygen. The operation went ahead, a lot of blood was spilled but was instantly replaced by the transfusion and all was successfully completed. The professor was delighted with the result (as no doubt also was the patient), and congratulated me with the remark that the last three patients he had had with that complaint had all died on the operating table. When one considers that up till then the only type of anaesthetic that had been available was open chloroform on a lint mask administered by a nurse or student with no training such an outcome is not really surprising!

Little wonder that the Dutch were anxious to embrace the 'Modern Anaesthesia'

The introduction of the muscle relaxants in the 1940s in Canada, the United States, Britain and Scandinavia was a real milestone in the history of anaesthesia. At first curare was the only available agent but as supplies depended on the market from the Amazon and importation from there during the war was chancy, the research chemists were working hard on the problem and during 1947, the year we were talking about, a synthetic substance called gallamine was discovered but did not become available until 1948. The use of curare was not as dangerous as might be thought because there was a simple antidote, neostigmine which on intravenous injection cut short the paralysis.

Muscle relaxants provided a safe way of opening the thoracic cavity and operating on the contents, lungs, oesophagus and the heart and blood vessels. Without their use and the artificial respiration it entails, known as 'controlled respiration' when performed after deliberately paralysing spontaneous respiration, when the chest is opened the lung on that side collapses and the patient is left struggling on only one lung and even the respiration on the unopened side is diminished. With controlled respiration, or Intermittent positive pressure respiration (I.P.P.R.) as it is now called both lungs are equally inflated by the anaesthetist via the endotracheal tube, and both sides of the chest can be opened simultaneously if necessary, as is the case today with some major cardiac surgery.

The standard of general anaesthesia in Holland, as all over Europe except Scandinavia, was abysmal. This was attributable mainly to the dominance of German surgery and the belief currently held in such circles that general anaesthesia was dangerous and local analgesia infinitely preferable. Also on the Continent Anaesthetics was not recognised

as a specialty so nobody became skilled in the art and when general anaesthesia was deemed necessary it was entrusted to untrained medical students, nurses or even hospital porters or 'attendants' as they are called today. The consequence was that the morbidity and mortality were appalling and this only strengthened the notion that all general anaesthesia was dangerous.

The governmentally inspired visit of the senior members of the medical profession to England in 1946 to see where 'Holland had fallen behind in medical knowledge as the result of the German occupation during the war' was an eye-opener, and the burgeoning interest in thoracic surgery led the surgeons on that visit to do something about it. Various factors such as the quiet induction of anaesthesia by intravenous injection, unaccompanied by any struggling, the use of endotracheal intubation, the adoption of muscle relaxants as a safe technique, and I.P.P.R. when indicated, all helped to convince the medical profession of the advantages of the methods used in the English speaking countries and Scandinavia.

Progress was slow at first, but general acceptance increased exponentially. After the successful outcome of the operation for the removal of the postnasal fibromata, the E.N.T. surgeons expressed more and more interest in our techniques and I attempted to demonstrate to advantages in simple operations like Tonsils and Adenoids (Ts & As).

I had watched with horror the technique that was used to take out Ts and As in children. (Obviously such an operation does not lend itself to local anaesthesia.) An assistant held the child sitting sideways on his knee, restrained the legs between his thighs and the arms with one arm round the child's body, another assistant held the child's head. The surgeon sat opposite the child and asked him to open his mouth. If he did so then the surgeon quickly put in a gag to hold it open and then without any anaesthesia would remove both tonsils with the Sluder guillotine and hastily scrape the post nasal roof with an adenoid curette. The screaming child would then be placed lying on his side on a bed, coughing and spitting out blood under the supervision of a nurse until the bleeding stopped and then would be sent home. To deal with a non-cooperative child the surgeon would hold a mask on its face from a nitrous oxide-oxygen analgesia machine, designed to deliver an adequate supply of oxygen in the mixture inhaled. This would not ensure that the jaw was relaxed so the surgeon would turn off the oxygen at the cylinder thus giving the child pure nitrous oxide. The resultant asphyxia from oxygen deprivation would cause spasmodic opening and closing the jaw in a convulsive attack known as jactitation. While the mouth was open the gag would be inserted and when the child recovered consciousness the operation would proceed. The psychological trauma of such an assault can be readily imagined. Indeed the little son of the tenants in the flat below us, i.e. in No.41 underwent such an ordeal and refused to speak to anybody for about three weeks afterwards.

I arranged with C.P. Wilson, the senior E.N.T. surgeon at the Middlesex, who had been with me at the Middlesex all through the war, to come over to demonstrate the technique of tonsillectomy by dissection as opposed to the guillotine method and I gave the children general anaesthetics. The surgeons were quite impressed but the technique did not find favour with the nursing staff who did not appreciate having to supervise the children after the operation until the anaesthetic wore off, and were so uncooperative that the method was not adopted in the hospital in Utrecht immediately. There was however an ex-Utrecht graduate who was a practising E.N.T. surgeon in the

neighbouring town of Amersfoort, who had been present at C.P. Wilson's demonstration, Dr 'Hermie' Overbosch, who had been very impressed and asked me to give his anaesthetics on a regular weekly basis during an afternoon session.

My private practice grew rapidly, which was just as well as my salary from the appointment as 'Conservator in de Narcoseleer' at the Stads en Academisch Ziekenhuis in Utrecht was only Fl.8,000 (£800) a year. I could not complain about that as it was equivalent to the salary paid to any professor, including Nuboer, who were expected to take advantage of their position to charge more than the average fees in their private practice.

I was soon working several mornings at other hospitals in Utrecht starting at 6.30 a.m. so as to be at the university hospital to work with Nuboer at 7.30 a.m. In the afternoons I was free to accept private work and the practice was not confined to Utrecht. Surgeons in other towns, especially those who were keen to do thoracic surgery, asked me to go and help them. I went as far afield as Roermond in the south-east near the German frontier, Middleburg in Zeeland, Zwolle in Overijssel and Sneek in Friesland.

Normally a surgeon decides when he wants to operate and then arranges for an anaesthetist to attend at that time. If the surgeon's first choice of anaesthetist is busy at that time, the surgeon will try to find another anaesthetist. In my case in Holland it was the reverse. I kept an appointment book and when a surgeon rang me up and ask me to help him I could almost dictate the time when I would be available. Such luxury had never happened to me before and it has never happened since!

Of course I always took Patterson with me and when we went to some of the places far away from Utrecht it meant that we had to stay the night, and these excursions had to be arranged at the weekend so that I did not miss my early morning attendance on Professor Nuboer. Some of the cases I did with Nuboer were private patients and I was entitled to charge a fee for those, as was Nuboer, of course. Nuboer agreed that I should charge 20 per cent of his fee and he or Cuni de Haas used to tell me how much I should ask for.

Another surgeon in Utrecht, Klinkenbergh, who worked at the Roman Catholic St. Antonius Hospital, also employed me occasionally when his usual anaesthetist, Dr de Zwaan, for some reason could not help him. Klinkenbergh was so honest about the fee he was charging that he used to send me his own account to the patient in an open stamped, addressed envelope and ask me, after seeing the amount and so calculating my fee, to seal the envelope and post it.

It was the custom to have one's account forms printed showing the Giro number. The Giro was a Post Office Savings bank and patients could deposit the amount of the fee at any post office to the credit of that number. The Post Office used to send regular monthly statements to all Giro customers, and so one could see who had paid and who had not paid. One day I answered a phone call and a man's voice asked if I was Dr Roberts and I assured him that I was. Then he said 'Do you have any outstanding accounts from patients who should have paid you some time ago?'

I said that that was unfortunately the case and then the stranger said 'Well! I think I may have some of your money! I am also Dr Roberts and I am an eye surgeon in Sneek

and I have had amounts paid into my Giro that I have been unable to account for. I think they must be from your patients who had gone to the post office to pay you and found that they had not brought the account with them and did not know the Giro Number and had looked up the Giro Register and found only one Dr Roberts and assumed that that was the one they ought to pay!' The Giro Register was only brought up to date possibly only once a year like a telephone directory, so my number was not yet included. The other Dr Roberts then said that if I would tell him my Giro number he would transfer those amounts to me, and then went on to ask who I was and what sort of a doctor was I and when he heard that I was a specialist anaesthetist who had come over from England to teach modern anaesthesia, he asked me if I would be willing to go to Sneek for a weekend and address the local branch of the Dutch Medical Association of which he was currently the President. He asked if I was married and when I told him that the whole family was living in Utrecht he invited Lilian as well. I accepted his kind invitation and Lilian and I went to Sneek on a Friday afternoon and after dinner Lilian stayed with his wife and I went to the meeting of the 'Kring' (literally a circle).

As all educated Hollanders have a very good knowledge of English as well as German and French I was able to give that and other talks in English. Dr Roberts and his wife both spoke excellent English and they took us on the Saturday for a tour of the northern provinces of Friesland and Groningen finishing up at a restaurant in the remote countryside that would certainly have merited inclusion in the Guide Michelin with three stars (*vaut le voyage*). They invited us for another weekend during the following summer and we spent the day on board his yacht on the local lake 'Sneekermeer' on the annual regatta day. It was a glorious summer day and I remember the picnic lunch they provided included a complete duckling per person!

We had been very fortunate to obtain the services of an excellent Nanny for the children. Lilian put an advertisement in the paper and chose a small dark Jewish girl called Kitty Modijefsky who had had an amazing life during the war. When the Germans occupied Holland they systematically tried to get rid of all the Jews. Kitty was given shelter by a gentile family and had to peroxide her hair to escape detection. Only one brother and Kitty survived the war. Her father and mother and other siblings were all exterminated in concentration camps. Kitty was an absolute treasure, she loved the children and they loved her and she lived with us for over a year until she married Auke Kransen, a tall blond school teacher who was sent to a little country school in Abbenes between Leiden and Amsterdam. We went to their wedding, and later when Lilian and I went out of the country on a holiday they looked after Nigel and Stuart.

Both Lilian and I smoked cigarettes in those days and unlike the situation in England tobacco was rationed with coupons. The method of rationing was very sexist and would have caused a riot from the feminists nowadays. Men were allowed to be full smokers, half-smokers or non-smokers, women could be either half-smokers or non-smokers, and children, I think up to the age of 21, had to be non-smokers. Non-smokers were rewarded by being given extra sugar coupons and half-smokers half as many extra. Chocolates and other sweets were only obtainable by surrendering sugar coupons. In England there was no official rationing and cigarettes were in short supply and to obtain any one had to be a regular customer of a certain tobacconist. This made it difficult for smokers who had to travel about the country and for people who moved home. The ration was very meagre, as far as I remember a full smoker only got 40 cigarettes a week and half-smokers one packet of 20. That meant that Lilian, who had

been smoking 20 cigarettes a day in England, now had to limit herself to three a day and, I am sorry to say she resorted to petty larceny! She stole my cigarettes while I was at work and I had to hide my ration. That ruse did not stop her for long, she searched the house as soon as my back was turned and usually managed to steal the lot. For some reason that I have never been able to understand, Belgium, which had also been occupied and ravaged by the Germans, had no post-war rationing, possibly because her colonies in Africa were very rich and untroubled as yet by the struggle for independence that beset the Dutch East Indies. Holland is only a small country and one weekend we decided to go to Belgium and there we bought a large stock of cigarettes. I had always liked the dark tobacco such as the French used in their 'Gauloises' cigarettes, but Lilian couldn't stand them so I bought a lot of their brand of the dark cigarettes, called 'Belga', and fondly thought that that would allow me to smoke my own cigarettes. It did not take Lilian long to acquire the taste for them and they too disappeared during my absence at work.

When Kitty came to live in the house, she told us she was a non-smoker, but we persuaded her to say she was a half-smoker and so we obtained extra coupons in the household. She did not go deprived of sweets or sugar because the authorities, on the strength of a medical certificate disclosing Nigel's inability to take any solid food, had given him a large increase in his sugar ration, more than enough for his needs so we could give the extra to Kitty! Although the rationing of everything was much stricter in Holland when we first arrived there, every fortnight the value of each coupon was revised and gradually but steadily the allowances of most goods increased. After several months, rationing of cigars was abolished to ease the financial plight of the numerous cigar manufacturers in the country but the sale of cigars was restricted to whatever the tobacconist decided he could spare to a full smoking customer at the time that he took his cigarette allowance for the fortnight. When this happened I gave up smoking cigarettes and smoked only cigars. This decision, helped by the fact that Jan van 't Oever's father had a cigar factory at Kampen and he gave Jan cigars to give to me, saved Lilian from a decline into a life of crime.

Jan's parents invited Lilian and me to go and stay with them at Kampen for a weekend and Jan's brother, Henk, took me duck shooting on the Zuider Zee. This outing involved getting up at 2 a.m., going a few kilometres in a car and then a fairly good walk in the pitch dark to the waters edge where there was a flat-bottomed boat. The water was very shallow for a 100 metres or so and the boat would not float if both we both sat in it so I was the privileged one and Henk had some tall gum boots and so he pushed the punt until the water was deep enough for him to jump aboard. We then paddled out to a clump of reeds and threw out an anchor. We also threw out about four tame ducks also anchored by a brick tied by a length of rope to one leg. In the boat we kept a retriever, as well as thermos flasks of coffee, a half bottle of Jenever, cigars and a drake, trussed under one of the thwarts so that he could not escape.

Then we waited quietly until dawn began to break when small parties of wild duck appeared on the horizon over the water coming in to feed on land during the day. When he judged that they were near enough Henk gave the drake a little kick causing a protesting squawk. The thought that their boy friend was being ill-treated was too much for the anchored ducks placidly swimming around. The uproar was enough to attract the wild ducks that came to investigate and when they were within range we fired our shotguns, and the retriever lived up to his name. When the sun was fully up and we

thought no more skeins of duck were likely to appear we went home and ate a heartier breakfast than most condemned prisoners.

That part of the Zuider Zee is now dry land following the reclamation of East Flevoland. The remaining water of the old Zuider Zee is now known as Ijsselmeer, and has become fresh water since the building of the enclosing dam across the northern end, shutting it off from the North Sea.

Another weekend when I had been asked to give an anaesthetic for a surgeon in Middelburg in Zeeland, Lilian came with us and we arranged to stay in the nearby village of Veere, because I had been fascinated by a book by Hendrik van Loon entitled *Van Loon's Lives* in which the author and a friend arranged a series of dinner parties entertaining the ghosts of a number of great men and women of the past including Confucius, Plato, Queen Elizabeth I, Voltaire, Shakespeare and Leonardo da Vinci. We tried to identify the actual house where van Loon had lived and written about these people in such an interesting manner.

One day at the Stads en Academisch Ziekenhuis, the Municipal and University Hospital in Utrecht where I worked daily with Professor Nuboer, I inadvertently left my wallet in the pocket of a pair of white trousers that I had worn in the operating theatre and they went to the steam laundry. It was returned to me afterwards but it had shrunk to less than half the original size and so had the banknotes it contained. I took the notes to the bank and they were amazed to see the Lilliputian Dutch currency but they exchanged them for new normal sized notes. I wonder if they thought it worthwhile to keep them as a curiosity.

The summer of 1947 was very hot and sunny and we were able to spend a lot of time with the children in the open-air swimming baths. Anthony left his boarding school in Teignmouth at the end of the summer term and we enrolled him as a day-boy at a school in Utrecht. The Headmaster interviewed him and ascertained his scholastic level and decided that as he did not speak any Dutch he would have to be placed in a form one above his true level because the master of that form spoke excellent English. Anthony soon learnt Dutch from his schoolmates especially in the playground and on the football field and at the end of the first term the Headmaster decided that he could now be put down a form!

In order to attract the right sort of people to take up the specialty of Anaesthetics it was necessary to have the need for such a discipline recognised. This could only be done if all those interested in anaesthetics in Holland could form some sort of professional association. Apart from Doreen Vermeulen and myself, who were the only ones who had had more than a few months training, there was already a nucleus of Dutch doctors who had decided to devote themselves entirely to the practice of anaesthetics. Dr Klein, who had been a surgeon in The Hague, had had some anaesthetic experience in England including a short time at Oxford with Macintosh, Dr van Nouhuys was a general practitioner in The Hague who gave anaesthetics at the Red Cross Hospital there and decided to go to England in 1946 to study under Rowbotham. Dr Ritsema van Eck was a surgeon who had worked in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and after the war decided to take up anaesthetics. He too was for a time with Macintosh at Oxford and in October 1947 was appointed to be an anaesthetist with Professor Eerland at Groningen. Dr de Zwaan was in the Dutch army medical corps and had been seconded to the

hospital at East Grinstead where Sir Archie McIndoe was doing such wonderful plastic surgery on the R.A.F. war injured to learn anaesthetics. He came back to his practice in Bilthoven just outside Utrecht and was appointed as a part-time anaesthetist at Sint Antonius Ziekenhuis with Klinkenbergh. Doreen had two assistants in training at the Wilhelmina Gasthuis in Amsterdam Dr Mauve and Dr Boere, and my two senior assistants were Hobbel and van 't Oever.

We had several meetings in the homes of some of the members in the Amsterdam-Utrecht area. We did not go all the way to Groningen because it would have meant too much travelling for all except Ritsema van Eck. On one occasion, while I was holding a meeting in our home in Utrecht, Kitty took Nigel and Stuart for a walk to give us a little peace. She took them into the churchyard of the Dom and Stuart was a little too adventurous and fell in the little ornamental pond surrounding the fountain and Kitty had to bring him back, crying and dripping, destroying what peace we had temporarily achieved.[28]

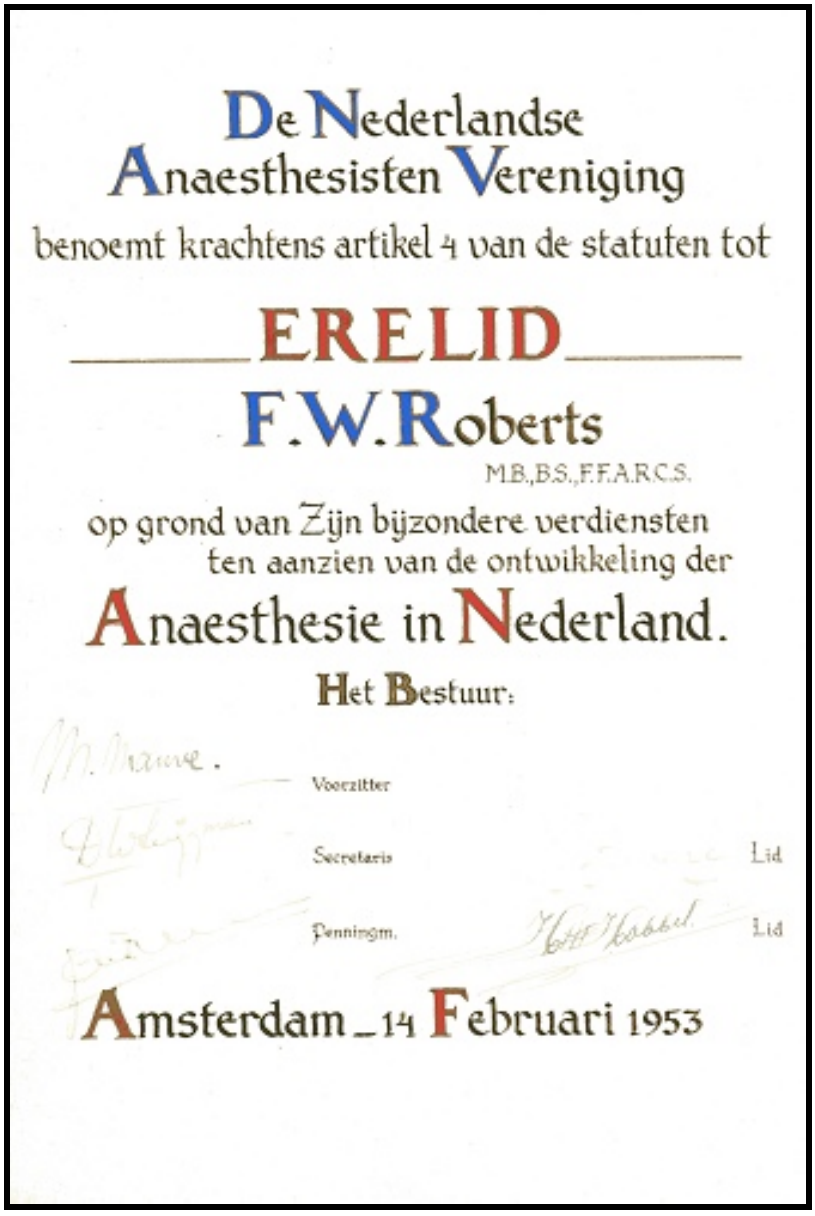


The fountain and its 'little ornamental pond'.

The Dom or Cathedral in Utrecht had been built with a huge covered entrance hall between the tower at one end and the body of the church, but in a severe storm in, I think, the seventeenth century the roofed forecourt was blown down and it was never replaced so that the church and the bell tower are separated by what latterly was used as a car park. The Dom Tower is the highest building for miles around, and for those who are fit and keen enough to climb all the steps, the view from the top is very rewarding.

[28] Stuart, crying, dripping, and wearing a yellow camel hair coat while being led home through the streets of Utrecht by Kitty is one of Nigel Roberts' earliest memories.

By the end of 1947 most of the groundwork had been done and we decided to call a meeting of all interested parties early in the New Year. In January 1948 the Nederlandse Anaesthesisten Vereniging was officially founded at a meeting in the W.G. (Wilhelmina Gasthuis) where Doreen worked with Professor Boerema. In the chapter Doreen wrote in the book *Van Aether naar Beter*, she records that when she started in 1945 to give anaesthetics for the previous professor of surgery, Noordenbos, she was paid the normal salary for a newly qualified doctor at the rote of F2.50 an hour! She says that she realised that anaesthetics was not recognised as a specialty and she did not wish to make a fuss about money when she was married to a director of a shipping firm and Holland was so poverty stricken immediately after the war. That book was written in 1988 as part of the celebration of 40 years existence of the Society although its name was changed in 1978 to 'Nederlandse Verenigiag voor Anaesthesiologie'. The Specialists Registration Committee formally recognised anaesthesia as a specialty in July 1948.


De Nederlandse
Anaesthesisten Vereniging
benoemt krachtens artikel 4 van de statuten tot
ERELID
F.W.Roberts
M.B.,B.S.,F.F.A.R.C.S.
op grond van Zijn bijzondere verdiensten
ten aanzien van de ontwikkeling der
Anaesthesie in Nederland.
Het Bestuur:
Voorzitter
Secretaris
Lid
Penningm.
Lid
Amsterdam_14 Februari 1953

In February 1953, Bobby was awarded honorary life membership of the Dutch Society of Anaesthetists for his role in the development of anaesthesia in the Netherlands.

My ex-partner in London who had worked there with me all through the war, Vernon Morgan was a bit of a gourmet and must have heard rumours that the food rationing in Holland was by now very relaxed compared with the situation in England and he rang me up and suggested that he should come out to Utrecht one weekend with his wife Phyllis and asked me to recommend a hotel for him to stay at and to take them to what I considered to be one of the best restaurants in Holland for a slap-up dinner.

After delaying his visit from the first weekend he proposed because unexpectedly some friend of his had given them a hare and they decided to do justice to that at home before the gaminess had passed its best, they eventually turned up and stayed at the Hotel des Pays Bas, where Lilian and I had stayed on our reconnaissance weekend in late 1946.

On the Saturday night I took them to Amsterdam and we went to the Lido Hotel which had the reputation for having the best table. The hotel is magnificently situated on a bend of the river Amstel with the windows of the dining room looking out on the impressive river scenery in the centre of the city. We all decided to have hors d'oeuvres before the main course and a large trolley was wheeled up to our table with a large variety of dishes laid out on about six trays which rotated up and down around a horizontal axis bringing each tray in turn to be appraised and offering a very wide choice. I remember Vernon taking quite a good selection of the dishes offered and in good sized helpings and while we were eating them he remarked that he was surprised that there seemed to be very little variety in that all the dishes were fishy. No sooner had we finished those another similar trolley was wheeled up and there were all the meaty appetisers.

There were, in fact, mini-courses within the courses. For the main dish both Vernon and I had ordered a steak. When they arrived luckily the one that was given to Vernon was absolutely delicious but mine, alas, was so tough that I had no option but to send it back. This meant that the chef took particular pains to ensure that my second replacement steak would be beyond criticism but by the time it arrived not only had Phyl, Lilian and Vernon all finished their meal but the effects of the enormous helpings of hors d'oeuvre made me no longer hungry but, of course, having sent the first steak back I simply had to eat the second and I know of few more difficult things to do than to have to eat with obvious relish food when one is already sated. However the main object of the exercise had been achieved, Vernon Morgan had had an excellent meal and would return to strictly rationed Britain replete and happy.

A famous British thoracic surgeon, Sir Clement Price-Thomas came to Utrecht, I suppose on Nuboer's invitation, and Lilian and I were invited to dinner at Nuboer's house to meet him. As I have said before, Nuboer was an excellent host and the evening was a great success. During the after dinner conversation I told him about Nigel's disability and he was amazed that he had not been operated upon before this as Nigel was nearly four years old. I explained that I had been told that it would be preferable to postpone the operation until he was older, but Price-Thomas said he would talk to an E.N.T. colleague of his and get his advice. About a week later we had a letter from Sir Victor Negus saying he would like to see Nigel in London, and that we should be prepared to let him keep him in King's College Hospital for a week to do a couple of dilatations of the oesophagus. This we agreed to do and waited for Sir Victor to let us know when it would be convenient for him.



Sir Victor Negus who did the dilatations of Nigel's oesophagus.

My practice continued to flourish and Nuboer began to extend his domineering habits towards me. This did not suit me at all and as I was not in the precarious position of his assistants who dared not disagree with anything he said, I stood up to him. One particular event sticks vividly in my memory. A French professor of surgery was coming to visit him (the news about being able to perform thoracotomies was beginning to permeate throughout Europe) to watch him operate. Nuboer was particularly keen to demonstrate his thoracic surgical prowess by performing a partial removal of a lung. He had a patient in his ward who was being prepared for such an operation for bronchiectasis. Such patients have a lot of purulent sputum and before they are fit for surgery need intensive medical treatment to dry out their lungs to the opposite lung. This man was not ready and I refused to give him an anaesthetic on the day the French professor came to visit just to glorify Nuboer. I stood my ground and Nuboer had to perform some relatively minor operation on another patient. Nuboer never really forgave me and relations became somewhat strained.

A truce was declared when in April Nuboer wanted to go to Stockholm to visit one of the pioneers of thoracic Surgery, Clarence Crafoord, and wanted me to accompany him. I was only too willing to do so because I had never been to Scandinavia and the anaesthetist at the Karolinskasjukuset, the hospital where Crafoord worked was world famous Torsten Gordh. The week he had arranged to go coincided with the week that Lilian was due to take Nigel over to London, so we went our two ways. Nuboer and I flew from Schiphol to Stockholm putting down at Copenhagen on the way. I had met a Dr Secher When he was doing some course in London and while at the airport in

Copenhagen I telephoned him at his home but he was out and his wife answered the phone and asked where I would be staying in Stockholm and said her husband would contact me there. In Stockholm we were made very welcome and taken to lunch at the first class restaurant in the basement of the Town Hall by Crafoord.

We spent most of our time in Stockholm watching Crafoord operating and I was very impressed by the efficient way in which Gordh ran his theatres. Crafoord had two theatres with interleading doors and each theatre had an anaesthetic anteroom, and both theatres and anterooms had an operating table. Gordh induced anaesthesia on the operating table in the anteroom and supervised the positioning of the patient for the operation and then the table with patient was pushed into the theatre in exchange for the empty table. Crafoord had assistants in each theatre who started each case on their own and when the vital part of the operation was reached Crafoord walked in and took over. Having finished the delicate part he would hand over to the assistants to do the tedious part of sewing up and walk through into the other theatre where by this time the assistants in that theatre would have the next patient ready for the coup de grace. Gordh also had assistants who looked after the anaesthetic while he did the induction for the next case in the other theatre. It was reminiscent of the way I ran two theatres during the war at the Middlesex. In this way the team was able to do five or six major cases in a half-day session.

Gordh asked me to dinner one evening and when he heard that that was the day that Nigel was to have his first oesophageal dilatation he insisted on ringing up London and got through to Lilian for me.

One day we were being driven by Crafoord to an outlying hospital where he was to operate and he started to question Nuboer about the system of paying for operations in Holland. The conversation was all in English which was the only lingua franca for the three of us, and Nuboer was momentarily unable to remember the English for ‘versekering’ and asked me and when I said ‘insurance’ Crafoord said ‘Do you know what the Swedish for insurance is? It is forsakering’ pronounced almost exactly as the Dutch word.

One evening Nuboer had some engagement and I decided to try my luck going about the city and having a meal on my own. I was amazed to learn that, as in Sweden at that time the government was very worried about the excessive amount of alcohol that was being consumed, the Swedes having the largest per capita ingestion, they had closed all bars. The only way one could get an alcoholic drink was to order a sandwich in a licensed restaurant and then one was allowed to drink. The sandwich was served up wrapped in a transparent plastic cover and there was no compunction on the customer even to unwrap it let alone eat it. A pile of wrapped sandwiches beside a thirsty man was quite a common sight. I gathered that one could not buy alcohol freely for home consumption, one had to produce coupons, issued in an apparently extremely undemocratic manner. It appeared that the number of coupons a person was issued varied directly with the amount of Income Tax he paid. The reason for this, I understood, was that whereas all Swedes drank heavily, the poorest such as the waterside worked spent a larger proportion of their income on booze than the more affluent who could afford it. By limiting the amount the poor could spend on alcohol it was hoped that a more equitable balance could be struck. I think that the result was that the poor spent all their coupons on the cheaper beverages such as South African sherry

while the richer could afford vintage wines and spirits. I don't think the regulations achieved the desired results as all classes of society continued to drink too much but the workmen drank more of the cheaper and possibly more toxic brands while the better off could afford to drink less of the safer potions.

Dr Ole Secher rang me from Copenhagen and invited me to break my return journey on the way back and spend the weekend with him. He and his wife were wonderful hosts and, apart from home hospitality showed me round the town including the Tivoli Gardens. I returned to Utrecht laden with presents for Lilian and the children, mostly chosen by Mrs Secher.

When I returned to Utrecht I learnt that Nigel's oesophageal dilatation had been successful but that he had to return to London in about two months time for further treatment. This he did but he had only one more dilatation and then we were told that he need not come again unless he had any further trouble.

In May 1948 I was asked by Dr Brom to go to the Sint Antonius Hospital and give an anaesthetic to a five-day-old baby who had a congenital abnormality incompatible with life. This was a oesophago-tracheal fistula, a communication between the oesophagus and the trachea and in most cases the oesophagus is in two separate parts, the top half just a blind pouch and the lower half with the opening into the trachea and leading down into the stomach. Thus when the infant takes any food by mouth it cannot get down to the stomach and eventually spills over into the larynx and causes at best a fit of choking and more likely inhalation, pneumonia and death. That is why the condition is incompatible with normal life. Moreover the fistula between the lower part of the gullet and the trachea makes it likely that acid gastric juice if regurgitated into the oesophagus will contaminate the lower air passages.

I had never seen a case of this condition before and indeed it was not very much reported in the medical press, because most cases would be diagnosed as infantile pneumonia, quite correctly but the cause of the pneumonia had not been recognised.

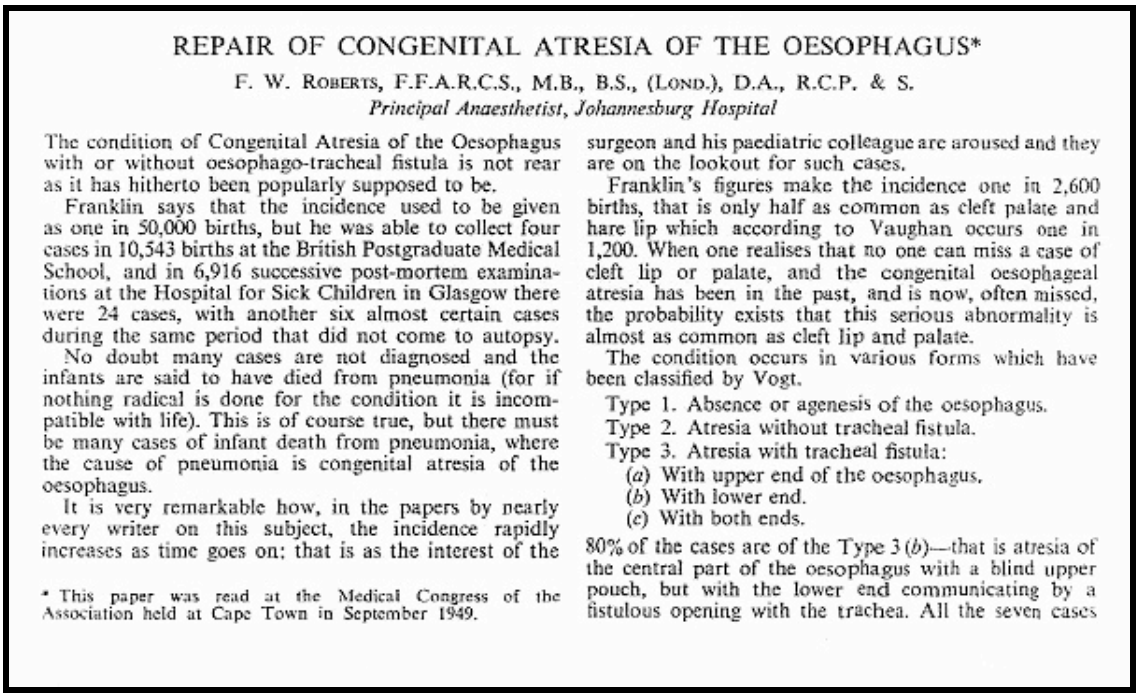
The operation to care the condition involves opening the infant's chest and had almost always before been attempted under local anaesthetic and the struggling, only to be expected during a major surgical operation on a conscious baby, together with the collapsed lung and the frantically moving chest with the efforts at respiration would make the procedure extremely difficult on such a tiny subject. Although I had often given neonates an anaesthetic for other forms of surgery I had not before been faced with the problem of anaesthetising one for thoracic surgery so I gave an anaesthetic but refrained from using a muscle relaxant, curare, in so small a patient and allowed the baby to breathe spontaneously. There was a considerable amount of paradoxical respiration, which means that there was a lot of movement with each breath. Dr Brom had a struggle to complete the operation on a moving target but completed the operation but the baby died the next day. The news spread that it was possible to diagnose and treat this comparatively rare condition and soon general practitioners and paediatricians were on the look out for it and it so happened that two more cases were referred to Brom during the ensuing month

When I was asked to help with the next neonate I decided to use the same principles as I would far an adult thoracotomy and so I calculated that if the normal adult dose of

curare was between 20 and 30 mg to produce temporary respiratory paralysis I should try the effect of a minute dose such as 0.5 mg. To my joy and relief it worked and I was able to perform controlled respiration on the infant and give the surgeon a completely still field of operation. I repeated the curare after the effect of the first dose wore off after about 20 minutes and the operation was successfully completed. In spite of this the baby died three days later, but with the second of the two further infants I used the same technique, giving, in fact three doses of curare and to our great satisfaction the little girl survived and made a complete recovery and grew into a healthy child eating and behaving normally.

The following year in South Africa David Adler, a thoracic surgeon had three such cases referred to him and I applied the same technique. The first two died out the third survived and as far as I know is still alive.

This method of anaesthesia for infants for thoracic surgery was quite unprecedented and so I read a paper on the subject at a Congress of the Medical Association of South Africa in Cape Town in December 1949, which was printed in the *South African Medical Journal* in March 1950, entitled 'Anaesthesia for the Repair of Congenital Atresia of the Oesophagus'. I checked the proofs, which had the correct title, and received my reprints also correctly titled, but when the Journal appeared the printer had missed out the first three words so that no notice of the article was taken by anaesthetists or by compilers of indexed anaesthetic literature and years afterwards other people got the credit for first using curare and controlled respiration in neonates for such operations. I found it irritating that I did not get the kudos for my pioneer work because of a printer's error. The editor of the Journal admitted the error but all that happened was the publication of an apology in an insignificant two or three line statement some weeks later.



REPAIR OF CONGENITAL ATRESIA OF THE OESOPHAGUS*

F. W. ROBERTS, F.F.A.R.C.S., M.B., B.S., (LOND.), D.A., R.C.P. & S.

Principal Anaesthetist, Johannesburg Hospital

The condition of Congenital Atresia of the Oesophagus with or without oesophago-tracheal fistula is not rear as it has hitherto been popularly supposed to be.

Franklin says that the incidence used to be given as one in 50,000 births, but he was able to collect four cases in 10,543 births at the British Postgraduate Medical School, and in 6,916 successive post-mortem examinations at the Hospital for Sick Children in Glasgow there were 24 cases, with another six almost certain cases during the same period that did not come to autopsy.

No doubt many cases are not diagnosed and the infants are said to have died from pneumonia (for if nothing radical is done for the condition it is incompatible with life). This is of course true, but there must be many cases of infant death from pneumonia, where the cause of pneumonia is congenital atresia of the oesophagus.

It is very remarkable how, in the papers by nearly every writer on this subject, the incidence rapidly increases as time goes on; that is as the interest of the surgeon and his paediatric colleague are aroused and they are on the lookout for such cases.

Franklin's figures make the incidence one in 2,600 births, that is only half as common as cleft palate and hare lip which according to Vaughan occurs one in 1,200. When one realises that no one can miss a case of cleft lip or palate, and the congenital oesophageal atresia has been in the past, and is now, often missed, the probability exists that this serious abnormality is almost as common as cleft lip and palate.

The condition occurs in various forms which have been classified by Vogt.

Type 1. Absence or agenesis of the oesophagus.
Type 2. Atresia without tracheal fistula.
Type 3. Atresia with tracheal fistula:
(*a*) With upper end of the oesophagus.
(*b*) With lower end.
(*c*) With both ends.

80% of the cases are of the Type 3 (*b*)—that is atresia of the central part of the oesophagus with a blind upper pouch, but with the lower end communicating by a fistulous opening with the trachea. All the seven cases

* This paper was read at the Medical Congress of the Association held at Cape Town in September 1949.

Bobby did not get the kudos he felt he deserved for his pioneer work as a result of a printer's error in the title of this article.

Although my appointment in Utrecht was only initially a temporary one, I was given to understand that it could be extended if I wished. I was not happy in the stressful circumstances of constant friction with Nuboer so I had to decide what to do in the future. I was still on the staff of the Middlesex but according to my original contract with the Mayfair Gas Company if I left the practice I would not be able to practise within a prescribed area around the West End. I was advised that this clause was not enforceable, but I would be fighting an uphill battle in competition with my ex-partners. I saw an advertisement in the Lancet and the B.M.J. for several positions as full time anaesthetists at the Johannesburg General Hospital in South Africa and decided to apply for one.

Testimonials were required and I decided to ask Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson for one, as I knew him pretty well from our association at the Middlesex and he was by then the President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and I hoped this would impress the South African authorities. His personal signature was necessary and, as time was short before the closing date for applications, Lilian flew over to London to ask for it. I managed to get the application ready with all the necessary testimonials by the last day for posting air-mail to South Africa that could be expected to reach there before the closing date. That day happened to be a public holiday in Holland but the G.P.O. in Utrecht was apparently open so I took the parcel and asked what the airmail postage would be. They weighed it and told me but then said that on a public holiday they were not allowed to sell stamps. Postage stamps were commonly sold in tobacconists so I went to try and buy some but they only had the low value stamps for internal letters. To make up the amount of the airmail postage for a parcel overseas I had to buy an enormous number of stamps and I had difficulty finding space on the parcel for the stamps, which meant that I had to visit several tobacconists. However I managed to get them all on and the took the parcel to the post office which curiously enough was able to deal with accepting articles for posting even if they could not sell postage stamps!

The next morning I received a parcel in the post and it was my application to Johannesburg returned because the postage paid was inadequate. Apparently the weight of the extraordinary number of stamps was enough to exceed the rate I had been quoted! I put on the extra stamps and then had to drive furiously to the airport to deliver the parcel to the airline personally for transport to South Africa.

One day Patterson and I were driving back home from the hospital after the morning's work along the Nieuwe Gracht. This street has the canal running up the middle of it dividing the two lanes of traffic so we were running with the canal on out left side. There were numerous narrow side streets crossing the Nieuwe Gracht by bridges. The traffic rules were that one had to give way to traffic coming from the right. As I approached one of these cross roads a man on a light motor cycle came charging out of the side street on my right at about 70 km.p.h. and crashed into the front passenger's door on the right of my car. Patterson was sitting there and fortunately he was not hurt, but the rider came off his bike, which nearly finished up in the canal. We got out and found the man unconscious and bleeding from the nose so we realised that he probably had a fractured skull. Quite illegally but in the victim's best interests we did not wait for the police to summon an ambulance but Patterson and I put him in our car and took him to the hospital where he underwent immediate emergency surgery. The man recovered but when he was discharged the police brought a charge against me for careless driving. When the case was held the victim said that he had four motor bikes

and was a very careful driver and that the bike he had been riding was not capable of more than 25 km.p.h., a statement that the magistrate obviously did not believe because a keen motor cyclist who owned four machines was unlikely to be interested in such a like. Because I was legally in the wrong, not giving way to a vehicle coming from the right, I was found guilty but the fine was only Fl 15, the equivalent of 30 shillings, a sentence similar to awarding a farthing damages. About three years later when I was in South Africa the victim brought a civil action against me for damages stating that he was a butcher and as a result of the accident no had lost his sense of smell and could no longer detect when his meat was going bad. The summons only reached me well after the action had been heard in court, and because I had not obeyed the summons the man was granted damages to the equivalent of £7,000. Luckily the company with which I had been insured in Holland paid the damages and I heard no more about it.

Eventually I received a telegram from South Africa saying that I had been appointed as Principal Anaesthetist to the Johannesburg General Hospital. A confirmatory letter followed explaining that the appointment was partly by the Transvaal Provincial Administration and partly by the University of the Witwatersrand. One might be excused for imagining from the title of the appointment that this was the top job. Not so, the top job was called the Chief Anaesthetist, Principal denoted the second in command of the anaesthetic department and third in the hierarchy was the Senior Anaesthetist. I was expected to take up the position within three months.

I enquired from the Utrecht University how much notice I would be required to give and was told that as I was paid monthly a month's notice was expected. I went to see Professor Nuboer and told him of my decision to leave and he was furious, but I pointed out that in Holland as things were I had no security of tenure. Had I been made a Professor that would have been different because then my position would be quite secure and I could have stayed in Holland without having to kowtow every morning to Nuboer. I liked Holland and the life there. The rationing was getting less and less stringent and although when I arrived in April 1947 it was much stricter than in England by now it was much easier. I gave in my notice and shortly afterwards the blow fell.

I got another telegram from Johannesburg saying that my appointment had been annulled because the South African Medical Council would not recognise me as a specialist on the grounds that I had never done any general practice. The regulations for being put on the Specialist Register were that one must do at least two years in general practice. In England there was no specialist register and the method of training there would preclude an aspirant anaesthetist spending two years away from hospital. When he came back he would have lost all chances of getting hospital appointments as a Resident or Registrar and from the ranks of senior full time hospital anaesthetists were chosen the Honorary Anaesthetists. Joan Nicholson who had been appointed to the Chief Anaesthetist position also had never done general practice but he had been in the army which the medical council regarded as the equivalent.

I had also written to the Middlesex hospital giving my notice to retire from the Honorary Staff, but I rang the Secretary-Superintendent and learnt to my relief that as it was August, a commonly accepted holiday month, there had been no meeting of the Board to consider my resignation and so he could withdraw my letter. In view of the

strained relations with Nuboer I could not bring myself to go to him, cap in hand, and withdraw by resignation.

So we began to make plans for returning to England. I decided that my best plan was to go back to London and see what work I could still do at the Middlesex. During my sojourn in Holland the National Health system had been introduced in Britain, and the Honoraries were now paid for their sessions which they had previously done 'pro deo', as they say in South Africa, meaning for no monetary reward. That, at least, would be a start because it would take some time to build up a private practice.

Patterson, whose wife had joined him in Utrecht, lived in a small rented house and was offered a permanent job as operating theatre technician and he decided to stay on in Holland.

I wrote a strongly protesting latter to the Johannesburg Hospital authorities pointing out the position they had put me in by sending not only a telegram out also a confirmatory letter telling me I had a job to go to there and I threatened to sue them for damages.

To add to my woes at this time I suddenly developed a Bell's Palsy, a facial paralysis. I woke up one morning and found I could not move the left side of my face properly while shaving. Lilian tended to think I was making a fuss about nothing and packed me of to work. There I found I could not look down a bronchoscope, because I could not close my left eye. I was sent back home and Nuboer despatched the Professor of Neurology to see me who chose to treat it with 'masterly inactivity'. I had to avoid draughts, wear a pad over the left eye to keep it closed, and take ten days off. We decided to take the car over on the ferry to England and Lilian and I went looking for a job and a house. This quest took us as far as the Lake District where a vacancy was advertised for an anaesthetist at Whitehaven, not exactly typical Lake District country being a coal mining town, but sufficiently near to the western side of the Fells to contemplate the possibility of commuting. We decided against the idea and returned to Holland, to get ready to move the family and our belongings back to London.

I was still not sure that there was no chance of us going eventually to South Africa so I arranged with an international removal firm to collect our household goods and store them in a container until I knew where we were going to live. Even if we did not manage to get to South Africa, we had no address in the U.K. to give them. With Anthony and the two small children aged only four-and-a-half and two years we had an enormous amount of things that we would have to have with us so we decided that Patterson and I should take the bulk of personal belongings over to England and then return so that I could take Lilian and the children with the rest of the intimate personal belongings with us.

We took the back seat out of the car and we packed in everything that we could, leaving Lilian with only the bare minimum to cope with the children, and we took advantage of excursion fares available provided we took the Hoek van Holland-Harwich ferry during the daylight hours which was not as popular as the night trip. Currency regulations were very strict and we were only allowed to take with us the equivalent of £3 each. The petrol tanks of all vehicles on the ferry and to be emptied before going aboard, leaving as only enough to drive on and drive off at the other side.

With our limited financial resources we decided that we could afford to buy between us a half bottle of Jenever and still have enough, on arrival in Harwich, to buy petrol for the journey to London and some food for the journey as we expected to be pretty hungry by the time we arrived in England. In Harwich we had to go through the customs, but seeing that we only had used clothing and ordinary household goods we did not expect any trouble. Each passenger was supposed to be allowed to bring in half a litre of spirits duty free so we had nothing to hide or to fear. However the customs people were very suspicious about a car arriving with two young men and the car stacked from floor to roof and door to door as well as the boot crammed full, so they kept us waiting until all the other cars had been cleared and the demanded that we took everything out of the ear for inspection and presented me with a form which asked for the date of purchase, price paid, and place of purchase of everything we had bought in Holland. I suppose I was stupid to do so but I was so incensed as well as tired and hungry that I wrote across the form 'All these goods are the belongings of a family that has lived in Holland for the last 18 months, with the expectation of possibly staying there for good. We have three children and we have not kept any bills or receipts and cannot answer any of these questions.' This must have infuriated them because they demanded that every trunk or suitcase be emptied in front of them and they searched the lot thoroughly. I suppose the fact that they found nothing, which is all there was to find, infuriated them more so they then said 'Now you will pay the duty on the half bottle of Jenever.'

I replied that that was only half of the amount we two men were entitled to bring into the country. 'That is at the discretion of His majesty's Customs, and in this case His Majesty's Customs do not wish to exercise that discretion.' So Patterson and I were forced to hand ever nearly all the money we had and we had no idea how we were going to buy petrol for the journey to London and food to sustain us on the way

I was a member of the A.A. and the A.A. agent was waiting for us anxious to close up and go home. He could not understand why we had been kept till last and then subjected to the long ordeal, the customs officials had left us to replace everything into the cases and pack them back in the car of course, but when he heard our story he said 'I will lend you £5 and you can pay me back on your return.' He knew that we intended to return to Holland in three days' time. We accepted his offer thankfully and to celebrate our relief we shared with him the half bottle of gin and drank it then and there in his office!

Back in Holland I had applied to be allowed to export the car I had bought although car rationing was still in force because there were very strong rumours that it was soon to be abolished. I had to go to The Hague for an interview and I thought the official was beginning to relent but he finally decided that we must sell it back to the Ministry of O.K.W. (Onderwijs, Kunst en Wetenschap) or Education, Art and Science according to the original arrangement. This meant that I must sell it at the recognised second-hand value, which they placed at about £180. By this time Nuboer had organised a replacement for me to come from England but he could not come for another two weeks or so and he would be allowed to buy the car from me. We arranged that I should hand it over to him in England. Thus I was able to load up Lilian and the boys and the remaining personal luggage and make the crossing three times in about ten days. This time we had no problem with His Majesty's Customs.

Chapter 11: Emigration from England to South Africa

When we landed at Harwich this time there was no trouble with Customs. Out of the dock area our first need was to fill up with petrol and when we did so Nigel was very intrigued and said to me quietly so as not to hurt anyone's feelings 'Daddy, They all speak English here!' Of course, as they were often during the day in Utrecht in the care of a Dutch nanny (after her marriage, Kitty had been replaced by 'Babs'), they heard a lot of Dutch spoken and understood quite a bit. When Babs took them to the Wilhelminapark (where it was forbidden to walk on the grass!), she would take them to see the ducks and they knew them as 'eendtjes' and a passing horse would be referred to as 'een paard'. Only two days after we returned to England Stuart was being a little fractious when being taken for a walk in his push-chair, or stroller as it seems to be now called, and we attempted to distract his attention from whatever was worrying him by pointing out a passing horse and cart by saying 'Kijk, Stuart, een paard!' he replied crossly 'It isn't a paard, it's a horse!'

Life in England was obviously not going to easy because we did not have a home, we only had the car for a few days until I would have to hand it over to Dr Johnson, my replacement for the job in Holland, and all I had to build a practice around was my appointment at the Middlesex which thanks to the introduction of the National Health Service was paid now, but not enough to keep a wife and family of three children.

Lilian's parents lived in a small house in Mottingham and managed to be able to give us the use of one bedroom. I cannot remember what happened to Anthony but we found a Children's Home on the South Coast at Littlehampton where we could board Nigel and Stuart temporarily. I was able to get five half-day sessions at the Middlesex, but of course they were the worst five sessions, all the better ones had been filled by my anaesthetic colleagues on the staff, including now Peter Dinnick and Brian Sellick, and I was landed with the sessions none of the others wanted, including a session with a newly appointed neurosurgeon, a Dr Diana Beck, the first woman surgeon to be appointed to the staff of the Middlesex. Diana Beck was a very nice person but she had the prevailing disadvantage of all neurosurgeons at that time, her operations were often very protracted and a morning session might not end until well into the evening. I had to try and fit any private cases I could get into the hours when not engaged at the Middlesex on hospital routines. I could not with confidence accept any private work on the afternoons following my 'morning' session with Diana Beck.

I had to try to get a car and found that unlike in Holland where such things were well regulated, in England there was a waiting list and the people at the top of the list were those who had had the foresight to order a new car even during the war before cars were being produced for the civilian needs. The waiting time on the list was about two years, but luckily the British Medical Association had come to an arrangement with car manufacturers that medical practitioners without a car should be given preference, so under this scheme I managed to acquire a new Humber Hawk within about two weeks of returning to England. It turned out to be one of the worst cars I have ever owned. The door handle of the driver's door had a habit of coming off loose in my hand and the self starter would not work once the engine was hot, and if it stalled in traffic I had to get out, lift the bonnet and press a mysterious knob called the solenoid. This performance in a crowded and busy London street is annoying to the motorist stuck behind as well as wearing on the performer's nerves. I looked all over the car carefully,

certain I would find somewhere chalked on the chassis a little notice ‘Unfit for Export’ but I failed to locate it. Still it went, most of the time, and I could not have carried on without it. I had to pay £900 for it and sign an undertaking that I would not sell the car in less than a year from the purchase date. This was to try and stop the racket which ‘Smart-Alecs’ had devised of putting their name down for every car on the market and as a soon as a new one became available, selling the current car for as much as twice the purchase price of a new car, such was the shortage of cars on the ordinary market. There was a proviso that if one had to sell the car for any valid reason before the year was up one could sell it, but only back to the original agent who in his turn agreed to refund the entire new purchase price.

Rather than commute by car from Mottingham morning and night to the west End, a matter of about 15 miles through heavy traffic each way, I used to leave the car from Monday to Friday, or even until Saturday mid-day if I had any private work on Saturday morning, in the car park of the Middlesex Hospital and do the journey by rail. I knew the line very well as Mottingham is only one station further on than Lee where I had lived as a student and commuted for nearly five years.

The practice went better than I had expected, quite a few of the dentists with whom I had worked before and during the war were pleased to see me back and gave me support. I did not have the help to which I had been accustomed from Patterson, so I had quite a lot of extra manual heavy labour, but I was only 37 years old and fit.

One day I was walking along Mortimer Street when I met a young doctor who had been a student at the Middlesex and I knew he had come originally from South Africa, He asked me what I was doing these days and I told him that if it had not been for the intransigence of the South African Medical Council with their blessed Specialist Register I would have been in Johannesburg on the staff of the General Hospital there. He asked for details and then said me would write to his father who was still in practice in South Africa and see what could be done about it. I didn’t really expect anything would come of it but some time in early December I received a letter from the Medical Superintendent of the Johannesburg General, saying that in consultation with the University of the Witwatersrand, they had decided to offer me the job again, but I must come as soon as possib1e.

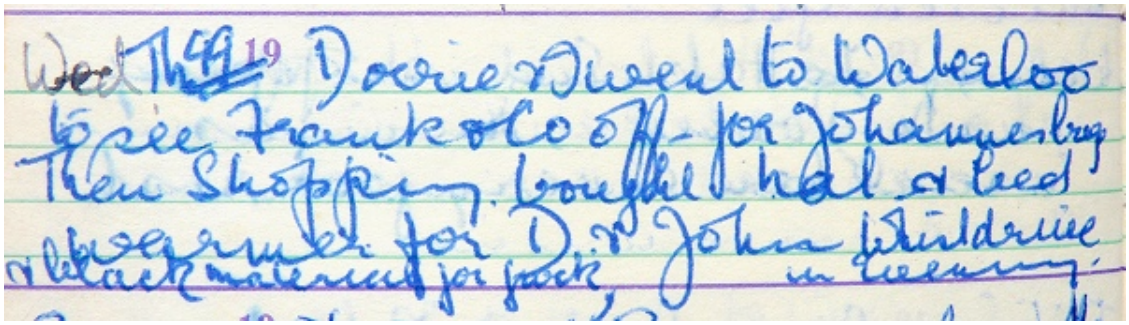
I found that all the accommodation in the Cabin Class of the Union Castle Line which ran regular services every fortnight between Southampton and Cape Town was booked out for many months but that in the first week of January 1949 there was a vacant Family Cabin in the First Class, and I decided to take that. Then followed a hectic time saying farewell to my mother, my father and Dora my stepmother, all my in-laws and friends.

I sold the car back to the agents, who had big glossy showrooms in Piccadilly, for the £900 I had given for it and saw it in their shop windows a few days later polished up and a ‘bargain’ at £1250.

I gave in my notice to the Middlesex Hospital and severed my connection with that institution a where I had been continuously as a student, resident, Assistant Anaesthetist and finally for the last 10 years as an Honorary Anaesthetist (though for the last three

months Honorary in name but not in fact), in all for more than 20 years. I went there as a student in September 1928 and left in January 1949.

I asked the Dutch removal firm, by the name of De Boer, to send our furniture to Johannesburg, but asked then to hold it in storage until I could give them on address. The only people I knew in South Africa were George and Vera Ridge. George was the friend of my mother's family to whom Olive had sent me on his farm in Leicestershire in the hope of eradicating that stupid idea of becoming a farmer, way back in 1926, twenty-three years before. They had immigrated to South Africa where George had a small holding about 20 miles south of Johannesburg on the road to Vereeniging, where the Peace Treaty had been signed at the end of the Boer War. The smallholding was too small to be viable as a farm and George had got a job with the Robinson Deep gold mine, and commuted daily. I managed to contact them (the postal service must have been much better then than it is now, in spite of the introduction of airmail as a regular thing) and they said we could stay with them until we managed to find more permanent accommodation.



Olive's diary entry for Thursday, 6 January 1949, says 'Dorrie & I went to Waterloo to see Frank (*i.e.*, Bobby) & Co off for Johannesburg. Then shopping …'

We sailed on was the Pretoria Castle and found that our cabin had five bunks and not much space. In those days it was *de rigeur* to dress for dinner every evening except on the first night on board. The children had to go to the dining saloon about an hour before the adults for each meal. Anthony was, at 12½, old enough to look after himself but Nigel was not yet five years old and Stuart was only 2½, so that meant that either Lilian or I would have to sit with and supervise the two little ones at every children's mealtime and then take them back to our cabin, dress ourselves appropriately and then lock them in the cabin, hoping that while we were away eating they would not manage to open the porthole and find their way into the Atlantic.

The vessel was fitted with a children's nursery, but it was in the cabin class part of the ship, the erroneous assumption being that people who travelled first class would be rich enough to bring along their own nanny. We explained our situation to the good lady in charge of the nursery and with very bad grace she consented to allow us to leave Nigel and Stuart there occasionally. Every time we did so they were received very reluctantly and we hoped that the children were not made to feel that they were despised for 'slumming'.

Lilian and I were allotted to sit at the table graced by the presence of the ship's doctor. I told him that I was an anaesthetist and that I would be willing to assist him if, during the voyage to Cape Town, he would need my help. I was fortunate in that there were no cases requiring the services of an anaesthetist in the next two weeks. A young Jewish

married couple, I suspect returning from their honeymoon in Europe, were very friendly and told us lots of interesting and useful facts about life in South Africa. They even asked us to go and stay with them at their home in Port Elizabeth at some future date, an invitation we accepted and followed up some two years later. He was a shoe manufacturer and the memorable thing about our subsequent stay there was that on the local golf course when I played with him there were numerous tortoises wandering over the greens and before putting one had to remove any tortoise in the line of the putt. Another fellow passenger was Tom Lovegrove, an extrovert with a gammy leg, a loud voice and a 'Life, be in it' spirit. I remember swimming with him in the ship's swimming bath during a particularly rough part of the voyage and having to take care diving into the pool because the water was swishing up and down and a mistimed dive could find one entering an area where the depth was only a few inches whereas a few seconds before it had been lapping over the sides.

A few days after leaving Southampton, during which the Bay of Biscay took its toll in the way of seasickness for Lilian and the two smaller children, the ship anchored in Funchal Bay in Madeira and while we were waiting for the tender to take us ashore we were treated to the spectacle of the youths diving for coins thrown by the passengers. I noticed that they usually ignored the copper coins and just let them sink but were very adept at going down and catching the silver before it reached the ocean floor. Various hawkers came aboard and tried to sell us their wares, chiefly lace tablecloths and place settings, but we had been warned to wait until we were ashore to know the current prices and then we would be in a position to bargain. When we landed from the tender, we hired a taxi to take us to the top of the hill behind Funchal and then came down riding in wooden sledges bumping our way over cobbles down a special track for the purpose at what seemed to us a very dangerous speed especially at the intersections that the track made with the winding road up which the taxi had taken us. The driver of the sledge was armed only with a stout pole which he used to steer and brake. It was a very exciting experience similar, I suppose, to that enjoyed by the daring young people who do white water canoeing or rafting.

What impressed Lilian and me most about that sea voyage was the sudden change from the living conditions in war torn Britain still suffering from the strict rationing that we had accepted as part of the war essentials but which, after emerging from the war reputedly on the winning side, we found hard to bear, to the luxury of First Class life on a peacetime ocean liner. Gourmet food at occasionally affordable prices had been available in Holland where the rationing during our 18 months there had steadily improved until the standard of living far surpassed the conditions in the U.K., but here on the Union Castle Line it was the norm throughout the whole fortnight. We had to take every opportunity to take exercise by walking round and round the deck, indulging in all the available deck sports and swimming. We experienced for the first time the ceremony of Crossing the Line where king Neptune, looking very like a bearded, seaweed bedecked Tom Lovegrove, dispensed rude justice, mock shaving and ducking to as many of the erstwhile landlubbers who could be persuaded to submit.

I do not enjoy long voyages on a liner. After a few days the view becomes monotonous, time hangs heavy, there is too much temptation to relieve the boredom by overindulging in the duty free liquor and, in this case, the irresistible rich food and the most exciting thing is the sighting of another ship which at any rate confirms that we are still in a shipping lane and not adrift in an uncharted ocean. Eventually we drew

near to Cape Town and we were excited to catch a first glimpse of the continent where we were to spend so much of our lives.



The Union Castle Line's 'Pretoria Castle' in Cape Town harbour.

We were booked on the train to do Johannesburg, which left in the early evening so we had most of the day to spend looking round Cape Town, which would have been more enjoyable without the smaller two children. In order to amuse them we decided to go to one of the beaches and we boarded a bus. We soon learnt the meaning of apartheid because in Cape Town at that time there were not separate buses for black and white people but certain parts of the bus were reserved for the different races. We did the wrong thing and sat down in the back part of the bus nearest to the point of boarding and had to be asked to move. We were to find that in Johannesburg there were separate buses with separate bus stops, a state of affairs that lasted until the late 1980s. In 1990 I rode in a white persons bus in Johannesburg driven by a black man, stopping at both the white and black stops if necessary and picking up anybody of any colour who wanted to get on at either type of marked stop and who sat wherever they wished. The fanatical anti-apartheid activists and their fellow travellers who wish to denigrate South Africa as much as possible do not talk about the great improvements that have been made in the last ten years so that the average person who has never been to South Africa in the last few years still believes that rigid apartheid is still practised, whereas in fact it lingers only in the towns of the Afrikaner *platteland* especially in the Northern Transvaal.

When we arrived it was summer in the southern hemisphere, being about the 20th January 1949 and on the first part of our journey by train we had the benefit of daylight to enable us to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Cape Province to the north west of Cape Town through the vineyards and rich farmlands around Paarl with the majestic mountain scenery leading into the Hex River valley winding up the pass towards the barren karoo desert. Darkness fell before we came to the most tedious part of the journey so we were not prepared for the change of scenery, which took place while we

slept or tried to sleep. The heat the next day we found very oppressive and the scenery was monotonous, miles and miles of rocky scrub with very few discernable signs of houses or people. At some of the stations we were able to get out and stretch our legs and buy welcome cold drinks from itinerant vendors.

After nightfall we arrived at Kimberley where we were told there would be a stop of 20 minutes so I decided to try and phone George Ridge to tell him we were on the way and due to arrive at Johannesburg at 7.30 the next morning. I got through but I did not realise until he told us the next day how lucky I had been, because their phone was on a party line and the long distance phoning at that time was not very efficient. George and Vera, his wife, seemed to regard the successful connection as almost a miracle. That first day, as we drove away from the station, we saw for the first time rows and rows of African mineworkers walking towards the station with huge parcels and often sewing machines on their heads. George explained that these were those who had finished their two-year contract and were on the way home, the majority of them to other countries in Southern Africa outside the Union of South Africa. They had come voluntarily in spite of the apartheid, attracted by the wages, leaving their wives and families behind. The mining authorities, knowing that if they paid the natives their wages in full during the time of their contract they would spend it all in riotous living, used to pay them only a small amount of the wage due to them at weekly intervals and the rest was in part sent home to the wives to provide maintenance and in part was saved until a few days before the termination of their contract. Then the man would spend a lot on presents to take home, hence the sewing machines, and return to the bosom of their families where they would stay without working, drinking with their buddies while the women continued to do all the work, both in and out of the house, until the money ran out and then the men would probably volunteer once again for a term of duty on the gold mines, sometimes for another two years and sometimes for a shorter period.

George and Vera Ridge lived on their small holding at a place called Apple Orchards near De Deur on what was then the main road to Vereeniging. They had a few cows and some fields under cultivation mostly to produce food for themselves or the cattle. They had a couple of African servants who, no matter what their age was, were always in South Africa called ‘boy’ and ‘girl’, they had a ‘garden boy’ and a ‘house girl’. The servants lived in their own ‘kyas’ or little single room huts on the premises and spoke not only their own language but also a smattering of English and also a sort of bastard Zulu known either as kitchen-kaffir or Fanagolo. In the environs of the big English speaking cities such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban the blank people or natives as they were then officially called spoke enough English to get by but in the country districts or *platteland* and Bloemfontein, Pretoria etc., their second language was usually Afrikaans.

One evening during our stay there while we looked for a suitable house to buy in Johannesburg, we were sitting out in the garden having our pre-prandial drinks or ‘spots’ when the house girl walked by at the other side of the garden taking a large tin full of water on her head to her kya and George said ‘Watch this’ and picked up a tennis ball and threw it at the tin. George was a good shot and it hit the tin with a resounding bang and the girl was quite unmoved, so luckily was the tin, and she just turned her head and gave him a big smile as though she was used to such pranks, maybe she was.

After recovering from the journey for a day George gave me a lift to Johannesburg and I reported to the Superintendent of the General hospital, Dr Kenneth Mills. He told me that, although the Hospital and the University (my appointment was a dual Provincial and University one) had decided to employ me after all, I must realise that the South African Medical Council were still adamant in refusing to recognise that I was a specialist and that it was very likely that they would sue me for practising as a specialist when I was not so recognised. He did however soften this blow by saying that I must not worry about that at all, as the University and the Transvaal Province would undertake the legal aspect of my defence. I was to start work at the beginning of February, and my next problem was to obtain a car. So I went down to the part of Johannesburg at the southern end of Eloff and Rissik Streets where the motor dealers congregated and looked around the showrooms. I bought a second hand Chevrolet that had 19,000 miles on the clock but otherwise seemed in good shape and after completing the formalities drove it back to Apple Orchards.



A 1947 Chevrolet.

Lots of people told me that I had been very rash, that second hand car dealers were a lot of sharks and that the true mileage was quite unknown as the dealer had probably wound back the odometer. However I had wheels and in the event it proved to be a very good bargain, as I had it for six years and it gave practically no trouble and had wall over 100,000 miles on the clock when I eventually rather reluctantly was persuaded by friends that the car was now too old and that I really should get a new car as a status symbol, as I was then in private practice and I could not afford not to look successful in either clothes or car!

We found a house in one of the newer northern suburbs, Birnam, which belonged to Chick and Madeleine Nathan who had bought a house in Bryanston. They were living in the house in Bryanston with the previous owner's furniture still in it and were only too happy to let us move straight away into the Birham house and use their furniture

until such time as Buster Elliot had bought his house and could remove his furniture from the Bryanston house. This suited us very well as our furniture had still to arrive from Holland. Now we had only to engage a nanny-house-girl and we could be settled in. Madeleine found us a girl and wanted us to go out to dinner with them in Bryanston the evening the girl arrived. The only drawback with that was that we intended leaving the children in the girl's care for the evening and she wanted to return to the 'township' to collect her blankets for her bed in the kya. Lilian said that she would lend her some of our blankets and she could go off the next morning to collect her own. I think the reason Madeleine and Chick wanted us to go to dinner was to vet us to make sure we could be trusted to look after their household goods. At least once a week during the next few weeks Madeleine would come to Birham and ask if she could take one small item of her furniture because they needed it in the Bryanston house, and those incidents were probably an excuse to see that we were treating her belongings with due care, anyway we must have passed all those tests because the Nathans became close friends.

The next day Johanna went off to the township to get her blankets and Lilian found that our blankets that we had lent her had acquired a rather offensive odour, so Lilian put them in the washing machine but that treatment failed to cure the trouble and so did the first dry cleaning and it was some time before we could use the blankets again or even tolerate them in the linen cupboard. This question of body odour is, I am sure, one of the chief obstacles to the instant removal of apartheid. I am assured that some Europeans have an aroma, undetectable to other white people, which is unpleasant in some sensitive black nostrils, so the problem is a two way one.

Eventually De Boers, the Dutch removal firm delivered our furniture and the large empty crate stood for a long time on the open veld opposite the house beside the little stream which later we found was the headwaters of the Sandspruit from the Melrose Bird Sanctuary running to join the Jukskei river which runs into Hartebeestpoortdam. From there the Krokodil river runs north to join the Marico forming the Limpopo, or as Kipling called it, 'the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo river'. We discovered when the winter came that as we had chosen a south facing house we did not get much sun and attractive as the thatched house was in summer it was often warmer outside the house than inside in winter. The front garden sloped down from the house to the road and there was a low wall about 30 inches high. One day we had a severe hail storm and the ice was level with the top of the garden wall and I had to shovel it out into the road in case the weight broke down the wall. I remember I had no gum boots and I did not want my ordinary shoes to become waterlogged so I stood barefoot in the ice and had to keep on retiring to warm them up.

Anthony went to a government school in the adjacent suburb of Bramley for his last year in primary school; Nigel and Stuart were, of course, too young to go to school yet. Lilian made friends with a young married couple, Cyril and Joan Harris who lived a few houses up the road we lived in, Sunnyside Road, and we soon made the acquaintance of Don and Ida Haynes. Don had set up in practice as a general practitioner near us in the main highway, Corlett Drive. On my way to and from the hospital I met Leslie Bate who commuted by bus into the city where he was a company secretary to a big agricultural and veterinary chemical firm, Cooper and Nephew, and I frequently gave him a lift and so we became friends with him and his wife Freda.

At hospital I was second in command of the fulltime anaesthetic staff. John Nicholson, from Manchester, was the boss with the title of Chief Anaesthetist, my title was Principal Anaesthetist, and the third in the hierarchy, the Senior Anaesthetist, was a South African who had done his medical training in London and was always known as 'D'. His surname was Devitt; he had changed it from the original South African surname of De Wet at medical school to avoid being called 'wet', as the original name is pronounced with the 'w' sounding like the English 'v'. We were all appointed at the same time in the August of 1948. Nicholson also had never done any general practice but the South African Medical Council had counted his service in the RAMC during the war as general practice. They must had had second thoughts about suing me because I did not hear anything further about that problem until later in the year when the member of the Council who had been the Chairman of the Specialist Registration Committee, Dr Sutherland Strachan died suddenly. It appeared that he was the stumbling block to my acceptance, because he was a staunch believer in South Africa for the South Africans and had been very much opposed to bringing any doctor from Britain to fill the advertised vacancies and had used every excuse he could to keep them out. As soon as he died I had a phone call from the Secretary to the Medical Council in Pretoria and he said 'Dr Roberts, I think that if you would like to put in an application now to be recognised as a specialist it won't be rejected this time!' I took his advice and was duly so registered. A few weeks later a circular was sent round to everybody on the Medical Register inviting them to subscribe to a fund for a memorial to the late Dr Sutherland Strachan. I refused to subscribe and explained that he had already cost me a lot of money by his obduracy and I did not wish to waste any more.

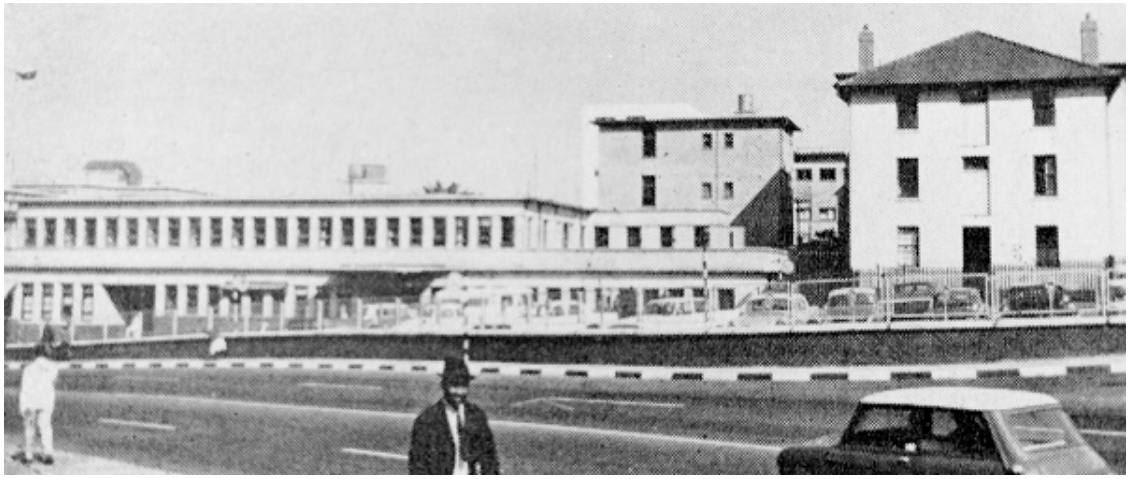
The method of medical staffing of the Johannesburg General Hospital before the new appointments advertised the previous year had been rather similar to that at the Middlesex before the introduction of the National Health Service.



A photograph taken in 1936 of the Johannesburg General Hospital.

The senior medical staff were all Honorary and the junior staff up to registrar level were full time salaried doctors. Presumably the advertisement that I had seen and answered had been an attempt to make the anaesthetic staff more coherent and manageable. The Honorary staff were now to come only for one period a week and the bulk of the work would be covered by the full time senior staff and teaching of students and training of junior staff would be easier to organise.

The three newcomers, Nicholson, Devitt and myself were in rather an invidious position, with a certain amount of resentment against us from the previous Honorary anaesthetists, the juniors who had suddenly new and imported bosses to cope with, and from the theatre sisters who now found more senior medical staff asserting their views and themselves. I had missed the first few months and by the time I arrived most of the difficulties had been resolved. We had to provide anaesthetics not only for the General Hospital but also for the Non-European Hospital which was adjacent just across Hospital Hill, the Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital and the Transvaal Memorial Children's Hospital all in the vicinity.



The Non-European Hospital.



The Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital.



The former Children's Hospital.

One of the conditions of my appointment was that I should undertake to become proficient in Afrikaans within two years so I enrolled at the Johannesburg Technical College to learn the language. Afrikaans is basically Dutch, in fact until, I think, 1929 High Dutch or Hoog Hollands and English were the two official languages of the Union of South Africa. Over the 300 years since Jan van Riebeeck established a revictualling post on the site of present day Cape Town the language spoken by the Afrikaners had diverged from the parent tongue by the inclusion of many words of foreign origin, Malay from the slaves brought from the Dutch East Indies, French, German and English from waves of settlers and some of the native African dialects so that with the change in pronunciation such as has occurred with English spoken in America or Australia some visitors from the Netherlands might find it hard to believe that Afrikaans was of Dutch origin. Such visitors do not like the language and refer to it as Kitchen Dutch in a derogatory manner. After having lived in Holland for 18 months I found that when I arrived in South Africa I could read the Afrikaans newspapers but the spoken language was difficult to understand. I with other recent immigrants attended classes at 5.30 p.m. twice a week under the tutelage of a Mejuffrouw Botha, one of whose methods of teaching consisted of bringing two of her pupils out in front of the whole class and suddenly presenting them with a random subject and inviting them to converse about it. One day in September Miss Botha brought out a Miss Patterson (who was a young English schoolteacher) in front of the class and looked around and said 'Ah yes, you, Dr Roberts, with your beautiful Hoog Hollands accent come out here. Imagine that you have just bumped into Miss Patterson in Eloff Street and that you recognise her as an old friend whom you have not seen for ten years. Now please carry on a conversation.'

Miss Patterson started off 'Oh! It's Dr Roberts, what are you doing here?', all in Afrikaans, of course. I replied that I was working at the Johannesburg General Hospital.

Then Miss Patterson said 'And are you married?'

To which I replied ‘Yes’ and then, because I knew the Afrikaans for it, I confided that in fact two days before had been my seventh wedding anniversary. Whereupon Miss Patterson asked if we had any children and I told her there were three boys. She then said ‘And how old are they?’

‘The youngest is three, Nigel is five and Anthony is 12.’

The class erupted into howls of laughter that Miss Botha quelled with difficulty, and asked Hiss Patterson to continue.

A little embarrassed by the turn of events, Miss Patterson then said

‘Maar, hoe is dit moontlik?’ (But, how is this possible?’) This was my opportunity to explain that I had married a widow with a child aged six years at the time and so I started ‘Dit is baie maklik’, meaning ‘It is very easy’ — meaning the explanation was easy, but that remark only had the class in an uproar again and poor Miss Botha could only restore order by saying ‘I think, Dr Roberts, that you and Miss Patterson had better sit down’. So I never had the chance to explain that Anthony had not been born out of wedlock!

I had had more experience of thoracic surgery anaesthesia than the others on the senior anaesthetic full-time staff so I gravitated to that specialty and also I worked frequently at the Children’s Hospital. I had not been there long before the three cases of Congenital Tracheoesophageal Fistula turned up to which I have referred in the previous chapter.

When I went to Cape Town to deliver my paper on the method of anaesthesia for such congenital abnormalities I was given a lift by one of the more senior full time anaesthetists working for the Transvaal Province at Coronation Hospital in the district in the western environs of Johannesburg where the Coloured (mixed blood) people lived, Molly Barlow. Molly was a daughter of Arthur Barlow, a prominent politician, and she was married to a Mr McWilliam-Smith, an engineer. Molly’s sister, Joyce, married Frank Waring who later became a Cabinet Minister in the Nationalist Government. Molly was a very pleasant person and a good anaesthetist and later became a Professor of Anaesthetics. The journey to Cape Town in those days was over corrugated unmetalled dirt roads for about two-thirds of the 970 miles, very dusty in the dry weather and muddy and slippery in the wet. We did not have rain and my chief impression of the journey was of the clouds of dust if one was unfortunate enough to be travelling behind another car. It was a two-day journey in both directions. Molly took me to meet her parents in their lovely family home at St. James looking out over False Bay on the Indian Ocean side of the Cape point peninsula.

While I was in Cape Town I contacted Ken Brauer, a radiologist practising there, who had been in the R.A.M.C. in Britain in the early years of the war and had met Lilian, and gave him her regards. Lilian had stayed with Ken and his wife Shena in Edinburgh and Ken suggested that Lilian and I might like to bring the family down to Cope Town in late December 1949 and stay at his beautiful home in Constantia while his family were going to be on holiday at Hermanus. Ken himself would not be able to get away from his new practice except at weekends, so what he was suggesting meant that Lilian would run his house for him, with the aid of all his servants, of course, and have a good

holiday while he would be living in the house from Monday to Friday and going to Hermanus for the weekends. This we agreed to do and had a wonderful holiday. We had glorious weather whereas in the Transvaal the summer is the rainy season and Constantia must be one of the loveliest parts of the Cape. One day we decided to drive with the children along the Atlantic coast to Cape Point and return via the False Bay side. We passed a beach called Llandudno and Anthony wanted to bathe so we stopped and in he went. I have never seen anyone come out of the water so quickly because the water on the Atlantic side is very cold whereas just round the corner on the Indian Ocean side in False Bay it is quite warm in summer. After that experience we always used to go for bathing purposes somewhere between Muizenberg and Simon's Town.

During that year I made the acquaintance of Denis Thompson who was at that time a surgical registrar working in the Casualty Department of the General Hospital. Occasionally the department of anaesthetics had to supply an anaesthetist to give a short anaesthetic to a patient in casualty for some minor surgery. Denis once asked me to go with him to a mission Hospital on the Witwatersrand to the west of Johannesburg, where he used to go in a purely Honorary capacity to operate on some of their patients from time to time. He told me that usually he had to put up with the sort of anaesthesia from untrained religious sisters that I had been trying to eradicate in Holland, but on this occasion he had to remove a thyroid gland and such an operation with primitive anaesthesia without endotracheal intubation would be fraught with danger so he wanted me to go and help with this particular case. He also took along Phyllis Knocker, a young house surgeon to assist him. She had been to this particular mission hospital before and told me that the usual anaesthetics there were given by what she described as the 'Rag, Bottle and Prayer method'. Rag and bottle described the simple method of pouring drops of either Chloroform or Ether on to a cloth mask held in front of the patient's nose and mouth, but I wondered where the prayer came in. I was to find out in a few minutes. After we arrived I induced the patient and when the operation was about to begin the Superintendent of the mission hospital called for silence before Denis started to operate and prayed for god to help the surgeon and the patient but didn't mention the anaesthetist. I wasn't sure whether to be hurt at the omission, but I decided to take it as a compliment that that I didn't need divine help. Both the anaesthetic and the operation went off very successfully so whoever was guiding did a good job.

Both Phyllis and Denis have remained very good friends to this day. Phyllis married a general practitioner, Zol Frame, who became our family doctor for the rest of the time we were in South Africa and was, the kindest and most dedicated G.P. I have ever known. Phyllis became a very well known general surgeon in Johannesburg rising eventually to be the President of the South African College of Physicians and Surgeons. Denis decided to leave the apartheid-bound South Africa for the freer atmosphere of Rhodesia and set up as a surgeon in Bulawayo.

During that first year in South Africa, 1949, it became very clear to us that the salary I was earning was not enough to live on and buy a house and bring up a family of three boys so I was very pleased when the Transvaal Province decided to nationalise hospital services by taking over the big municipal hospitals including, the Johannesburg General and gave all the Honorary Staff the sack but invited them to apply for positions known as Senior Part-time Anaesthetists, Surgeons etc. I decided to apply for one of those positions and to my delight I was appointed and so I gave in my notice to resign from the full time job of Principal Anaesthetist at the end of January. One of the other ex-

Honoraries, now Senior Part-time like me, Cyril Frost, who was about a year older than I was, asked me to join him in partnership in private practice. Once again, as when I first got on to the staff of the Middlesex, I was being saved the trouble and expense of finding my own rooms and secretarial service. Cyril did not want any premium but I would have to buy my share of the outstanding debts out of income and to begin with I was to take a smaller share than his of the takings.

To my surprise when I started in my new capacity at the Johannesburg General I was informed by the Medical Superintendent that I had been allotted the session on a Saturday morning working with the Professor of Surgery, Bill Underwood, I objected to this direction on the grounds that hitherto anaesthetists had always been free to choose the sessions or sessions they would work. For surgeons to assume that they could order anaesthetists when and with whom they most work was regarded as a retrograde step by anaesthetists. Apart from that I did not wish to work with Professor Underwood, as I did not like him. I found him autocratic, tending to fuss about things that did not really concern him, and behaving generally rather like a Teutonic professor. His colleagues on the surgical staff had serious doubts about his competence as a surgeon and there was a rumour that he had been given glowing testimonials by his alma mater, which I think was Bart's (St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London) merely to get rid of him![29]

In any case I did not wish to revert to conditions from which I had escaped by leaving the domination of Professor Nuboer in Utrecht. Neither did I wish to have to work every Saturday morning thus restricting my social weekend activities. I protested and eventually I won my point and settled in to do a weekly session with the thoracic surgeons David Adler and Denis Fuller. There was another thoracic surgical unit comprising Libero Fatti and Reg Crawshaw. Both thoracic surgical units worked outside the actual General Hospital as there was not enough ward or operating theatre space for them there. Adler and Fuller were given beds in a private hospital just across the road, the Lady Dudley, and Fatti and Crawshaw worked in the Princess Nursing Home.

My appointment at the General meant that one of the previous Honoraries lost his association with the hospital. He was Heymie Samson and I must say he never bore me any grudge for displacing him. Heymie was afflicted with a stammer and had an obsession with inventing new pieces of anaesthetic apparatus. He had a lathe in his bedroom which drove his wife to sleep in a separate room. On the lathe he worked with perspex and in the end his persistence paid off. He invented and made a small lightweight mask for infants[30] and receiving only lukewarm support in South Africa eventually took it to America where it was accepted and I understand that he made a fortune with it. I cannot remember now how the subject arose but in one meeting of the South African Society of Anaesthetists he was putting forward the view that all the best

[29] Plarr's Lives of the Fellows [of the Royal College of Surgeons] notes that 'William Elphinstone Underwood … antagonised many people in the department of surgery' at the University of Witwatersrand and was eventually 'asked to resign.'

[30] An article in the *Southern African Journal of Anaesthesia and Analgesia* in 2014 noted that 'Samson was probably best known for his neonatal resuscitators. The original version of the Samson neonatal resuscitator was designed to resuscitate neonates up to 8.2 kg by either untrained members of the public or trained healthcare professionals.'

anaesthetists were Jewish and said with a stutter ‘Even that b-b-bloody R-Roberts has ch-changed his name from R-R-Rabinovitz!’

Working with Cyril Frost I met the dentist Sam Skinner and we became good friends. A young English dentist who was working his way round the world, Terry Knight, worked as an assistant to Sam Skinner and fell in love with one of the patients referred to him by Sam, Joan Reynolds, and married her. Terry and Joan Knight have been friends of ours right up to the present day although we are far apart geographically as they emigrated to Canada in 1978 shortly before we returned to Tasmania.

Cyril’s wife, Adrienne, was an Afrikaner and a delightful person. I remember her explaining to me one of the peculiarities of the Afrikaans language, the double negative. The Afrikaans for ‘I am cold’ is ‘Ek is koud’ and the word for ‘not’ is ‘nie’, but ‘I am not cold’ is not ‘Ek is nie koud’ but the negative has to be duplicated rather like the French *n’est-ce pas* making the phrase ‘Ek is nie koud nie’. Adrienne stressed the fact that ‘In Afrikaans one keeps the ‘nies’ apart’.

Once Adrienne volunteered to look after our four-year-old Stuart and found him helping himself to a sweet from a bowl. Not in the least put out by being detected in this peccadillo, Stuart smiled at her and said ‘Shall I show you a sweetie?’ Forty years later Adrienne, then aged 82, told us that she would always remember Stuart because of this disarming pre-emptive remark.

The partnership with Cyril frost lasted only one year. We found that we had an incompatibility of temperament when working so closely. I had, and still do have, the greatest respect for Cyril’s integrity and his ability as an anaesthetist, but somehow we rubbed each other up the wrong way so we decided to split up amicably. Gerry Hochschild, who had been with me as a rival in the anaesthetic world of the West End of London before and during the war, had been born in South Africa but had trained as an anaesthetist in Britain. He left England and went to Johannesburg a few years before I arrived there. I had met him frequently in the operating theatres of the Nursing Homes and at meetings of the Anaesthetics Section of the Royal Society of Medicine. Hearing of my dissolution of partnership with Cyril, Gerry approached me and asked if I would consider joining him as he was finding out that a one man practice in anaesthetics meant being very tied all the time and missing a lot of work merely because our employers, surgeons or dentists, were the ones who fixed the time of the operation. He knew, of course, that I had had the experience of being in the Mayfair Gas Company and how successful that partnership had been.

I was very pleased to join Gerry Hochschild and that was the start of a very happy professional and social relationship. Little did we know then that was the start of one of the biggest and most successful anaesthetic practices in Johannesburg. Two years later we were so busy that we decided to take in a third partner and Michael Kramer joined us, and a year or so after that we needed yet another partner and we enlisted from the ranks of the registrars in training at the General, Peter Caswell.

In 1957 Gerry decided to give up practice and bought a farm in Rhodesia at Penhalonga not far from Umtali near the eastern border with Mozambique with the intention of growing oranges, so we replaced him with Hugh van Hasselt, who later became Professor of Anaesthetics, and two or three years after that we were joined by Dennis

Glauber, who had already become a well known entity because of his prowess a radio 'quiz king'.

The standard of medical knowledge and practice in South Africa was and still is vary high and one of the extremely efficient organisations was the South African Blood Transfusion Service. In Johannesburg it was run by a very capable and devoted Director, Dr Maurice Shapiro. All the blood was collected by full time staff and stored in the Service's own building in Hillbrow near the General Hospital and most of the private hospitals, which, as in Britain, were also called Nursing Homes, When blood was required, a specimen of the recipient's blood was sent to the Centre and the staff there cross-matched the blood and made ready the required amount. The normal routine was for general practitioners in the district, on a roster, to collect the blood from the Centre and take it to the place where it was needed and start the transfusion. In this way the Service was responsible for ensuring that the correct blood was used. Sometimes the surgeon in charge of a patient who was to receive the blood would circumvent this admirably simple procedure and order his house surgeon to go to the centre and collect the blood, signing for it to the effect that he would then be responsible for the transfusion from then on, and take it to the Nursing Home or hospital where the operation was to take place.

One day I was booked to give an anaesthetic for Libero Fatti[31] and Rag Crawshaw in the Princess Nursing Home to an 18-year-old girl with bronchiectasis who needed a partial resection of one lung, and their house surgeon collected the blood that was deemed necessary to be given daring the operation and brought it to the Princess and deposited it on the floor of the operating theatre where I had already started the anaesthetic, saying 'Here's the blood.' what he did not say was that he had collected the blood, not only for my patient but also for another of Fatti's patients who was due for surgery in the afternoon after my case. I had already set up an intravenous infusion and was busy doing manually controlled respiration as I had already paralysed the girl's respiratory muscles and would have to continue squeezing the rebreathing bag intermittently until after the chest was closed at the end of the operation and I could reverse the paralysis. A trained Sister in the theatre collected a bottle of blood from the cardboard carton that the house surgeon had brought and inserted the drip giving set into it and brought it to me and I connected it into a Y junction on my infusion. The operation proceeded normally and finished apparently satisfactorily and then it was discovered that the blood given was that intended for the afternoon patient, and was incompatible with the blood of the girl who had received it.

Immediately we contacted Dr Maurice Shapiro, who came and performed an exchange transfusion but it was too late, the incompatible blood had already interfered with the circulation to the kidneys and the girl died from renal failure. Everybody made the usual depositions to the authorities and after the inquest where an open verdict was returned nothing happened for two or three months until, while I was on holiday with the family at Hermanus about 70 miles east of Cape Town, I was visited by the police and charged with manslaughter, and ordered to appear about two months later in court in Johannesburg.

[31] Libero Fatti was born in Johannesburg in 1900. His parents, Luigi and Eliza Fatti, had immigrated to South Africa from Sansepolcro, a small town in Tuscany, in 1896.



A photograph by Bobby of the old harbour in Hermanus.

My first intention was to leave my defence in the hands of the South African insurance company with which I held a policy covering malpraxis, but when I approached them they said that they would not defend me against a criminal charge but were only concerned with civil actions. Chick Nathan came to my help, he was a non-practising lawyer, and insisted that I had the best possible representation and he organised both a solicitor and a Q.C. to act on my behalf.

It appeared that the Crown had obtained the services of the house surgeon to act as a prosecution witness and had promised him immunity from prosecution in return for turning Queen's evidence. I wrote to the Medical Defence Union in England and gave them the facts and they confirmed that had I been insured with them they would certainly have been responsible for my defence, on either a civil or criminal charge.

My trial lasted three days and there were, of course, lurid placards promoting the sales of the local newspapers. The Q.C. was able to convince the judge that as the house surgeon had signed for the Blood at the Blood Transfusion Centre taking over the responsibility from their doctors, and that as he had not transferred that responsibility it was still his. He also stressed that I had never actually handled the bottle of blood and as I was fully occupied with the anaesthetic I could not he held responsible for someone else's carelessness. So a terrible ordeal was over and the Q.C. fully earned his sizeable fee. The local insurance company gave me £60 (without prejudice) towards the expenses, which did not of course come anywhere near covering them. I think they afterwards had cause to regret their decision not to represent me because I wrote a letter to the South African Medical Journal, which was published, advising medical

practitioners to change from that company and to take the cover offered by the Medical Defence Union, and I know that a lot people took that advice.

This incident highlights the fact that at that time, and for some time afterwards the police were labouring under the obsession that anything that went amiss in the operating theatres was due to the anaesthetist. Surgeons, in their eyes, could do no harm and were regarded as little gods and I suppose their glory rubbed off onto the house surgeons who were presumably little demi-gods.

A further example of this devious double standard attitude was provided by another occurrence. A senior gynaecologist, Alan Boyd, had performed a hysterectomy in the private hospital run by Roman Catholic nuns called the Kensington Sanatorium. I had not given the anaesthetic. Some few days postoperatively one of the ligatures on one of the uterine arteries slipped and the woman had very severe internal bleeding. The original anaesthetist was not available and I answered an emergency call to go to the 'Ken. San.' as soon as possible. When I got there the Mother Superior, knowing that any death on the operating table was always blamed on the anaesthetist said to me 'Dr Roberts, you cannot give this woman an anaesthetic, she is going to die'. I replied that unless something was done she certainly would die but that there was a chance that if we could operate and tie off the bleeding vessel she would survive and that I would not like to think that I was responsible for her death by refusing to cooperate in the desperate attempt to save her life.

I gave the anaesthetic and although Alan Boyd managed to tie off the bleeding artery she did die. After both Alan and I had made our depositions to the authorities I was subpoenaed to appear at the inquest, but Alan Boyd was not. I rang up the Coroner's Officer and asked why I had been subpoenaed and not the surgeon as well and said I had no intention of appearing at the inquest unless he was subpoenaed too. In spite of the fact that he said that that would be Contempt of Court, I stuck to my guns, feeling plenty of contempt for such an unjust system. The Coroner's Officer relented and both Alan and I appeared at the inquest where a verdict of Death by Misadventure was recorded with no suggestion, for a change, that a wicked anaesthetist had murdered an innocent woman.

The virtual persecution of anaesthetists became a very serious matter and was, in fact, counter-productive. Because any death on the table was likely to be presumed to be the fault of the anaesthetist who would then be very likely to be charged with manslaughter, there was a natural reluctance on the part of anaesthetists to undertake any case where there was any chance of the patient dying before recovering consciousness, thus many patients were being denied a chance of surviving a risky operation. One Sunday afternoon I called at the Lady Dudley Private Hospital for a routine pre-operative visit for patients scheduled for operation on the Monday and was immediately asked if I would please give an anaesthetic straight-away for a case of acute intestinal obstruction. Anaesthetics in such cases are always hazardous because the contents of the gut are under pressure and as soon as the voluntary muscles are relaxed by the anaesthetic gastric contents can well up the oesophagus (regurgitate) and with the cough reflex ablated by the anaesthetic, the acidic fluid can spill into the respiratory tract and this can either drown the patient from the sheer volume of regurgitated material or the acid can set up an acute reflex bronchospasm and pneumonitis which can very rapidly be fatal, Apparently the surgeon had been trying

for a considerable time to obtain the services of an anaesthetist but those he had been able to contact had all refused to come. One lady anaesthetist who had visited the Lady Dudley for her 'pre-med round' had locked herself in the lavatory and refused to come out! I am glad to be able to report that, after I gave the anaesthetic, not only was the operation a success but the patient survived.

Another result of the persecution was that, because in South Africa at that time the anaesthetic was presumed by the legal authorities not to have been responsible for the death of the patient if the patient recovered consciousness after the operation, there was the temptation to keep the patients too lightly anaesthetised to ensure rapid recovery of consciousness, so that patients were sometimes aware of the final stages of an operation. The possibility of this occurrence had been brought about by the use of the muscle relaxants in general anaesthesia. Very light anaesthesia, with plenty of oxygen to avoid the dreaded hypoxia and the use of muscle relaxants can result in the phenomenon of the syndrome known as 'Pink, paralysed and perceptive'

Perhaps I have been stressing the trials (actually only one trial) and tribulations of life in the fifties in Johannesburg. In fact it was a very happy period of my life. One noteworthy event in 1950 was that I decided to give up cigarette smoking for three months. Before the time was over, Lilian was pregnant and having overcome the immediate desire to smoke I decided to continue with my self-imposed ban until the baby was born.

In the meantime we had moved home from Birnam to a house in Parktown North. It was the original old farmhouse in the district before suburbia had surrounded it and still stood in well over an acre of garden. It was a spacious house with a large central living room leading out on the north side to a wide shady veranda.

After we bought it and before moving in we discovered that the floorboards of the main bedroom were rotten with termite infestation so we had to have the whole floor removed and replaced with concrete. We moved in a couple of weeks or so before Charles was born in the Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital in May 1951. When I got back home from the hospital I decided to have a celebratory cigarette and found the taste so horrible that I continued to be a non-smoker right up to the present day, nearly 40 years on.

We now had four boys in the family. Anthony went to a boarding school in Potchefstroom in the Orange Free State, a town renowned as an educational centre. Although in a largely Afrikaans speaking area the High School was an English medium school and had a good reputation for getting excellent results academically. Anthony acquired not only a good knowledge of Afrikaans but also an Afrikaans accent to his English, which grated on our *rooinek* (literally 'red-neck', in effect Afrikaans for 'Pommie-bastard') ears. Each holiday in Johannesburg he would shed his *platteland* accent and speak again with what is curiously known as Received Pronunciation', only to assume it again as soon as he boarded the train for Potchefstroom. Nigel moved from the government primary school in Houghton to the one in Saxonwold, an affluent suburb not far from Parktown North, and Stuart also went to it as soon as he was old enough.



A photograph taken in the garden at 27, 12th Avenue, Parktown North, Johannesburg, during the summer of 1951-52. From left to right are seven-year-old Nigel, five-year-old Stuart, Charles (who was not yet one), Lilian (39), and Carolyn Craggs (the daughter of neighbours).

We were very friendly with a gynaecologist whom I had met professionally, Margaret Orford and she knew that Lilian and I would both have liked to have a girl so in August 1953 she went to see Lilian one day while I was working and explained to her that she sometimes arranged adoptions. She had a source of babies for adoption in South West

Africa, now known as Namibia, through the National Council of Women in Windhoek, the capital of the country. Margaret had arranged for two babies from Windhoek to be adopted by two Johannesburg families, and the adoptive parents of one of the babies, a boy, were going to fly to Windhoek on the following day to collect their adopted son and would bring back the other child, a girl. However, the other prospective adopted parents had got cold feet and decided to withdraw from the arrangement. Margaret told Lilian that if we wanted the baby she would be able to arrange it and told Lilian to let me know on the telephone and ask me to think about it and be prepared to come home after work and have a serious discussion to decide whether to take this opportunity of having a daughter. Lilian got in touch with me and stressed that I must not mention it to anybody until we had made up our minds.

Consequently I thought about the proposal all day, figuratively chewing my finger nails hoping to make the correct decision and when work was finished I went home for the proposed discussion with Lilian, but when I walked in the front door after parking the car in the garage the phone rang and I answered it to find it was Dr Louie McIldowie, Field Marshall Jan Smuts's daughter, who was a great friend of Margaret Orford ringing up to congratulate us on having decided to adopt a baby girl! Apparently Margaret had told her but had not stressed the fact that a final decision was to be made that evening after I had had a chance to discuss it with Lilian. However I'm sure that that was the decision that we would have come to, so we started to make arrangements to have an addition to the family the next day.

Lilian was taken by Mapoo, the wife of Denis Fuller the thoracic surgeon, to Jan Smuts Airport to meet the plane from Windhoek bringing the baby. Writing this now in 1991, I must say how pleased we are to have adopted Linda Margaret. We have had such a lot of pleasure in watching her grow up and she is a most loving and well-loved member of the family.[32]

It is a curious thing that there have not been any girls born into the Roberts family for four generations. My father, Harry, was an only child; he had two sons, my brother Peter and me. Peter married but never had any children, and Lilian and I had three boys, Nigel, Stuart and Charles. Anthony is not a Roberts, of course, and he subsequently had a daughter, Tania, and, who was not born a Roberts but had that name thrust upon her, also had a daughter in 1976, but of our three boys Nigel has one son, Evan, Stuart has three sons, Jamie, George and Simon while Charlie has two sons, David and Jonathan.[33]

In the world of Anaesthetics I was an active member of the South African Society of Anaesthetists and after being Honorary Secretary for two years I was President in 1955. In that year the world Federation of Societies of Anaesthetists was formed and held the first World Congress in The Hague. I was the official representative of South Africa and signed the Inaugural Document. During my year of office also we had a visit from my old friend and ex-senior partner of the Mayfair Gas Company, Sir Robert Macintosh. Mac had a wonderful personality, endearing himself to both Afrikaans and English anaesthetists and helping to efface some of the innate hostility South Africans

[32] Shortly after Bobby wrote this, Linda stole a large amount of money from one of my brothers. She was prosecuted by the Victoria fraud squad and imprisoned. Linda then cut herself off from the family, and my parents never saw her again. For the rest of their lives, Bobby and Lilian were deeply distressed by this sad and serious turn of events.

[33] After Bobby wrote this, Charles had a daughter, Louise, and then a third son, Rory.

feel against the British in much the same way but with more justification in view of the memories of the Boer War as the average Australian has against the 'Pommie bastards'. I'm not sure that those two last words shouldn't be hyphenated, and I am reminded of the inhabitant of the southern States of America who said that he was a grown man before he realised that 'Goddam Yankees' was not one word.

In 1953 when I was Secretary to the South African Society of Anaesthetists we had, as the official visitor from overseas, Professor E.A. Rovenstine from New York and it was part of my duties to sea that he was properly entertained during the time of his visit when not occupied with expounding anaesthetic wisdom. I had, therefore, arranged a visit to the Kruger National Park, the huge Game Reserve along the eastern border of the Northern Transvaal. The plan was to pick him and his wife up after a luncheon with the Pretoria anaesthetists and drive north, stay overnight at a delightful hotel in the Soutpansberg hills, the Mountain Inn, and enter the Game Reserve the next morning at the northern entrance through Punda Maria. For a family holiday, Lilian and I and the three older boys, Anthony, Nigel and Stuart, went to Rhodesia.[34] On the way south back to Johannesburg I went into the Mountain Inn and booked the two double rooms for Professor and Mrs Rovenstine and Lilian and myself. I stressed the fact that, as the time of my departure from Pretoria after the anaesthetist's lunch was uncertain, that they must keep the rooms for us until we arrived and offered to pay a deposit which they refused saying that even if we did not come we would be liable for the cost of the rooms to which I agreed.



Bobby took this photograph in June 1953 of the Magoebaskloof area in the Northern Transvaal.

[34] July 1953 was the centenary of the birth of Cecil John Rhodes, and during the holiday we visited the Rhodes Centenary Exhibition in Bulawayo.

Lilian was not happy at the thought that she would be stuck in the back of the car with Mrs Rovenstine, whom she had never met and with whom she might not have anything in common, whereas as I would be talking anaesthetics with the Professor all the time.

As it happened the lunch in Pretoria was a great success and the hosts were reluctant to hand over the guest of honour so we were very late getting on our way north. For the first time since I had bought the second hand Chevrolet it started to give trouble on the journey with overheating and we stopped in Potgietersrust to have some repairs done which only lasted until we reached Pietersburg where we found a garage which found the cause of the trouble and would take about two hours to fix it. We decided to spend the enforced delay by having dinner at a hotel and I phoned the Mountain Inn to let them know we would be delayed. To my astonishment and extreme anger they said they had given our rooms away to other travellers.

After the meal we drove to Louis Trichardt, a few miles south of the Mountain Inn and where the road to the most northerly gate of the Kruger Park turned off to the east from the Great North Road, and were lucky to find accommodation at the Hotel Louis, not so luxurious or with the spectacular views that the Mountain Inn had to offer but clean and comfortable. Lilian's fears about being stuck with an unknown travelling companion with whom she might have no rapport were quickly dispelled as soon as we set out from Pretoria and Pearl Rovenstine and she got on famously and the conversation from the back seats never faltered whereas 'Rovy' himself proved to be a taciturn man with very little small talk and while driving I found it very difficult to interest him and, of course, I was embarrassed by the bad behaviour of both our car and the owners of the Mountain Inn.



Professor and Mrs Rovenstine were two of many visitors Bobby and Lilian took to the Kruger National Park. For instance, this photograph by Bobby is of Charles Hanrott in the Kruger National Park's Pretoriuskop rest camp in November 1952.

Once in the Game Reserve Rovy brightened up and took a great interest in the animals but was not willing to arise early in the morning to go out game watching at dawn before breakfast so Pearl, Lilian and I left him behind in the camp and he missed what we had, the rare opportunity of seeing a pack of Cape Hunting dogs. In all the years that I have been visiting the Kruger National Park and it must amount to at least 20 occasions I have only seen Cape Hunting dogs twice.

Because he had no intention of getting up early Rovy did not want to go to bed early and insisted that we played Bridge after the evening meal. In those days the authorities used to turn off the electricity at 10 p.m. and so we were obliged to finish our games by candlelight. I'm sure that made good telling later in New York. We exchanged Christmas cards for some years after that and Pearl urged us to look them up if we were ever in New York but when we were there in 1960 we tried to see them but Pearl did not wish us to see him then as he was dying of cancer.

How well that old Chev did us! Bought second hand with 19,000 miles on the odometer it lasted us for eight years and I only got rid of it the at the urgent request from Margaret Nicholson who said that an old car like that was not a good advertisement for the senior partner of a flourishing firm of anaesthetists. Three years running we made the journey of 975 miles from Johannesburg to Hermanus, a fishing village turned fashionable holiday resort some 70 miles east of Cape Town, and back. We rented a cottage for a month from the brother of Jim Cuthbert, a plastic surgeon with whom I worked and was very friendly. In those days about 300 miles of the road between Johannesburg and Cape Town was a dusty gravel road, now it is tarred the whole way and like nearly all the roads in South Africa in first class condition. I used to drive the whole way from Johannesburg with all the family in the car without an overnight stop. I used to sleep all the morning and set off about 4.00 p.m., in that way the children who would naturally be excited would begin to get tired about 6.00 p.m. and a short time after filling up in Kroonstad nearly all the family was asleep. I arranged to have one of the family awake with me in the front seat, usually Anthony but on one occasion, I remember, I suppose Anthony was still at boarding school and would join us later, Nigel sat in the front with me. I took Benzedrine tablets (amphetamine), which were then not illegal, to keep me awake and I fed Nigel half a tablet. He never stopped talking all the journey until about 6.00 a.m. we stopped at Beaufort West, went into the hotel took a room where we all showered and changed and then had breakfast before continuing our journey. By then the back of the trip was broken, we had only another 300 miles to go! Turning off the main road to Cape Town at Worcester we would buy fruit, bread and cheese and have a picnic lunch along the very scenic route and arrive in Hermanus about 2 p.m.

On one of these long drives after dark going about 60 m.p.h. on a straight road (thank goodness), we went over a bump or a pot hole and suddenly all the lights went out. I managed to stop the car without running off the road and then when my eyesight had accommodated to the darkness we had to drive slowly without lights to the next town where there was an all night garage and the African patrol pump attendant managed to find the electrical fault in the boot after we had had to remove all the tightly packed luggage and he effected some emergency repair so we were able to proceed.

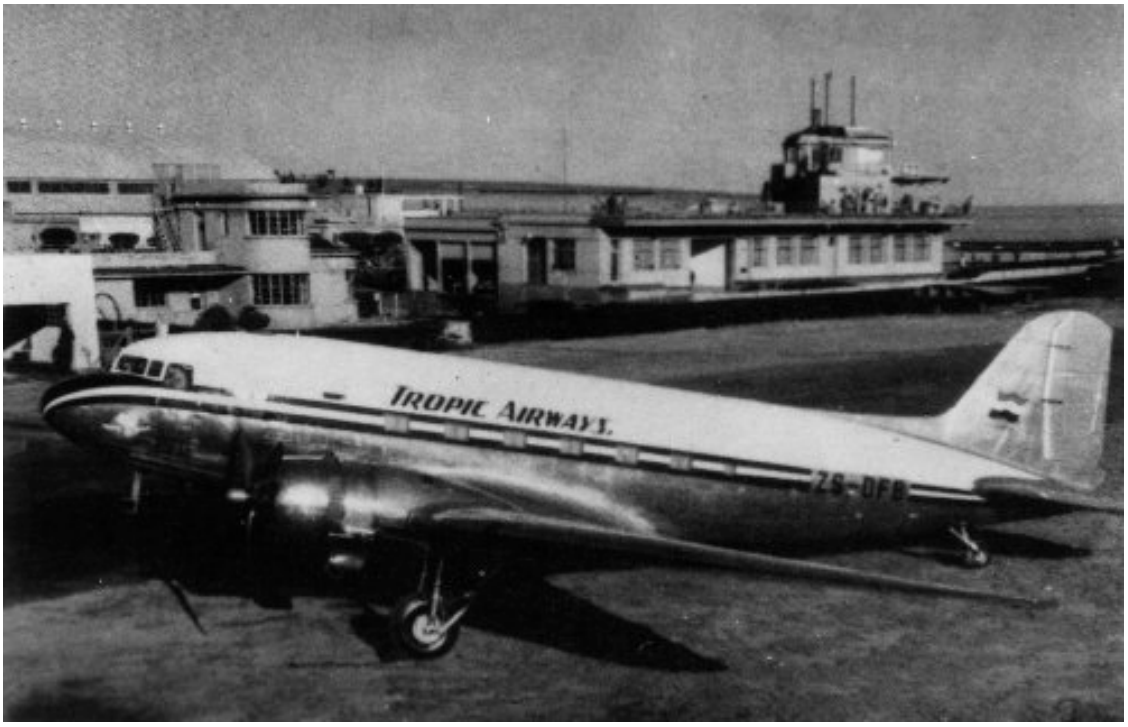


Bobby and Lilian (and Stuart in the background)
on the beach at Hermanus in 1953.

Those Hermanus holidays were wonderful. There were two lovely beaches with good safe bathing, and a small mountain stream with water the colour of Coca-Cola with a pool in it large and deep enough to dive and swim in, good rock fishing and spinning for yellow-tails when there was a run on in the New Harbour, good walks in magnificent scenery and countless drives in the vicinity.

The trip to Europe for the inaugural meeting of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthetists in 1955 in The Hague was for Lilian and me the first return to our native land for six years and for Charles and Linda their first time out of Africa. Nigel and Stuart being 11 and nine years old respectively were deemed to be more in need of continuing their education than a trip to Europe so stayed behind boarding with

friends[35], while Anthony had already left South Africa to go to Guy's Hospital in London to start his course in Dentistry. Lilian and I and the children booked on a small privately run airline called, if my memory serves me right, Tropic Airways, who were offering a return trip to England for much less than the recognised airlines and for what we could afford. In retrospect I'm sure it was a very dicey decision but we decided to risk it. The airline company had bought one aircraft, an old Lancaster bomber refitted to be a York airliner that had been presented to Field Marshal Jan Smuts as his personal plane. Smuts had died in 1950 and the entrepreneur who formed Tropic Airways had bought the old plane and started these flights to Europe.



The flight took four days. The first leg was from Johannesburg to Entebbe and the aircraft was not pressurised so we had to suffer extremes of heat and very bumpy conditions. Lilian, Charles and Linda were all very travel sick and I was the only person able to look after then. I remember taking Linda who was not yet two years old frequently into the toilet and stripping off her little frock, standing her in the hand basin, and washing her and the dress and such was the heat that her clothes were dry by the time I returned her to the cabin to start the whole business over again. When we arrived in Entebbe we were put up the five-star Hotel Lake Victoria very sumptuously and told we were not taking off again until early evening on the following day. We walked in the magnificent Botanical Gardens and marvelled at the luxurious growth just few miles north of the Equator and learnt that the local climate was constantly warm and sunny with a daily evening downpour. The next day we took a very cheap taxi into Kampala some 15 miles or so away and having seen the capital of Uganda returned to Entebbe for the next leg of the flight which took us to a few huts apparently in the middle of the Sahara known as Wadi Halfa. Here we sat for a few hours while the plane refuelled and other formalities were no doubt observed. Then to Rome where we were put up in what appeared to us to be a palace. We were given an enormous double

[35] Stuart stayed with Alec and Doreen Craggs, our next-door neighbours in Parktown North, while Nigel stayed in Bryanston with Chick and Madeleine Nathan.

room with cots for Charles and Linda and the most attentive staff assured us that they would look after the children while we were given a tour of the city in a horse drawn cab. The cabby spoke no English and we had no Italian but it was one of the best-conducted tours I have ever known. He took us to all the place tourists want to see and when we came to the place where Nero is supposed to have sat watching Rome burning in A.D. 54 the cabby put on an act saying 'Roma' and figuratively with his hands and fingers showing fire and he said 'Nero' and sat in the driver's seat of the fiacre[36] playing an imaginary violin.

After a good night's rest we flew the next day to Amsterdam where our plane stopped but our tickets took us by KLM to London. When we boarded the KLM flight we noticed that in the row in front of us as a passenger was the pilot of our Tropic Airways York. Young Charles said in a loud voice as soon as we found out seats 'What a clean plane!', a remark that must have been overheard by our erstwhile captain.



From left to right: Anthony Banks, Lilian, Charles (in front), Dora (Bobby's step-mother), Bobby, and Harry Roberts in Barnstaple in 1955.

After a round of the friends and relatives showing off our latest two members of the family we left Charles and Linda being looked after in England, and Lilian and I went across to France by Cross Channel Steamer and train to Tours where we stayed with Jean and Blanche Rainer who told us the fate of our cottage that we had built on the sand-dunes at Kerhostin. During the German occupation the Germans had been most meticulous in preserving the cottage which they were told belonged to English people but after the Allied invasion of June 1944 the Germans retreated from Brittany and because of the disaster at Arnhem the war dragged on over a very cold and bitter winter. The local French population were short of firewood and the Allied forces were

[36] Fiacre: A small four-wheeled carriage for public hire.

intent on finishing the war as quickly as possible and took very little interest in the preservation of foreigners' property and so the whole cottage was burnt on the hearths of the Breton peasantry.



Back row: Lilian; Marian Dussek and Jenny Gardner (Lilian's sisters); Marie and Walter Wynn (Lilian's parents). Front row: Four-year-old Charles and Penelope Dussek. Photographed by Bobby in London in 1955.

We had arranged that Jimmy and Helen Durham should pick us up at the Rainer's house on a certain day at 6.00 p.m. Jimmy was a friendly rival anaesthetist in Johannesburg and was also over to attend the World Anaesthetic Congress. He and Helen had never been out of South Africa before and they had flown to Amsterdam and hired a car there. Their only language other than English was Afrikaans so they were well able to make themselves understood in Holland. From there, armed with a foreign phrase book they successfully drove through Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Italy and back through to Tours. Apparently the only difficulty they encountered was once in Italy when they tried to order butter at breakfast they got beer. During the few days that Lilian and I had stayed with the Rainers I found it very difficult to find my way to their new (to us) home, but Jimmy and Helen managed to arrive at about two minutes past six on the appointed day! We showed the Durhams a few of the chateaux in the Loire district, notably Amboise and Chenonceau and then set off under my guidance to Brittany, taking in Azay-le-Rideau and Angers on the way.

After peering at the macabre collection of monks' bones and skulls in the crypt of the church at Ste. Anne d'Auray we made it to Kerhostin in the late afternoon and presented ourselves at the local pub, *Au Bon Acceuil*, where as a schoolboy, student and young newly qualified doctor I had spent many happy hours drinking liqueurs at the

equivalent of two pence a glass and dancing with the French girls, mostly holiday visitors but also including the attractive young daughter of the publican who was known as 'Dede'.



A photograph of the *Au Bon Acceuil* hotel in more recent times.

At the reception was a very plump rather plain young woman in her mid thirties and I asked if we could have two double rooms. Two rooms were available and while we waited for the keys and the luggage to be collected I asked the young women how long she had been there and she said 'I have lived here all my life' and I realised that she must be Dede so I said to her 'Then I know you!' whereupon she smiled and said *Oui, et je vous connais, Monsieur Bobby!*[37]

That evening we went to the beach on the Atlantic side of the peninsula and after a swim we tried to find the old cottage. I had a pretty good idea of the bearings taking the fort Penthievre at the northern end of the beach and the direction out to the Ile Tiviec, or Ile aux lapins, and we scuffed around in the sand and were delighted to find the concrete foundations, We spent a couple of days at Kerhostin and I was able to show them the magnificent cliff and Atlantic wave scenery on the Côte Sauvage and the prehistoric *alignements* of menhirs at Carnac.

When we left Kerhostin we drove up north across Brittany to marvel at the old stone walls of St. Nalo and on to visit the remarkable Mont St. Michel. Next we saw Chartres cathedral and took the guided tour of Versailles. In the town of Versailles we followed the advice of the A.A. and bought the latest edition of a street map of Paris showing all the one-way streets. This advice was necessary because it appeared that the authorities were always changing the one-way system and to drive in Paris without knowing the latest regulations would be asking for trouble. The A.A. followed up this advice with

[37] Yes, and I know you, Mr Bobby!

the suggestion that the front seat passenger in Paris should be the navigator using the map and that the driver should proceed ‘with speed and determination’! We had booked into a hotel in a quiet side street near the Place Vendome, prosaically called the Family Hotel and I managed to navigate there. Lilian and Helen in the back seat kept saying ‘Ooh’ or ‘Ah’ and suggesting that we were driving too fast but we just silenced them by repeating the A.A.’s instructions ‘with speed and determination!’

We stayed in Paris for three nights but we did not drive the car again until we left Paris and we made our way by the Metro. In the street where the Hotel was the parking regulations demanded that only one side of the street was available for parking, on the even dates of the month cars had to be parked on the side where the even numbers of the houses were and on odd dates on the odd house number side. The day was, for parking purposes deemed to start at 6.00 a.m. The concierge kindly under took to move the hired car for us every morning at 6.00 a.m. to save us from having to get up early just for that purpose.

Brian Sellick, my ex-Registrar from the Blitz days and colleague on the staff of the Middlesex was also going to attend the Congress in The Hague and passing through Paris and we had arranged to meet him and Florence for dinner at the Restaurant Pigalle in the Place Pigalle on the last night of our stay in Paris. Brian and Florence had brought their three schoolboy sons with them for their first visit abroad and had somehow been given the name of a hotel in the Place Pigalle where they booked in, but as soon as they were installed it became obvious that it was getting most of its custom from the Parisian prostitutes! However, it was too late to try to find alternative accommodation so they put up with it and left the three boys to look after themselves while Brian and Florence joined us for dinner, which was memorable because Lilian and I ordered ‘Steak Tartare’ without knowing what it was. We were intrigued, when the waiter brought a huge pile of raw mince to an adjoining table and started to pour raw beaten eggs, Worcestershire Sauce etc., over the mince and we wondered who was going to eat that! Imagine our surprise when we found that we were! However we enjoyed it very much and we thought it good experience because now we knew what Steak Tartare was.

The next morning we left Paris early and headed northwest and decided to have a picnic lunch in the local forest. We parked the car on the outskirts of the town and Lilian and Helen went in search of suitable picnic food while Jimmy and I also looked at the shops. Seeing some camembert cheese I decided to buy one as Jimmy said they had never had any, what I did not count on was that Lilian also bought a box of camembert and both boxes were pretty ripe, just ready for eating. At the picnic lunch we could not do more than finish one whole camembert between us so we had to take the other cheese with us for future consumption.

We carried on towards the Belgian frontier and crossed over and found ourselves in a town called Han just as it was getting too late to consider going on any further to find somewhere to stay the night. The town was full for some local celebration and we were very lucky to find that the local hotel still had two rooms for us. One was a very pleasant room with an outlook over the town square and the other was a back room with no outlook beyond a brick wall a couple of yards away and also up in an attic with curious gurglings from the local plumbing which could reasonably be expected to continue throughout the night and very little ventilation on a hot summer night. We

decided to draw lots for the rooms, but we stipulated that whoever drew the better room should have to take with them the camembert left over from the picnic lunch in Soissons.

Jimmy and Helen Durham won the better room and had to hang the camembert on the wooden shutters of their bedroom which they left wide open so that the good citizens of Han should not be denied the opportunity to enjoy the aroma. After freshening up for dinner we met in the dining room to be told that the only dish left on the menu was 'Filet Americain', which they assured us was made from the choicest beef steak. *Faute de mieux* we all decided to have Filet Americain and to our surprise it turned out to be exactly the same as Steak Tartare. So for two nights running we had raw mince steak, very tastefully garnished with piquant lubricants.

Han turned out to be the place where the largest limestone caves in Europe are to found so this was an opportunity not to be missed and we all signed on for a guided tour. The guide took us through various cave until we arrived at a point where he asked us all to remain absolutely still until he told us to move. He turned out all the internal electric lighting and lit a hand held paraffin (kerosene) flare and then ran down a flight of steps until he was scarcely visible in the distance. Then he turned on the lights and we found we were in the roof of a vast cavern which the guide told us would hold the whole of Reims cathedral and asked us to follow down the steps he had descended. Down below we arrived at an underground river and embarked on boats which took us through a series of tunnels. When the lights were once again turned out we saw glow-worms on the roof and sides of the tunnels looking like thousands of stars. We eventually emerged on the far side of a range of hills from Han and transport was provided to bring us back to the town.

From Han we sat off in the direction of Brussels and decided to have another picnic lunch in the forest of Waterloo. Lilian was by this time feeling a little queasy. We were uncertain whether this was the result of a surfeit of raw beef mince over the previous two evenings or the camembert from yesterday's picnic, but she decided not to eat anything and so Helen, Jimmy and I had to finish the, by now, very ripe camembert that had gently perfumed the Durham's bedroom at Han. We then made hasty tracks to Brussels and had to go to one of the best hotels in the Grande Place to satisfy Lilian's urgent needs to deal with her gastro-enteritis. Leaving her in Helen's tender care Jimmy and I went off to see and photograph the famous little 'Mannekin Pis' fountain. After a couple of hours Lilian had recovered enough to travel on as we had booked to stay at an old-fashioned hotel in Bruges highly recommended by my father. When we arrived there Lilian went straight to bed and Helen, Jimmy and I went to the dining room where, because we had arrived late, we found the only dish still on the menu was 'Steak Tartare'! A real 'Filet Americain' hat trick!

After a good night's rest in this hotel where we were treated as if we were royalty because of Harry's recommendation. Lilian revived and we spent a wonderful day trying to soak up the culture of Bruges. Our visit coincided with a student festival of some sort and when in the evening we walked along a road separated from some University buildings ay a canal we were surprised when sheet-clad figures suddenly swung out from upper windows in the building across the canal on a rope uttering ghoulish shrieks and swung back into the building again.

The next day we drove into Holland and Jimmy gave up his hired car after depositing as at our booked hotels in Scheveningen, the upper class seaside suburb of The Hague. The congress was, in fact, to be held in Scheveningen, a place-name that most foreigners find difficult to pronounce. They say that during the German invasion of Holland in 1940 when the local populace were afraid of German parachutists being dropped behind the Dutch lines they used the word as a Shibboleth. The pronunciation of 'ch' like the Scottish 'ch' in 'loch' following a sibilant 's' can be difficult for non-Dutch speaking people and the Germans seeing the 'sch', which in German is pronounced as in the English shop or shoe, would be expected to say the word as if it were Shaveningen. The story is that if they did so they were summarily executed as spies. Luckily for us (a) Lilian and I had spent 18 months in Holland and could pronounce it properly and (b) such drastic reprisals were no longer enforced.

The Congress in Scheveningen was the first occasion when a World Congress of anaesthetists was held and at that meeting it was decided to form the body which would organise future World Congresses, and it is known as The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists. The original document to which I was honoured to be the official signatory on behalf of South Africa has been preserved in the National Archives in The Hague. I used to be the proud possessor of a photograph of all the participants at the congress taken on the steps of the Ridderzaal, the equivalent of the House of Lords in the Netherlands parliament, but the picture was destroyed when our house was burnt down with all our belongings in the great bushfires in Tasmania in February 1967.

As always at a medical congress the participants derive more benefit from meeting other people with similar interests and from the friendships one makes rather than from listening to all the scientific papers. In fact in most congresses there are simultaneous papers being read in different rooms and one has to study the programme carefully before the day's proceedings to pick out which one would like to hear and shuttle from room to room. Even so unless the chairman in each of the rooms is a strict disciplinarian and keeps the speakers rigidly to the time schedule one can find one had hurried across to another venue only to find that the paper one wanted to hear either has already been read or will not be heard until it clashes with some other paper one wants to near. The best Congress I ever attended was one of the Asian/Australasian region of Anaesthetists at Canberra in 1970 where the organisers had, by prodigious efforts managed to obtain full copies of all papers well before the congress date so that on registration all those attending ware given a book with all the papers in full, Then if one had to miss any paper one could read it in full and only miss the questions and answers afterwards which are often of more use than the actual paper. At The Hague congress I was able to meet again many anaesthetists I had known in my days in England and of course those in Holland were there in full force. I also met Torsten Gordh again who had been so kind to me in Stockholm in 1943 and Ole Secher from Copenhagen.

Also present was my old friend and senior partner of the Mayfair Gas Company 'Big Mac', by now Sir Robert Macintosh. I remember he had in tow two delegates from Russia who were there merely as observers, as Russia had not then realised that 'modern anaesthesia' could be beneficial to even those on the Eastern side of the 'Iron Curtain'. They seemed to have been latched on to Mac, perhaps because, even with the Cold War, someone over there had realised that a Professor was someone to be reckoned with and they were under K.G.B. orders to find out what they could about this

new Western secret weapon. Those sullen taciturn envoys were completely out of their depth but Mac chatted to them at the bar over a vodka or two and I have no doubt that they fell under his spell and probably reported back to Bulganin or Khrushchev or whomsoever was the current Russian tyrant.

Gastronomically my memories of the Scheveningen congress are of the 'Rystafels' or Indonesian dishes served at the numerous restaurants which were a hangover from the recently surrendered Dutch East Indies and the breakfast snack which had somehow escaped us during our 18 months in Holland called 'Uitsmijter', a ham and eggs on toast which we found most useful, not only on this visit but also on subsequent trips to Holland.

Recalling food in Holland, I must not forget to mention two other delicacies with which we became very partial. 'Gerookte Paling' or smoked eel is a wonderful partner of Jenever or Hollands Gin. 'Eidere dag een glasje' as the daily admonition from the distillers ran, meaning 'A glass every day', urged a constant intake of this potent rather oily spirit which soon became an acquired teste and the combination of this with smoked eel brings back many pleasant memories. The other fishy favourite was to be eaten at market places in season, namely 'Nieuwe Haring' or raw fresh herring. Freshly caught herring, skinned and filleted, are offered at stalls in fish markets and the done thing is to pick up a fillet by the tail and dip it in a dish of diced onions and then eat it there and then by putting back the head and doing what comes naturally.

Chapter 12: More of Life in Africa

Soon after joining Gerry Hochschild in partnership I had been persuaded by Chick Nathan to become, with him, a founder member of the Bryanston Country Club. This was to be formed in the trendy outer suburb of Bryanston about 12 miles to the north of the city centre. Here in rolling hilly country, well away from the smog of the city and mine dumps of the southern suburbs, was where Chick and Madeleine had bought their house just before they sold us 37 Sunnyside Road in Birnam.

The land had been bought and a Club House built and the first nine holes of a golf course had been laid out. At first they found it difficult to persuade people to join because the golf course was stony and rather bare of trees and other interesting features and the offer of 'Founder Membership' was made to entice more people to rally round. I consequently started playing golf mostly with Chick Nathan but later other friends joined the club as the course began to take on a more attractive look with water hazards constructed and the trees beginning to grow. In South Africa trees grow very rapidly compared with the rate to which I had been accustomed in Europe and the grass planted on the previously arid and dusty fairways transformed the area into the makings of a first class championship course with the full complement of 18 holes. I remember sitting on the *stoep*[38] of the Club House with Chick at the time of the Coronation of Elizabeth II, quaffing a welcome pint of beer after a round of golf, and hearing the news that Hilary and Tenzing had been the first men to climb Mount Everest.

Shortly after that, one Saturday evening Lilian and I were driving back from the Johannesburg Country Club at Auckland Park where we had been as the guests of Terry and Joan Knight at a dance and we saw to the north a glow in the sky and I remarked that it looked as if there was quite a big house fire somewhere over Bryanston way. The next morning I drove out to the Bryanston Country Club for my Sunday morning game of golf and found that the site of the fire had been the clubhouse. It was totally destroyed and this tragedy was a great setback to the membership drive. Indeed a lot of people already members resigned and there was considerable doubt as to whether the project was any longer viable. An emergency General Meeting was called and very poorly attended. Chick and I went along and voted successfully for the motion to rebuild the clubhouse, and because so few members turned up both of us were elected onto the House Committee. As we walked out of the meeting, Chick, who was, like me, very short in stature, said to me

'Well Bobby, at least we'll be able to have the men's urinals at the right height!'

Another memorable remark by Chick, on the subject of his daughter's decision to leave the expensive and exclusive private school in Natal to which they had sent her, was:

'She didn't get on well with the Headmistress. It wasn't the school, just the Principal of the thing!'

I was never any good at golf, I enjoyed the game and the exercise and the companionship but my play was most erratic. I could play several holes in par or even one in a birdie but at the next hole I could easily take 13 strokes. My best game was a

[38] *Stoep*: Veranda.

Four ball, better ball. My occasional par or birdie could win the hole for my partner and me and then when I fluffed my drive at the next hole I could pick up my ball and allow my partner to carry me until it was my turn again. I had been given the maximum handicap which was then 24 but I could never do less than 96 when I took out a card and I think that I only once played a medal round in under 100. One unusual course I played on with Chick was at Mbabane in Swaziland, the only former Protectorate that did not change its name after independence, when Bechuanaland became Botswana and Basutoland became Lesotho. The golf course at Mbabane was very hilly and we used to talk about playing vertical golf. At one hole the tee was at the edge of a small cliff and one drove off straight into a line of fir trees running from left to right across in front of the tee. The tops of the fir trees had been lopped to allow the ball to go through the barrier but not low enough to give one a view of the fairway below and at another hole, a short par three, the green was on the top of a truncated cone so it was necessary to play a lofted approach shot, preferably from the tee to land on and stay on the green. At that hole I sliced my tee shot into the rough, mishit my second and the third fell on the fairway short of the green and such was the slope that it ran all the way back and I played my fourth from behind the tee. Rumour had it that at a similar hole at, I think, the Royal Durban course Edward VIII, when Prince of Wales, kept overshooting the green so many times that it was popularly known as the Prince of Wales's hole.

I took lessons from the professional at Bryanston, Jimmy Bullock, and I played most Sunday mornings and generally one afternoon during the week and yet I never really advanced much in the skill of the game. Lilian used to say that she could tell how I had played when I got home on Sunday at lunch time just by looking at me, and she was always very critical of me if I swore when I missed a shot. On one occasion I persuaded her to try the game at Bryanston and when she played a couple of air-shots her own language convinced her that perhaps there was some justification for my outbursts. Eventually towards the end of the decade I decided to give up golf and both Lilian and I joined the Bowls Section and had two or three enjoyable years playing that game.

At the end of 1954 Anthony had passed his Matric at Potchefstroom Boys High and had decided to become a dentist. Lilian's old boss, Freddy Warner, who had taken on Lilian's younger sister to replace Lilian as a nurse/ receptionist soon after we were married, was by now the Dean of the Dental School at Guy's Hospital so Lilian wrote to him and we were able to get Anthony accepted to start the Dental course there in the September of 1955. Lilian, who had received the miserable sum of £2 a week as a pension from the R.A.F. after Sandy was killed in 1938, plus another ten shillings for Anthony, had had to forego that when she married me. But she had had the bright idea of seeing whether the R.A.F. would consider helping with Anthony's fees for his education as a dental student at Guy's, and had written to them during Anthony's last term at 'Potch'. To our amazement and delight the reply was that the R.A.F. would pay his fees and would have paid his school fees also if we had asked for help. The offer was not retrospective but they did pay his last term's fees at Potchefstroom, and we kicked ourselves for not thinking of it earlier. To fill in the time between the end of the scholastic year in South Africa at the end of 1954 and the beginning of the academic year in the U.K. in September 1955, Anthony joined the gold mines as a cadet and spent a few months doing gas sampling underground in one of the mines on the East Rand. In August he and Anthony Skinner, Sam Skinner's younger son, travelled on the Union Castle Line to England and they found themselves digs and started as dental students. Anthony was not entirely on his own in a strange country as Lilian's parents

were still alive and living in Ramsgate and two of Lilian's sisters, Jenny Gardner and Marian Dussek, both lived in Sidcup in Kent on the south-eastern fringe of London, with their respective families. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Lilian and I, together with Charles and Linda, also visited England that year for the Anaesthetic Congress in Holland, so we were able to see he was satisfactorily settled in suitable lodgings.

We did not see Anthony again until the end of his pre-clinical studies in July 1957 when he came out to South Africa for his last 'long vac' to celebrate his 21st birthday with us in August. That was the last occasion that the whole family, Lilian and I, with Anthony, Nigel, Stuart, Charles and Linda were all together until 30 years later when Lilian celebrated her 75th birthday in Tasmania and our children organised a surprise party for Lilian, which involved an awful lot of lying to keep it a secret from her. Anthony flew out from Portugal, stayed with Linda, Roland and Melanie for four days before they smuggled him over to Tasmania. Nigel flew over from Wellington in New Zealand, Stuart and his wife, Patricia, and their children were the only family members living in Tasmania, Charles came from Sydney and his fiancée, Liz, from Harare, Zimbabwe, was over in Australia and also able to come.



The family gathering in August 1987 for Lilian's 75th birthday. Back row (from left to right): Stuart, Charles, and Nigel. From row: Linda, Bobby, Lilian, and Anthony.

Later in 1957 I was delighted to get an opportunity to visit the renowned Albert Schweitzer at his 'jungle' hospital at Lambarene in French Equatorial Africa in the then French colony of Gabon. Harry Oppenheimer, the son of Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, the founder of the Anglo-American Corporation controlling most of the gold and diamond mines of South Africa, had inherited his father's wealth and business interests and was well known in Johannesburg as a generous philanthropist. Jack Penn, the plastic surgeon and sculptor, had made bronze busts of both Harry Oppenheimer and Albert Schweitzer, and, I think, told the mining magnate of the difficulties under which

Schweitzer was working and aroused his interest. Harry Oppenheimer used to send medical specialists periodically to Lambarene to help with difficult cases that the staff there were not competent to treat adequately. The doctors at Lambarene used to save up difficult cases and when they had a quorum of cases of one type a team would go from Johannesburg to deal with them. I was asked if I would be prepared to go and give some anaesthetics and I agreed with alacrity.

Gabon lies more than 2000 miles to the northwest of Johannesburg. Lambarene is on the Ogowe River about 50 miles south of the equator and 175 miles from the mouth of the river at Port Gentil on the shores of the Atlantic. There were no major airports in Gabon and I was given a ticket on a French airline from Johannesburg to Brazzaville, the capital of the adjacent French colony of Congo. The Congo River, now called the Zaire, is the frontier between the old French colony and the ex Belgian Congo, now the country of Zaire. Brazzaville is on the north bank of the Congo and is just across the river from the old capital of the Belgian Congo, Leopoldville, now called Kinshasa. I had to spend the night at Brazzaville. I was booked into the largest hotel, very comfortable and there I met up with the surgeon with whom I was to work during the next week. He was Joel Cohen, one of the leading gynaecologists in Johannesburg with whom I had not often worked but I did know him from meeting him at the various private hospitals in that city. He was a very able surgeon and I looked forward to anaesthetising for some interesting operations. Joel Cohen had his wife with him, they were on their way back from a visit to Europe and they had with them an American couple, Larry and Kaye Gussman, whom they had met on their travels. Larry was the boss of a very large grain and cereal concern in New York and Kaye was a delightful ex nurse. They were both keen to meet Schweitzer and Joel Cohen agreed to take them along. It turned out to be a very fortunate meeting for the Schweitzer hospital set-up because Larry became a very earnest aficionado and a very hard working and influential member of the Albert Schweitzer Foundation, and long after Schweitzer's death his only daughter was a frequent visitor to the home of the Gussmans. Larry was a very great help to the hospital in obtaining supplies of rice and in many other ways.

John Gunther, in his book *Inside Africa* which he wrote about 1955 and which I read before going to Lambarene, says 'Nowadays it is easy enough to get to Schweitzer, if you do not mind old aeroplanes and eccentric flying', so I was prepared to some extent for the experience the next day. The five of us, the Cohens the Gussmans and I, boarded with some trepidation an old Dakota run by Air France (I had already heard of the nickname 'Air Chance') for what turned out to be a roundabout tour of French Congo and Gabon. At every stop people got in and out and the cargo was stored alongside the passengers and if it was bulky then some passenger seats would be removed to make room for the very varied freight, which included live goats, chickens and possibly other livestock as well as machinery of all sorts. I remember at one stop a young white couple being very disappointed because the machinery they brought along for transportation could not be accommodated with the load we already had aboard and they would have to await the next flight of the so-called Milk Run. It was a regular scheduled flight but I do not know how frequently it went but certainly not more than daily and it may even have been only two or three times a week. We went right down to the coast at Pointe Noire and then doubled back inland and some of the places we stopped at were nothing more than clearings in a very dense jungle with no visible signs of human habitation in the vicinity.

The aircrew told us that at the penultimate stop before Lambarene we would stop for an hour and a half for lunch which we would be able to get at the ‘airport’ as they had a French chef there who would cater for our needs.

When we arrived there we found the airport to consist of a landing strip in a clearing in the middle of a very dense forest and a thatched wooden hut in one room of which were tables set for a meal. Imagine our surprise and delight when we found that a very substantial meal was provided, I had a very tender rare buffalo steak followed by French cheese and complemented by half a bottle of Beaujolais. When the passengers and aircrew came out of the hut prepared for the last leg of our journey to Lambarene we saw that the little wheel under the tail of the Dakota had a puncture. There was no spare wheel available so the crew had to go through the tedious process of taking the wheel off, taking out the inner tube and mending the puncture. Before they could start on that it was necessary to jack up the rear end of the plane and about a dozen of the interested audience of the black local residents of the tropical jungle were press-ganged into two groups and each group knelt down under the tail on either side of the wheel and then on a word of command they all stood up lifting the tail high enough for the engineer to slip an empty oil drum under so that the wheel was clear of the ground. After about an hour’s delay the puncture was mended, the wheel back in position and our human jack took the weight while the oil drum was removed.

On our arrival at Lambarene we were honoured to be met by the great man himself. The airport at Lambarene was similar to the other clearings in the forest that we had stopped at on the way but an attempt had been made to have a small flower bed outside the wooden hut marked out with the metal crown cork tops of innumerable Coca-Cola bottles and some of the local beer bottle tops.



Pirogues on the banks of the river Ogowe.

The airport at Lambarene is on the opposite bank of the river Ogowe to Schweitzer's hospital and Schweitzer had come over in a small launch but he had not known that the Gussmans were to be included among his guests and he did not have room for us all so I volunteered to make the journey across in one of the native dugout canoes known as 'pirogues'. Schweitzer had a small fleet of these, normally pulled up on the river bank below the hospital buildings, and he employed some of the native Africans to ferry hospital personnel and visitors wherever they might want to go.

The town of Lambarene is on an island in the middle of the river and was the headquarters of a very flourishing French timber industry; I say 'was' because I am not sure what happened to the industry after Gabon got its independence. Schweitzer's hospital is not on the island but on the river bank about a mile or so away. Schweitzer always referred to the town as *le Grand Village*, and he was generally known as *le Grand Docteur*.

Each of the visitors was given a room in a long single-storey building higher up the bank above the hospital. The length of the building ran parallel with the river and on the top side was a corridor giving access to the rooms all of which were small, spartan but spotlessly clean, furnished with a bed, a chair, a desk and a washstand. Each of the rooms had a window at each end of the room, one in the door and the other overlooking the hospital and the river beyond. There was no glass in the windows but a fine mesh fly screen allowed through ventilation and kept insects out. The window on the door had a blind on the inside for privacy. There was no running water or bathroom but a jug of cold water stood on the washstand and hot water was brought each morning at 6.30 and again in the evening before the evening meal. The only electricity came from a generator which was turned on only when it was necessary to supply power for the operating theatre lighting, all the other lighting was by paraffin (kerosene) and heating (for cooking and sterilising hospital equipment) by wood burning stoves.

All meals for the white staff and visitors were taken in a communal dining room, breakfast at 7.30 a.m., lunch staggered to allow continuity of work but at 6.30 p.m. all work finished and after an hour for freshening up almost a ritual dinner. The evening meal was presided over by Schweitzer who opened the ceremony by grace in French. We all sat at one long table covered with spotless linen and illuminated by a series of oil lamps, Schweitzer in the middle of one side flanked by the two senior nurses, Emma Haussknecht and Matilda Kottmann who had been with him at Lambarene for more than 30 years. After dinner two or three of the nurses handed round hymn books printed in German and Schweitzer announced which was the hymn for the day and then he would go to an old piano that stood in the dining room and play the accompaniment and everyone sang the hymn, then Schweitzer read a short passage of his own choice from the bible, again in German. His selection was frequently from the Acts of the Apostles about St. Paul who seemed to be one of his favourite characters. I remember one evening when some of the other doctors tried to play on the old piano in the dining room but found it extraordinarily difficult because a number of the notes just didn't work at all. They decided that only Schweitzer could play that piano because he knew which notes not to play.



Albert Schweitzer playing the piano at Lambarene.

During my three weeks stay there Schweitzer made a point of asking each of his guests to visit him alone on one evening after dinner and asked them about their life. Although he could understand English very well he did not like to speak it because he knew that he was fluent in both French and German, as he would have to be being born in Alsace a province between the two countries and at the time of his birth under German rule as the result of the Franco-German war of 1871. Alsace was returned to France after the First World War but during that war, being technically a German citizen working in French colonial Africa he was interned in Africa and in 1917 taken back to France and interned there in what nowadays would be called a concentration camp. He did not want to speak English except to be polite to English speaking guests in case he should

inadvertently say something which could be misconstrued to a different meaning from what he intended and that it might be quoted afterwards. Schweitzer asked if I could speak French or German and when he heard that I was at that time fairly fluent in French he conducted the whole of our after-dinner chat in that language. He thanked me for agreeing to give up three weeks of my time to come to Lambarene and asked about the advances in anaesthetics and asked that I should impart what knowledge I could in the short time that I was there to any of the nurses who might be available to benefit. He had a collection of cheap monochrome French picture postcards in sepia depicting the hospital and he wrote on two of those, in my presence, a few lines to the effect,

'To my friend, Dr Roberts, with thanks for his help'.

Both those cards and all the 16 mm cine films I took during my stay were eventually destroyed in the Tasmanian bushfires of 1967.

After a weekend of getting to know our way about and being shown the patients they had saved up for Joel Cohen to treat and the facilities, or lack of them, with which we had to cope we embarked on four days of operations. There was no oxygen and no nitrous oxide, the logistics of maintaining an adequate supply of such heavy and bulky objects deep in the jungle made the lack understandable. There was an x-ray machine of a very primitive kind but that was out of order and could not be expected to be repaired until some representative of the makers paid his next infrequent visit. I gathered that the rep would have made the journey specially had he been asked to do so by Schweitzer but the old doctor did not think it was really necessary. There was no blood available for transfusion, and the two young doctors who really ran the clinical side of the hospital were probably correct in thinking that as the only possible supply would have been from the local indigenous population it would not be possible to ensure that such a source would be safe as the majority of donors would be found to have at least five or six tropical diseases, malaria, bilharzia, yaws etc.

The anaesthetics were usually given by one of the more senior nurses who was a Dutch woman, in her fifties I would estimate, who gave the type of anaesthetic I had been at pains to eradicate from Holland ten years earlier, and which I had again encountered at the mission hospital near Johannesburg when I went with Denis Thompson and Phyllis Knocker which they had dubbed 'Rag, Bottle and Prayer'. She was pleasant and efficient enough in her way but very conservative and I am sure would never change her ways. There was also a much younger Dutch nurse there who had seen the change in anaesthetics in Holland before she went out to Gabon and who was eager to be taught whatever I could teach her, but I felt that the elder woman did not want to lose her position as the acknowledged anaesthetist of the establishment and she made sure that her superior status was not usurped.

Having had previous warning of the meagre facilities that would be available, I had begged from the manufacturers a donation to Lambarene hospital of an E.M.O. apparatus and taken it with me. This machine devised by Epstein, an assistant of Sir Robert Macintosh at Oxford (E=Epstein, M=Macintosh and O=Oxford), contains ether kept at a constant temperature by a simple chemical thermostat, and a known concentration of ether vapour can be given very simply. This either can be breathed spontaneously or, if respiration is deliberately stopped by the use of a muscle relaxant,

can be given by Intermittent Positive Pressure by the hand use of a concertina bellows (I.P.P.R.).

Macintosh had preached from his earliest days as Nuffield Professor at Oxford that the safest anaesthetic agent in the hands of unskilled anaesthetists was ether and this simple portable apparatus simplified the administration by delivering a known concentration. I took with me also a supply of Pentothal for induction and gallamine triethiodide (Flaxedil) as a muscle relaxant, some endotracheal tubes and a laryngoscope mainly for my own use in the difficult cases I knew I could expect to do with Joel Cohen.

We worked hard during those four days of gynaecological surgery from about 8.00 a.m. until 6.30 p.m. with about an hour's lunch break. I well remember two operations out of the 20 or 30 we must have done. One was a colpo-perineorraphy for a very severe case of vaginal prolapse and the other a Wertheim's Hysterectomy, a very radical removal of the entire internal female genital system, for advanced cancer of the cervix. The latter woman lost too much blood which we were not able to rectify and she died postoperatively.

An interesting person staying at the hospital while we were there was Olga Deterding, the heiress, we were given to believe, of the famous oil magnate, Sir Henri Deterding who was the head of the Royal Dutch Shell business. She had apparently been one of a group of what were known as the 'Bright Young Things' who had set out more or less as the result of a whim or even a wager to cross the Sahara, or so the story went. Olga had had either an accident or an acute attack of appendicitis, I forget which, which had enforced a stay in hospital and she had been left behind the rest of the expedition but was expected to be able to catch up with them later. Before she did so she had been told about Albert Schweitzer and decided to forego the Saharan jaunt and made her way to Lambarene. She was so impressed with him that she wanted to stay on and help. She became what John Gunther in his book, *Inside Africa*, calls a Schweitzer addict. She helped in various ways about the place, I remember that she was put in charge of organising the stock of medicinal drugs in the hospital dispensary and one day when there was no surgery being performed I sat at a table with her in the open air and we opened innumerable packets of 'free samples' of drugs which had been unused by their recipients, or never even sent out, and then had been collected and sent on to Schweitzer. We then transferred them into large glass jars with the generic name of the drug on it for use in the hospital. Olga had been at Lambarene for nearly a year. During the second week when I was the only short stay guest there Olga uses to ask me to go in the evenings and talk or listen to her gramophone records which she had managed to have sent out. At the end of the first week of my stay Schweitzer organised a motor launch trip on the Ogowe for the visitors and any of the rest of the white staff who were not on duty or could be spared. We had a picnic on one of the small islands and then went off in a number of pirogues exploring various narrow channels in a sort of marshy backwater until the launch was ready for the return trip.

Joel and Mrs Cohen and Larry and Kaye Gussman left after the first week and as the normal hospital routine only called for operating sessions on three mornings a week I had a lot of spare time. During the surgical sessions I attempted to teach the two Dutch nurses to use the simple E.M.O. machine. The younger girl was very keen but I detected a tendency for the older woman to take most of the cases and prevent the dissemination of knowledge where it could have done most good.

Schweitzer asked me if I would like to make a day's expedition to 'le grand village', the town of Lambarene and so I armed myself with the 8mm movie camera and wearing the inevitable solar topi I sat in a pirogue paddled by an African who had orders to take me over to the island and wait there until I should want to return. I used the word 'inevitable' because Schweitzer had a 'thing' about his staff and guests always wearing a hat and he was known to have a decided preference for the old pith helmet. I had bought a cheap imitation one in Johannesburg and both the Cohens and the Gussmans came similarly prepared. Schweitzer was convinced that they prevented sunstroke, but medical opinion at that time was throwing doubt on the existence of such a disorder and most people at the hospital only wore it to please the old gentleman. Later medical knowledge shows that whether or not sunstroke is a medical entity the use of a protective hat is of great value, in light skinned people at any rate, in the prevention of skin cancers. I wandered around the town and entered the de-luxe hotel, but only for a cold beer on the veranda. I was too overcome by the price of that to think about having lunch there. There was however another smaller hotel and I had an excellent meal with genuine French cuisine and I made sure I had some meat. We only once had meat at Schweitzer's hospital and that was for a special occasion, somebody on the staff had a birthday. Normally the diet was in the main vegetarian but we got fish fairly frequently and eggs every day. Although he had his famous 'Reverence for Life' and that was one reason for a mainly vegetarian diet Schweitzer did not totally ban the killing of animals for food. On this birthday occasion he had personally given orders that a goat should be killed and served. He was very worried that the average African native in the district was not getting enough protein in their diet and urged them to go out in boats and fish. It was, he explained to us, a vicious circle in that they got fruit and other food too easily and that left them deficient in protein and this deficiency made them too lazy to go to the effort of going out in a pirogue on the river to fish. He told us that the local natives were so lazy, mainly due to malnutrition, that in the town of Lambarene the French timber people found that it was worth their while to import African labour all the way from Nigeria because the natives from there were strong and energetic. He told us that on 14 July, the French National Day, Bastille Day, they had a great celebration in Lambarene organised entirely by the Nigerian ex-patriates, and they were not even from a French colony but a British one, but the locals were too apathetic to try and organise anything so onerous. Schweitzer told me that he would have been willing even to organise an elephant hunt to supply the Africans with protein, so I realised his reverence for life had reasonable limits. While I am sure he would be distressed to see someone needlessly kill an insect he had no objection to the use of anti mosquito sprays. He would not have endeared himself to the modern antiracist advocates because his attitude towards the black people was summed up in a remark I heard him make that 'The black man is my brother, therefore I must love him as a brother, but he is my younger brother and he must do as I tell him!'

During the third week Teddy Epstein, no relation to the Epstein who worked with Macintosh at the Radcliffe at Oxford, but an eye surgeon from Johannesburg, with whom I used to work fairly regularly, came up to Lambarene and I had some more specialist work to do, but after that I was due back in Johannesburg, so I bade farewell to the great man and to all the staff and I caught the 'milk-run' Dakota for the rest of its circuit and arrived back in Brazzaville. There I transferred to a cross-river ferry to Leopoldville, the capital of the Belgian Congo.

I hired a taxi to take me round to see the sights of the city and to the falls on the River Congo to the west of Leopoldville which render the river unnavigable between the city and the sea. The Congo is a huge river, it must have been over a mile wide at the point where the ferry plied between Brazzaville and the southern (Belgian) bank, and up stream from there it is navigable for about 2000 miles and is, of course, or was in those days, one of the main traffic arteries for the Congo. My flight from Leopoldville to Johannesburg was at about 2 a.m. so it was not worth while booking into a hotel so I just had to sit around in some bar spinning out a few beers until the time for departure to the airport.

For the summer holidays at the end of 1957, we had booked to go to Umngazi Mouth, in what is now the Transkei, at Christmas time, and shortly before we were due to leave Olive, my mother, announced her intention of coming to South Africa to stay with us for a few months. I managed to get accommodation for her too at Umngazi Mouth, in spite of the fact that the place was very heavily booked for the holiday period, but it did mean that she would have to share her accommodation with some of her grandchildren. Lilian and I had Charles and Linda with us in our *rondavel*[39] and Olive had to share with Nigel and Stuart.

The Umngazi river, like many in that part of Africa, does not flow into the sea unobstructed. Sandbanks form a lagoon of warm salt water out of the main stream where the children can safely bathe in water that is neither too deep nor subject to strong currents. Nor is there any danger from sharks.



A photograph taken by Bobby of Umngazi Mouth in December 1957.

[39] *Rondavel*: A round house resembling a native hut often used as a guesthouse or tourist dwelling in southern Africa.

The open sea provides more exciting bathing for the more experienced or foolhardy with waves that invited surfing, although in those days that meant either body surfing or just the help of a small board with an upturned front edge. As far as we knew there were no such thing as boards with a keel and on which one could stand up. On Christmas day Father Christmas appeared from beyond the sandbank and cruised across the lagoon in a small boat with an outboard engine. One of the pranks that the young boys at the hotel played was to cut off a curled up leaf of a banana tree after tying up the open end and then taking the leaf and opening it in the girls *rondavel*, releasing a bat which was snoozing away the daylight hours in a mistaken belief that it was safe from interference until dusk when it would venture out on its nocturnal business. The girls, who then had the monopoly of long hair, would be suitably alarmed lest the poor creatures should become entangled in their crowning glory, not knowing that with their radar bats could and would avoid any such obstacle.

Our friends, Denis and Mapoo Fuller, with their four children were staying at Coffee Bay, a similar holiday establishment not far away down the coast as the crow (or bat?) flies but about 50 miles by road because one had to make a long detour inland to cross the one or two streams that separated us. We went across there and they arranged that we should stay the night so as to have time between the going and returning to enjoy their company. The eldest Fuller girl, Jessica, was a relatively staid and sensible young teenager but Jane and Natalie were pretty wild tomboys and Robert, the youngest child, was a real terror or so we thought. I have memories of being the only adult in a small rowing boat doing some fishing with Jane, Natalie, Stuart and Robert as my rather mutinous crew and being relieved when the ordeal was over.



The Loteni river (where the water is not turned off at night) with the Drakensberg mountains in the distance.

Lilian and I with four children and a black Nanny and my mother were obviously too many to go in just one car so we took apart from the large Ford a smaller car and we decided that on the way back we would split up into two distinct parties as Olive was keen to see a bit more of South Africa, so I drove the little Ford Anglia and took Olive and Stuart. We left a few days before the others and went up into the Drakensberg mountains in western Natal and had the good fortune to find a delightful stone hutted camp in one of the Natal Parks Board's Nature Reserves at Loteni. There we spent a couple of days and I caught my first trout in the fast running mountain stream the Loteni river. Stuart and I were so taken with the place that we arranged to go there for several holidays in the ensuing years with Lilian, Nigel, Charles and Linda. The first time Linda saw the river she asked in an awed voice, 'Do they turn off the water at night?'

After our first stay at Loteni, Olive, Stuart and I went on through the west half of Swaziland and stayed at Pigg's Peak with the local Commissioner, Mark Patey, who was the younger son of my old chief and friend David Patey, the surgeon at the Middlesex. Mark's duties rather resembled those of Pooh-Bah in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*. These included Chief of Police in the district, Magistrate, Jury and chief Prison Warder. When we stayed with him a convicted murderer who was serving a long prison sentence waited on us at table and prisoners were often granted home leave for special occasions.



Bobby took this photograph in Swaziland in January 1958 of young Africans and home-made scooters.

Lilian stayed on at Umngazi Mouth until the end of our booked accommodation there and then driving the big car set off with Nigel, Charles, Linda and the African Nanny. We had booked for them to stay the night en route at Rawdon's Hotel at Hilton near Pietermaritzburg, but Lilian left so early and made such good progress that when they got there it was only about 2 p.m. and it was pouring with rain and she decided to push on and make for home straight away. After our experience with the Mountain Inn who gave away our booking as we did not turn up by 6.00 p.m., she assumed that Rawdon's would do the same thing. When I arrived back at Johannesburg with Olive and Stuart I had expected to be home before Lilian and the others but to my amazement I was greeted by Lilian who told me gleefully that she had saved me the cost of their night's lodging. Our joy was short lived because a few days later we got an account for meals and accommodation. I protested but I had to pay for the rooms although they did not press for the payment for meals. It seemed to me that this was a no win situation for the customer. I suppose that Lilian should have gone into the hotel and formally cancelled and no doubt would have done so had it not been raining heavily when she stopped outside the hotel and wondered whether to stay or push on.

I should really have mentioned in the previous chapter more about the running of the practice. When Gerry Hochschild and I first teamed up together we attempted to carry on with the arrangement that Gerry had with Alan Boyd and Gough Charlewood, who were gynaecologists and had agreed that for a certain sum their secretary would make his bookings and take messages for him and send out his accounts. That arrangement had worked fairly well for Gerry on his own but when I joined him the secretary found that the work was a bit more than she had bargained for and we were made to feel very much second-class citizens and our bookings were not made properly and we often didn't get messages. So we realised that we would have to arrange to employ a secretary of our own. There was a general practitioner, Dr Brocklehurst, who had rooms in Harley Chambers in Jeppe Street who wished to let off one of his rooms and agreed that we could employ a secretary there. We started to do minor surgery anaesthetics in those rooms and found that we needed the services of a trained nurse. Dr Brocklehurst had no objection to his secretary, Mrs Shillaw, helping out if the nursing sister we had engaged was busy with us in the minor ops theatre.

We had a couple of young good-looking keen trained nurses, one after the other, who worked very efficiently until, one after the other, they gave their notice to leave and get married. Gerry and I decided that we would look for a more mature woman to be our secretary and so from those who answered our advertisement we picked a rather plain, plump woman who came clutching a folio of music, just off for a singing lesson. Jean was very pleasant and efficient and we thought all our secretarial troubles were over but after a few months Jean decided to learn to fly and during her flying lessons she met Robin Darley whose wife had suddenly decamped leaving him with two school age children.

Jean and Robin got married and so we lost a very good secretary but Lilian and I gained a couple of very good friends. Robin was one of those people who are good at everything they do. He built his own double storey thatched house in the outer suburban area northwest of Johannesburg called Honeydew, with his own hands from bricks he made from the clay on his own property. They had a lovely garden and we had many a pleasant evening there playing bridge or listening to his 'state of the art' Hi-Fi equipment, or watching his movie or slide shows from their overseas travels. Robin

could not leave the house alone, he was always adding a bit here or putting in an extra staircase there but it was always very comfortable and he and Jean were always wonderful hosts.

When Jean left us Mrs Shillaw carried on and fortuitously at that time her employer, Dr Brocklehurst, decided to restrict his practice considerably and only come in to the rooms a couple of times a week so we then became the chief employer of Mrs Shillaw and she only worked part time for Brocklehurst. Frances Shillaw was one of the best secretaries one could wish for. She stayed with us for the rest of the time that I lived in South Africa and really became the backbone of the practice.

The practice began to make quite a name for itself for anaesthetising for minor surgery in our rooms and I remember one incident when one Saturday morning Margaret Orford brought along a young married woman who was pregnant but the foetus was the wrong way round with its head uppermost instead of down in the pelvis. If untreated it would have been a breech presentation wherein the baby is born not headfirst as is usual but with the buttocks presenting, a much more difficult and potentially dangerous situation. Margaret intended to attempt the manoeuvre of 'External Version' whereby the foetus is turned round by manipulation through the abdominal wall. Under a general anaesthetic the muscles of the abdominal wall can be temporarily paralysed and the manoeuvre made much easier. All went well, the girl went to sleep, I gave a small dose of suxamethonium or 'Scoline' and all the voluntary muscles were paralysed and Margaret was able to turn the baby round quite easily, and we expected to be able to let the patient wake up as soon as the effect of the scoline wore off which was usually after a couple of minutes. Some people are, however, deficient in the chemical factor in the blood which counteracts the scoline and in such cases the paralysis can last for up to two or three hours. Of course during the time that the muscles are paralysed the patient is unable to breathe spontaneously because the muscles of respiration, the diaphragm and the intercostal muscles, cannot work. This means that the lungs must be artificially and regularly inflated by the anaesthetist until the effect of the muscle relaxant wears off. Not only must the lungs be inflated with a mixture containing at least 20 per cent oxygen as is found in air but some anaesthetic agent must also be given so that the patient does not have the terrifying experience of being conscious and unable to breathe. So I kept the patient under and applied the simple means of artificial respiration by regularly squeezing the rebreathing bag and inflating the lungs. Mild cases of so-called scoline apnoea last only ten minutes or a quarter of an hour so we sent a message out from the operating theatre to the husband waiting in the adjoining room that all was well but that his wife was taking longer than usual to recover from the paralysis, He took the news very calmly and we waited and started to make arrangements to give his wife a blood transfusion because that would contain enough of the reversing agent to normalise things.

Before the blood could be obtained from the Blood Transfusion Service the girl started to breathe spontaneously although at first inadequately so that assisted respiration had to be maintained. This is a simple manoeuvre, the mask is kept applied to the face in an airtight manner and each time the patient breathes the rebreathing bag is given a little extra squeeze by hand to increase the volume of inhaled gases to normal. The order for the blood was cancelled and we told the abnormally unanxious husband that although his wife was now breathing on her own again she would not really be fit to return home to a distant suburb as they had come by train and that we thought for her safety and

comfort she would be better off if we could arrange for her to be admitted to a private hospital until the next day. The young man very readily agreed to this suggestion and with obvious relief he asked if we could arrange for her admission and said that he would collect her the next morning but that if we would excuse him now he would still be in time, if he left immediately, to catch a train himself back home and go and play cricket for his club. It seemed that he had been more concerned that the unscheduled delay of two hours would interfere with his weekend sport than he had been worried for the safety and wellbeing of his wife!

In 1959 we decided to have a swimming pool built in the garden at 27, Twelfth Avenue. One of the anaesthetic registrars at the Johannesburg General Hospital was a Dr Finn, always known as Mickey Finn, and he was at that time rostered to do the neurosurgical lists, which tended to comprise long and tedious operations. Mickey used to occupy his time designing swimming pools for himself. He built one of his own design for himself and it was so successful a neighbour of his asked him to build one for him and his reputation spread rapidly. He formed a company called Penguin Pools and I think the pool he built for us was only the fifth he had ever built. He arrived one afternoon and said 'Now, what shape and size do you want?' and then proceeded to take our garden hose and spread it into approximately the shape we wanted.

I believe that Mickey was one of the first to use the Gunnite method of building swimming pools. We were entranced to see it taking shape before our eyes. The next day four African labourers arrived and started digging out the area mapped out and Mickey popped in from time to time and saw that the walls were vertical and that the bottom of the hole sloped down to the deep end and flattened off to leave a safe area at the shallow end. A truck took away the unwanted soil and after only a day-and-a-half there was a hole looking like a swimming pool, but with red earth sides and as yet (of course) no water. That evening Sam Skinner and Irene came to dinner and arrived after dusk. After the meal the men left the ladies to use the bathroom and in the old South African tradition went out on to the lawn to look at the stars and water the garden. Sam walked straight into the hole, luckily only into the shallow end and onto the top step of the future pool. How he managed to avoid any injury I cannot imagine. After a day, when the men tacked chicken wire all around the sides and base of the excavation, carefully keeping it about an inch from the soil, the gang with the concrete spraying machine arrived and that took only another day-and-a-half to cover the entire walls and bottom about two inches thick with concrete.

Two men then scraped the surface of the concrete smooth for about a day-and-a-half and then we waited another three days with the sides covered with damp sacking to prevent too rapid drying and it was time for the painters to move in and the tilers to put a frieze at the future water line.

Not all the work was done by African labourers and their white foremen. We had decided that we would like the inflow from the filter to come in at the top of a mound of excavated soil along the deep end. Greg and Pam Gregory came and helped Lilian and me to landscape this with rocks and arrange it so that the inlet pipe poured over a natural looking waterfall with a rock garden all around it. Poor Greg got a hernia lifting some of the heavy rocks but survived the operation to repair it.



The swimming pool in the garden at 27, 12th Avenue, Parktown North, Johannesburg.

In the end we had a pool that merited an article in the equivalent of *Homes and Gardens* and was a source of great pleasure for all the family and countless friends. Many a pleasant Sunday was spent in and around the pool enjoying a *braaivleis* (South African for barbecue). Linda was not to be outdone by her brothers who could swim already and within a week she had taught herself to swim.

At the end of 1959, Nigel decided he would like to do a bit of exploring Africa during the long summer holidays and he managed to persuade us that together with Garth Hoets, a school boy of a similar age, he should be allowed to set off and hitch-hike to Mt. Kilimanjaro. The fact that we let Nigel attempt such a journey shows now the times have changed. Our main concern was that we should not let him have a lot of money on his person, lest he be robbed and left destitute. In those days we never worried about the possibility that he might be sexually assaulted, murdered, or involved in a revolution. We obviously were not as 'civilised' then as we are now. We decided to let him go and gave him just over £10, but I had also made provision for Nigel to get extra funds along the way, if necessary, by persuading our bank manager in Johannesburg to give him a letter to present to the manager of any branch of Barclays Bank authorising him to let Nigel have as much money as he needed to return home to Johannesburg. We thought that that would avoid the necessity of him carrying too much actual currency which could be lost or stolen.

Lilian took both the boys in the car as far as the northern outskirts of Pretoria and dropped them off and saw them set off. She waited until they were picked up by their first benefactor, a farmer who was only going a few miles as far as Pienaar's River, and then returned home leaving them to the mercies of the passing motorists. Soon after I got home that evening, about half past six, the phone rang and to our intense surprise it

was Nigel phoning from Bulawayo. Shortly after being dropped at Pienaar's River, the boys had been picked up by a motorist who was going directly to Bulawayo and not only agreed to take them both as far as that but stood them a meal en route. The boys encountered some slight difficulty at the Rhodesian customs at Beit Bridge because the regulations were designed to prevent anyone entering the country without adequate visible means of support. Customs officials allowed them to enter, but they were later told that before they would be allowed back into the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland from Tanganyika, they would have to show that they had at least £25 each.

After a couple of days with the Thompsons in Bulawayo the lads went on their hitch-hiking way to Salisbury (now Harare) and then Kariba where they were able to see some of the work on the dam which would soon hold up the waters of the Zambesi to form Lake Kariba that was, when it was first formed, the largest man-made lake in the world.

In Moshi at the foot of Kilimanjaro Nigel used his letter of credit with the local bank and withdrew £55; enough for both himself and a fellow traveller whose parents had not made the same provision for their son. In Moshi Nigel also said goodbye to Garth, as he had decided not to attempt the ascent but to press on to Nairobi to stay with an uncle. Nigel and Garth had met four other boys hitchhiking from Johannesburg with the intention of climbing Kilimanjaro. They were students at St. John's College, one of the best private schools in the city, and they took Nigel, who was at least a year younger than any of the others, under their wing. The five boys spent a night at the Kibo Hotel in Marangu at the base of the mountain, and then set off on the climb which does not involve any rock climbing or mountaineering skills, but merely a long hard slog uphill along a well defined track intended to be done in three days with a rest hut at the end of each stage. The usual procedure at the top hut was for the climbers to get up very early in the morning and make the final part of the ascent in time to see the sun rise from the top of the highest point in Africa. Although the other boys were able to do that, Nigel had mountain sickness and was not able to make the final effort. Nigel retired to rest in the hut until the others returned from the summit and then all five boys walked all the way back down to the Kibo Hotel in the same day, sustained on their downhill way by the thought of a glass of beer[40], a good meal and a comfortable night's rest.

Lilian and I, who knew nothing of the difficulties with the currency regulations at the Rhodesian border, were staggered when we got a note from our bank to say that Nigel had drawn £55 from Moshi![41] So much for our wish to keep him well supplied with funds but never to have so much money on him so as to be a possible target for thugs or thieves. The next thing we knew was that Nigel arrived home. He was lucky in that he picked up a 1,600 mile lift from veterinary students from Ondersterpoort near Pretoria who were in a hurry to get back and brought him as far as there.

When I first started in private practice in the early fifties the private hospitals provided nothing for the anaesthetists and we had to take with us to each hospital for each case our own anaesthetic machine, cylinders of nitrous oxide and oxygen, all ether, chloroform or whatever anaesthetic agents we wished to use as well as our own syringes and needles and drugs we might wish to give. Through meetings of the South

[40] In fact, as the diary of one of the five boys recorded, they 'all had a Pimms Number 1 to celebrate.'
[41] Bobby and Lilian had good reason to be concerned. The purchasing power of £55 in 1959 was the equivalent of more than £1,100 in 2017.

African Society of Anaesthetists we were able to arrange that all the anaesthetists donated an anaesthetic machine, so that in each of the operating theatres there would be a machine waiting for the anaesthetist using that theatre. Gradually pressure was brought to bear on the owners of the private hospitals to provide all the equipment which we had previously had to carry in ourselves. We pointed out that the hospitals provided the surgeons with all the things they required and were able to recoup the cost by adding it to the patient's account and that there really was no valid reason why the same procedure should not obtain for the anaesthetists. By the end of the decade it was possible for an anaesthetist to walk in to a private hospital carrying nothing and give the anaesthetic, although we would often sneak in with us a favourite laryngoscope or some other bit of equipment that we preferred to use rather than that supplied by the management.

When Gerry Hochschild left to go farming in Rhodesia, Mike Kramer, Peter Caswell and I took in Hugh van Hasselt into the practice and we decided that, with the increase in minor surgery work we were doing in our own room, Dr Brocklehurst's old rooms in Harley Chambers were inadequate for our needs and we moved to the 11th floor of a new block of medical offices called Cavendish Chambers where we occupied over half of one floor. Our only other neighbours on the floor were two dentists, father and son, by the name of Kincaid-Smith. We did a lot of dental anaesthetics for them and some 30 years later the son was still using the same anaesthetic firm although the anaesthetists had moved again from Cavendish Chambers to Lister Building. When I left in 1962 to come to Australia the younger Kincaid-Smith told me that his sister was practising in Melbourne. Professor Priscilla Kincaid-Smith is now one of the leading world authorities on kidney diseases.

During the days when we had to carry most of our equipment in to the private hospitals, both Gerry and I adopted the technique of Sir Robert Macintosh, my old chief in the Mayfair Gas Company, in employing a lay helper to help with the carrying. We both employed black Bantu men, but we did not use them as drivers. Gerry had found out the hard way that once you taught a Bantu to drive he would leave and get higher paid work elsewhere. I employed a very reliable trustworthy man who had been a 'houseboy' of some neighbours of ours in Sunnyside Road, Birnam. His name was Abraham and he was of the Venda tribe from the far northeast of the Transvaal. While working for Cyril and Joan Harris he had had the misfortune to make an enemy of someone who induced the witchdoctor to put a spell on him and he became very ill and very nearly died. I don't remember how he escaped death but when he came back to he Harris's they had by then had a daughter and had employed a Nanny to look after her and help with the housework and on their recommendation I took Abraham on and taught him how to look after my anaesthetic equipment and he became a very useful helper, though not able because of the apartheid to come and work in the theatre with me as Patterson had done in London and Holland. Both Gerry and I had equipment stolen from our cars. In my case I had been doing a preoperative visit at the Lady Dudley Nursing Home and when I came out I found that a large heavy bag was missing from the boot. I told the police and within a very short time they had found the bag thrown away on an empty lot almost next door to the hospital, and amazingly nothing was taken from it. Gerry was driving back to his flat in the prestigious suburb of Killarney in the dark at the end of a day's work when he got a flat tyre. He and his black assistant got out of the car and while Freddy worked the jack and changed the wheel Gerry held the torch for him to see what he was doing and when they went to

replace the jack and the punctured wheel in the boot they found that his bag of equipment was missing. Someone had brazenly taken it out of the boot while they were busy at the front wheel.

Chapter 13: Passion Play, Canadian Congress and Anthony's Wedding

The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists decided to hold the second world Congress in Toronto in 1960. As I had been South Africa's official delegate at the inauguration of the W.F.S.A. in The Hague in 1955, I decided that I would attend the meeting. Lilian and I also wanted to go back to England to see our parents and other relations and friends for only the second time since 1949. So we again booked on Tropic Airways, still using the same old York aircraft that had belonged to Field Marshal Jan Smuts, for the journey to Europe and back. In Johannesburg I booked a flight from London to Boston and back with B.O.A.C. as we intended to stay with Lilian's youngest sister and her husband for a few days on our way to Toronto. Gladys had followed Lilian as nurse-secretary to Freddy Warner the dentist in Harley Street and after the war had married an American doctor, Norman Selverstone, who had come over to London to do some post-graduate study at the Heart Hospital in Westmoreland Street. While in London he had been drafted into the American Army and sent to Germany, but he returned on leave and proposed to Gladys and they spent the first year of their married life in Germany and then, when Norman's army days were over, they went to live in Cambridge, Mass., the home of his alma mater, Harvard.

The slowness of the old aircraft had its compensations. What is now, in jetting in Boeings etc., a journey of a few hours was then a matter of three days with overnight stops in interesting places. We did not, on this occasion, take any of the children. The boys were all at school at a private school in Bryanston run by Methodists on the lines of an English Public School, called St. Stithians. Nigel and Stuart were boarders there, and for the duration of our overseas trip we persuaded the headmaster also to take Charles as a boarder.[42] At the age of nine he was one of the youngest boarders there. Linda went to a convent school in Parktown.

On the journey north we had a stopover in Vienna and were put up in a very good hotel. We had been given, by fellow members of the Bryanston Country Club with whom we regularly played lawn bowls, Fred and Nita Schiller, the names of a Viennese couple who had also lived in Johannesburg for a while. They came and collected us from the hotel, took us to the Prater for a ride on the giant wheel, then up into the Vienna Woods to Grinzing to taste the young wine and lastly to the Ratskeller restaurant for a sumptuous meal which unfortunately we were too tired to enjoy properly. The next day we flew to Dusseldorf the terminal in Europe for Tropic Airways. We arrived there on a Sunday afternoon and made our way to a hotel where we had arranged to meet a friend from Johannesburg, Diana Aungiers.

Before we left Johannesburg we had bought and paid for in South African currency a small car from the Borgward factory in Essen and we had the papers showing that it was to be delivered to a certain garage in Dusseldorf on the day before we were due to arrive. Being a Sunday we did not expect to be able to take delivery of the car until the next day but when we went to the garage on the Monday morning they knew nothing about the whole transaction. However I had the papers which showed quite clearly that

[42] While the three boys were all boarding at St Stithians, they were jokingly referred to as Roberts Major, Roberts Minor, and Roberts Mini-Minor.

it had been due at that garage on the Saturday, so the garage people rang up the factory in Essen and they agreed to send the car straight away but pointed out that it would not be ready to drive away until it had been unpacked and checked and the protective petroleum jelly wiped off the metal parts.

This was a bit of a blow because we all three had tickets for the Oberammergau Passion Play on the Friday which would necessitate us getting there by Thursday evening and we had counted on being able to drive away on the Monday morning. So we had to content ourselves with waiting until the Tuesday, we booked in for another night at the hotel and then wondered what to do for the rest of Monday. We asked at a travel bureau and they suggested a trip on one of the Rhine steamers and we only just made it with a short train journey and a hurried taxi to the quay and we were the last people on the steamer before it set off south up stream.

We went as far as we could upstream so as to catch the last downstream steamer for the return journey to Dusseldorf. Before we disembarked we could see the downstream steamer approaching and we nearly missed our connection because our boat was a bit late but we luckily scrambled aboard the north-bound boat with seconds to spare, it had been a day of near misses but eventually all worked out very well and we enjoyed an excellent dinner aboard the return steamer.

The next day we had to wait until 4 p.m. before we could drive away in our new car.



Bobby and Lilian's new Borgward Arabella was used mainly by Lilian during the family's final two years in South Africa, while Bobby drove a Saab 96.

It was only a small car and there was not enough space in the boot for all our luggage but the garage fixed us up with a roof rack and we put Diana's case on the top. We set off in a strange car, with a left -and drive, driving on the right hand side of the road, in a strange city in the rush hour to try and find our way to the Autobahn leading south towards Heidelberg. It was the hour at which factory workers stopped work and I have never seen such a vast number of cyclists all hurrying home. To make matters worse it came on to rain. We managed to find the Autobahn and then we made a vital mistake; we did not take the correct exit for Heidelberg and had to do a cross country trip trying to find our way back on to the Autobahn. After an unnecessary detour of about 40 kilometres we were again on the right road. By the time we arrived in Heidelberg it was dark and we tried to find a hotel but they were all full for some local festival so we drove on up the valley of the Neckar and came to a village where again we found all the rooms in the hotel were taken.

We decided that we must have a meal before we set off to try and find lodging for the night. In very halting German I managed to explain our plight to the waitress who said her parents had a bedroom and would give us breakfast and she would enquire from a friend about another room for Diana. The enquiry proved positive and so we were thankfully able to have a good night's rest under those enormous duvets so beloved of the German country folk. Diana was most distressed to find that her suitcase had not proved to be waterproof and some of her clothes were damaged so the next day we had to be sure that her suitcase was in the boot and to prevent further luggage soaking we bought a large piece of plastic which we wrapped around the case on the roof rack.

The Wednesday turned out fine and we had a very pleasant run through the Black Forest and in the evening we started to look for somewhere to sleep and began once again to be afraid we might not find anywhere, so we stopped at every place where we saw the sign in the window *Zimmer Frei* and decided we could not afford to be choosy. The first place that could give us two rooms was a small farmhouse and the rooms were directly above the cowshed and the wooden floors had gaps between the boards so that we spent the night in a strong odour of rich manure. The beds were very comfortable and, refreshed in limb if not in lung, we set off at daybreak to arrive at the famous Rheinfall near Schaffhausen where we had breakfast admiring the cataract.

After a pleasant day driving through the southern Bavarian countryside we arrived at Oberammergau, where we met, by arrangement, Don and Ida Haynes. They had been friends of ours for the whole decade. Don had been a general practitioner starting out in practice in Corlett Drive, the main road running through Birnam only a block away from our first house in Johannesburg in Sunnyside Road, but had later decided to devote himself to Ear, Nose and Throat surgery and, after training under Sir Terence Cawthorne in London, returned to practise in Johannesburg as a specialist.

After registering we were all billeted in various private houses in the large village. The five of us had dinner at one of the local restaurants. After buying a few souvenirs from some open stalls in the market where we were often served by men with shoulder length hair (in those days of 'short back and sides' hairdos for men, it was quite a cultural shock especially if one saw the back of the salesman first and thought one was being served by a woman), we retired early to our restful beds to be up in time for the next morning for the performance which lasted the whole of the day, four hours in the morning and another four hours after a break for lunch. As I remember it, there were only three performances a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. One's ticket included the two nights' bed and breakfast and the lunch on the day of the performance. On the following day we said goodbye to Don and Ida and made our way into Austria and through the Tyrol and Lichtenstein and spent the night in Zurich, where we had arranged to meet Anthony and his fiancée, Julie Ashley.



The Oberammergau Passion Play being performed in 1960.

Julie was a nurse at Guy's and they had met when Anthony had to be hospitalised for the removal of a wisdom tooth. We had arranged that they should fly out to Zurich and join us for the rest of our holiday on the Continent. Anthony and Julie were waiting for us at the Hotel zum Bahnhof near the central railway station. It was the end of Diana's holiday in Europe and so while Lilian rested in the hotel Anthony, Julie and I took Diana out to the airport and saw her off on Swissair back to Johannesburg. That evening we dined well but very expensively at a restaurant on the shores of Lake Zurich and the next few days we wandered slowly through Switzerland and made our way over the pass west of Martigny into France at Chamonix. There we spent the night and the next day I took the road to the Col de Voza where I had first set foot on a ski 21 years before. We had a picnic in glorious sunshine on the lower slopes of Mont Blanc and watched with fascination as a helicopter repeatedly took loads of building material from Chamonix up to build or rebuild one of the mountain huts.

A couple of days later we arrived in Tours and made our way to the small village of St. Avertin a few miles south of the city, where Jean and Blanche Rainer had retired to live. What a welcome we received! Because their cottage was not big enough for all of us, neighbours across the street provided bedrooms for Anthony and Julie.

We spent the next few days visiting the best of the chateaux including my old favourite Chenonceau, with its extraordinary setting on a bridge across the River Cher, Amboise where Leonardo da Vinci spent the last two years of his life and is buried, Loches where King Richard I, Coeur-de Lion, was imprisoned for two years after being captured on his return from a Crusade until anecdotally discovered by the wandering troubadour Blondel and ransomed by the English, and the graceful Azay-le Rideau.



M. and Mme. Rainer at their house in St. Avertin.

We also paid a visit to the caves in the cliffs at Vouvray where some of the best vintners of Touraine cellar their wines. In the evenings sustained by pre-prandial aperitifs we played Boules, a game with rules like lawn bowls except that the boule is smaller, made of heavy metal and is thrown through the air, not rolled along the ground, and the rink is of gravel not close-cropped grass. We concluded the holiday by crossing from Le Havre to Southampton and called on Julie's parents at Gosport on the way back to London.

Now it was nearly time to go to Boston on our way to the Congress in Toronto. Lilian and I were asked to a party in our honour by Peter and Margaret Dinnick, Brian and Florence Sellick and Jan and Nan Hewer, my three last Registrars at the Middlesex, all by this time on the Honorary staff, as I had been before I resigned in 1949 to go to South Africa, and their wives. I made arrangements for the car to be shipped to Durban and while in the West End I passed the Regent Street offices of B.O.A.C. and thought it would do no harm to confirm the booking I had made in Johannesburg for the transatlantic flight. There were three long queues waiting to be served and I dutifully waited my turn in one of them. When the booking clerk finished with the customer in front of me, he shut his grill and announced that he was going off to lunch. I was very angry and said in a loud voice

'Will somebody please tell me which queue I have to go to the back of now so that I get served before all the staff go to lunch?'

An American man at the head of one of the other queues said ‘Well now, that’s the first time I’ve heard an Englishman lose his cool and justifiably. Here come and take my place in front of me!’

The clerk who had refused to attend to me then decided to reopen his grill albeit with bad grace. When I showed him our tickets he said triumphantly

‘These tickets are no longer valid! You should have reconfirmed onward flights long ago.’

I pointed out that it was not an onward flight, it was an original flight by B.O.A.C. but he maintained that the flight was fully booked and that I could not travel on it. When I said that it was important that I arrive in Toronto for the Congress he said the next available flight would not be until a day or two after the opening of the Congress. I demanded then that I got my money back for the tickets and I would try other airlines. He was adamant that I could not obtain a refund until I returned to Johannesburg.

Dejected I walked up Regent Street and tried one or two other airlines without success so I went to the Middlesex Hospital where at that time the Honorary staff used to be able to get excellent lunches in the beautiful panelled Board Room for a mere pittance. As an ex-Honorary there were always plenty of my former colleagues only too pleased to invite me to lunch there as their guest. Peter Dinnick was there and when he heard my sad story of the airline ticket, he said that there was a charter flight which had been specially organised for anaesthetists from England to attend the Congress and that although it had been fully booked (which I knew because I had originally tried from Johannesburg to get on that flight) he thought that he had heard that there had been some recent cancellations. He would make enquiries and let me know at the party they had arranged for Lilian and me that evening. At the excellent party Peter brought the good news that he had been able to secure two seats for us. The relief and the pleasure of renewing old friendships made it a very enjoyable occasion and we possibly over-indulged in liquid refreshments so that Lilian and I decided that we would not go back to her sister Marian’s in Sidcup and we stayed in a small private hotel in Manchester Square.

The next day Lilian had a headache that did not surprise me but as it showed no signs of wearing off as the morning progressed we decided it was of some other origin. I decided to take her to the Middlesex and asked Hugh Marriott, then one of the Honorary physicians to look at her. Hugh was mystified and worried because we had the tickets for the charter flight that evening and he did not think that we should fly to America with an undiagnosed persistent headache. Even in those days the cost of medical treatment in the United States was by English standards exorbitant and moreover he could not be sure that a headache was not the forerunner of something more sinister, He called into consultation a neurologist who could not find any other signs of such dire complaints as a brain tumour or meningitis and we were getting ready to cancel the whole transatlantic trip when he said to Lilian, ‘Have you ever had anything like this before?’

Lilian told him she remembered once having a bad headache and it was diagnosed as migraine. This news mollified Hugh who then gave his consent for the flight and gave Lilian a small dose of Pethidine which relieved the pain but made her a bit sleepy.

Hugh gave me a syringe loaded with 100 mgm Pethidine to be given once we were airborne and hoped that she would arrive in Boston feeling much better. The flight had been arranged to go via Boston because Dr Beecher, the professor of anaesthetics there, had invited the whole group to a buffet dinner party at his home on arrival and visit the Massachusetts General Hospital the next day. The 'Mass General' is a very famous place from an anaesthetist's point of view. It was there that Dr Morton in 1846 gave the first successful recorded anaesthetic using ether. The old 19th century operating theatre has been preserved as a memorial and is known as the 'Ether Dome'. All the British anaesthetists were very pleased to have this opportunity to meet Professor Beecher as he with his associate Todd had published a sensational paper in 1954 in which they purported to show that the use of muscle relaxants in anaesthesia increased the risk of death under anaesthetic six-fold, a theory which had been later completely disproved, but Beecher and Todd were anathemas to progressive anaesthetists all over the world and the stigma had not fully been removed from their names even by 1960.

This arrangement of course fitted in with our plans very well as we had, in any case, decided to stop over in Boston with Lilian's sister and Norman Selverstone. We, with all the other people booked on the charter flight, were told to assemble at a hotel near Victoria Station where a bus would collect us and take us to the airport. When we got there we were told that there was some hitch, I think a strike by the baggage handlers, but that the hotel would give us an evening meal. Lilian didn't feel like eating so I left her in the care of Geoffrey and Peggy Organe, who had already eaten at home before leaving, while I had dinner. Lilian curled up on a sofa in the hotel lounge and slept most of the waiting period. Geoffrey later became the President of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists and was knighted in 1968.

Eventually the industrial dispute was settled (why such events are always euphemistically referred to as industrial action I cannot imagine, industrial inaction would seem more appropriate), and we boarded the bus and eventually the plane. As soon as we were airborne, I gave Lilian an intramuscular injection of 100 mg. pethidine and within ten minutes she was out like a light. What we did not know was that we would land at Shannon Airport for refuelling. The flight attendants ordered everyone to disembark, but when I pointed out that Lilian was not able to walk they let her stay but I had to spend about an hour wandering round the duty free shop without being tempted. When we were about three hours out over the Atlantic the Captain's voice over the public address system announced that one of the engines had failed but we were not to worry because the aircraft could very well fly on three engines. He gave us time to relax and then said, 'Although this aircraft can very well fly on three engines, with the load we have on board we cannot maintain enough height so we are going to stooge around for a bit and jettison some of the petrol'

We were relieved to know that it was not passengers who were to be jettisoned and then back came the Captain's voice, 'During this operation will you all kindly extinguish any cigarettes to minimise the risk of fire.' Everyone looked and felt alarmed at the thought of fire and kept a close watch out of the windows for any glimpse of flames, all except Lilian, that was, who was still deeply drugged. After some time the Captain announced that we had now jettisoned enough fuel to enable the plane to fly properly, and we all relaxed once more and the smokers again lit up and this calm was allowed to be maintained for about five minutes and then the intercom again alerted us. 'Although this aircraft can now fly quite well on three engines, we do not have enough petrol

aboard to enable us to reach Boston so we are going to turn around and return to London.'

Some three hours later we arrived over London and now the intercom told us to fasten our seat belts prior to landing at London. Lilian was by now, it was about 6.00 a.m., starting to arouse from her drugged sleep and, not knowing anything of the drama we had experienced, said in a loud clear voice, 'London? Is there another London?', causing a general ripple of laughter throughout the cabin. It took six hours of waiting in the London terminal before the authorities produced another aircraft. They did allow us, at the airline's expense, to phone America to anyone who would be meeting us so we were able to let Gladys and Norman know. It was now obvious that we would not arrive in time for Professor Beecher's reception and that had to be cancelled.

Lilian suffered no more migraine and we spent a couple of days with the Selverstones in Cambridge and we made the acquaintance for the first time of Norman and their two elder children, Andrew and Jane. Lilian decided that she would not come and spend a whole week kicking her heels about in Toronto but would stay with her sister until the work of the congress was finished, so I flew alone to Toronto and boarded a bus to take me to the University where I was able to obtain accommodation in one of the men's residential colleges.

What I did not know was that a dentist in Johannesburg for whom our firm often gave anaesthetics had some relatives in Toronto and had written to them and they had decided to meet me at the airport and offer me accommodation at their home. They were waiting for me but as they did not know what I looked like and I knew nothing at all about the arrangement I got away in the bus before they realised that they had missed me. Imagine then my surprise when, after I had installed myself in my room in the men's residence, I was called to the telephone and the dentist's relations were asking me if I would like to change and go and stay with them. I decided that as they lived in an outer suburb I would have a lot of transport difficulties in getting to the Hotel York each day for the programme of lectures and so I declined with thanks. They, however, when they heard that Lilian would be joining me on the Friday evening, invited us both to spend the weekend with them before we caught the charter flight back to England on the Monday evening. Even from the University it was quite a journey to the congress venue, involving a walk of about ten minutes, a tram ride and then the Underground where I had to change trains at a station deep under one of the largest department stores, Eaton's. The weather was extremely hot and I did not have any cool clothing so I bought a pale beige linen suit at a sale at Eaton's.

At the weekend our hosts were extremely kind to us and showed us round the city and surrounding area and on the Sunday we made a day's excursion to see the Niagara Falls. Having been twice to the Victoria Falls, we found Niagara a bit of an anti-climax being only half the height and terribly built up and commercialised. Only a few days before we visited Niagara a small boy had survived being washed over the falls wearing an inflated inner tyre tube. His sister had jumped out of the boat and swum to the shore just above the torrent when their uncle had lost control of his craft and the boat, boy and uncle were washed over. Even in specially prepared barrels and other devices very few of the foolhardy people who have deliberately gone over the Falls have lived and the small boy's survival was regarded as miraculous.

Back in the U.K. we prolonged our holiday so as to be able to attend Anthony and Julie's wedding in early November. For some reason they had decided to get married at a church at some village in Hampshire, I think because they knew that the local hotel would be a good place for the reception. I remember that there used then to be some regulation in the Church of England that one could only be married in a particular church if one could provide evidence of a certain duration of residence in the parish and that to fulfil the requirements all that was necessary was to deposit a suitcase (even an empty one) at the local hotel for a few days. Anthony complied with these farcical conditions and on Guy Fawkes Day Anthony and Julie were married. Lilian and I stayed the night in the hotel where the reception and Anthony's suitcase had been held and a couple of days later returned, again via Tropic airways, to South Africa.

This time we made a stopover in Cairo for two nights staying, at Tropic's expense, at a five star hotel on the banks of the Nile and paying the customary visit to the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx and being appalled at the streets of the city by night crowded with people lying in the gutters and shop entrances. We joined a group of Tropic passengers who dared to go by taxi to see the Royal Palace, but the taxi driver crammed so many bodies into the cab that we could hardly move and all I could see, out of the corner of one eye and between the arm of the person sitting on me and the neck of the next sardine, was a blank bit of wall which could equally as well have been the back of the G.P.O., the prison or the public conveniences, if such things existed in Cairo.

From Cairo on I sat next to a man who, we were told, was a famous stunt man for the films and known as 'Crash' Kavanagh. He enlivened the journey by pointing out screws on the under surface of the wing of the aircraft which were visibly undoing themselves with the vibration. We had to make an unscheduled stop at Lusaka for some repairs and when we were told we would be only a couple of hours my Job's comforter assured me that that really meant we would have to stay the night there. However he proved to have been unnecessarily pessimistic because before we had had time to drink the beers we had ordered in the transit lounge we were hurriedly summoned to return to our seats aboard the aircraft and we were on our way in well under only one hour, and we arrived back home in Johannesburg safe and sound.

In 1961 the complacency of white South Africans was shaken by the unfortunate incident at Sharpeville where several Africans were killed by gunshot by a small detachment of police who strongly objected to being stoned and threatened by an unruly mob carrying pangas[43] and overreacted with disastrous consequences. I began to wonder if South Africa, with its apparently immovable Nationalist government, was the right place to bring up three sons and possibly expose them to being conscripted as they grew up to fight for a cause, apartheid, in which they did not believe.

I made enquiries about jobs for anaesthetists in more peaceful parts of the world. There were a number of countries in Europe where the benefits of modern anaesthesia were becoming recognised and a number of surgeons were looking for trained anaesthetists to come to their clinic and work for them. I contacted one such surgeon in Switzerland but I found that he was only prepared to offer a salary on a contract that would prevent me from working anywhere outside his private clinic. Such an offer was unacceptable, being a retrograde step to a condition worse than that which I had rejected when I

[43] *Panga*: Machete.

stopped working with Professor Nuboer in Utrecht, where at least I had the afternoons free to work for others.

I saw an advertisement in the South African Medical Journal for an appointment as Director of Anaesthetics at the Royal Hobart Hospital in Tasmania. I asked the family how they would like to go and live in Tasmania and they said 'Where's that?' I put in an application and awaited the result. With my qualifications and experience I was fairly confident that I might be appointed so I prepared my partners for my possible resignation. Once again [in a situation similar to one that had occurred in England in 1948], my partners were unwilling for me to sell my share to another anaesthetist in Johannesburg, on the grounds that when we had taken in Denis Glauber he had been given an undertaking that the senior members of the partnership would not resign within a specified time, a sensible clause in the partnership agreement to prevent the senior partners selling a share to Denis and then all resigning leaving him with the obligation to buy all the others out. None of the others had the slightest intention of resigning, but they saw the loophole in the agreement and stuck to it legalistically.

In the event, my application to Hobart was rejected together with a covering letter explaining that (a) they thought my qualifications too high for the post and (b) they were really looking for a younger man. I was, at the time, 50 years old. The position had been offered to a young man, also from Johannesburg, and so I went to my partners and said that I would not be leaving after all and we settled down to our normal routine.

However, after about six weeks I received a telegram offering me the job. It appeared that the young man they had chosen had been advised that he had a brilliant academic future ahead of him and that he would be wasting his talents in a backwater like Hobart which did not, at that time, have a medical school. This was in January 1962, shortly before my 51st birthday. Lilian and I took a week's leave and went into the country to discuss our decision. Neither of us really wanted to leave South Africa where we had lived very happily for 13 years and the children were doing well at school. Nigel had just finished his Matric with a First Class pass, only the second-ever recipient of that award in the history of St Stithians. Stuart was happy at the school, more interested at that time in collecting snakes in the well-wooded extensive grounds than emulating his elder brother. One of his reports stated that 'Stuart is very clever, he knows exactly how little work to do to get away with it', but he was patently not lacking in intelligence. I think he felt a bit overawed by Nigel and had decided not to try and surpass him but to bask in reflective glory.

Nigel had been awarded an American Field Service (A.F.S.) scholarship to go for a year to the United States starting in August so his education would not be affected if we migrated to Australia. Charles and Linda were young enough for the move not to affect them much. It was only doubts about what Stuart's reaction might be that caused us to have any misgivings on the score of children's education. The reason given for my initial rejection, that I was too old for the position, emphasised the fact that unless I accepted this offer I was only going to get even older in the future and my chances of finding other suitable employment would rapidly diminish. It was a question of now or never if I wished to emigrate from South Africa.

Eventually I decided to take the plunge and wrote to Hobart accepting the position and asking for more details of the perks that went with the job such as low cost

accommodation, help with the cost of moving family and belongings etcetera. We were told that the Tasmanian government would refund over a three-year period the fares and freight of goods provided I stayed in the job for that time. Housing would be provided with free electricity and I was advised to contact the previous holder of the appointment for details of the accommodation. When they gave me his name I was astonished to learn that it was the Hon. Edgar Hacking who had been chosen over me for the post of Honorary Anaesthetist at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in 1946, but before taking up the job had resigned and emigrated to Cape Town. I had actually never met him during my time in South Africa and had no idea that he had gone from there to Australia. I wrote to Edgar and he sent a scale plan of the ground-floor flat that I would get and advised us not to bring any of our furniture as the place was fully furnished. That was very misleading information and we unfortunately acted on it and organised an auction sale of all our furniture before we left.

The next available ship plying between Durban and Melbourne was the S.S. 'Southern Cross' of the Shaw Line sailing in June 1962.



The Shaw Savill Line's 'Southern Cross'.

I gave my partners notice that I would leave the practice at the end of April. They were adamant that they would not buy me out of my share nor would they allow me to sell my share to anyone else. This was all the more galling when Dr Arne Cilliers replaced me paying them the purchase price of his share, which I believed should have been paid to me. Many of my anaesthetist friends from both Johannesburg and Pretoria organised a farewell party for us in the garden of Don Jeffes and this took the form of a *braaivleis* (barbecue) and the making of some biltong for us to take with us as a memento. Biltong is made by taking lean meat, cutting it into thin strips, marinating it for days in a strong salt solution and then hanging it up to dry until it is as hard as a piece of wood. Small slivers shaved off this are very tasty and biltong is a convenient form of energy giving food when 'on safari', or out fishing or even as snacks with drinks. We took some with

us when we sailed but I don't think it had been sufficiently dried as it went bad in our cabins on the liner and had to be fed to the fishes in the Indian Ocean. Just as well because any form of meat is a prohibited import in Australia and, had it survived the journey, it would have been confiscated and destroyed at our first port of call, Fremantle.

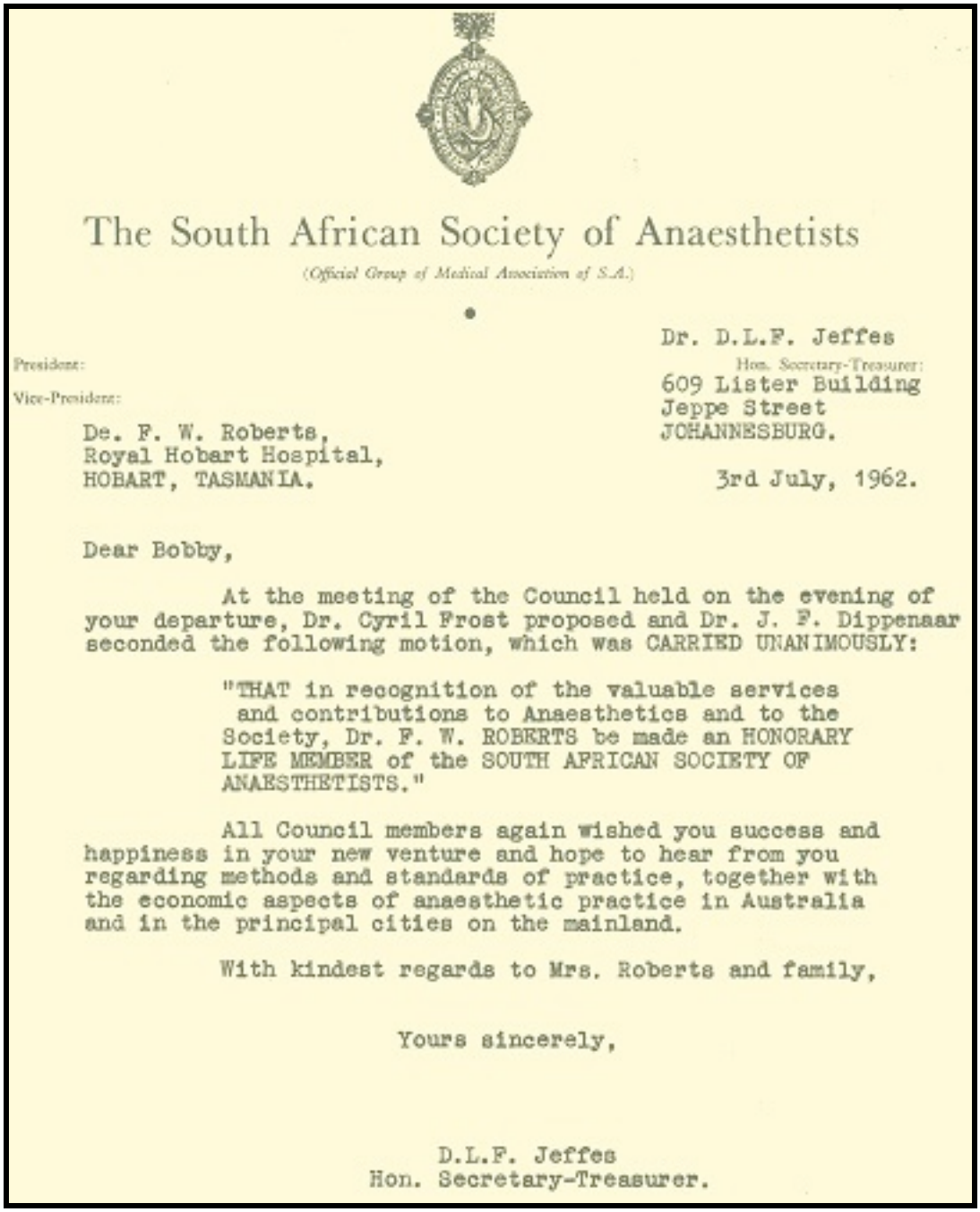
We sold the lovely old house in Parktown North on an acre and a half with the swimming pool for 12,000 Rand. The rand was derived from the British ten shillings when decimal currency was introduced into South Africa in February 1961, on St Valentine's Day. I don't know if St Valentine had anything to do with currency as well as love but five years later decimalisation took place on 14 February in Australia. We were very sorry to leave the home we had lived in for more than 11 years, the longest time that as a family we have remained occupiers of any house. In 1985 while staying with Harold and Pam Gregory, Terry Knight's sister and brother-in-law, we visited the site and found it had been bought by a speculator, the house pulled down and four 'town houses' built and two had been sold and the other two were up for sale at R250,000 each! From R12,000 to R1,000,000!

The auction sale of the furniture was a disaster. Lilian and I couldn't bear to go but we sent Nigel to try to look after our interests and he phoned us to say that although we had put a reserve price on most things the auctioneer had ignored that and had sold our Hepplewhite dining room chairs for below the reserve price. I rushed round and remonstrated with him and he was forced to withdraw that item and resell the chairs to our old friend Diana Aungiers, who certainly got a bargain at R75! We have since been back to Johannesburg several times and on each occasion we have had the pleasure of dining at Diana's home and sitting on our old chairs.

One of the many farewell parties that we attended was a dinner given by Graham Scott, an ophthalmic surgeon with whom I had enjoyed working for several years, who invited us to meet a lady ophthalmic surgeon from Australia, the world renowned Ida Mann. During the course of the very pleasant evening she told us how to improve our lot down under by buying the local brand of whisky known as Corio, much cheaper than the imported scotch, and pour out from the bottle a sherry glassful of Corio, use it for cooking or throw it away and fill up the bottle with dry sherry. I must confess that it is a recipe that I have never tried so I do not know how efficacious it is.

We left Nigel with Denis and Mapoo Fuller until the time came in August for him to go to America. Nigel had, since leaving school, got himself a job with the 'Rand Daily Mail' as a copy-holder (an assistant to a proof-reader, whose job was to check the text of proof columns set up before it was passed as ready for printing. I don't think that, in these days of modern electronic printing, such a job exists).

Lilian, Stuart, Charles, Linda and I departed on the night train from Johannesburg to Durban seen off by quite a crowd of well-wishers, including all my ex-partners, Nigel, Mapoo and Denis Fuller, Joan and Terry Knight, Pam and 'Greg' Gregory, Leslie and Freda Bate, Jimmy and Helen Durham, Cyril Frost, Don Jeffes, Chick and Madeleine Nathan, Don and Ida Haynes and many others.



The South African Society of Anaesthetists

(Official Group of Medical Association of S.A.)

President:

Vice-Presidents:

Dr. D.L.F. Jeffes
Hon. Secretary-Treasurer:
609 Lister Building
Jeppe Street
JOHANNESBURG.

De. F. W. Roberts,
Royal Hobart Hospital,
HOBART, TASMANIA.

3rd July, 1962.

Dear Bobby,

At the meeting of the Council held on the evening of your departure, Dr. Cyril Frost proposed and Dr. J. F. Dippenaar seconded the following motion, which was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY:

"THAT in recognition of the valuable services and contributions to Anaesthetics and to the Society, Dr. F. W. ROBERTS be made an HONORARY LIFE MEMBER of the SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF ANAESTHETISTS."

All Council members again wished you success and happiness in your new venture and hope to hear from you regarding methods and standards of practice, together with the economic aspects of anaesthetic practice in Australia and in the principal cities on the mainland.

With kindest regards to Mrs. Roberts and family,

Yours sincerely,

D.L.F. Jeffes
Hon. Secretary-Treasurer.

Shortly after he left South Africa, Bobby was awarded honorary life membership of the South African Society of Anaesthetists in recognition of his valuable services and contributions to anaesthetics and to the Society.

As soon as we were installed in our cabins on the liner in Durban harbour I shaved off the beard and moustache I had worn for the past three years because I did not wish my new employers, the State Government of Tasmania, to think that they had not only reluctantly taken on a man older than they wanted but engaged someone who was a bit of a rebel. In those days beards were not as common or accepted as a normal style of appearance as they are now. In fact during the first six or seven of my ten years with the Royal Hobart Hospital the Medical Superintendent had on several occasions carpeted some of the residents who had dared to grow one.



Bobby with his beard (called a *bok baard* – a buck's beard – in Afrikaans) and Lilian, both photographed by Leslie Bate shortly before they emigrated from South Africa to Australia in June 1962.

The Shaw Savill Line ran a one class service and Stuart was deemed old enough to come to the adult meals. He was 15 and had his sixteenth birthday on board during the voyage. Charles was 11 and Linda nine. Once again because of my profession, as happened on the Union Castle trip from Southampton to Cape Town, we were put at the table in the dining saloon at the ship's doctor's table, and my offered services as an anaesthetist if required were not called for. During the first rather boring ten days across the Indian Ocean to Fremantle we soon encountered rough weather and for a period of more than 24 hours the doctor himself, Stuart and I were the only attendants at mealtimes while the others, in the privacy of their cabins, wished the ship would go down to save themselves further suffering from seasickness.

When we docked at Fremantle we were met by Edgar Hacking, my predecessor in the Hobart job, who had managed to stall his wife's plan to return to South Africa for the time being by stopping in Perth and setting up there in practice. He and his wife showed us the local sights and entertained us to a meal before we had to hurry back to Fremantle to re-board the 'Southern Cross'.

Chapter 14: Hobart, A.F.S and Holland locum

We disembarked in Melbourne and were met by Bernie and Sue Hammerschlag who had emigrated from Johannesburg about a year before. Bernie had been a general practitioner who had often been asked to assist with chest operations performed by either David Adler or his partner Denis Fuller and I had got to know him as a sincere hard working young man with a family of two small girls. Denis Fuller had written to him to apprise him of our arrival and he had arranged for us to stay at a family hotel near his home in Caulfield.

The next day we flew from Melbourne to Hobart in a Viscount belonging to one of the two airlines that had the monopoly of internal air traffic in Australia, the government airline T.A.A. standing for Trans Australia Airlines and a private company Ansett A.N.A. I never did know what A.N.A. stood for. Both those airlines still carry most of the domestic passengers in Australia in spite of the deregulation supposedly breaking the monopoly although both airlines have changed their name slightly, why I cannot think, to plain Ansett and Australian Airlines. For Stuart it was the first time that he had flown but, of course, both Charles and Linda had flown with Trek to Europe and back seven years before.

The Superintendent of the Royal Hobart Hospital (R.H.H.), Dr Phil Nolan met us at Hobart airport and drove us to show us our new home, the complete ground floor of an early Victorian mansion in the Sandy Bay Road called side. He left Lilian and the children to sort themselves out and decide who and what went where and took me off to have a look at the hospital and introduce me to the theatre staff with whom I would be working. The theatre sister in charge was a white haired lady rather of the old school of nursing sisters, authoritarian and strict, by the name of Sister Howard, always known semi-affectionately as ‘Snowy’. I could see immediately that any innovations that I might wish to make would have to be introduced with considerable tact.

Having been introduced to my new workplace I was returned to Gattonside where Lilian had already started trying to make the place more lived in and homelike. Seeing that we had been told by Edgar Hacking that the place was fully furnished and advised not to bring our furniture we were somewhat appalled, on opening the front door, to find a large entrance hall carpeted but totally devoid of any furniture. The telephone was on the floor, not the most convenient site for dialling. The enormity of what we had done in selling off, for virtually peanuts, all our lovely furniture, a lot of which had been bought in antique shops in Zeist near Utrecht while we were in Holland and in Johannesburg was brought home to us. We had arrived in Melbourne on a Wednesday and now it was Thursday evening and I was not expected to start work until the Monday, giving us a few days to find our way about and make arrangements for buying a car.

The next morning we awoke to what, in my memory, was the coldest day that I have ever experienced in Tasmania. Although we were used to frosty mornings in Johannesburg, in fact frosts are 20 times more prevalent in the highveld of the Transvaal than they are in Hobart, this was a surprise to us. The pavements on our walk down to the local shopping centre were white and slippery and we wondered what we had come to. We made arrangements with a local Holden agent to show us a suitable car and he took us for a drive down the river along the Bonnet Hill road as far as

Kingston and we were fascinated by the beauty of the scenery of the estuary of the River Derwent. This no doubt mollified our impressions of Tasmania induced by the cold and possibly clouded our view of the merits of the car he was promoting. Even through that cloud we decided that the car he was showing us was the one for us and did not regret the decision. It would however take a few days for the car to be ready for delivery so we returned home to Gattonside to spend the weekend in making the flat homelike and waiting for the delivery of the new car.



Gattonside – *i.e.*, 53 Sandy Bay Road – is now a B&B.

We discovered, to our amazement that on Saturday the whole of Hobart was deader than Jacob Marley or any doornail. The great Australian weekend meant that all shops were closed. In fact, the whole place was quieter on Saturday than it was on Sunday, when at least some people went about in the streets on their way to church. It was illegal to open a shop on Saturday morning and the only way to get anything that was deemed necessary was to go over the river to the eastern shore at Bellerive where some renegade shop insisted on opening.

However, about lunchtime we had a surprise visit from an old friend of Terry Knight, Norman Wood, who had been with Terry at a world famous postgraduate dental college near Chicago and had been advised by Terry of our impending arrival. He explained that Terry had written to him and asked him to help us if possible and asked us to come and have lunch with him and his wife, Norma, and family on the following day up at their home in Fern Tree, an outlying rural suburb of Hobart six miles out of the city halfway up the road to the pinnacle of Mount Wellington. Norman came to collect us and we had a very enjoyable day. After lunch we were persuaded to stay on to chat and then have a sun downer and finally an evening meal so that the day finished up with Norman insisting on lending us one of his cars until the one we had ordered was ready for our use.

At the hospital I found that the Anaesthetic department had been efficiently run, after the departure of Edgar Hacking, by the registrar Paul Rainsford. Moves were already afoot to found a Medical School so that, when the formalities had been concluded, the hospital would become a teaching hospital. As things stood there were only three operating theatres, a plaster room and a minute doctors' change room. It was obvious that if and when the proposed medical school came into being we would need more room.



The Royal Hobart Hospital.

Having just mentioned my first registrar I would like to place on record my gratitude to the succession of anaesthetic registrars that I was fortunate to have to assist me during the ten years that I held the position of Director of Anaesthetics. All of them were most helpful and I had very few administrative difficulties arising from within the department.

My first day at work at R.H.H. taught me that, as in Holland, I would have to learn a few phrases in the local language. After a serious operation I went along to the recovery room to see how the patient was doing and the sister in charge said:

'She was pretty crook but she's come good.'

I digested this information and decided that although the patient had been in a serious condition on arrival in the recovery room, she had improved, and her condition could now be described as satisfactory.

I started work at the beginning of July and early in August Lilian had a birthday so we thought we would celebrate by giving our first dinner party. When I arrived home after work earlier than usual as I had taken the afternoon off I found Lilian busy with the cooking and other preparations, but I had not as yet given her a present because I

wanted her to choose something suitable so I persuaded her to come with me into town. I can't remember what we got but when we returned I went to open the front door and was greeted by a cloud of smoke which made me choke, splutter and retreat rapidly. The hospital gardener was still at work in the grounds of Gattonside and he came to my help. I took a deep breath of fresh air and then fought my way through the smoke into the kitchen where I found that a couple of chickens had been left roasting in the oven and were now two blobs of grey ash. I switched the stove off and dashed out again for relief into the garden. The gardener and I opened as many windows and doors as we could, not the best treatment of the inside temperature in the middle of winter, and eventually we could see what we were doing. Louisa Hamilton, the wife of Peter, the hospital pathologist, who lived in another hospital house in the same grounds behind Gattonside, came to Lilian's help as she had a couple of 'chooks' (must get used to the local lingo) in her deepfreeze. But in spite of the thorough airing we had tried to give the flat the odour of smoke hung around. Among the guests we had asked Phil and Moira Nolan. Phil, the medical superintendent who had met us at Hobart Airport on our arrival about six weeks earlier, sniffed the polluted air and said:

'Good God, Bobby! Have you been trying to burn the house down?'

I have often thought subsequently that that physical insult to my lungs may have been one of the major factors in the development of acute asthma and chronic bronchitis that first struck me two years later in 1964. Before that I had never had the slightest wheeze in my chest and I had stopped smoking cigarettes in 1950.

In August Nigel went to the U.S.A. to take up the so-called scholarship of the American field Service, an organisation founded originally as an ambulance service for non-combatants in the First World War. After the end of that war the founders decided to continue their work for peace during peacetime. At first they embarked on scholarships at university level and then after World War II they changed to trying to foster international understanding and goodwill by sending boys and girls at about the age of 16 to 18 from other countries to America and vice versa. Nigel was sent to Kent, Ohio, where he stayed with two American families and attended the local High School, although he had already got his South African Matric.

Stuart was hoping that he might be able to be accepted for a similar position from Australia. I had been given the name of the girl in Sydney who organised the A.F.S. in Australia, Carole Hertzberg. I made enquiries locally in Hobart but nobody seemed to have heard of any such scheme so I wrote to Carole and was told that A.F.S. did exist in Australia but under the umbrella of the Australian American Association, and as Tasmania did not have a branch of that Society Tasmanians were not eligible for A.F.S. scholarships. The only way to get A.F.S. in Tasmania would be to start a Tasmanian branch of the Australian American Association, and Carole offered to talk to the Federal President of that organisation to see what could be done. The President, Sir Keith Yorston, offered to come over to Hobart to address a public meeting if I could arrange a suitable venue, so I contacted the Lord Mayor of Hobart, Basil Osborne, later Sir Basil, and he agreed to have a meeting in the Town Hall. The Lord Mayor's secretary, Mrs Claire Rust, was most helpful suggesting the names of prominent Hobart citizens who ought to be invited and in due course Sir Keith came over accompanied by Carole Hertzberg. At the meeting it was proposed that a Tasmanian branch be formed and various people including me were elected to form a committee, When the

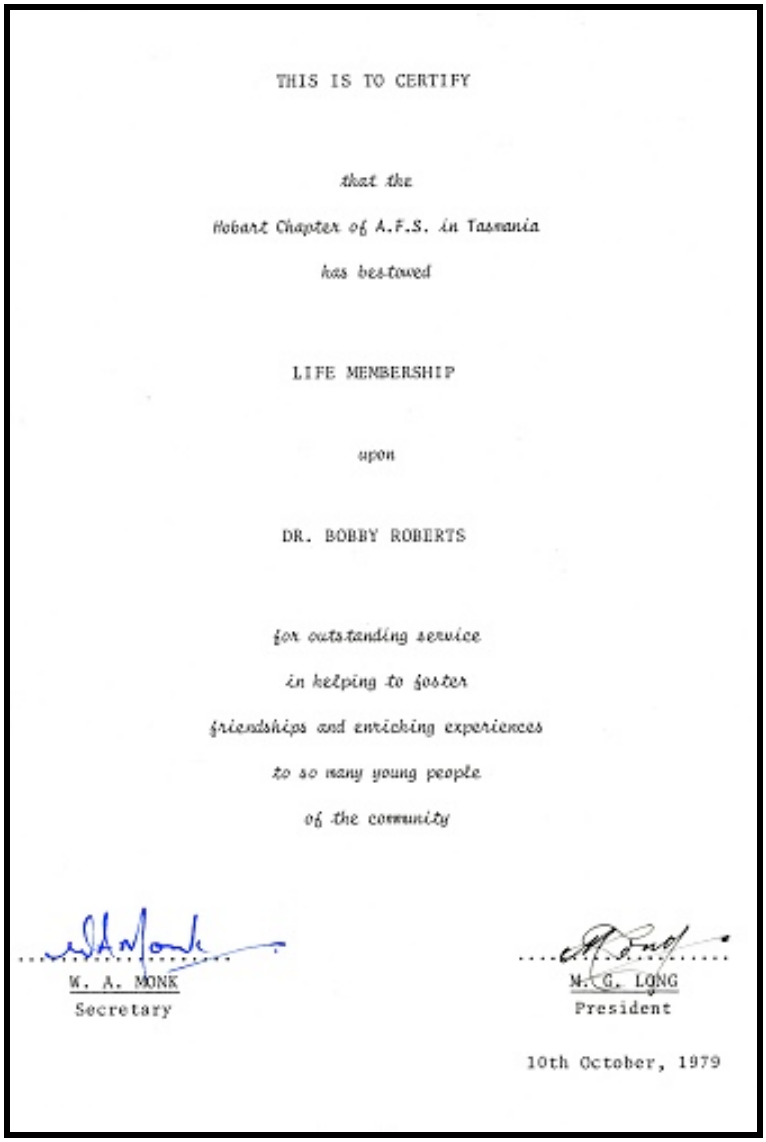
committee met I was elected as the first President of the Branch. and so an odd situation came about whereby I, a 'Pom', born and bred in England, having lived in Holland and South Africa and been a resident of Australia for only about a year, became the president of a branch of the Australian American Association.

Once the A.A.A. was established I was able to go ahead and organise another committee to run the A.F.S. in Tasmania. Stuart's hopes of following in Nigel's footsteps were dashed because we were told that there was a rule that not more than one member of any family was eligible. Whether this was in fact ever true I do not know but if there was such a rule it certainly lapsed subsequently because about five years later Charles was allowed to be an applicant.

The A.F.S. did lay down fairly strict rules to ensure that only suitable applicants were chosen. The teenager had to be proficient, not necessarily brilliant, at schoolwork. Because the word scholarship was used some people imagined that only the cleverest need apply, and we had to disabuse many a parent and schoolmaster on that point. The young person also had to be perfectly healthy and a good mixer socially. We were told from A.F.S. Headquarters in New York each year how many students we could nominate from Tasmania and the first year that we sent any was 1964. Although A.F.S. was not a strictly one for one exchange (to find the best description of the scheme was difficult in that scholarship was not strictly applicable and exchange student did not fit the bill either), any country sending students was expected to make some provision for the hosting with suitable families of young American teenagers. This involved canvassing for applicant families and then carefully vetting the family. Ideally the family should have been healthy, a two-parent family, with a teenager of their own attending the same school as the visitor would attend and while not necessarily wealthy at least able to afford to keep another child in comfort for a year without imposing any strain on the familial purse or happiness.

I thoroughly enjoyed this undertaking. There were occasional difficulties, of course, with schools, families and parochial rivalry and jealousy, but we managed to get them all sorted out and I remained President of the A.A.A. for three years and chaired the A.F.S. committee.

Every year in May the United States sent out to Australia a high ranking member of one of the three services, rotating between the Army, Navy and Air Force, to Australia to do the rounds of the States that had a branch of the A.A.A. to commemorate the Battle of the Coral Sea victory. That was the battle fought between two opposing navies who never came within sight of each other but which broke the strength of the Japanese attack and saved Australia from being invaded. Now that Tasmania had a branch of the A.A.A. the dignitary with his retinue would include Tasmania in their itinerary. Each State put on a ceremony of wreath-laying at the local Cenotaph and a dinner attended by the Governor and the heads of the three armed services in the State. In most of the mainland states they used to have a Ball, but we did not aim as high as that, probably our comparatively small population would not really support too much of a good thing.



THIS IS TO CERTIFY

that the

Hobart Chapter of A.F.S. in Tasmania

has bestowed

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

upon

DR. BOBBY ROBERTS

for outstanding service

in helping to foster

friendships and enriching experiences

to so many young people

of the community

W. A. MONK
Secretary

M. G. LONG
President

10th October, 1979

In 1979, Bobby was made an Honorary Life Member of Hobart's A.F.S. chapter.

At one of the Coral Sea Dinners in the prestigious Wrest Point Hotel I had an embarrassing few minutes when an elderly doctor, who I think felt that his age and standing in the community entitled him to have been made the first President of the branch, got up and started abusing me in front of the visiting admiral and the Governor, accusing me of having seized power improperly and calling myself a President when I had no right to do so. Guests seated near him escorted the old gentleman out and the dinner proceeded quietly as though nothing had happened. The Governor, who was sitting next to me, sympathised with me and thanked me for resisting the impulse to turn the affair into a slanging match.

In August 1963 Nigel's year in the States came to an end and we had asked the A.F.S. authorities in New York to arrange that Nigel be sent back not to South Africa but to the U.K. From there at the end of the year we applied for Nigel to be given a passage out to Australia as an immigrant. In those days there was a scheme whereby suitable immigrants were transported all the way to their destination in Australia at the total cost to be paid in London of £10. As Nigel had a British passport and no criminal record he

was eligible and, in early January 1964, he flew out to Australia and on from the mainland to Tasmania for about one fifth of the cost it would have been to cross the Bass Strait.

Anticipating his eventual arrival to re-join us we had made an application to the R.H.H. for a move from Gattonside because there were not enough bedrooms there for all our family. The hospital bought a cosy compact house in Adelaide Street in South Hobart and we moved in in good time to welcome Nigel back into the family circle.



21 Adelaide Street, South Hobart: the Roberts family home from 1963 to 1966.

Soon after arriving in Tasmania I had joined the Walking Club and had a lot of pleasure at weekends in the beautiful rural and mountainous country in the environs of Hobart. At Easter 1963 a camp had been arranged designed to interest teenagers in bushwalking. The site chosen was Lake Dobson in the Mount Field National Park and I was asked by Jack Thwaites, the doyen of Tasmanian bushwalkers, to go and join the managing party as the doctor to the 'expedition'. Stuart was one of the participants and I readily agreed. We all stayed in huts provided by the National Parks Board. The guest of honour for the whole affair was the Sherpa, Tensing Norgay, who ten years before had been with Sir Edmund Hillary, the first men to climb Mount Everest. I was thrilled to find that I was to share a hut with Jack Thwaites and Tensing Norgay. Tenzing spoke English fluently but was a bit difficult to understand. He had brought with him some slides of the memorable climb and one evening the whole camp watched his record of the magnificent feat. Whenever I had done any walking before, starting with the walks on Exmoor with Billy Reade and Leslie Franks, I had been accustomed to take along a walking stick. I had found, on some of the Hobart Walking Club walks, that the other fellow walkers tended to make fun of me for my use of the stick when I was not disabled. However, I had taken my stick to Mount Field and the first day we awoke to find a 'winter wonderland' and we set out on a days walk. What gave me a lot of satisfaction was the fact that almost as soon as we started Tenzing picked up a small

fallen branch and proceeded to make himself a walking stick, declaring that he always preferred to use one. I was not kept particularly busy medically on the Mount Field camp. Several of the boys and girls had colds or a headache or something trivial demanding no treatment other than mild analgesics, sympathy or a band-aid. One girl fell and hurt her arm and I could not decide without the benefit of X-rays whether or not it was broken, so I had to escort her by bus back to the Royal Hobart Hospital and then return to the camp thus missing one day's walk.

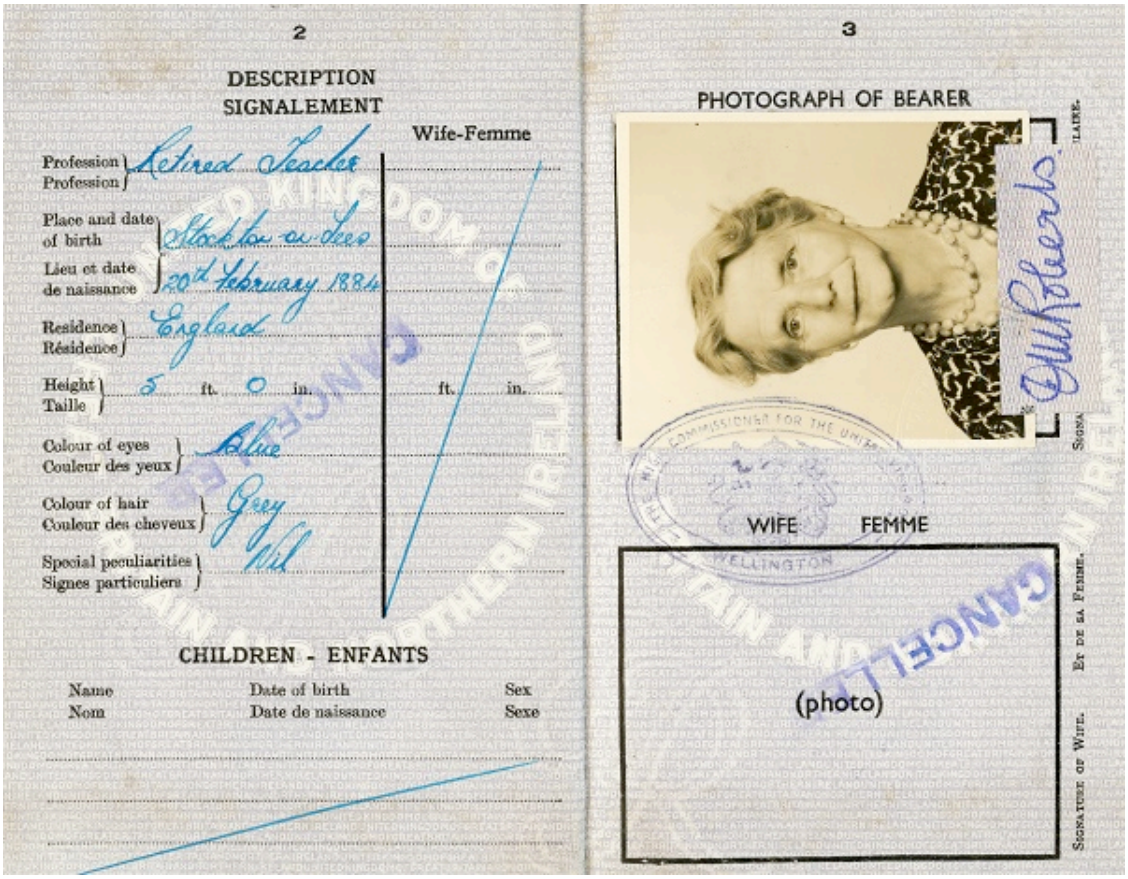
Nigel arrived from England and enrolled at the University of Tasmania to do an Arts degree. In those days students or their parents had to pay fees and Nigel decided to approach the Department of Education, as he had decided that teaching was his metier, for a grant and he was bonded to work for the Department for four years after graduation in return for having his University fees paid. Stuart had done very well at Hobart High School, adapting to a new curriculum, and at the end of 1963 he got a Matric pass that would have been good enough to take him to University but he decided to spend another year at school and try to get the required number of credits that would entitle him to a scholarship. Another advantage of postponing his University entry was that he would not be in the same year as Nigel who was always a very assiduous worker and likely to put Stuart's efforts in the shade by comparison. So Nigel started at University in 1964 and Stuart waited until 1965 when he did in fact earn a Commonwealth Scholarship. Nigel did very well in his first year and became interested in student politics so that in 1965 he became President of the Student's Union and worked so hard at that that his academic results were disappointing so he reluctantly had to ease up on extramural activities in his third year. Stuart decided to study law.

1964 was marked for me by the first attack of acute asthma which hit me while in Melbourne attending a Congress of the Faculty of Anaesthetists of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and I was admitted as an emergency to St Vincent's Hospital where I stayed for two weeks and then returned to Hobart to spend another fortnight in the Royal Hobart Hospital. Other highlights of 1964 were the sending of our first batch of A.F.S. scholars to America, Gail Scarr, Anne Gerard and Greg Peart and made arrangements for the reception of our first A.F.S. visiting scholar from America, Jim Kratzer from Davis, California in 1965.

In 1966 Lilian began to feel that the time had come for us to move out of the hospital house and buy our own so we fell for a small cottage at Fern Tree, six miles from the city halfway up the slopes of Mount Wellington. It was too small to accommodate all our family so we engaged the help of a local handyman-builder who built on three extra bedrooms. When we moved we had to forego the perks of living in a hospital house such as free electricity and firewood. We moved up to Fern Tree in June and were able to enjoy the pleasures of country life. We had a marvellous view from the house, from the bedroom we could see out beyond the mouth of the Derwent estuary to the sea at Storm Bay and look at the oldest lighthouse in Australia, the Iron Pot, so named because it stood on a rock off the southern tip of the left bank of the river where in the old whaling days there used to be a huge iron cauldron used for melting the blubber of the whales to extract whale oil. The inhabitants of Hobart had objected to the smell that arose from when the process was carried out on the wharf in the centre of the town in the early part of the 19th century and the operation was banished down to the river mouth.

After the days of the whaling industry a lighthouse replaced the cauldron but the name of the rock persisted, 'Iron Pot'. The light was originally manned and a double storey house was also built on the Iron Pot, but later the light was mechanised and the house demolished. The old staircase from the house was brought to Pierson's Point at the southern tip of the right bank of the river on the Tinderbox peninsula and used in the Pilot House at Tinderbox where the Hobart Marine Board maintained three houses for the River Pilots, the main house for the Pilot and two cottages a little higher up the slopes of Mount Louis for presumably the Mate and the Cook-Bottlewasher. Eventually modern technology such as radar and echo sounding depth finders made the need for pilots uncalled for and the Marine Board withdrew the men to Hobart and put the houses up for sale. George and Jill Mure bought the large house and then installed George's mother Diana Hargrave-Wilson and her husband Bill, a specialist in Physical Medicine and chiropractor when George and Jill went commercial fishing in Western Australia.

In 1963 we heard that my mother, Olive was coming out to Australia. Among other things, she worked as a matron in a girls' boarding school in Hobart.



Olive's passport.

We did not have the space at Adelaide Street to put her up over the Christmas holidays, so decided to buy a seaside cottage, or 'shack' as such places are called in Tasmania, at Dodge's Ferry. We did not keep it long. In 1964 we went to visit one of the Honorary Anaesthetists at the Royal, Jean Oakes, at her seaside cottage at Oyster Cove a few miles down the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. We agreed to meet her there on a Saturday morning at 11.30, but when Lilian and I arrived at Oyster Cove, Jean failed to turn up.

At the last minute she was called out to give an emergency anaesthetic and she tried to ring us but we had already left. Lilian and I peered in through the windows and waited for Jean for half-an-hour or so and then set off home.

On the way back we passed a road leading to Tinderbox and Lilian said ‘Oh, do let’s drive round that way, I do love the view from there’, so we made the detour and as we rounded the corner near the pilot station houses I saw a notice on the top house to say it was for sale, so we stopped and went to look at it. I think all the windows were broken, some of the doors were open and the place had obviously been used by the local sheep as a shelter in bad weather as sheep dung was liberally spread over the floors. However we realised it had great potential and when we got back home we rang the number shown on the For Sale notice and found it was that of Ted Hale, a farmer in the Tinderbox area. He asked us to come and look at it so back we went and agreed to buy it for £1,750. We spent weekends shovelling the traces of sheep out and scrubbing the floors, putting up wall paper, had the widows re-glazed, did a lot of painting and generally made the place habitable up to weekend shack standards. In that way, we became neighbours of Bill and Diana and have been friends ever since. Bill had a small yacht, ‘Mistral VI’ and many a pleasant summer’s day have I spent with them sailing in the Channel area.



The top house at Tinderbox, which Bobby and Lilian bought in 1964.

In 1966 my old pupil and friend Jan van ‘t Oever wrote and asked it I could possibly come to Rotterdam to do his locum in private and hospital practice for the month of July. I had accumulated leave so I thought it would be an excellent idea. Because of the children and the expensive fares it would not be possible for Lilian to come with me but she agreed that it was a chance not to be missed as I would be earning the locum fee and accommodation would be provided at the Sofia Kinderziekenhuis in the Gordelweg, one of the hospitals where Jan worked and also I would have the keys to his house to be able to get away from the hospital atmosphere from time to time. Also

there was to be the quadrennial Congress of the European branch of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists at Copenhagen in mid-August for which I could get hospital finance to attend and moreover the cost of fares could be partially tax-deductible.

All these factors added up to a means of being able to visit Europe again after an absence of nearly six years. So, only about six weeks after moving into our new home on the slopes of Mount Wellington, I set off. At the Coral Sea celebrations that year the American high-ranking officer was a general stationed in Hawaii, who at the dinner at Wrest Point Hotel said to me that If I were ever over in Hawaii I should be sure to let him know and he would show me round. Accordingly I wrote to him and told him that I would be flying to San Francisco and could arrange to break my journey at Honolulu and I received an invitation to be put up at the U.S. Army headquarters.

After a night flight I arrived early the same morning in Honolulu and was met by a most glamorous blonde captain who escorted me, bedecked with a lei she had hung round my neck, to my room with advice to go to bed for the rest of the morning and a promise that she would call for me in time for lunch. She them drove me all round the east end of the island of Oahu. I remember being very impressed with the beauty of the island and intrigued to find out that the climate on the north side of the mountain range was quite different from that in Honolulu. Apparently the prevailing winds from the north carrying water vapour from its journey over the north Pacific meeting the mountains dropped most of its burden on the north side if the island creating a very dense rain forest type of vegetation whereas on the Honolulu-Waikiki southern side it was hotter and drier. The general then took me for a tour of Pearl Harbour and then to an officers' club where we had a sumptuous seafood dinner.

I had also written to Jim Kratzer, our first American A.F.S. guest student who had spent the whole of 1965 in Hobart and he had said that lie and his parents would meet me at San Francisco airport, Jim was now a medical student at the University of California, Stanford. I was due to arrive in the early evening but we were very delayed before starting from Honolulu and we did not arrive until about 2.00 a.m. Jim's parents, Howard and Georgie Kratzer lived in Davis, some 80 miles northeast of San Francisco, also a University town where the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of California was based. Howard was a Professor of Poultry Husbandry. They could not wait for my arrival as they had to be back in Davis but Jim and his aunt; Georgie's sister, Pat Garbutt waited in the airport and drove me back to her house where she lived with her father in Oakland. Pat worked as a biochemist at the Berkeley campus.

After breakfast Howard and Georgie returned to pick Jim and me up and we collected Rosemary White, a Tasmanian girl from Devonport, an A.F.S student staying in Richmond in the Bay area. We visited Stanford University and then back to San Francisco, over the Golden Gate to Muir Woods admiring the giant sequoias and back for dinner at Fisherman's Wharf and a ride on the tram up to the Top of the Mark, went up to the cocktail lounge in the all-glass outside lift with magnificent night views over the city but we were not allowed in because Rosemary was under age to be allowed into the bar.

The next day I flew to Boston where I stayed for a few days with the Selverstones, then on to England and was met by Anthony and taken to his home near Farnham and met

for the first time our eldest grandchild, Tania, who had been born in 1961 and was now a kindergarten schoolchild. After a few days there I flew in a small plane to Rotterdam and was met by Jan van 't Oever and shown the set up of his practice. He worked mainly at two hospitals, the Bergweg a municipal hospital and the Sophia Children's Hospital where I was to stay, but also had one session a week at a Gynaecological Hospital.

I was given a small DAF to drive. The car belonged to Jan's wife, Dien, and had no clutch and worked rather on the same principle as the modern automatic gearbox. As I remember it had a chain drive between the engine and the wheels. It was remarkably economical on petrol and quite easy to learn to drive and very manoeuvrable in the city traffic. Jan, Dien and their two children went off to Greece in their Mercedes and left me for the whole month. The urologist at the Bergweg was Henk Vlietstra who had been one of the assistants to Professor Nuboer way back in 1947-48, whom we knew fairly well at that time because he used to take out Lilian's sister Gladys (now known as Bobbie and married to Norman Selverstone) when she came and stayed with us in Utrecht for a few weeks. Henk had married a very beautiful blonde expert horsewoman and had a hobby collecting clocks. I got on very well with the sisters in the operating theatre at the Sophia and also with the two surgeons, Vervat and Noordwijk. On one of my weekend off duty I drove around and paid a sentimental visit to Culemborg, the birthplace of Jan van Riebeeck, the 'Founder' of South Africa.

When the van 't Oevers returned a few days earlier than expected Jan suggested that I might like to take the DAF and go away for a holiday. I still had a few days to spare before the Copenhagen congress so I accepted the offer gratefully and decided to go to France and pay a visit to Jean and Blanche Rainer who had retired to a small village a few kilometres south of Tours called St. Avertin. Jan asked me if I would take his 19-year-old son, Bernard, with me and, of course, I was delighted to do so as, not only was Bernard a very pleasant young man, but also for a long journey it is always more congenial to have company and also reassuring to have a co-driver.

We set out early in the morning and traversed Belgium and northern France with no problems but somewhere in the hinterland of Normandy we ran into some very rough country roads and got a puncture, changed the wheel but then did not like to go far without a spare so we stopped at the next garage and had the puncture repaired only to get another a few miles further on and we lost a lot of time trying to persuade the next garage to mend it. Bernard had the appetite of a growing teenager and said we must stop for something to eat. I reluctantly agreed because I knew that Madame Rainer would have prepared a veritable feast for us and I did not want to arrive later then necessary, and as the Rainers did not have a telephone we could not warn them that we had been delayed. I had a glass of beer and a sandwich but Bernard ordered a voluminous dish in spite of my warning that he would be expected to do justice to Blanche's cooking as soon as we did arrive. After the meal we set out and ran into a rather frighteningly severe storm and that delayed us all the more so that it was about 11.30 p.m. when we finally arrived in St. Avertin.

As I had thought, we were right royally welcomed and after a bottle of sparkling Vouvray and some Pernod to stimulate our appetites we sat down to a real banquet. Poor Bernard was soon regretting his heavy meal less than two hours before, I was thankful I had resisted the temptation to satisfy my hunger before arriving chez Rainer.

Three days later we said ‘An revoir’ and returned to Rotterdam, without any of the delays we had had on the outward journey so that we arrived before Jan and Dien were expecting us.

The Congress at Copenhagen was, like so many professional meetings notable more for the fellowship engendered by meeting old friends, making new friends and experiencing life in Scandinavia for all too short a time. For me it was the second week I have spent in those parts, the other being the time when I went to Stockholm with Nuboer in 1948. Old friends there included Doreen Vermeulen-Cranch from Amsterdam, Brian and Florence Sellick (not staying in a brothel this time!), and Torsten Gordh. Doreen and I spent a very pleasant evening exploring the delights of the Tivoli a huge park with several theatres, concert halls and numerous restaurants to suit all tastes and pockets. Another evening we window shopped in the centre of Copenhagen and were amazed at the display in the bookshop windows, hard porn open at tine porniest pages cheek by jowl with religious books, with Brian and Florence I went on a bus tour that included the royal castle at Frederiksborg and the castle at Helsingor the site of Shakespeare’s Elsinore in *Hamlet*. To counteract the surfeit of castles we were also taken to the famous brewery. Another afternoon the Sellicks and I went on the hydrofoil ferry to Malmo. I did not realise how fast we were travelling until I thought I would take a photo of the hydrofoil that we met halfway on its way from Malmo to Copenhagen and as both boats were making about 50 knots it went past in such a flash as one ought to have expected as it was approaching us at about 120 m.p.h. I also got quite a shock when we approached the harbour and once inside the seawall we were able to appreciate our speed by reference to the stationary object and I honestly did not think that we could possibly stop before we were well into the central business district. While in Malmo we decided to have our evening meal there to make a change from Danish cuisine. We found Swedish cuisine exactly the same as Danish but about three times as expensive. However it was such a good meal that we lingered a bit and only just caught the last ferry back to Copenhagen.

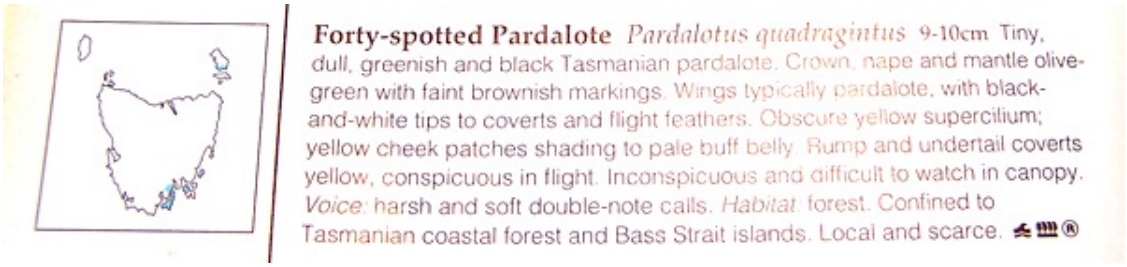
I had booked my return flight to Australia via Hong Kong and had been given by Jan Hewer an introduction to the Chief Justice, Sir Michael Hogan, who lived in a magnificent house near the Peak on Hong Kong Island. I rang up from my hotel in Kowloon and was invited by Lady Hogan to go over for afternoon tea. I was instructed to wait at the Hong Kong terminal of the ferry and be picked up by the Chief Justice’s Roll Royce. This I duly did and was very graciously received and pressed to accept an invitation to a formal dinner on the next night. This posed a problem as I did not have a dinner jacket with me and I was sure that to turn up in a lounge suit would have been a terrible faux pas. At that moment I felt an attack of asthma coming on and I had to beg leave to return to my hotel rather precipitously after the dainty tea. However I was driven back to the ferry and I spent a miserable night at my hotel and the next day I decided to cut short my proposed stay in the colony and return *post haste* to Tasmania. I had to telephone my sincere apologies to Lady Hogan who was very solicitous about my welfare. Once back home some suitable medication cut short the asthma and that was the last time that I have had an acute attack. A curious indisposition in that it arrived out of the blue in 1964 and returned with the winter of 1965 and then nothing further until the Hong Kong episode and then nothing more for the next 25 years.

It was while living at Fern Tree, I think, that I started to take an interest in the bird life. Our land there was five acres and the top part of about one acre was reasonably

horizontal, sloping away towards the southwest where the remaining four acres were on a very densely wooded steep descent to a small stream, the boundary of our land. Thus in our own property there were many kinds of bush and garden birds and it was not at all unusual to see a pink robin perched on the handle of a spade and the various L.B.J.s (little brown jobs) scurrying through the undergrowth on the side of the ravine.

A couple by the name of Boss-Walker had a house on the Hobart side of Fern Tree that had a veranda looking out over a wooded valley and the used to attract the various honey-eaters by putting out plates of granulated sugar and the birds, especially the strong billed honey-eaters, became so tame that they would come and sit on one's hand to feed. They would also, at nesting time, sit on one's head and try to take a few hairs to line their nests, so to provide a preferable alternative the Boss-Walkers had hung an old fur coat on a hook on the veranda. We tried putting out little bowls of sugar in our garden and found that we too could induce the birds to feed from the hand.

I became familiar with the numerous walking tracks on the slopes of Mount Wellington which were now within a few minutes' walk from our house. I attended a course of Bird Recognition offered by the Adult Education Department and learnt a lot from Len Wall. One weekend while I was taking the course we were down at the Tinderbox 'shack' and I was walking with a pair of binoculars up the hill behind our house, Mount Louis, and saw an echidna I stood quite still and kept very quiet and was fascinated to see how efficiently it dug away the soil from under itself and gradually become completely buried. As I watched a little bird came and sat on a projecting stump of a branch of an old tree and then it went into a hole in the tree just above its perch. I kept still and silent and then it reappeared and flew off and a few seconds later another little bird came and did the same thing. I realised that they were a pair of forty-spotted pardalotes. They were so near and stayed stationary for a few seconds each time they returned perched on the stump before entering the hole that I was able to identify them quite definitely. After five or ten minutes of observation I went over to the tree and looked in the hole but could see nothing, but I could hear cheeping so I realised that the birds had young in the nest and were busy feeding them.



A photograph of an extract from the Reader's Digest, *Photographic Field Guide: Birds of Australia*, showing the distribution of forty-spotted pardalotes in Australia. The only blue dot on the mainland of Tasmania represents the forty-spotted pardalote colony at Tinderbox that was 'discovered' in the mid-1960s by Bobby.

When I went to the next Adult Education lecture I told Len Wall what I had seen and I could see from his expression that he thought, 'Oh here we are again, a complete novice comes along and claims to have discovered the nest of a fairly rare bird'. However I told him that if he would come down to Tinderbox the next weekend I would be able to show him the pair and the nest site. He took me up on that and sure enough he had to admit that I was right. I think that until then the occurrence of forty-spotted pardalotes

at Tinderbox was not known. Len Wall has never forgotten that I 'discovered' the existence of the colony there and Michael Sharland in his 1981 *Guide to the Birds of Tasmania* says, 'There is also a small colony at Tinderbox, south of Kingston, where visiting ornithologists are regularly taken to see them.'



A painting by Lilian of a forty-spotted pardalote.

At the end of 1966 Nigel got his B.A. and so too did his fiancée, Heather Meredith. At the end of December they were married in Hobart's Quaker Meeting House and took a flat in Battery Point. In early 1967, however, they decided to head off overseas. Both of them had bonds with the Education Department and they asked for a stay of their commitment to work for the department in Tasmania. The department refused to agree to such an arrangement, but Nigel and Heather decided to go overseas anyway and agreed to repay their bonds over the next few years. In early February 1967 they flew to Melbourne and boarded a liner to take them to the U.K.

Chapter 15: Bushfire and Beyond to Bulawayo

The spring and early summer of 1966 were very wet in Tasmania, and as a result there was a luxurious growth of all plant life. It continued to rain nearly every day until Christmas, but after that we had no rain for about six weeks. The consequence was that all the abundant growth was dry and very flammable. January and February 1967 were hot, and it was generally realised that the likelihood of outbreaks of bushfires was very real. There was a drive to enlist all able-bodied males in rural and semi-rural areas as volunteer firefighters. I put my name down and even attended a dinner for the volunteers at the pub in Fern Tree. As I came out from the dinner to return home to Westringa Road, several of us saw a fire in the bush above the road and we stopped a drunken lout who was deliberately lighting fires. He was put into a car, driven six miles down to the main police station and handed him over to the police. They seemed remarkably unwilling to do anything about it, and apparently all that happened to the man was to be told to be a good boy and sent home.

About a fortnight later, early on Tuesday morning, 7 February 1967, Lilian got up sometime around 3.00 a.m. and looked out of the window at a red glow south down the road to Huonville: no flames were visible, just smoke over the hill with a red glow. At about 6.30 a.m. the Fern Tree fire siren sounded, so – knowing there was only one operation booked for the whole Hospital in the morning – I phoned Bill Thompson and said I wasn't coming in, and Charles and I decided to obey the summons.

Stuart (then aged 20) was away working as student casual labour helping in the canteen of an army camp at Fort Direction, near South Arm at the extreme end of the left bank of the Derwent estuary about nine miles as the crow flies from our house in Fern Tree but almost 30 miles by road, while Nigel and Heather were arriving in Adelaide, their first port of call on their voyage to England on the M.S. Aurelia. Charles – not yet 16 – was a pupil at The Friends School, and 7 February was the last day of the summer holidays. Linda, also a Friends student, had arranged to spend the day at one of the beaches with a school friend, so Charles and I set out together. We were picked up by trucks and taken to various places where the fire was raging.

We both spent a very busy morning beating out flames and carrying five gallon drums on our backs to spray water on the fires. I got separated from Charles by about 8.00 am. I was fire-fighting mainly at the Neika Post Office and a bit further on near the lovely home of the Hobart architect, Mr Lighton. It was terribly hot, windy and smoky. I got very tired and sweaty, and had sore eyes.

About 2.00 p.m. I thought I had better go home and ring the Hospital to see if they wanted me. They said it wasn't urgent but they were getting a few burns cases in from the Richmond / Colebrook area and perhaps I'd better be on hand. So I sprayed the outside of the house with a hose, changed, and asked Lilian for something to eat. Then the power went off, so the last meal I had in Westringa Road was a glass of milk. We did not have any candles, and it was so dark that I could not see the colour of the tie I was putting on, nor did I have enough light to shave. Out on the lawn Lilian looked as if she was going to be blown away by the gale force gusts. I tried to ring the Hospital again to say I thought I ought to stay with Lilian unless they really needed me, but the line was out of order. So Lilian said I should go to the Hospital and she would come with me as far as the Fern Tree shop in order to get some candles and then walk back

home.

As I had not shaved early in the morning before going out fire-fighting and hadn't been able to shave at home, I decided to take my electric razor with me to the Hospital and, finding the glove box full of maps etc., I put it under the seat of the car. I dropped Lilian at the store and continued down the road to Hobart but did not get very far because there was a policeman stopping all traffic. I tried to pull rank and explain that I was in charge of anaesthetics at the Hospital and that therefore he had better let me through. I learnt then that it was not just a matter of a police ruling, but a physical impossibility to drive down the road as the fire had burnt away the wooden poles carrying the power lines and telephone wires, and the road was impassable because of the tangled wires and other debris across it. So I returned to the Fern Tree village store. Lilian had bought her candles and was chatting to other Fern Tree inhabitants where all sorts of rumours about the extent of the fire were circulating. I used the Post Office phone to let the Hospital know I was cut off, and we decided to go back home.

At the top of Westringa Road, a Hobart City Council truck stopped us and asked where an old lady of 91 lived: they had been told to take her out of her house as there were fears for her safety. I told the men to leave their truck at the junction of Westringa Road and Huon Road as the road deteriorated past our house and became just a track. We then took one of the men down to the farm to look for the woman (who was the mother-in-law of Mr Gray, the farmer). Lilian ran down into the farm and found the door wide open, but the house was absolutely empty of people.

When we returned the few hundred yards back to our house, we saw that a fire had started at the bottom of the ravine that carried a small stream, Fork Creek, along the boundary of our land. I backed the car into our concrete drive (for a quick getaway). We stopped the car. We wanted to go and try to save something from the house, but also realised that we would not be able to save the house with a small garden hose if the fire continued to spread in our direction. As I got out of the car, the fire reached the lip of the gully on the edge of our cultivated garden area, and the trees below the lawn literally burst into flames – like a torch! There was then no time to save anything.

Lilian said we had to leave immediately in case the lawn caught fire and the engine stalled. We drove back to the small open area opposite the pub, where there were about 70 cars and two- to three-hundred people, all herded like sheep. Every road was cut – you couldn't go down to Hobart, couldn't go up the mountain, couldn't go down Summerleas Road, and couldn't go back to Huonville. So we just waited, getting more and more frightened and crowded. Babies and children were crying; men and women were getting nervy and panicky. A policeman was there, shepherding people into the open area, but there were also a lot of cars, including ours. I pointed out to the policeman that if the fire was going to reach us, we would be at a great risk of the fuel tanks exploding. He agreed and ordered everybody to move their cars away from the open area. I took mine some way back along Huon Road.

Eventually we could see fire, and smell it, and hear it approaching on three fronts – from behind the hotel, down the mountain, and along the road in the direction of our house. I found a bucket and filled it with water, and Lilian and I soaked our clothes in it. Lilian took off her frock and dipped it in the bucket, and I did the same with my blazer. Then Lilian and I went to sit in our car – parked right up against the bank, under

a cutting on the mountain side of the road – hoping that with the windows shut we could keep sparks and smoke out, and that the fire would blow over the top of us without either cooking us or exploding our petrol tank.



A photograph of 8 Westringa Road taken by Stuart roughly two months after the 7 February 1967 'Black Tuesday' bush fires.

Another car came and parked on the other side of the road where the land fell away steeply in what I would have thought was a dangerously exposed position because the flames from any burning trees on that side would come up and lick the sides of the car. As it turned out that is exactly what did happen and that car's petrol tank exploded. Lilian exclaimed that she was not going to sit in the car waiting to be burnt and jumped out and started to run back to the village centre. I abandoned the car and ran with her through falling red-hot ash and burning bark, leaves and twigs. Small branches from the roadside trees were falling all around us, but we reached the Fern Tree pub unharmed. We went and stood in the bus shelter opposite the pub, where there were about 30 people. In the event it did not get burnt, but the smoke was terrible and everyone was scared stiff. By now the fire was very visible. Beyond the pub across the road, we could already see several houses well ablaze.

Just when we thought all hope had gone, the policeman in charge announced that the road down to Hobart was now passable and suggested that everybody should escape that way as quickly as possible. I ran back towards the car but the heat was too intense to get through, so I returned and shortly after that a lorry came along and we jumped on board and headed for the city.

We arrived at the Hospital where I found that they were soon to start treating casualties from the fire, so I got to work immediately while someone took care of Lilian and took off her soaking clothes and dressed her in a theatre gown. One of the honorary anaesthetists, Alan Bond, who had come in to help, took her to his home in Battery

Point, the nearest inner suburb, and left her with his wife, Jenny, who was an eye surgeon. Jenny gave her a meal and then Lilian tried to repair the damage I had done to her hairdo by soaking her with water: ‘Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’

Charles was given a lift from the fire on another lorry and asked to be dropped off at Westringa Road and was appalled to find that not one house was left standing in the road, all were smoking ruins with just a brick chimney and fireplace to mark the spot. He picked up a stray dog which he found running around, obviously a fire victim, and the lorry then brought its load down to Hobart. Shortly after Huon Road becomes the upper end of Davey Street, they passed the home of Harry Jones, an Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon, and his wife Betty, who were standing watching the cars returning from the smouldering countryside. They recognised Charles and took him and the dog in for the night. They were able to tell him that Lilian and I were safe and where we were. Later during the evening, Linda and her school-friend returned to the city after spending the last day of their holidays at the beach and then playing softball. She tried to catch the next bus up to Fern Tree only to be told more or less that Fern Tree was no longer. The poor child was naturally very upset, but had the good sense to come to the Hospital to find out what had happened to us and she appeared in the operating theatre area and was relieved to see me alive. Her school-friend's parents took her home with them for the night until we could sort out what we would do.

I was kept busy from 5.00 p.m. until near midnight treating 33 patients admitted with burns severe enough to warrant hospitalisation. The scene in the operating theatre suite was for me very reminiscent of the days of the blitz in London during 1940-41. One similarity was the rapid turn over of cases, and another was the dirty state of the patients, nearly all of them were blackened with smoke and wood ash whereas during the blitz it had been house rubble and broken glass.

As none of the patients could be assumed to have empty stomachs, we had to avoid giving complete general anaesthesia. I had been doing some work on the use of a combination of neuroleptic and analgesic drugs, known as neuroleptanalgesia. Neuroleptic drugs do not, in the doses used, cause unconsciousness but produce a state of mental detachment, and when given with strong pain-killers known as analgesics, cause the patient not to worry about what is happening to them and yet be awake enough to talk and to respond to questions or orders. Thirty-one of the thirty-three patients that evening were given neuroleptanalgesia.

Murray Drew was the surgeon in charge of the Burns Unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital, and several of the honorary surgeons turned up to help so that we were able, by using two surgeons to each table, to get through the work without it dragging on well into the night when doctors and nursing staff would be tired and also making sure that the patients at the end of the list were not kept waiting unduly for treatment.

We were very pleased with the efficacy of the neuroleptanalgesia. Just how efficient it was is demonstrated by the following two incidents. I was at one table with Murray Drew operating on a man who was very severely burnt over 90 per cent of the body surface. Murray had just started pulling off the dead skin when the orthopaedic surgeon, David Roebuck, put his head round the door of the theatre and asked if he could be of help. Murray asked him to scrub up and come and work simultaneously on the other

side of the patient. Roebuck did not know I was using this new technique and assumed that the patient was asleep so he was uninhibited in telling us some funny story. When he delivered the punch line he was astonished when the patient joined in the laughter. The other occasion proving the effectiveness of the analgesia was when Murray was performing debridement of the whole of the back area of a man who lived at Fern Tree and was incidentally the father of one of the nursing sisters. Murray knew the man and was chaffing him about being burnt on the back saying that he was surprised that for an experienced bush man he had been running away from the fire. The patient replied 'Well, the fire kept changing direction and didn't give any hand signals either!', demonstrating that he had so little discomfort that he was able to joke about it. When all the patients had been dealt with I, too, went off to Alan Bond's house for the night.



FIRE DEATH TOLL NOW 47 — 3,000 HOMELESS

The Mercury

FORTY-SEVEN people are now known to have been killed and 3,000 left homeless in Tuesday's fire horror.

And officials believe many more perished in the inferno that left tens of thousands of acres of South-East Tasmania a lifeless wasteland.

More than 600 homes are in ruins. Entire towns have been blasted off the map. In others only one house in four is still standing.

Help for victims

STOP PRESS

Fire-fighters helped

It should stay cool

Escaped to death...

Insurance payout will start end of this week

NO OTHER CAR IS BACKED LIKE HOLDEN

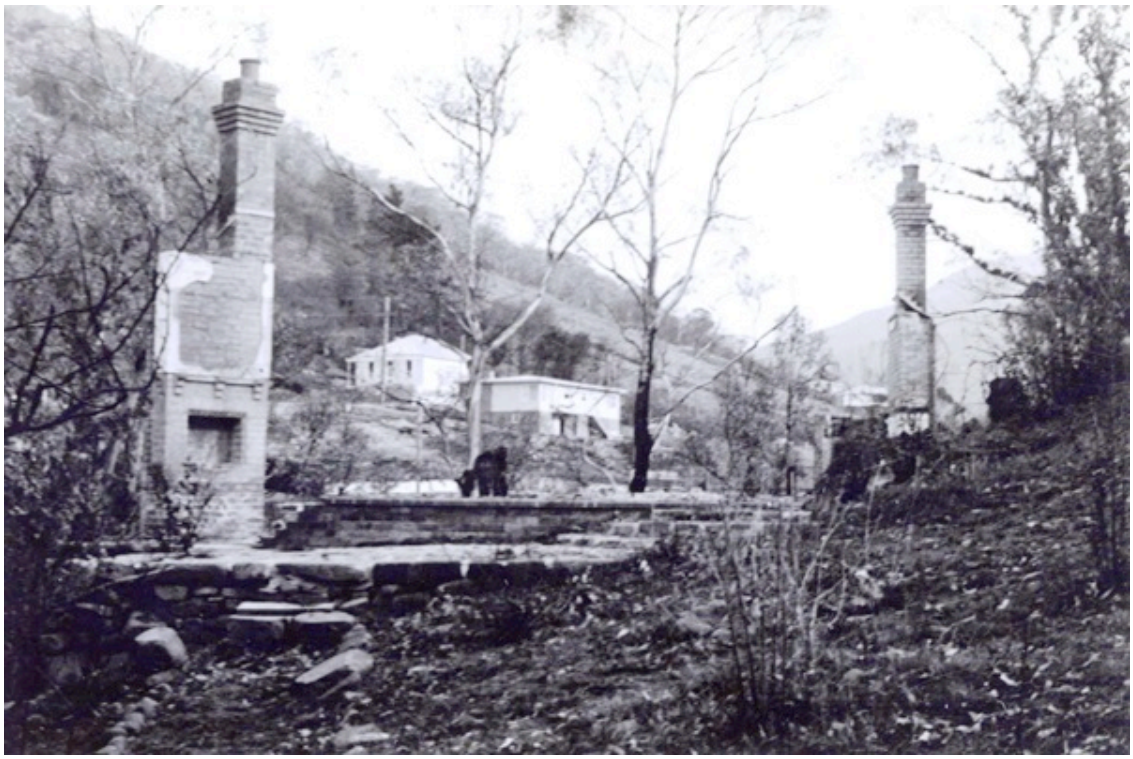
PLUS BETTER BACKING

MOTORS LTD

The front page of *The Mercury*, Thursday, 9 February 1967.

The next day we started to receive donations of clothing which were absolutely essential as even the clothes we had worn on the day were so ruined by soaking from my bucket, smoke and burnt debris that they were deemed uncleanable. Bill Law lent us his car for three days, and then the Department of Health Services lent us a Valiant, which went beautifully … except for an intermittent fault of refusing to start at all on the self-starter.

On Saturday, 11 February, we decided to go and have a look at the remains of our property in Westringa Road. Everything was razed to the ground except the brick chimney stack and that proved to be a common sight: lonely chimney stacks surrounded by black ash.



'Lonely chimney stacks surrounded by black ash.' A photograph by Stuart Roberts that was taken roughly two months after the 7 February 1967 'Black Tuesday' bushfires.

From the site of the chimney I was able to determine just where a chest of drawers had stood in our bedroom and we fossicked about looking for anything worth salvaging. We found a collection of South African tercentenary crowns that I had, a Dutch two-and-a-half guilder piece, and a Kennedy half-dollar, but only skeletons of cameras, binoculars, transistors, TV sets, radiograms, and the like. I had kept the coins in a plastic bag in the top drawer of the chest of drawers and there they were, blackened and tarnished by the heat and smoke but still recognisable for what they were. Next to the telephone we kept a child's money box in the forlorn hope that any of our children making a personal call would make a contribution. We found all those pennies welded together almost exactly in the shape of a map of England, Scotland and Wales. Charles souvenired this (but sadly no longer has it).

We explored along Huon Road and found our car. The back part had been burnt but the front was apparently untouched and I looked inside and saw that some looter had already been at work removing the car radio, but he missed my electric razor which I had slipped under the front seat. I reported the theft of the radio and had high hopes of it being returned as it was a South African make and therefore scarce in Australia, but what would make it unique was the fact that accidentally the small plaque with the brand name on it had been put on upside down at the factory. However it was not to be. Once more the saying 'Crime does not pay' was disproved: callous looters who could stoop to robbing people who had just lost their home and contents got off, not only scot free, but richer. Looters in times of national disaster should be dealt with much more strictly.

In the immediate aftermath of the fires, everyone was very kind. I took several sets of trousers donated by doctor friends to be altered, and the tailor I took them to refused to charge me for them. The Sherreys, Laws, Hurburghs, Chestermans, Jones, Kirklands, Woods, Borehams, etc., etc. – to name only a few – were wonderful to us. We were hardly allowed to stay at 'home' to eat the food they brought us. During the first week alone after the fires, we went to dinner with the Kirklands, Woods, Kellys, and Merediths, and we had Sunday lunch with the Sherreys. We had cables or letters from the Hammerschlags, Gerrards, and Littles in Australia; from the Kratzers and Selverstones in the USA; from Mme. Rainier in France; from the Knights and Gregorys in Johannesburg; from the Dusseks, Gardners, Caswells, Hewers, and others in England; as well as from the Lichters in New Zealand – he used to be in Johannesburg and was a chest surgeon in Dunedin.

Colin Munro and his wife, Anna, had a house in Sandy Bay where they had built a 'granny flat' under their living area and he offered it to us as a temporary refuge. Space there was limited so we were only able to take it for Linda, Lilian and myself. It was very comfortable indeed – for two – but as we had Linda with us sleeping on a stretcher in the living room, she had to go through our bedroom to the bathroom and we had to go through hers to the front door, but one must admit they were minor inconveniences for refugees! Stuart and Charles were taken in by the parents of some of their friends: by the Elthams and the Rusts respectively.

Friends and relations were wonderful in their response to the situation. Many friends in South Africa even sent the maximum amount that their strict currency export regulations would allow. Lilian's sister in America, Gladys (namely, Bobbie Selverstone) showed the most acute understanding of our needs by sending a cabin trunk filled with household linen and spare clothing and most importantly any old photographs she had of our family, realising that whereas most things can be replaced by paying for them, intimate items of sentimental value only, such as family photographs, can never be replaced.

My insurance company also treated me kindly over the car. They called the car a complete write-off and so enabled me to buy a replacement immediately instead of being without a car for weeks while the very extensive repairs that would have been necessary were carried out. John Sherrey, the Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon, kindly decided that he needed a new car and let me buy his old one instead of trading it in.

Less than a week after the fire, Athol and Beryl Corney, who had been Jim Kratzer's AFS host parents, suggested that we might like to look after Beryl's mother's house in Glenorchy. Mrs. Langham was a keen amateur orchid grower and so was her sister in Sydney and she decided that it was time she paid her sister a long visit. We were offered the house rent-free on condition that we looked after not only her orchids but also her small dog. Although the offer was tempting, I wasn't initially very keen on moving out north: we knew no-one on that that side of the city except for the Merediths, the Jamisons and the Corneys. Most of our friends were in the Sandy Bay, Battery Point, South Hobart area. However, it meant that we were able to get together again as a family while we looked for a more permanent arrangement. Despite the fact that Glenorchy was not the most convenient location from which we could go about our various vocations – the Hospital for me, school for Charles and Linda, and University for Stuart – we were very thankful for this temporary alleviation of our residential problem.



10 Bishop Street, New Town, Hobart.

It was Charles who found us our next home, a lovely old solid brick house with a slate roof in a large garden in Bishop Street in New Town, one of the oldest suburbs just to the north of Hobart's city-centre. We were now able to settle down to a normal family life after the upheaval of the bushfire, and we lived in that house for nearly four years, longer than anywhere else in Tasmania till then.

In 1968 the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists was going to hold its fourth quadrennial Congress in London. I had attended the inaugural meeting in the Hague or more specifically in Scheveningen in 1955 and the second in Toronto in 1960, that was the only time when the interim period had been five instead of four years, but I had not had been able to go to the 1964 meeting in Sao Paulo. Lilian had not been able to accompany me when I went to do Jan van 't Oever's locum in 1966 so it was eight years since she had been to England to see her relations and friends there. I had been

doing some clinical research work on a drug put out by Parke, Davis called ketamine, in fact I had used it on a child who had been badly burnt in the 1967 bushfire.

Parke, Davis were keen that I should publish my results and what better place than a World Congress? I was given leave and financial help to attend the meeting in London by the Royal Hobart Hospital and so we made plans to go and I prepared to read a small paper at the Congress. Brian Lucas, the chief medical rep for Parke, Davis in Australia, who had supplied me with the stocks of the drug I needed for the research, assured me that Parke, Davis would undertake to do some of the statistical analysis of my work. For some no doubt very good reason this failed to reach me before we left Tasmania on our journey. I can never understand why the airlines find it possible to charge less for overseas travel if you are prepared to take a round-the-world ticket, but that is the case, so we booked to go right round the world. We sold the land at Fern Tree where we had been burnt out and the proceeds provided enough to buy three round-the-world tickets, as we decided to take Linda with us. Stuart and Charles would be able to look after themselves at the house in New Town.

We left Hobart on Friday, 2 August, the day after Linda's fifteenth birthday and flew to Melbourne where we stayed the night with Geoff and Jess Taylor in Balwyn North. I had got to know Jess at an A.F.S. meeting in Sydney and on that first occasion she had asked me to stay with them overnight on my way home to Tasmania rather than put up in a hotel in Melbourne. They had a daughter, Judy, who had been an 'AFSer' in Utah and was now as a 'returnee' training as a nurse at the Royal Melbourne. After Judy finished her training she returned to America and married a boy she had met there and while she worked there as a nurse and produced and brought up six children her husband got qualified as an optometrist. The A.F.S. experience does have a considerable effect on some people's lives!

The following day Geoff and Jess drove us to Essendon, at that time the Melbourne airport, and we flew to Perth where we stayed overnight with Patience and 'Mac' Mackinley who had been our neighbours at Tinderbox at the time of the bushfire. On the Sunday when we caught the South African Airlines flight to Johannesburg, refuelling at Mauritius *en route*.

What a welcome at Jan Smuts! After a remarkably quick passage through the Customs and Immigration formalities, due to some gentle string pulling by Don Haynes, we emerged to find not only Don and Ida Haynes and their children, with whom we were to stay a few days, but also Gwynne and Beryl Davies, Chick and Madeleine Nathan, Leslie and Freda Bate, Terry and Joan Knight, and Sam Skinner. We all went to the Haynes home in Observatory for a welcoming drink and coffee. After the others left Don and Ida took us to see Eric and Vera Samuel who were leaving the next day. Terry Knight insisted on lending us one of their cars, a Mercedes, for the rest of our stay in South Africa, a great help as we could then dash around on our own and see nearly all our old friends without having to rely on transport from the Haynes's. At the weekend we set off in two cars with the Haynes towards the Kruger National Park and put up at the Crocodile hotel at Schagen. As we approached our destination I began to get very worried by a peculiar noise from under the bonnet and although the car was pulling quite well we were anxious as the Game Reserve is not the best place to have a car breakdown. Early on the Sunday morning Don and I went in two cars to Nelspruit, where eventually we managed to root out a mechanic from the local Mercedes agents.

He diagnosed a worn out differential and that meant we had to leave the car with him while we visited the Game Reserve because the spare parts would have to come from Johannesburg and the car would not be serviceable until the Wednesday. We were rather squashed in the Haynes' Galaxie as there were seven of us in all, Don, Ida, Sheilagh and Tacye Haynes and Lilian, Linda and myself, but we had a marvellous few days made all the more interesting because Don and Ida were very friendly with one of the senior rangers, Thys Mostert, who took us out in a Land Rover into the square mile fenced off 'camp' where a start was being made to reintroduce 'white' (square lipped) rhino into the Kruger, and we had an exhilarating if pretty bumpy ride in the bushveld looking at them.



White rhino in the Kruger National Park.

On Wednesday we picked up the Mercedes and then we all made a dash up north to Tzaneen where we spent the night before making our way back to Johannesburg via a nostalgic visit to Asgard, the pine plantation in which Don had long ago persuaded us to take some shares because we were able as shareholders to go and stay at the old farmhouse on the property by arrangement with the manager and such holidays had been marvellous as a family with walks, horses to ride and sailing on the Ebenezer Dam near Magoebaskloof. We had been sorry to have to sell those shares in 1962 when we left to go to live in Tasmania.




Left: A photo by Bobby of the Ebenezer Dam. Asgard, the pine plantation in which Bobby and Lilian had shares, was on the slopes of the mountain in the background. Right: Bobby sailing a sharpie on Ebenezer Dam.

Gerry Hochschild and his wife Nan had abandoned the attempt to live on a citrus farm in Southern Rhodesia as for the first few years after planting, the trees do not bear fruit and they just got bored sitting in the country doing nothing. Both Gerry and Nan were essentially city people. When they had moved into the farmhouse near Umtali (now Mutari) it was the first time that Nan had ever lived in a house! Up till then she had always lived in a rented flat. Gerry had gone back to anaesthetics in a very gentle way. He took a job on the Northern Rhodesian (now Zambian) Copper Belt where the work load was very light and the climate tropical and a golf course on the premises made them very contented. Gerry had been ill and very wisely had decided to come to Johannesburg for investigation and treatment. He and Nan had taken a flat during their stay and we were fortunate in that that coincided with our visit. I had always enjoyed my days of partnership with Gerry who was a very gentle person and a true gentleman. We had gone to see them before our trip to the Game Reserve and when we boarded the plane for the Swissair flight to Zurich friends told us that the day before we left Gerry and Nan had gone out to a restaurant with Mike and Peggy Kramer. After the meal, as they were leaving, Nan, who had hardly had a day's illness in her life, dropped dead.

We landed in Zurich in the early hours before daylight and caught a domestic flight to Basel. Parking our luggage at the city terminal, we went by tram to the shopping centre near the Rheinbruck, had an excellent lunch in a Bierhalle, and spent the wet afternoon in a cinema seeing a film *Prudence and the Pill* with Rex Harrison in the lead, a very amusing bedroom farce about the newly discovered contraceptive pill. In the early evening we collected our luggage and went aboard the pleasure cruiser on which we had booked a passage down the Rhine to Rotterdam. It was a thing I had always wanted to do and I had had to overcome some well-meant opposition to the plan on financial grounds but Lilian agreed with me that it was, in some ways, the highlight of our holiday. The accommodation was luxurious, the food of gourmet quality, the scenery superb and as all the travelling was done in daylight hours we did not have to miss any part of the Rhine spectacle. We spent four nights on board, the first in Basal before we sailed at 5.00 a.m. on the Sunday morning, the second at Speyer, the third at Rudesheim and the last night at Dusseldorf.

The weather was not too kind the first day and the only people to avail themselves of the open-air swimming pool were two American boys and Linda and myself. During the first afternoon the boat moored at Strasbourg and we went on an organised bus tour of the city and in the evening Linda introduced us to the American couple, Ken and

Elaine Leventhal that she had met while swimming in the pool with their boys, Bob and Ross. The Leventhals, another American family of father, mother and a daughter Bob, Mary and Molly Evans respectively, were, except for Lilian, Linda and me, the only English speaking passengers on board, and we saw a lot of them especially the Leventhals. Together we went on the organised bus tour of Cologne and explored the *bier und weinstuben*[44] of Rudesheim, gazed at the castles on the banks of the Rhine and the Lorelei rock while the boat's orchestra played the appropriate melody. The Evans family left the boat at Cologne and before we parted from the Leventhals after arrival at Rotterdam, Elaine had urged us to visit them at their home in Los Angeles. I pointed out that we were not booked to return to Australia through L.A. but through San Francisco and that I had written to our friends the Kratzers to ask if we could stay with them. I had to admit that I had not heard from the Kratzers in reply but that I was sure that we would be welcomed there. At Rotterdam we were looking at the crowd waiting to welcome arriving friends and we saw an enormous Rolls Royce limousine and wondered who would be going in that and to our amazement the Leventhals were driven off in it and we thought that that was the last we would see of them.

We were met by Jan van 't Oever and we spent a couple of days with them meeting many old friends, then we went to Amsterdam and stayed with Doreen Vermeulen-Cranch and her family who took us to their lovely renovated old farmhouse in Elburg for the weekend. Back in Amsterdam I hired a car, a svelte new type of Volkswagen quite unknown to me, not the familiar beetle, and we went to Utrecht and stayed with our old nanny Kitty Kransen-Modijefsky and her family for a couple of nights. On the intervening day Lilian, Linda, Kitty and her husband Auke and I drove to Arnhem where we visited an open-air museum where they had erected a large variety of typical old Dutch houses, farms, cottages, town houses and windmills showing the various types. We were later to see the same sort of museum at Sturbridge in Massachusetts. On the way back to Utrecht we stopped and had a picnic by the side of the road crossing the expanse of moorland known as the Hoge Veluwe. (In Holland where a large part of the country is below sea level anything more than 50 feet or so above sea level is called 'hoog' or high.) That picnic stop was made memorable for us because while we were eating a number of Dutch Army tanks on manoeuvres passed us and the young men waved and let out a few wolf-whistles when they saw Linda, an indication that our little girl was becoming a nubile young woman, at least in the eyes of the 'brutal and licentious soldiery'.[45]

Back in Rotterdam at a sale in the smart shopping mall, the Lijnbaan, I bought a suede car coat that has lasted me to this day, 23 years later, and will last for years still. In spite of the undeserved reputation that Hobart has on the mainland of Australia for being so cold, I have a corduroy and leather overcoat of Spanish origin that I bought in Melbourne after the fire of 1967 still in almost pristine condition, so little use do I have for it, but the shorter car coat is very useful on the colder and windier days of winter.

At the end of August we returned to England and we stayed with Anthony and Julie. I still had to finish my paper on the use of ketamine for presentation at the World Congress of Anaesthetics and eventually all the statistical figures were ready so I was lent a car, an old Lancia which Julie was trying to sell, and for a couple of days I drove

[44] Beer and wine taverns.
[45] This is a quote from Rudyard Kipling's *Soldiers Three*.

up to Parke Davis London headquarters at Hounslow where a secretary had been lent to me to type the finished handwritten paper.



A photograph taken by Anthony of, from left to right, Linda, Tania (Anthony and Julie's daughter and, at the time, Lilian and Bobby's only grandchild), George and Doris Ashley (Julie's parents), Julie, Heather and Nigel, and Bobby and Lilian.

On one day during that week Lilian and Linda went to look at West End shopping and paid a visit to Harrods. While they were separated temporarily Linda ran into Elaine Leventhal who told her that this was their last day in England before returning to America and asked her to ask me to phone them that evening at the Savoy Hotel. I did so and once again Elaine asked me if I had heard from the Kratzers in San Francisco confirming that it was all right for us to go and stay with them on our return journey. I had to admit that I had not and Elaine then repeated her invitation to go instead via Los Angeles and stay a couple of days with them. This I agreed to do and the following day I changed our air tickets and of course the very next day after we got a letter from the Kratzers saying that of course we could stay with them and apologising for not having written before because they knew that I would know that we were always welcome! Then, of course, I had to write to Howard and Georgie Kratzer and say that I had had to make other arrangements.

We now had the weekend free before I had to turn up at Festival Hall sometime on the Sunday afternoon to register for the Congress. We drove via Maidenhead, Burnham Beeches and the Chilterns to the north of London to Braughing near Ware where we called on Ivor and Rosabel Spencer-Thomas at their lovely old farmhouse, Braughing Bury. Ivor had been a choirboy with me, Leslie Franks and Eustace Piers at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and it was he and Rosabel who had made their home a very welcome retreat for the Middlesex Hospital members of the Emergency Medical Service during the 1940-41 Blitz.

Thence to Colchester where Nigel and Heather had just gone for Nigel to spend a year at the University of Essex getting his M.A. Heather had got a job at one of the schools teaching and she was to be their breadwinner for the year. After dinner with them we left Linda with them and made our way to Assington, just over the Suffolk border to my cousin Dorothy and her husband David Wilson who lived in a quaint old farmhouse with tiny rooms and only one twisty staircase very inconveniently sited at the very end of the house leading from the snug sitting room to a small low beamed bedroom. All people going to other bedrooms upstairs had to pass through that bedroom which we occupied so a lot of warning had to be given by through traffic in either direction either by knocking on our one door interleading from the other bedrooms or by vocal signal of intent from below.

On the Saturday we were able to visit the picture postcard town of Lavenham with its many half-timbered houses and anything but perpendicular uprights. Dorothy and Dave entertained Nigel, Heather and Linda and us to meet their neighbours, the Milners who farmed the adjacent property. We had drinks in the garden and lunch in the only room large enough, the modern added kitchen. After a walk in the surrounding Suffolk countryside to shake down the lunch, we were guests of the Milners at East Farm for dinner, made memorable by a delicious bilberry pie. Bilberries, known as whortleberries on Exmoor, are pretty rarely used to make pies because they grow sparsely on tiny little plants and the actual picking has to be done on hands and knees and is very labour intensive, but the result is worth a lot of time and back-ache.

When we arrived in London I handed over the car to Lilian who, together with Linda, went to visit her parents and left me to stay with the Sellicks in Westmoreland Street in the West End, which was more convenient for attending the meetings at Festival Hall. The delivery of my short paper was a bit of an anti-climax. They had a system of lights like miniature traffic lights on the lectern, While the green light was on the speaker could continue and then a two minute warning that the allotted time was nearly up was shown by an amber light and when the red light showed the speaker had to stop talking. Unfortunately the timekeeper mistakenly switched on the red light for me when there should have been two more minutes to wind up my delivery. Without any warning I suddenly saw the red light and stopped talking before I had had a chance to summarise the results of my research and folded up my papers and started to leave the podium. The Chairman realised the error and said I might go on but I was unable to find my place among the hastily gathered-up papers so I just left it at that. As always the most enjoyable part of a congress was the opportunity to renew old acquaintances. My ex-partner from Johannesburg, Peter Caswell was there. He was now living at Epsom and working at a big hospital at Carshalton. Jimmy and Helen Durham from Johannesburg and Tim Verster and his wife, Bordie, and Professor Kok from Pretoria were among the South Africans, and of course the people from Holland and Torsten Gordh from Stockholm as well as other old friends from previous congresses all helped to ensure that ‘auld acquaintance should not be forgot’ for auld lang syne.

After the congress we went west to visit my parents, first to Olive in Swanage and then via Castle Carey, to look up Eustace Piers, to Barnstaple where Harry, now more commonly called ‘Tim’ was living still in the house with the lovely old walled garden belonging to Dora’s cousin, Alice Hamlin. While we were there I took Linda one day to Exmoor and we hired ponies from the same farm where Leslie Franks and I had started our riding days in the early twenties about 45 years before, not I suspect on the same

ponies. We had a good canter on Tippacott moor and then went back to Brendon for lunch in the bar of the Staghunters where Lilian and I had spent our honeymoon (at the hotel, not in the bar!). After lunch we drove to Cloud Farm, by now run by Bob Nancekivell's son Jim. We walked up the lovely Badgeworthy Water and there I saw for the only time in my life a ring ouzel, a pied relative of the blackbird. Having shown Linda the Lorna Doone country we returned to Barnstaple via Oare (where Nigel had been christened), Robber's Bridge, County Gate, Countisbury, Lynmouth and Blackmoor Gate. Before we left England we flew up to Teesside and spent three days with my brother Peter and his wife Rhoda partly in Eaglescliffe and partly in Runswick Bay and exploring the North Yorkshire moors, driving past the farm at Snilesworth where Anthony had been evacuated during the first part of the winter of 1941-42.

Very early one morning Peter drove us to Leeds airport and we flew to Heathrow and caught our flight to Boston where we had a few days of hot sunny weather and explored some of the delights of New England. One day we arranged to meet Suzie Marshall, one of our Tasmanian A.F.S. students currently staying in Connecticut, and her 'host parents' at the Sturbridge Model village a concept rather similar to the 'Open Lucht Museum' that we had visited in Holland at Arnhem.

Parke Davis were keen that I should pay a visit to their head office at Ann Arbor so, leaving Lilian and Linda at Winchester with Bobbie and Norman Selverstone, I flew to Detroit and spent the day with their medical staff there and the next day flew back to New York where I called at A.F.S. headquarters near the United Nations building and had lunch with Carole Hertzberg who had been in charge of A.F.S. Australia-wide in Sydney when first I started A.F.S. in Tasmania. I then went to La Guardia Airport and was joined by Larry and Kaye Gussman, whom I had met at Lambarene. We met Lilian and Linda coming in on the shuttle from Boston and were driven to the Gussmans' home in Scarsdale. The visit was memorable to me because it was the first time (a) I had been knowingly entertained in a millionaire's household and (b) I saw a supermarket. We went to Hurstdale shopping centre and in a hardware supermarket style of shop I bought a rechargable hand torch which I still use. A live-in couple, Annie and Bill, 'did' for the Gussmans and I was reminded of the sort of employer-servant relationship that was usual in South Africa.

After two nights in their home we flew to Los Angeles and were met by all the Leventhal family, and transported to their home in Bel Air. In no way, during the Rhine cruise had the Leventhals impressed on us their wealth that was now obvious.[46] Our first hint had been in Rotterdam when we saw the Rolls-Royce collect them from the boat, but now as we approached their house we saw for the first time the use of an electronic gate opener allowing us access to the property. We were shown our rooms up on, I think, the fourth floor and thinking ourselves alone, Lilian and I marvelled to each

[46] The following is a quote from the 15 July 2016 edition of the *Los Angeles Times*: 'The Leventhal residence, a lower Bel-Air home named for longtime residents Kenneth and Elaine Leventhal, has come on the market for the first time in more than half a century. Listed for $13.95 million, the stately 1930 Colonial Revival sits on an acre of park-like grounds filled with formal gardens, ornamental statues and fountains, a swimming pool and a pool house. A tunnel runs between the main house and the pool area. … Kenneth Leventhal, who died in 2012 at 90, was an accounting pioneer, who oversaw some of the largest real estate transactions in the country. Among his clients were real estate developers Ray Watt, Edward DeBartolo and Donald Trump. Elaine Otter Leventhal, a dedicated philanthropist and volunteer, died last year at 97. She and her husband started Kenneth Leventhal & Co. from scratch in the spare bedroom of their Los Angeles apartment in 1949.'

other how modest the whole family had been travelling down the Rhine. After what the Leventhals deemed to be sufficient time for us to unpack and freshen up we were startled by a voice (that of Ken Leventhal) over the intercom in our bedroom asking us to come down and have a drink at their poolside. We were given directions to go along the corridor and summon the lift (sorry, elevator!) and press the basement button. Arriving at the bottom we found ourselves at the end of a long passage cut out of the rock of the hillside and when we went along it we came out in their garden with a large swimming pool and a building as large as our whole home as a change room and reception area for poolside entertainment. We wondered how much of our previous conversation in our room had been able to be overheard by our hosts. After dinner another surprise awaited us, Margie, the daughter of Hobart paediatrician Neville Newman, also an A.F.S. student in America for a year came with her host family and stayed for an hour-and-a-half.

For the next two days the Elaine Leventhal was a wonderful hostess taking us to Marineland at Palos Verdes, to lunch at a superb Mexican restaurant called Senor Pico's, an unscheduled visit to the Chinese and Negro areas because Elaine lost her way, and a visit to the film studios of 20th Century Fox before putting us on a flight to San Francisco where, while waiting for our TWA flight to Fiji, we rang and told the Kratzers in Davis how much we had missed the opportunity of seeing them again.

Over the date line and missing out Wednesday, 9 October, completely we arrived in Fiji and after a hurried breakfast caught a bus to Lautoka where we embarked on a little launch for a day on a tiny island called Beachcomber Island. There we were given a small beach hut and swam in the warm sea to try to keep cool and were given a fabulous seafood barbecue and a trip in a glass bottomed boat to view the local coral reef before returning to the Hibiscus Hotel. After a morning of duty free shopping we caught a UTA Caravelle to Noumea. Inadvertently I left behind on the aircraft some duty free spirits and cigars and I was not allowed to go and retrieve them but was assured that we would be boarding the same aircraft the next day and that all things would be safe on board until then. After a hair-raising drive of 30 kilometres into the town in a ramshackle bus over rough mountain roads we eventually arrived at the super-de-luxe hotel the Chateau Royal where we had to wait in the lobby more than an hour while they tried to allot us rooms. Then after a shower and change we descended to the bar to get a much-needed pre-prandial drink and were astonished at the price! We had been given 300 New Caledonia francs towards dinner only to find that the cheapest dish, inadequate to settle our hunger pangs, was NCF 250. We had no means of getting further cash but we were lucky to meet in the bar a young honeymoon couple who insisted that it was their pleasure to stand us a decent meal and share their two bottles of Beaujolais. The next day we had to rise at 5.00 a.m., pack, have a *petit dejeuner* at a little beachside kiosk included in the free accommodation and board the rickety bus at 0645 back to the airport at Tontouta, only to find the plane stripped of our grog and cigars. We had lunch during the 3½ hour flight to Sydney and Brian Lucas came to meet us and take us to their Kogarah Bay home until it was time to fly on to Hobart. Round the world in 78 days!

To his and our delight, and to his teachers' great surprise, Charles, who had decided to move from Friends School and go to the Hobart Matriculation College, got through his Matric, and thought he would rather spend a year in some job and save some money to pay for an overseas trip first rather than go directly to University so he got some gainful

employment in the accounts section of the Post Master General's Department, as Australia Post was then called, While thus employed he entered for a competition aimed at young people under 25, sponsored jointly by *The Mercury*, the Hobart daily paper, and Qantas. There was no limit to the number of entries that any one person could submit provided each one was accompanied by a coupon taken from the mercury. Charles assiduously collected more than a 100 copies of the paper and worked hard to try and cover all the possible answers by submitting as many different permutations and combinations of them as possible. One of his answers was correct but so were the entries of five other people so the six finalists were all asked to attend a general knowledge quiz. Here again Charles did his homework literally by reading *The Mercury* attentively for the preceding few days, presuming that *The Mercury* sponsors would ask questions pertaining to the news published in the paper. Charlie won and the prize was a free trip round-the-world with Qantas so he decided to use the money he had saved for the fares overseas as pocket money and he departed first to Athens and then after a few days in Greece to London. Charlie then joined Nigel and Heather for a trip to the continent before setting off on his own. The following year Dorothy Wilson, my cousin, wanted to travel on the continent but her husband did not want to go, so she took Charles with her and after France, Spain and Portugal she returned home and Charlie among other things visited Israel and stayed about six weeks in a kibbutz before returning to England.



THE MERCURY, FRIDAY, 13-6-1969—3

Happy youth wins big trip

SOUTH African - born Charles Roberts, of New Town, was a surprised and happy winner when the result of the Qantas-Mercury Pacesetter Competition was announced in Hobart yesterday.

His prize is a free Qantas world trip under the Pacesetter regulations.

● He is pictured (right) being congratulated by the Qantas district manager (Mr N. Spencer), as the circulation manager of "The Mercury" (Mr J. F. Barker) looks on.

Eighteen years of age, he was the youngest of the six finalists interviewed yesterday in the final selection of the winner.

The 700 contestants were required to answer 12 questions on an entry form published in "The Mercury" and each of the six finalists gave 10 correct answers.

They were then questioned by Mr Spencer, and Mr Barker on general knowledge and current affairs, and on their own future plans.

The winner, who is the son of Dr and Mrs P. W. Roberts, of New Town, is a costing clerk with the PMG Department.

He matriculated from the Hobart Matriculation College at the end of last year but decided to work for a short while before taking an arts course at the university.

He said last night that he would use the prize for a working holiday of America, the Continent, and England, where he would visit relatives.

During the year that Charlie won his round-the-world trip, 1969, Stuart, who had got his Law degree and had signed on as a public servant, working for the Department of Immigration, was transferred to Canberra. We went to see him there and stayed with the parents of one of my Anaesthetic Registrars, Rupert McArthur. We told Stuart that we would like to go for a holiday to Queensland and asked his advice about where to go. One of his workmates persuaded us that we would get more value for our money if we went to Norfolk Island, so we changed our plans and arranged to go there. We thoroughly enjoyed it and marvelled at the variety of things to do on an island five miles by three and explored it by tiny hired car, on foot, on an organised bus trip, and I even hired a pony to ride most of the way round the island. The sea was too rough for nearly all the time we were there to go fishing but at last one of the boats ventured out and I tried that with no success from the catching of fish point of view. Norfolk Island is a duty free area and we were amused by the notice outside one of the stores: 'This is where you go broke trying to save money'.

Later that year Stuart had an accident in a car he had just bought. Returning from a trip to Cooma in the dark he missed a turning and ran off the road into the wire fence which acted like the catching wires on an aircraft carrier and held the chassis and body but threw out the engine into the field beyond. Stuart broke his femur and had a nasty bruise from the lifesaving lap-sash safety belt and his passenger had a fractured wrist and some teeth missing. Of course all the lights went out and they could easily have stayed in the car without being seen until the next day but luckily another couple was following and saw their lights go out suddenly and they stopped to investigate. One of them stayed with Stuart and the passenger and the other went on into Canberra to alert the ambulance which drove back at such a speed that it failed to see them and overshot but eventually came back and took them to the hospital. As it happened the surgeon on duty was David Roebuck who had been on the staff of the Royal Hobart but had recently moved to Canberra. The news was broken to us by David Roebuck who invited Lilian to come to Canberra and stay with him and his wife until Stuart was over the pinning operation and out of danger. Lilian went and brought back Stuart to recuperate in Hobart and so we had a reunion of the family for Christmas that year as Nigel and Heather passed through Australia on their way to take up jobs in Christchurch in New Zealand and they were able to stay with us too. During their final year in Britain Heather had taught at a secondary school in Chelmsford where she found it impossible to maintain discipline as all forms of correction were frowned upon by the ultra-modern philosophy of allowing everybody to express their own individuality. She stuck it out so that she could keep both of them while Nigel took his M.A. at the University of Essex.

Linda was now at 16 a typical teenager and went through that stage of her development in a pretty stormy fashion. Bill Oats, the Headmaster of the Friends School, made it clear to us that we were wasting our money keeping her at school so we took his advice and took her away. She thought she would like to become an apprentice hair-dresser but there were difficulties in finding a vacancy so she found herself a job doing nursing aide work at the geriatric hospital at St. John's Park for a short while. Early in 1970 Linda met Tom McCarthy and with the impulsiveness of youth decided that she wanted to be engaged to him. We thought that for one thing she was too young being only 16½ and for another that she hadn't really known him for more that a very few weeks so we were not in favour of anything as definite as a formal engagement, a decision she received with bad grace. I had to go to Melbourne for some meeting, I don't remember

whether it was medical or to do with A.F.S. After the meeting on the flight back to Hobart I was offered the Hobart newspaper, *The Mercury*, and turning to the Hatched, Matched and Despatched Notices I saw the announcement of Linda's engagement to Tom. Rather than make a fuss and probably drive her to something even more desperate, we decided to accept it as a *fait accompli* and see whether the novelty would wear off with time.

Now she was engaged, however, she started on a campaign of attrition to get us to allow her to get married and eventually she wore us down into accepting that she would arrange for the ceremony to take place on her seventeenth birthday. When she tried to fix that she found that the church was booked out for weddings on that day so they made it the following week. The reception was held at the Botanical Gardens and Linda had two little flower girls in attendance, the twin daughters of Lois and Charles Spiegel, Anne and Margaret. Meanwhile, on his round the world trip, Charlie had been in the habit of writing, just a postcard from various places, to both his sponsors, *The Mercury* and Qantas saying in effect 'Enjoying my trip thanks to you!' and had stressed to the manager of Qantas in Hobart that he would like to work for Qantas should a vacancy arise in Hobart. Eventually the manager, Bob Cureton, rang us up and said that there soon would be a vacancy and that if Charles was serious he had better cut short his journey and return to be present for any interview that would be required. Charles had by this time left the U.K. and flown over the Atlantic and was visiting Lilian's sister Gladys (also known as 'Bobbie') Selverstone in Cambridge, Massachusetts where she and Norman had three children of school age. No sooner had Charles arrived than Bobbie had an acute attack of cholecystitis and had to have an emergency operation to remove the gallbladder. As Norman was very busy in his private practice in partnership with his brother Louis, Charles's presence was to the family a godsend as he was able to run their home while Bobbie was in hospital, getting the children, Andrew, Jane and Roger off to school with their 'cut lunch' and doing the housework and the housekeeping shopping and some of the cooking. When the call from Qantas came Bobbie was back home and well enough to release Charles who flew back to Hobart as soon as he could. He applied for the job with Qantas and got it and at the end of October 1970 started to learn the ropes of the office work. He was destined to stay with Qantas for 20 years and only left them in 1990 when his late father-in-law left a business in Harare, Zimbabwe without anyone to run it.

Soon after he returned to work for Qantas, Charlie decided he was too big a boy to live at home and went to share a house with three others of his ex school friends. This left Lilian and me alone in the large house in New Town that we had bought in 1967 after the fire with five bedrooms and three bathrooms and a large garden, so we decided to sell the house and go and live at what up till then had been our seaside 'shack' at Tinderbox. We fitted it with wall-to-wall carpets and generally made it more suitable for permanent occupation and we spent a very pleasant year there in 1971, enjoying a truly rural life, six miles from the nearest shop and bus-stop and yet only 15 miles from the centre of Hobart. We had delightful neighbours in Bill and Diana Hargrave-Wilson who were living in the Pilot House perched on the edge of the cliff overlooking the D'Entrecasteaux Channel opposite the northern end of Bruny Island a mile away. Our house was the smallest of the three that had belonged to the Hobart Marine Board and the intervening house was owned by a lady doctor who lived in England and had been a close friend of the Hargrave-Wilsons. On a visit to stay with them she had fallen in love with the place and asked them, should the 'middle cottage', as we called it, ever come

on the market to buy it for her. As an absentee landlord she delegated the running of the place to Diana who had there as a tenant a young man, David Hilledge. David was a keen ornithologist and knowing that I had been lucky enough to show that forty-spotted pardalotes were present on Mount Louis, as the hill behind Tinderbox is called, asked me to help him in a survey of the colony. He had found more than a dozen nests on the southern slopes of the hill and we watched these and were able to catch several by the simple process of standing by the nest and, when the bird returned to the hollow in the tree where the nest was, holding a butterfly net over the entrance and banding them with coded colour bands. One pair had a nest in a fallen stump of a tree right on the edge of the road at the corner of the road by the tennis court and Pierson's Point lighthouse and David was able to saw off what was in effect the roof of their little wooden cave and expose the nestlings when the lid was removed. We replaced the lid after banding the young and periodically inspected the brood.

One day in 1971 I received a letter out of the blue from a Dr Neil Ransford who had trained at the Middlesex and qualified a few years after I did and was then practising in Bulawayo in Rhodesia as an anaesthetist. He was a brother-in-law of Dr Massey Dawkins who had an appointment at the Middlesex giving Out Patient anaesthetics twice a week in the Dental department, and also he was on the staff of the University College Hospital. Neil was looking for a locum for six or seven weeks for the whole of December 1971 and half January 1972 to allow him to go to the U.K. to attend the wedding of his younger daughter Charlotte who was nursing in England and had become engaged to a young doctor. Somehow he had been told that I was not averse to doing locums in Europe and wondered if I could accept the job.

It so happened that I had a considerable amount of holiday time due to me so that I could fit it in. I applied for leave from the Royal Hobart Hospital and told Neil that Lilian and I would come and take over for the time he needed me. Charles, because of his job with Qantas was able to get us concession tickets on standby so long as we travelled on Pan Am. We had to devise a rather complicated itinerary because the only Pan Am flight into Johannesburg was from New York so obviously we had to get somehow to New York. We flew from Sydney on Pan Am to Seattle where we stayed with the American host family of one of our first A.F.S. scholars to the U.S., Gail Scarr, a very hospitable couple called Ray and Dot Kraatz. They met us at the airport and took us to the revolving restaurant at the top of the Space Needle built for the 1962 Expo. One of the disadvantages of having to travel with Pan Am was that it was an airline only licensed to carry passengers on trips to or from the U.S.A., domestic flights within the U.S. were not allowed, so that meant that we could not go direct to New York but had to catch a flight the next day from Seattle to London stopping for refuelling at Chicago. Anthony met us at Heathrow with his ten-year-old daughter, Tania, and my mother Olive and took us back to their home near Farnham a third of a large house built for a millionaire. It had one unusual feature. At the end of a narrow drive in front of the house was a metal turntable so one drove on to it, swung the car round 180 degrees and was then ready to drive away. We spent two days there and then flew to New York where we didn't leave Kennedy Airport but caught the flight to Johannesburg, known as the 'Milk Run.' This took us in turn to Dakar in Senegal, Monrovia in Liberia, Accra in Ghana, Lagos in Nigeria, Kinshasa in Zaire and finally to Johannesburg.

We had flown more than 40,000 kilometres and crossed the Pacific Ocean once and the Atlantic twice in order to arrive in Africa. On the 'Milk Run' we had stopped at five

intermediary African capitals and were able to do some duty free shopping, buying a crocodile handbag for $45 and two wallets at $2.00 in Dakar, three more wallets also at $2 and another crocodile handbag for $10 in Lagos and finally an oil painting on an old mealie bag in Kinshasa with the paint still wet of African women carrying water urns on their heads for $10. Another memorable thing about Kinshasa was the fact that the airport toilets were smelly and overflowing and the water was running out under the doors into the general reception area. Incidentally we observed on our return journey some eight weeks later that the water was still running into the transit lounge at Kinshasa airport! We spent nearly a week in Johannesburg staying with Doreen Craggs our ex over-the-back-yard-fence-neighbour in Parktown North, and seeing as many of our friends as possible.

Finally on 30 November we flew about 800 kilometres to Bulawayo where we were met by Neil and Irene Ransford and taken to their lovely home set in a large and colourful garden in a suburb with the unusual but descriptive name of 'Suburbs', the nearest and oldest of the residential areas south of the city. The next day I started working at the Bulawayo Central Hospital and also anaesthetised for an emergency appendix at the Roman Catholic private hospital, the Mater Dei, with my old friend Denis Thompson. After a couple of days settling in period during which time I had the knowledge that Neil was there to help me find places and get to know the medical and nursing staff of the hospitals where I would be working, namely the B.C.H., the Mater Dei, Mpilo, the segregated black hospital, the Richard Morris Hospital for coloured people and the Lady Rodwell Maternity hospital, the latter being a branch of the B.C.H. There were also a couple of small operating theatre suites in Bulawayo for day surgery, one in the same building, Medical Centre, where Neil had his rooms, shared with a surgeon Ken Macdonald and the other in a suite of medical offices, Lancet House. There were four other anaesthetists in practice in Bulawayo, three of them, Drs Michie, Kaplan and Eberle all in a partnership known as 'The Combine' and a younger man, Ian Crook, on his own.

We had a most enjoyable nearly seven weeks in Bulawayo, the practice work was most congenial and we made good friends. I received a lot of help from Ken Macdonald's secretary, who also kept Neil's appointment book, Mrs Young. Lilian and I were told that we could take alternate weekends off and we utilised two of those to good affect visiting the Wankie Game Reserve and the Maleme Camp in the Rhodes Matopos National Park. Of course, both Christmas and the New Year fell into my term of duty and we enjoyed a Christmas dinner with yet another old friend from Johannesburg, Reg Crawshaw the thoracic surgeon who had been a partner of Libero Fatti in the 1950s. On New Year's Eve we attended a dinner-dance at the Bulawayo Country Club in the company of John and Joan Wakelin, Frank Hendrie and his wife and Alan and Joan Eberle. John Wakelin was one of the two E.N.T. surgeons on the staff of the B.C.H., Frank Hendrie was Neil's friend and accountant and Alan Eberle was the junior member of the Combine. Alan was a delightful person and we remained friends until he died years later after retiring to live in Crediton in Devon where we stayed with Joan and him twice on subsequent visits to Britain. That New Years Eve Dance was memorable because it was a black tie affair and because of the heat the men were not expected to keep their jackets on so I had to make a hurried visit before the Ball to an outfitter to purchase a cummerbund (braces were definitely not *de rigeur*).

Neil and Irene arrived back from England on Thursday, 13 January, and we stayed on a few days handing over the practice and sorting out financial matters. Neil told me that what he really wanted was a partner and asked if I would be interested. We had so much enjoyed our stay in Rhodesia that I said that I certainly would like to come back and join him if the Tasmanian Department of Health, my employers, were still intransigent in maintaining that it would be possible for me to run a new suite of seven operating theatres in place of the three theatres we had before with no increase in staff.

Dr Harrington, the medical supervisor of the Bulawayo Central Hospital, said that my temporary position on the staff of the hospital would be made permanent if I returned within three months. With these thoughts in mind, Lilian and I left on our return journey to Hobart on Monday the 17th, still with the restrictions imposed by the Pan Am flight schedules of Pan Am determining our route. We flew to Johannesburg, where Helen Durham met us and took us to stay once more with Doreen Craggs. In the evening Carolyn took us up to town to go to the cinema at 'Cine 700' in Star City to see *The Owl and the Pussycat*. On the way there we ran into one of the worst tropical thunderstorms that I ever saw in Johannesburg, passing lots of cars in Oxford Road stalled in mud and water. How Carolyn got through I don't know. I call to mind one more sudden downpour, but I do not remember when it occurred, when I was driving from east to west across Louis Botha Avenue during a freak storm, when we had to stop because the water rushing down into a dip in the main road was about three feet deep causing the buses to run through a torrent that submerged the wheels and landing platform.

Two days later we returned to New York on the reverse Flight of the 'Milk Run', calling at Kinshasa, where we noticed that the toilets were still overflowing into the transit lounge as already mentioned, Lagos, Accra, Monrovia and Dakar on our way, arriving in JFK Airport at 0315. We travelled on a yellow bus to the North-East Terminal and bought our tickets for the shuttle service to Boston. I went to a phone booth and called the Selverstones and left my newly bought tickets on the phone! However we made the flight at 0455 and were met at Logan International Airport by Bobbie at 0530 for a welcome cup of coffee while Norman, Andrew, Jane and Roger went their respective ways to school or work. Snow lay thick on the ground and I ventured for a solitary walk across the Winchester Golf Course on a sunny, crisply cold day, unable to distinguish fairways, bunkers or ordinary rough under a deep white overlay. After five enjoyable days in a New England winter wonderland, we flew to England and after arriving in Heathrow transferred to a British Midland Airways flight to Teesside where my brother Peter met us and took us to his home in Hartburn. During a two day stay with Peter and Rhoda we paid a visit to a marvellous Pub in the Cleveland Hills on the north side of the North Yorkshire moors called the 'Blackwell Ox'. My diary reminds me that we had a 'Super dinner party. I had Rollmops, Roast Pheasant and red wine' and we were then taken back to the Eaglescliffe Golf Club for, as my diary notes, 'further (unwanted) drinks', That's what comes of only seeing one's nearest relatives at something like ten yearly intervals. In a further mitigation plea for this profligacy I can offer the excuse that it was my 61st birthday.

The next day we flew to London and Lilian, with a referral from Bill Hargrave-Wilson, consulted the famous orthopaedic surgeon, Sir Henry Osmond-Clarke (Nobby Clarke) about her 'Horton's metatarsalgia' resulting from a previous operation for Hallux Valgus. On the last day of January we were taken from the Sellicks' home in

Westmorland Street by two Australians, Fae Bown, the wife of my former R.H.H. Anaesthetics Registrar, Robert, and Jill Taylor, the wife of Wal, an ex resident at R.H.H. who was training to be a radiologist, to Heathrow and we caught a Pan Am Jumbo to Los Angeles by the non-stop 'polar' flight, we took off in the early afternoon of a bright sunny but crisply cold day and, instead of west as one might think, in a mainly northerly direction over Scotland and saw nothing, not even a snow-covered landscape. Then over the sea and over Greenland and again the sea, all covered with ice and snow bathed in a pinkish glow from the continually setting winter sun, over Hudson's Bay and then the North American mainland until we crossed into the airspace of the United Sates and landed at Los Angeles, still on a winter afternoon just as the sun was finally allowed to go on without us and set. Nearly all the way all we could see was a snow covered land or sea-scape with a pinkish hue. We were met by Elaine Leventhal who greeted us with the words 'What a pity you didn't land a few minutes earlier, you would have seen a lovely view of the Sierra Nevada covered in snow with the pink glow of the setting sun!'

We stayed one night with them before flying to Hong Kong, where in a disastrous two days I had my wallet stolen over breakfast and later the camera, a Voigtlander that my father had left in his will to Charles. Eventually, on 5 February, we arrived back in Tasmania after crossing the Pacific Ocean twice and the Atlantic four times in a total journey of well over 90,000 kilometres.

Chapter 16: Back to Africa

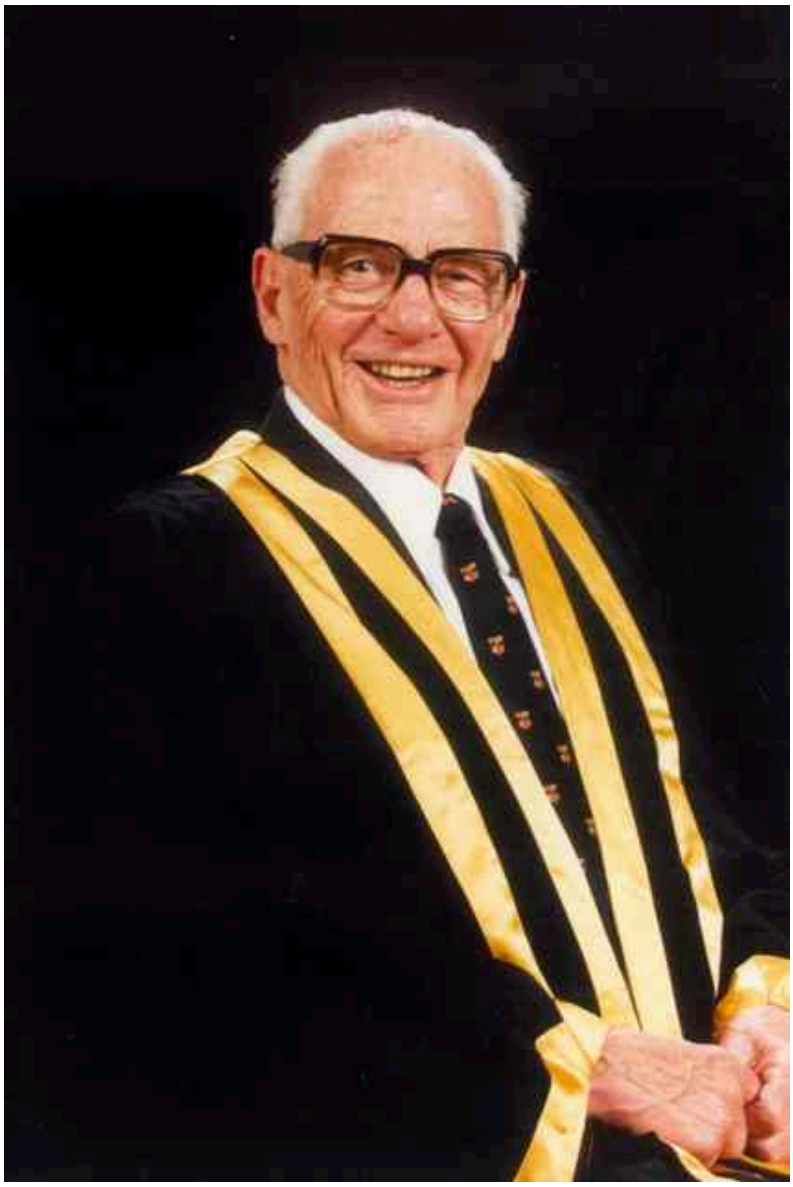
On our return to Hobart I found a letter waiting for me from the Department of Health saying that they could not accede to my request for more staff and hoped that this decision would not dampen my enthusiasm. To try to run seven operating theatres with the staff that had only just managed to cope with the work of three theatres was quite impossible and I had tried to point this out to the Department.

Already the University had appointed more surgical staff than we could find theatre space and time for and especially I recall to handle the appointment of a paediatric surgeon, Jim Cartledge, who was persistent in his demands to me that he be given a fixed operating session. In three theatres, working five days a week, morning and afternoon sessions only, amounted to 30 lists a weeks and every session was booked. I had to tell Jim that the only chance for him to do routine children's surgery was on one morning a week when the surgeon on that morning usually had a short list so that Jim would be able to start at about 11.00 a.m. There was also a full time 'Reader in Surgery' who was first assistant to Professor Shepherd who wanted time for his operating session and a similar appointment in Orthopaedic Surgery. So long as we only had three theatres these surgeons realised that, from the mere point of actual operating space and time, they could not hope for a fixed session but when the new suite of theatres opened, they would all be demanding theatre time. The attitude of the government was that they had spent all their money on building the theatres and the anaesthetists would just have to work harder. I tried to point out to them that the present registrar staff were already working as hard as could be reasonably expected and that if the word got around, as it very quickly would, that at Hobart the working conditions were any worse than at present, the hospital would find itself with no applicants for such jobs. As it was, registrars in Hobart suffered from isolation when compared with those in, say, Melbourne where, with so many other teaching hospitals in the city, there were courses and lectures going on all the time which they could easily attend.

In view of the intransigence of the Department of Health, I replied to their letter that they had not dampened my enthusiasm they had killed it and that if they thought that the Anaesthetic Department could be run with such a small number of staff they could try running it with one less and would they please accept a month's notice of my resignation.

It was unfortunate that the hospital in Bulawayo had insisted that in order to be accepted back there on the staff I would have to go back within the next three months from leaving there in mid-January, because that meant that I could not complete my ten years at the Royal Hobart Hospital. After ten years' service I would be entitled to three months' long service leave or the money in lieu, so that decision cost me a few thousand dollars. Another financial loss would not be apparent so quickly but if I had stayed in Hobart until I was 65 I would have drawn the full pension in my superannuation, whereas at 61 I was only entitled to about one third of the maximum.

We arranged to have our furniture sent over to Bulawayo, via Beira, and I decided to fly to Johannesburg as soon as possible after my notice to the Royal Hobart Hospital was up, leaving Lilian to supervise the removal of such furniture as we were taking and to arrange for the letting of the house at Tinderbox.



Bobby's picture in the Royal Hobart Hospital's portrait collection.

On the evening before I was due to leave to fly to Africa we had a little family farewell dinner party at the Tinderbox house. Charles and Stuart were there and after the meal we played some game, I think it was *Vingt-et-Un* but I can't be sure. After a while I decided to leave the others to the game and go for a short nostalgic trip down to the little concrete jetty at the small bay just below the house. This was a relic of the Pilot Station days and I had had a pair of davits erected there and at one time I had kept a small dinghy on them. It was an ill-fated venture. Once the dinghy was stolen and recovered stranded on a beach on the other side of the Derwent estuary and, after that, one night a particularly violent storm bashed the boat to pieces on the davits that were at a height of at least ten feet above the normal high water mark. All that was left of the boat was a small piece of the transom at the end of the rope. I often used to go fishing from either the jetty or the adjacent rocks and during hot summer days we used to bathe from the jetty.

On this occasion I made my way down the remnants of the concrete steps leading down and for some unknown reason I did not go all the way down but stopped about three or

four steps above the jetty and stood there looking at the sea. Without any warning a huge freak wave came and I could see it was going to submerge the jetty so I clutched hold of one of the remaining rusty steel stanchions that had in the Pilot Station era supported a rope handrail. I was lucky to have been within reach of it because the next moment the wave broke with such force at the level of my waist that I was knocked off my feet and had I not been holding the metal post I would have been washed off the jetty into the D'Entrecasteau Channel and would have had very little chance of scrambling ashore again on the rocks. When we bathed we used to have a rope attached to a similar stanchion at the base of the steps thrown into the water to help us climb out on the rocks at the base of the jetty. I picked myself up absolutely soaked and squelched my way up the 200 feet climb back to the house. I am sure that had I drowned a lot of people would have believed that, having suddenly regretted my decision to resign from the Royal, I had, on the spur of the moment, committed suicide!

On arrival in Johannesburg I enlisted the aid of Don Haynes to find a suitable car as owing to the sanctions against Rhodesia such luxuries were not easy to come by north of the Limpopo. Don recommended me to Lindsay Saker's, agents for Volkswagen, and I bought a beauty, not a beetle. It had a more conventional style bonnet which held the capacious luggage compartment and the engine was in what one might have thought was the boot. It was the first model that VW brought out with fuel injection and as that system was in its infancy it was regarded by most people, including unfortunately the VW expert in Bulawayo to whom I later entrusted its maintenance, with awe and some suspicion as dangerously new-fangled. I never had any trouble with it but I could quite understand the mechanic's worry because with sanctions it would have been extremely difficult to obtain any replacement spare parts and we might have had to wait months for such things to arrive from Johannesburg.

I also laid in a stock of other things which during my six weeks' locum in December and January I had found to be in short supply or unobtainable, from whisky to torch batteries and various items of anaesthetic equipment such as disposable intravenous needles and endotracheal tubes. After about a week I set off to drive the 880 kilometres to Bulawayo. I stopped the night at Beit Bridge, the border town on the Rhodesian side in the very comfortable motel there. Neil and Irene Ransford were delighted to see me again and had arranged that until we found something suitable for more permanent occupation, we should stay with them in the house in Suburbs where we had spent such a pleasant time such a short while before.

I started work as Neil's partner on 1 April and Lilian arrived a week later and she started looking for a likely house to buy. There was no hurry because our furniture was expected to take about a couple of months to come. At that time Mozambique was still a Portuguese colony known as Portuguese East Africa, or colloquially just 'P.E.A.', and friendly towards the Rhodesian Government so that sanctions were not strictly applied. South Africa too had no qualms about ignoring the U.N. trade embargo and throughout the period of sanctions supplied Rhodesia with all its fuel oil and petrol.

The main supply route of goods destined for Zambia from all over the world via South Africa was by the railway through Rhodesia and the trains used to get as far as Victoria Falls, the border between Rhodesia and Zambia and the Rhodesian crew would take the train to the middle of the bridge over the Zambezi and then get off the train and walk back to Rhodesian soil and the Zambian crew would walk from the Livingstone side of

the river along the track, board the train and drive it to its destination. Meanwhile the Zambian army in a trigger happy frame of mind was sniping at and occasionally killing innocent sightseers on the Rhodesian side. The most ardent critics of the rebel Rhodesian Government which had declared itself unilaterally independent were in fact dependent on the supplies which crossed the Zambezi at the Victoria Falls, so trade must go on even during the undeclared war.

Before we found a house we stayed for a month in the house of Barry and Ursula Thompson while they went on holiday. Barry was the chief medical officer of the Rhodesian Railways and Ursula was also a doctor in general practice. In this way Lilian was able to get some experience of housekeeping in Bulawayo with the Thompsons' tried and trusted servants before we embarked on running our own home with new staff. The Thompsons' home was also in the suburb of 'Suburbs' but at the other end of it from the Ransfords' and was in fact nearer to the Central Hospital and also to the Mater Dei private hospital where we did quite a lot of our work.

After about six weeks we found a house in Tait Road on the southern outskirts of Bulawayo between Matopos Road and the Old Gwanda Road. I think that officially the suburb we were in was called Four Winds, a poetic name reminiscent of Mah Jong, but we never used that name and most people referred to our district as Hillside.



Lilian sitting on the *stoep* at 10 Tait Road, Bulawayo.

Tait Road was a quiet short road running east and west and we were on the southern side so that we had a northern aspect. The drive sloped slightly up from the road and we had, I think, about three-quarters of an acre. The hedge along the road was of hibiscus and the garden was full of trees with a fair expanse of lawn, too much from the point of view of the person who had to do the mowing and that was my chore because although we employed a gardener we did not like to trust the lawn mower to him. African gardener servants, we were warned, and we knew from our experience of living in

Johannesburg for more than 13 years, were a little too keen to try to take the machinery to bits to see if they could improve the performance and cause endless trouble so the only safe way with an inexperienced gardener was to forbid him to touch the mowing machine. The trees were lovely. We had nine jacaranda trees and about a dozen bougainvilleas of all possible shades from white, cream, yellow, orange, pink and various shades of red to purple and, at the top of the drive, a beautiful tree with large scarlet trumpet-like flowers, I'm not sure whether it was a flame tree or a flamboyant. This tree was especially precious to us because it had a hole in it where a pied barbet made its nest and had a habit of perching at the mouth of the hole looking out in full view of us sitting on the *stoep*.

We had two servants, a housemaid who did the cooking and a young rather effeminate 'garden-boy', Simon, who was a Shona from the most numerous of the tribes, and the girl was Ndebele. That tribe originated when Mzilikazi, who was a son of the chief of the Kumalo tribe which was a part of the Zulu complex under Chaka, was sent by Chaka to go and replenish stocks of cattle and women by raiding some minor neighbouring tribe in 1822. Mzilikazi was so successful that he decided not to let have Chaka all the booty but to flee from Zululand and find his own territory, taking with him the best part of the loot. The wanderers went west to the south of present day Pretoria and then swung north and crossed the Limpopo into the south western part of the land occupied by the Shona. The Shona were essentially resident, bucolic people, not nomadic, and quite unprepared to meet the incursion of aggressive go-getters like the Matabele. The new conquerors occupied the southwest of the hitherto Shona territory and it became Matabeleland with the capital Bulawayo. Under British rule the tribal antagonisms were suppressed and the outspoken Matabele got their way in the main. Later, of course, when Robert Mugabe, a Shona came to power because with 'one man, one vote' principles ruling, the Shona outnumbered the Matabele four to one and entrepreneurial 'go-getterism' did not count in votes, the Shona turned on their former conquerors and harassed them in every possible way. However in 1972 Bulawayo was the heart of Matabeleland. I thought that I should try to learn to speak the prevailing native tongue and so I enrolled for lessons in Sindebele, as the language of the Matabele is called. I bought a grammar book and a dictionary and had coaching from the 'house girl'. The language is a difficult one to learn and when after a year, the girl's husband who was in the police was transferred to Salisbury, she left to accompany him, my linguistic enthusiasm waned and I was left able to say the equivalent of 'Good morning' and 'Thank you', I found very little practical use for it. When the girl left we employed a male cook, Nicholas, another Shona, who ran the inside of the house very efficiently.

We had only recently moved into Tait Road when Stuart was sent, in August, from Canberra to London with the Department of Immigration. He decided to route himself to London via Johannesburg and break his journey there and visit us in Bulawayo. As Rhodesia was the target of United Nations' sanctions, it would not do for an Australian Government employee to have entry into Rhodesia stamped in his passport. This was not necessary because one of the ways that Rhodesia fought the embargo was to stamp on a loose piece of paper their entry and when the guest departed to take back the scrap of paper so that other black African government immigration officials would not deny the visitor access.

While Stuart was with us I proudly told him that in spite of the fact that I had only been in the country for a month or so, I had received a letter addressed to Dr F.W. Roberts, Bulawayo. I was comparing, to the advantage of Rhodesia, the postal service with that of Australia. I pointed out that we still in those days had two postal deliveries a day and one on Saturday, an impossibility in Trade Union-run Australia. Stuart strongly disapproved of us ringing, a small bell on the dining table to tell the girl that we had finished one course when the kitchen was within easy earshot. He had acquired in the last ten years in Australia an underlying disapproval of employing servants in the house anyway, but we could not see way we should deprive the servants of employment just to satisfy some ideological theory. To forego making life easy, and this was before the famous Malcolm Fraser quip 'Life is not meant to be easy', we were apparently expected to add to the unemployment figures among the native African population. Stuart only stayed a couple of days and the next month I received a postcard from him addressed to 'Dr F.W. Roberts. Rhodesia'. It arrived three days after posting in London. Eat your heart out, Australia Post, with your motto 'We deliver'!

During the dry winter season we decided that we would have a swimming pool built right in front of the house. The whole thing, which included digging the hole in the front lawn, lining the hole with concrete in the same way Mickey Finn had pioneered in our Parktown North house in Johannesburg about 15 years before, painting and making a surround in 'slasto', a brown and beige type of slate, installing the filter system and pump and underwater lighting and 'all that jazz' cost us $2,000 (Rhodesian). Mickey Finn's pool had cost only R700. I think today in Australia such a venture would cost at least $15,000.

We were very fortunate in our neighbours. On our right as one looked out from the front *stoep*, *i.e.*, to the east of us, were Bill and Una Kinleyside. A year or two before we arrived Bill had been Mayor of Bulawayo and the very first day we took up residence we had a little note from them asking us to go next door for a 'sundowner'. They were always very friendly and helpful and later in our stay in Bulawayo when we had a young beagle named Sheena she used to go through a hole in the fence first thing every morning for a little ceremony in their bedroom. When their houseboy brought their morning pot of tea he used to put newspapers down on the floor and put two saucers and pour some tea into them for their two labradors. Sheena was friendly with the Kinleysides' dogs and soon developed the habit of making her way into their bedroom at early morning teatime and expect to have a saucer of milky tea with her friends.

On the other side of us were the Blackers. David was an ex-Lancashire policeman and was currently a senior officer in the C.I.D. of the local police. Curiously enough the Rhodesian Police were not officially called that, they were the British South Africa Police. This stemmed from the fact that in the early days of Rhodesia it had been administered by a chartered company called the British South Africa Company. When Rhodesia became a self-governing colony in 1923, the B.S.A.P. elected not to change the name of the force and, misnomer though it is, seeing that it was neither British nor South African, clung tenaciously to the original name. David was married to a German girl called Hanni and they had two small daughters, Karen and Greta. When we had the pool built in the front garden Karen and Greta and Hanni used to come frequently to swim. David was a marvellous raconteur and parties at either of our houses were kept amused by the incessant flow of jokes told in a deep Lancashire voice. After we left

Rhodesia we kept in touch and so we were distressed to hear how David had been treated by the Mugabe government after the country became Zimbabwe. At first he had been promoted to be the head of the C.I.D. and moved to Salisbury, now called Harare. Then one day he arrived for work and found that his office had been taken over by a black Zimbabwean without any explanation or notice and he was given a small room with a desk and chair but with absolutely no work to do. The Blackers left Zimbabwe and went to Cape Town where he had a number of jobs, one of which was to run a new supermarket in the southern suburbs. On subsequent visits that we paid to Africa we visited them where we found them as friendly as ever but rather bitter about his lost career.

We could not fail to be struck with the abundant and varied bird life in Rhodesia and we joined the Rhodesian Ornithological Society and became keen bird-watchers. There was a sub-branch of the Society based in Bulawayo, the Matabeleland branch, and during our second and third years in Bulawayo I found myself on the committee. By one of the other members I was introduced to catching and ringing birds.



Bobby and Lilian on an ornithological outing in southern Africa.

I purchased mist nets, ringing pliers and the various necessary tools for weighing and measuring wings, tails, beaks, claws etc. I was given a wire netting walk-in trap with narrow funnel shaped entrances and used to put that on the slastoed area in front of the *stoep* and was amazed at the variety of birds that came to feed off the seed we put in the trap. I still have an old school exercise book in which I recorded the type of bird caught, its weight, length of wing, tail, tarsus and culmen,[47] and the number of the metal ring

[47] Culmen: The upper ridge of a bird's bill.

and any coloured plastic rings I put on the leg. The types of birds caught in our garden were house sparrow, grey-headed sparrow, laughing dove, blue waxbill, scarlet-chested sunbird, redbilled fire-finch, blackeyed bulbul, Kurrichane thrush, boubou shrike, streaky headed seedeater, tinkling cisticola (pronounced sissTickola not as though it were a competitor with pepsi and coca-cola!), quelea, spotted back weaver, melba finch, red bishop bird, red-backed shrike, yellow-eyed canary, cut-throat finch and Jameson's fire-finch. Not bad for one garden!

The identification of the cisticola was too difficult for me, a beginner, so I took it round to the house of Peter Steyn who lived in the next suburb. Peter was a very keen and experienced amateur ornithologist. He had first become interested when a school master at a boys' boarding school at Essexvale near Bulawayo, but later became an acknowledged expert especially with birds of prey and has published a book called *Eagle Days*. There are 17 different species of cisticola listed in the South African birdwatcher's bible, *Roberts' Birds of South Africa* (no relation), and the differences are very slight. Even Peter, with the bird in his hand, studied a book devoted entirely to cisticolas and took half-an-hour before he pronounced it to be a tinkling cisticola. The different varieties all seem to have carious names from 'chirping' to croaking, rattling, singing and wailing apart from names more descriptive of the plumage.

About 20 kilometres south of Bulawayo an area of granite outcrops which we then knew as the Matopos Hills, but since the formation of Zimbabwe in place of Rhodesia has been called the Matobo Hills, had been made into a National Park and had the largest concentration of black eagles (*aquila verreauxii*) in the world. In fact it is the largest concentration of any species of large eagles in the world. The black eagle has a range throughout Southern and East Africa and as far north as Israel. A very active member of the Matabeleland branch was Mrs Val Gargett, an ex school-teacher who had become so interested in the black eagle that she gave up her profession in 1969 and devoted nearly 20 years to their study. In 1990 she produced a book, *The Black Eagle: A Study*. Val could not obviously watch and monitor all of the more than 100 nest sites and more than 50 breeding pairs, so she enlisted the aid of whom she refers to in her book as 'enthusiastic amateurs'. I was only too pleased to be admitted to the group. I was allotted several nest sites to monitor and each enthusiastic amateur was expected to visit each of his sites at least once a month and report to Val. I was lucky in that I could usually get away from my anaesthetic duties every other weekend and also on one afternoon a week (not that all of these times could be spent raptor watching, of course).

During that first year in Rhodesia, 1972, the Rhodesian Medical Association held a Congress in Bulawayo. As wall as the local medical fraternity participants came from South Africa, Britain and America. My old friend, Don Haynes, Professor of Oto-Rhino-Laryngology or Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery in lay terms, and Ida came and stayed with us. I remember one of the functions arranged was in the Matopos to visit Rhodes' grave. Rhodes had been so impressed with the area, where he had, in 1896, very bravely ridden unarmed to meet with the chiefs who had staged the 'Matabele Rebellion' and at the famous 'indaba' had brought peace to the country, that before he died at Muizenberg, near Cape Town, he let it be known that he wished to be buried at the top of a large dwala (a bare rock hill or granite dome) that he had named as 'The World's View'. In the Congress outing after the pilgrimage to the grave there was a *braaivleis* (Afrikaans for a barbecue) at the foot of the dwala which was attended by the 'rebel' Prime Minister, Ian Smith. It was very revealing to note how many of the

visitors from countries which were engaged in imposing sanctions on Rhodesia were privately very sympathetic to the country's plight. My own feelings were that, having once given Rhodesia responsible self-government way ahead of all the other surrounding colonies in 1923, Britain should not have withheld the status of independence from Rhodesia as it had given recognition to the independence of Zambia and Malawi, previously known as Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland presumably because they were under a black African government. I found it ironic that during my sojourn in South Africa from 1949 to 1962, liberal thinkers emigrated from South Africa to Rhodesia because there was no official policy there of apartheid and now they found themselves in a country subject to sanctions whilst South Africa was for the time being free to pursue its repressive policies. In order to keep most of the so-called United Nations talking and not squabbling among themselves, the U.N. found it convenient to have one nation as a whipping boy. Everybody's anger could be directed against that state and for the time being it was Rhodesia. Presumably South Africa was at that time too strong or their trade was too important to take any heed of what went on there, but Rhodesia was small and should easily be brought to its knees. There is nothing like having a common enemy to unite unlikely bedfellows as Hitler demonstrated when making the Jewish race his whipping boy.

After the Congress Don Haynes gave me a lift to Johannesburg for me to consult Pat Dennehy, a urologist with whom I had often worked before going to Tasmania, who told me I ought to have a prostatectomy so I flew back to Bulawayo after making plans to return in early November for the operation which I underwent in the very comfortable nursing home, the Kenridge. Five days after the operation I had a surprise visitor, none other than Brian Lucas, who had been the doctor working for Parke, Davis and got me interested in the anaesthetic agent, ketamine, a report on which formed the basis of the paper I had read at the World Congress in London in 1968. I had made a very good recovery from the operation and Brian asked if he might be allowed to take Lilian and me to dinner in a restaurant not far away. To my surprise, Pat Dennehy made no objection and I thoroughly enjoyed the sudden return to social life. I was discharged two days later and Pat wanted me to stay in Johannesburg for another week and then Lilian and I were able to drive back to Bulawayo. I was able to start work again two weeks after the surgery. Until the world oil crisis of 1973 we were able to drive long distances as frequently as we wished or could afford and went frequently down south to South Africa. The journey was 550 miles (880 kilometres) and we sometimes made a stop at the border town Beit Bridge and sometimes pushed on to some more attractive place on the way to Johannesburg such as the Mountain Inn in the very scenic Soutpansberg just north of Louis Trichardt. This, you may remember was the place where we had intended taking Professor and Mrs Rovenstine on our way to the Kruger Game Reserve in 1956 when our old Chevrolet let us down and we lost our booked rooms. However, by now the hotel was under different management and we spent several very pleasant nights over the years from 1972 to 1978 enjoying the comfortable rooms and excellent food amid beautiful scenery and a glorious garden. Twice we went to Johannesburg to attend weddings of daughters of our old friends: Terry Knight's daughter, Carolyn, and Diana Aungiers's daughter, Sue. Diana was by this time divorced from Jasper Aungiers and married to Geoff Ross and living in Melrose. We often stayed with them in the *en-suite* guest cottage in their garden on our visits to Johannesburg and when we ate in their dining room we sat on our old Hepplewhite chairs which Diana had bought at the auction of our furniture in 1962.

Diana and Geoff had a house in Botswana up north on the banks of the Chobe River, a tributary of the Zambezi, forming the boundary between Botswana and the elongated tentacle eastwards of the territory of South West Africa known as the Caprivi Strip, thus giving S.W.A. (later to be known as Namibia) an outlet to the east with access to Zambia and Rhodesia which would otherwise be obstructed by Angola on the north and Botswana to the south. After Botswana gained its independence from being the former British protectorate of Bechuanaland, it had decreed the north-eastern corner to be the Chobe National Park. The Botswana government had decided on a plan to rid the Chobe National Park of all exotic and introduced plants and to evict all those landowners who had purchased their holdings when the area was a territory under the mandate of South Africa. The government was very fair in its dealings with such 'owners' and told them that they could continue to live in and maintain their 'property' until they were given notice to quit.

When Geoff Ross received this eviction notice he decided to go and have a last holiday there and at the end of their time there to bring out everything of value and dispose of the immovables as they thought best. They invited Lilian and me to go and spend the last weekend of their occupancy with them. Accordingly we drove up from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls and after a night at the wonderful 19th century five-star Victoria Falls Hotel we drove westwards through the frontier at Kazeagula and onwards past Kasane towards where we had been told to find the Ross's house. We had been told to look out for a windsock flying from the local aerodrome and suddenly we turned a corner and found our road blocked by a herd of elephants. We stopped and looked backwards to see that the road was clear before reversing and found more elephants coming out of the bush making for the river. All we could do was to sit still and hope that our presence would not arouse their displeasure. When we deemed it safe to continue we pressed on westwards until we realised that we had overshot the mark with the bonus of seeing Lechwe antelopes wading in the swampy area south of the river Chobe. We retraced our steps and eventually saw the windsock just at the place when our attention had been diverted by the untimely appearance of the elephants. According to instructions we turned north towards the river Chobe and found our friends. Later that day Geoff told us of one occasion when they had several friends staying with them and in order to make room for their guests Geoff and Diana had decided to sleep in a small corrugated iron *rondavel*. When they left the house after a very good party to go to bed Geoff decided to follow the good old South African custom and dispense with the necessity of going to the loo and to relieve himself in the open between the house and the *rondavel*. Before he had finished he was astonished when the tree that he was using walked slowly away and he saw, as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, that he had been peeing on the hind leg of an elephant.

Their house there was on the bank of a small inlet of the Chobe river and it looked very picturesque with Bougainvillea trees around it. Diana was very keen on bird-watching and she told us that along the river there several couples of African fish eagles nesting. They had a boat with an outboard motor and we went for a fishing trip. We did not catch anything but there was in the boat the remains of a tiger fish that Geoff had caught the previous day, so we tied it to one end of a piece of fishing gut and Diana sat in the stern of the boat trailing it as we cruised down the river with the other end of the nylon round her finger. We hadn't gone far before a fish eagle swooped down and grabbed the fish in its talons and flew off with it to share the booty with its mate on a

branch of a riverside tree. Diana just managed to release the nylon from her finger in time.

The dreaded sword of Damocles had fallen: the Botswana government had, as I said, given them notice to quit and the weekend we were there was the last time that they would be allowed to occupy their house. We all spent the last day of the visit packing up everything. Most of the furniture and things like the stove and the fridge they had already promised to a neighbour who for some reason was not being turned out. I think it was because the old man who lived near them had been living permanently there for many years and was quite a character and not expected to live long so the government was leaving his eviction until the last. There was a large oil painting of the bush in Chobe with a couple of simple whitewashed buildings done by a Johannesburg woman friend, Phil Green, that was about to be thrown out, but Lilian decided we could find a home for so we salvaged it and now, nearly 20 years later, it still finds a place on our walls. I must admit that it has frequently been 'touched up' by Lilian whenever the spirit moves her to improve it by small applications of oil paint to lighten or darken the bark or the sparse foliage of the trees in the foreground. Years later, in 1988, on a visit to Africa, Diana took us to the home of Doug and Phil Green to see a juvenile peregrine falcon, four months old, taken from the nest by the Parks and Wildlife officials from the Green's farm in the Eastern Transvaal, on a scheme to try to breed some peregrines in captivity to increase the dwindling local population that appeared to be in danger of extinction for some unknown reason, probably intake of pesticide or herbicide resulting in the thinning of the eggshell and consequent fatal fragility. I had a lovely sequence showing the bird, very alert and vocal, on video but the whole of that holiday's video cassette has inexplicably vanished.

At the end of 1972 I received an invitation from the Dutch Society of Anaesthetists, the Nederlandse Anesthesisten Vereniging which later changed its name to an Amercanised version, the Nederlandse Vereniging voor Anesthesiologie, to attend the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation and they offered to help towards the fare. With the help that we already got from Qantas there was enough to pay for both Lilian and myself. So in January 1974 Lilian and I once more embarked on the Pan Am Transatlantic 'Milk Run'. We arrived in JFK at 6.00 a.m. and caught the Boston shuttle from La Guardia and phoned Lilian's sister 'Bobbie' Selverstone to come and fetch us from Logan Airport. New England was in the grip of winter with skating, ice hockey, and ice yachting on many of the small lakes in the parks. On the Sunday, 14 January, Norman and Bobbie drove us up the coast a bit and we saw the harbours of Rockport and Gloucester frozen over and had a fabulous seafood meal at a restaurant in Gloucester. We flew to Heathrow over Tuesday night and stayed with Stuart in his furnished flat lodgings near Sloane Square. Linda had also got an assisted passage from Melbourne thanks to Charles's employment by Qantas. As well as having visits from my cousin Dorothy (nee Harrison) and her husband Dave Wilson, Anthony, Julie and Tania, and Niko Devitt (widow of 'Dee' Devitt, Staff Anaesthetist at Johannesburg General Hospital with me in 1949) the four of us 'Aussies' went down to Micheldever and stayed a night with Algar and Ken Bond. Algar was Lloyd Veysey's wife at the time I had my sudden attack of quadriplegia owing to a difference of opinion between me and the horse I was riding for too short a time at Midhurst in 1946.

Eventually the four of us flew to Schiphol where Jan van 't Oever met us and took us to Rotterdam where he and Dien put all of us up. The official celebration of the 25th

anniversary was on Saturday 27th (my 62nd birthday). I had to make a speech as one of the original founders and I managed to do a part of it in Dutch to show I had not completely forgotten the language although it may have become a bit tarnished with Afrikaans. The next day we all left, Stuart and Linda to return to London and Lilian and I flew to Boston where we phoned Bobbie before catching a flight to Detroit. There we were met by Brian and Pat Lucas who put us up for two nights and on the intervening day took us to see a fragment of the fantastic Henry Ford Museum, which is so huge that one could spend a week and not look at the same exhibit twice. After that back to New York and on the 'Milk Run' again via Dakar, Robertsfield, Accra, Lagos and Kinshasa back to Johannesburg, arriving back in Bulawayo three weeks after leaving there.

Olive, my mother decided that she would like to visit us so she came out and stayed for three months. She was now 88 but as active as ever and she swam every day in our pool and was rather careless about dressing on the *stoep* after her dip, not taking much care about exposing her ample body when there were the servants about, so much so that Lilian felt she ought to ask her to be a little more circumspect. Olive was furious and asked Lilian how she could be so two-faced about exposure in front of the African staff when all the time there was on the wall a pencil sketch Lilian had drawn of the back of a young girl in the nude! Olive was the typical school-marm, accustomed to having everybody doing as she told them and who did not think that anyone else had the right to criticise her.

Lilian tactfully arranged that Olive should come with me on my afternoon off excursions to the Matopos and on my eagle watching outings I set off with her in the car and had a picnic lunch and then I left her in or near the car while I went on to inspect the nest and its owners on foot. One favourite lunch spot was on the southern end of the Ntsheleli Dam and another was a clearing near the foot of a dwala that gave me a good view of the nest on the face of Silozwe that we used to call the 'car park'. Olive had her 89th birthday with us and was so pleased with her stay that she promised, or threatened, to return the next year. That she did, but we felt that next year six weeks would be enough to demonstrate filial devotion without endangering family harmony.

In September 1973 we heard from Anthony that he was about to sell up his practice in Frimley near Camberley and go to Lagos. We naturally assumed that that was Lagos, Nigeria, and did our best to dissuade him because my brother Peter had been there for many years and assured us that it was not a suitable country in which British citizens could hope to flourish. Peter had had a very successful Travel agency based in Lagos, with a branch office in Accra, Ghana, and had had to extricate himself after the granting of independence to the ex-British colonies in West Africa. With great difficulty Peter had managed to sell his business and was able to start again in Stockton-on-Tees.

However, Anthony assured us that it was not that Lagos, which is pronounced 'Laygoss' but a small fishing town cum holiday resort in the Algarve province of southern Portugal, pronounced 'Langosh', where he intended to go and join a Portuguese dentist in partnership. He, Julie and Tania were going to immigrate to Portugal in the September and Anthony invited us to go and spend Christmas with them. Lilian and I enrolled in the local Technical College in Bulawayo for a course in Portuguese. Rhodesia had a common border with the Portuguese East African colony, Mozambique, generally known as P.E.A., and there was quite a lot of commercial

intercourse between the two countries. The teacher in the Portuguese language course was the Portuguese Consul resident in Bulawayo who, being Portuguese, spoke impeccable Portuguese, of course, but unfortunately was not very fluent in English. He had another disability in that he was a chain smoker with a very bad cough so that he could hardly speak a sentence in any language without one or two breaks for spasms of coughing. One of the eight or nine people taking the course was Denis Thompson. He and I were two people in the class who could speak French and so could the Consul, between coughs, so Denis and I use to translate what the teacher said in French, if we couldn't understand his atrocious English, for the benefit of our fellow pupils. The saving grace of the Bulawayo course was that the Technical College had an excellent language laboratory, with a first class series of cassettes in elementary Portuguese, so with a combination of the facilities I was able in a ten-week course of two lessons a week and unlimited, except for the exigencies of my anaesthetic practice, access to the language laboratory, to become fairly proficient in simple Portuguese, enough to be able to do shopping, find our way about on tram, train and bus and in hotels and restaurants when we eventually arrived in Portugal.

Epilogue

The visit to Portugal was not an especially happy one. Anthony and Julie separated soon after Bobby and Lilian's visit, and the tensions in Anthony and Julie's marriage were palpable. Bobby and Lilian returned to Bulawayo in early 1974 and invited Tania, Anthony and Julie's 12-year-old daughter, to visit them in Rhodesia, and – unlike the trip to Portugal – it was a very happy and successful visit.



A photograph of Bobby, Lilian and Tania that was taken in Bulawayo in 1974. Tania was Bobby and Lilian's first – and, for 13 years, their only – grandchild.

After about three years in Rhodesia, Bobby and Lilian moved to Johannesburg for a period of three years or so, and Bobby gave anaesthetics for his old anaesthesia practice partners. While in Johannesburg, they rented a house that belonged to their friends, Pam and 'Greg' Gregory, Terry Knight's sister and brother-in-law.

However, Bobby and Lilian were increasingly conscious of the fact that none of their family lived in Africa. The bulk of their children and grandchildren lived in Australasia. Nigel and Heather and their son, Evan (Bobby's first grandchild and Lilian's second) lived in Christchurch, New Zealand; Stuart and Patricia and their first son, James, were living in Launceston, Tasmania; Charles and Elaine were in Melbourne; and Linda and Tom McCarthy and their daughter, Melanie, were also in Australia. Anthony and his daughter, Tania, were the closest members of the family, but they lived in Europe and weren't nearby.



**While living in Johannesburg in the mid-1970s,
Lilian's portrait was painted by Alma Flynn.**

In late 1978, therefore, Bobby and Lilian went back to Tasmania.

Bobby and Lilian stayed initially in Fae and Robert Bown's house. Robert had been one of Bobby's favourite anaesthetics registrars at the Royal Hobart Hospital, and the Bowns' home in New Town was the venue for a Christmas Day reunion of Bobby, Lilian, four of their five children (namely, Nigel, Stuart, Charles, and Linda), their spouses (Heather, Patricia, Elaine, and Tom respectively), and three of Bobby and Lilian's four grandchildren (Evan, Melanie, and Jamie). The gathering underlined the reason why Bobby and Lilian had emigrated to Australia for a second time.



Fae and Robert Bown's house in New Town.



Christmas Day, 1978: Lilian is at the top of the table, nearest the camera. Going round the table clockwise from Lilian are Charles, Elaine (Charlie's first wife), Melanie (Linda and Tom's daughter), Linda, Bobby, Stuart, Jamie (Stuart and Patricia's son), Patricia, Evan (Heather and Nigel's son), Heather, and Nigel.

Back in Hobart, Bobby initially gave anaesthetics for Robert Bown's private practice partnership, and in 1979 he also started working on a part-time basis as a Medical Officer for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Department's hospitals used to be

called Repat (*i.e.*, short for Repatriation) hospitals, and many people still used the term. Bobby's job was assessing veterans – for example, people who had served in World War II, the Korean war, and / or the Vietnam war – so that the Department's Board could decide whether their medical conditions stemmed from their war service and thus qualified them for subsidised treatment or pensions.

Bobby was initially annoyed when the Board ignored his assessments and over-ruled his recommendations. He described a case in which a former soldier claimed his bronchial problems were the result of his war service, but Bobby concluded they weren't – their true cause, he said, lay in the fact that the returned serviceman had smoked two packets of cigarettes a day for 40 years. The Repat Board – heavily weighted with former servicemen in its ranks – set Bobby's findings aside and awarded the man a pension. But Bobby gradually realised these were the rules of the game, and he grew remarkable relaxed about the Board's decisions. What Bobby enjoyed was the medical detective work: trying to find causal links between patients' service records, their intervening lives, and their current medical conditions.

He confided to me once – in a statement that surprised me – that he was enjoying his work for the Department of Veterans' Affairs as much as, or possibly even more than, any medical work he had ever done. The conditions of his employment helped a lot too. He was, in effect, a stand-by contractor. If he was asked to work and he could, he did. If he had something else on, he simply wasn't available and he didn't do the work. He was paid by the hour at a rate that was higher than anything he'd ever received before. This was, of course, because he was not a salaried employee and he was not paid when he wasn't working. He certainly didn't get any holiday pay, but that didn't stop Bobby and Lilian having many holidays.

In 1981, Bobby stopped giving anaesthetics. He did so after he'd been back in Tasmania for roughly three years. Anaesthesia, he said, was changing rapidly. It was difficult to keep up with modern developments, and it was time for younger people to take over the work. However, he continued his work as a part-time Medical Officer for the Department of Veterans' Affairs – and he continued to enjoy it – for another six years. Bobby's work as a medical Sherlock Holmes ended in 1987 when the Department of Veterans' Affairs reorganised its procedures for assessing the health status of former servicemen and women: he would have happily continued the work, the problem was that there wasn't any longer any work for him. At the age of 76 – after working as a doctor for a more than 54 years – Bobby Roberts finally hung up his stethoscope. A few years later, encouraged by his family who loved hearing him talk about the 'old days', Bobby began working on his memoirs.

After their return to Tasmania and initially staying in Robert and Fae Bown's house, Bobby and Lilian went on to buy and live in four different houses over a period of 25 years. Each time they moved, they stayed in their next house longer than they'd been in the previous one.

First they bought and moved into 49 Proctors Road, Dynnyrne, Hobart. The house was on a fairly busy road and it wasn't particularly easy to turn into its driveway. Bobby and Lilian lived there in 1979-80 for little more than a year before they sold the house and bought and moved into 8 James Avenue, Kingston Beach, which, as its name

indicates, is a seaside suburb. It's about eight-and-a-half miles south of the centre of Hobart.



49 Proctors Road, Dynnyrne, Hobart: Bobby and Lilian's home in 1979-80.



8 James Avenue, Kingston Beach: Bobby and Lilian's home from 1980 to 1982.

In 1982, though, after only about two years in Kingston Beach, Bobby and Lilian sold their James Avenue house and moved back to Sandy Bay, the suburb they had lived in when they first arrived in Hobart 20 years earlier. 26A Manresa Court was less than

three miles from the centre of Hobart, and Bobby and Lilian spent ten happy years there. Lilian turned 75 while they were living in Manresa Court, and – as Bobby mentioned in Chapter 12 of his memoirs – the whole family, all five children, came to Hobart for the occasion. It was the first time in 30 years that the family was together in one place. It was also the last time. It was while Bobby and Lilian were living in Manresa Court that Bobby began working on his memoirs.



Bobby and Lilian standing in front of 26A Manresa Court, Sandy Bay, Hobart. It was their home from 1982 until 1992.

The next house that Bobby and Lilian bought – 10 Fairway Drive, Redwood Village, Kingston – was their last. Their move to a house in a retirement village surprised the family, who thought their parents were possibly making a mistake. They weren't.



10 Fairway Drive, Redwood Village, Kingston (with Mt Wellington in the distance) was the last house that Bobby and Lilian bought. It was theirs from 1992 until 2004 – longer than any other house they'd previously owned.

Although the house was about nine miles from the centre of Hobart, it was – if necessary to do so – easy to get in and out of the city via the Southern Outlet Road. More important, though, was the fact that the Kingston shopping centre and the town's library were close by, a short drive away, which meant that trips to Hobart's city centre were seldom necessary.



In the late 1980s, Lilian's photograph was used in newspaper advertisements to promote a retirement village. Ironically, though, Derwent Waters was *not* the retirement community in which Lilian and Bobby chose to live.

The retirement village had a 9-hole par-three golf course, a bowling green, and an indoor swimming pool, and Bobby in particular enjoyed using these facilities, especially the swimming pool.

Bobby and Lilian were both gregarious people, and they quickly made new friends at Redwood Village. The house had only two bedrooms, so Bobby had the garage converted into a study, and they parked their car in a carport instead. In his unusually large study, Bobby continued writing his memoirs and also reading books onto tapes, making recordings for Hobart's 'Hear-A-Book' service.



Life as retirees in Redwood Village wasn't all beer-and-skittles. In the early 1990s, as mentioned in Chapter 11, Linda stole a large amount of money from one of her brothers. She was prosecuted by the Victorian fraud squad in 1997, found guilty and imprisoned. Linda then cut herself off from the family. Bobby and Lilian never saw her again. For the rest of their lives, they were deeply distressed by this sad and serious turn of events. Another tragic blow for Bobby and Lilian also occurred in the late 1990s: it was the untimely death of Anthony, Lilian's oldest child. In 1998 Anthony flew from Portugal to Britain in order to have an operation to remove part of one of his lungs. When he was well enough to do so, he returned to Portugal to continue recuperating, aided by the Algarve's pleasant climate. Sadly, though, he contracted pneumonia and died on 11 November. Bobby and especially Lilian thus experienced the awful pain that stems from having one's child die before you do.

Olive, Bobby's mother, had been an inveterate traveller, and so too were Bobby and Lilian. Not surprisingly, during their retirement they continued to travel.

In the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, Bobby and Lilian together made five trips to New Zealand, and Bobby once went there by himself. In 1990, Bobby also went to Britain on his own in order to visit his cousin, Dorothy Wilson, when he learnt that she was dying of cancer. When they were in their mid- to late-80s, Bobby and Lilian flew to the United States to see Lilian's sister, Bobbie, and her husband, Norman Selverstone. The last time they went overseas was in 1999, when Bobby was 88 and Lilian 86, and they flew to New Zealand to see their oldest grandson, Evan, graduate with his second

degree, a B.Sc. On that trip, though, Lilian experienced respiratory problems, and to a greater or lesser degree they affected her for the rest of her life.

While they were living in Redwood Village, both Bobby and Lilian celebrated their 90th birthdays. Bobby's was on 27 January 2001.



27 January 2001: Bobby and his 90th birthday cake.

On 6 August 2002, despite her respiratory difficulties, Lilian enjoyed her birthday celebrations in the company of Bobby and her three remaining sons.



Flanked, from left to right, by Charles, Bobby, Stuart, and Nigel, Lilian celebrated her 90th birthday on 6 August 2002.

A month later, however, Lilian struggled to breathe. Celebrations to mark Bobby and Lilian's 60th wedding anniversary on 5 September 2002 were abruptly cancelled and Lilian was, instead, admitted to hospital. She was there for only a few days, but when the family gathered in Hobart four months later in order to have Christmas together with Bobby and Lilian, she again took a turn for the worse. She was again admitted to hospital, and eight days later – on 1 January 2003 – Lilian died.

Bobby continued to live at Redwood Village after Lilian died, but was increasingly crippled and increasingly unable to cope living in a house by himself. As a result, he moved into a rest home later in 2003 (and sold his Redwood Village home in early the following year). Bobby celebrated Christmas 2003 at Stuart and Patricia's seaside cottage in Coles Bay (on the east coast of Tasmania). Bobby's two other sons, Nigel and Charles, also went to Coles Bay for the occasion, and – as events transpired – it was the last time the four men (father and three sons) were all together.



Bobby and his boys (from left to right: Stuart, Charles, Bobby, and Nigel) at Coles Bay, 28 December 2003.

Nigel was in the United States in late-2004 and unable to be in Hobart for Christmas, but the following month both he and Stuart went to Hobart especially for Bobby's birthday. Bobby wanted it that way. After all, he said, 'Christmas is not about me, but my birthday is.'

Despite being confined largely to bed (or occasionally a wheel chair), Bobby was mentally as sharp as a pin. He could usually work out the answers to *The Mercury's* cryptic crossword puzzle clues considerably more quickly than his sons could fathom the meaning of the puzzle's straight (*i.e.*, non-cryptic) clues. On 27 January 2005 – Bobby's 94th birthday and Mozart's 249th birthday – Nigel and Stuart, with the help of an immobility taxi-van, took their father out to lunch. Bobby was in fine form. Ever the *raconteur*, Bobby laughed and joked as he told stories, and even though he could not lift his glass, he happily drank good Australian red wine with the aid of a straw.



Nigel, Bobby, and Stuart celebrating Bobby's 94th birthday.

The boys said goodbye to Bobby the following morning, and Stuart drove back to Launceston while Nigel flew to New Zealand. Five days later – on 2 February 2005 – Bobby died.

Neither Lilian nor Bobby was religious. Bobby said that while he was a Church of England Christian in the 1930s, his beliefs gradually changed. By the late 1980s he described himself as an atheist. After their deaths, both Lilian and Bobby were cremated. Lilian had once accompanied Stuart when he went on an abalone-diving trip up the east coast of Tasmania in the late 1960s. While Stuart scuba-dived for abalone, Lilian sat on the shore and painted. One of the paintings she did was of a small bay with Maria Island in the background. Of all her oil paintings, it was the one her children liked the most.

As a result, when Nigel, Stuart, and Charles met on the east coast of Tasmania nearly a year after Lilian died, they decided to scatter Lilian's ashes in the sea at Spiky Beach (which is roughly eight kilometres south of the small Tasmanian town of Swansea). Two years later – 11 months after Bobby's death – Nigel and Stuart scattered Bobby's ashes at the same spot.



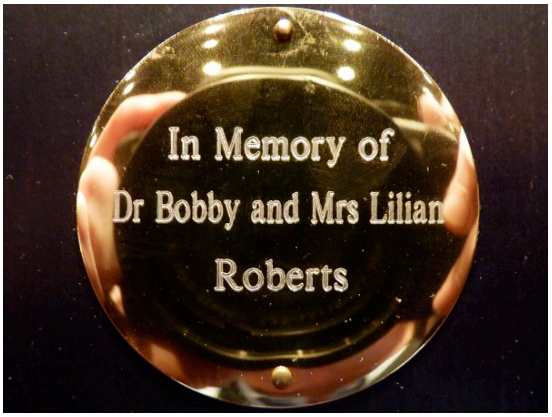
Lilian's painting of Maria Island.

The small beach, sheltered by rocky promontories, with Maria Island visible to the south, is a special place for Lilian and Bobby's children and grandchildren. Lilian and Bobby's thus far only great-grandson, Simon, has already visited the beach, and it's likely that Spiky Beach will be a place of pilgrimage for Bobby and Lilian's descendants for a long time to come.



Spiky Beach, where both Lilian and Bobby's ashes were scattered.
Maria Island can be seen in the distance.

Because they were cremated and their ashes were scattered in an isolated spot, neither Bobby nor Lilian has a gravestone. Instead, a small memorial plaque has been installed on the back of one of the seats in Hobart's Federation Concert Hall, the home of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

Left: The exterior of the Federation Concert Hall in Hobart.
Right: The plaque in memory of Bobby and Lilian.

Bobby and Lilian loved classical music (Bobby especially so), and they hugely enjoyed attending TSO concerts, which makes the plaque a particularly appropriate way to remember Bobby and Lilian, and to celebrate their long lives.

Bobby Roberts was still alive while two of his grandsons – Jamie and Simon, Stuart and Patricia's oldest and youngest sons respectively – were studying medicine. Bobby was very proud of the achievements of all his children and all his grandchildren, but the fact that two of his descendants were going to be doctors gave him special pleasure. He probably would have been ecstatic had he known that Simon would go on to become an anaesthetist.

Illustrations: sources and references

Sources for the illustrations in this edition of Bobby Roberts' Memoirs are as follows:

Page	*Placement*	*Source*
6	Top	Nigel Roberts' collection of family documents.
	Bottom	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
7		Nigel Roberts' collection of family documents.
8		http://www.brambledown.com/services/environmental-improvement/case-study3.php
9		http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mcneillyandco/
12		Photograph by Stuart Roberts.
14		http://www.keble.ox.ac.uk/about/past/Reade.jpg/view
17		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
20		http://wellcomeimages.org/indexplus/obf_images/22/26/aa87592c67d914e53a0367c3d6eb.jpg
23		https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mint_Yard_Canterbury.jpg
28		https://lizandstu.com/yelland/showmedia.php?mediaID=277&medialinkID=427
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37	Left	http://jap.physiology.org/content/121/2/401
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48		http://www.gettyimages.ae/photos/sir-alfred-webb-johnson
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58	Top	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
	Bottom	http://www.ebay.com/itm/HERBERT-FROM-KARAJAN-with-Orch-EINE-KLEINE-NACHTMUSIK-Columbia-78rpm-12-034-/161966446889

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172		Olive Roberts, *Five Year Diary 1948-1952*.
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179	Top	https://johannesburg1912.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/hospital-hill-non-european-hospital-1960sjpg.jpg
	Bottom	https://johannesburg1912.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/hospital-hill-queen-victoria-maternity-hospital-1960sjpg.jpg

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180		https://johannesburg1912.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/hospital-hill-childrens-hospital.jpg
186		Photograph by Bobby Roberts.
189		Photographer unknown. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
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198		https://q-ec.bstatic.com/images/hotel/max600/892/89206507.jpg
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207		Photograph by Erica Anderson (reproduced with the permission of the Syracuse University Libraries).
209		Photograph by Erica Anderson (reproduced with the permission of the Syracuse University Libraries).
213		Photograph by Bobby Roberts.
214		Photograph by Bobby Roberts.
215		Photograph by Bobby Roberts.
219		Photograph by Bobby Roberts.
224	Left	http://www.borgward.nl/folders/arabella.htm
	Right	https://www.netcarshow.com/saab/1960-96/1280x960/wallpaper_02.htm
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227		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
233		https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/287507
235		Nigel Roberts' collection of family documents.
237	Left	Photograph by Leslie Bate. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
	Right	Photograph by Leslie Bate. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
238		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
239		http://cdn.newsapi.com.au/image/v1/d6f70a5475b93f7381f32b0d1142affe?width=1024
242		Nigel Roberts' collection of family documents.
243		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
245		Nigel Roberts' collection of family documents.
246		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
250		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
251		Photograph by Nigel Roberts of a painting by Lilian Roberts.
254		Photograph by Stuart Roberts.
256		Nigel Roberts' collection of family documents.
257		Photograph by Stuart Roberts.
259		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.

Page	*Placement*	*Source*
261		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
262	Left	Photograph by Bobby Roberts.
	Right	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
264		Photograph by Anthony Banks. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
268		Nigel Roberts' collection of family documents.
276		Photographer unknown. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
278		Photograph by Bobby Roberts.
281		Photographer unknown. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
288		Photographer unknown. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
289		Photograph by Nigel Roberts of a painting by Alma Flynn.
290	Top	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
	Bottom	Photograph by Tom McCarthy. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
292	Top	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
	Bottom	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
293		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
294	Top	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
	Bottom left	Photographer unknown. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
	Bottom right	Nigel Roberts' collection of family documents.
295		Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
296	Top	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
	Bottom	Photographer unknown. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
297		Photograph by Patricia Roberts. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
298		Photographer unknown. Nigel Roberts' collection of family photographs.
299	Top	Photograph by Nigel Roberts of a painting by Lilian Roberts.
	Bottom	Photograph by either Nigel Roberts or Stuart Roberts in Nigel Roberts' collection.
300	Left	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.
	Right	Photograph by Nigel Roberts.