

These memoirs were written by my mother,

Jos Wood

Jocelyne Louisa Wood (née Withycombe)

21 February 1921 - 25 September 2012



Jos, sons Michael and Ian, husband David,
father [William Withycombe](#), and his cat Pussy,
in May 1960 at 3 Claremont Gardens, Nottingham

Michael Wood (mickofemsworth@gmail.com), October 2015.

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FAMILY

MY FAMILY

Maud Devas and William Withycombe were married at St Michael's parish church, Minehead, on June 5th, 1909. She was 29; he was 28. I know quite a lot about Will's childhood since he told many stories about it, but relatively little about Maud's, since like me she talked very little about herself. She grew up in Devizes where her father was a vicar, and was the 6th child of a family of nine. With her sister Bertha, she was sent to a school in Harrogate run by a relative - for how long I have no idea. With her two younger brothers, Jack (Horace) and Ernie, she used to bathe in the Devizes canal, which seems a rather unusual activity for a vicar's daughter in the 1890's. Beyond this I know just about nothing about her. One family photograph survives. Maud with her uncontrolled mass of long fair hair has an elfin look and does not seem to fit in with the rest of the family.

Maud and William married relatively late. What they were doing as young adults is one of the many things about which I wish I had asked questions while there was still someone left who could answer them. They themselves never talked about this stage of their lives. Betty thought that Maud had spent some time as a governess in Ireland and had unhappy experiences.

I know a little more about Bill - as he came to be called. John Withycombe endeavoured to give his three sons professional qualifications. Jack trained as a surveyor, but his ambition was to be a painter. By the early 1900's he had given up surveying and was trying to earn a living as a painter at Dedham in Suffolk - Constable Country. He had married Ellen Bell (Win), an elementary school teacher. The arrival of three babies, Betty, Peggy and Joyce, in quick succession must have made survival on picture sales increasingly difficult.

Bob trained as an electrical engineer and went off the Zanzibar to electrify the island. Bill was apprenticed to a brewer in Ipswich. He stuck this for two years before abandoning it for his lifelong passion - horses.

Only Bob fulfilled his father's hopes during his lifetime, although Jack later returned to surveying to earn a living while continuing to paint. About 1911 he went out to do surveying in the Malay States taking Win with him and leaving the three girls as boarders with Mrs Weston in Minehead. My painting of tin panning in a Malay river is a memento of this time. When the war started he joined the Ordnance Survey in Southampton, and remained with them in a well-paid job till he retired. Most of his peacetime work was on the 1" O.S. map.

While Bill was at Ipswich he saw a lot of Jack and Win. Jack was already a socialist and a freethinker. The girls were never sent to school to preserve them from religious contamination. Contact with Jack had, I think, considerable influence on Bill and preserved him from becoming a die-hard Tory like most of our relatives.

How Bill earned a living from horses at this stage I have no idea, or when he specialised in polo ponies.

Both my grandfathers died roundabout 1900 and both grandmothers ended up

living next door to each other in The Parks, Minehead. They were large three storey houses that would have needed servants for maintenance. I presume Bill must have lived with his mother after leaving Ipswich ending with his marrying the girl next door.

Grandmother Devas (Granny Was) came home to Somerset when her husband, the Rev. Arthur Devas, died in 1901. Her household was probably down to the four younger girls: Dolly, Bertha, Maud and Jocelyn (no e). Florence was already married to a Devizes brewer, Edgar Meek; the boys would have been dispatched on their careers. Helen, the family mystery who spent most of her life as an inmate at Virginia Water, a private mental asylum, might possibly still have been at home.

Soon after they got married my parents went to live in Ireland somewhere near Dublin. Again I have no idea what form the horse business took, but the Anglo-Irish ruling class doubtless played polo. Both Jim and Stephen were born there; Jim must have played with local children since he spoke broad Irish. Neither parent talked about their Irish experience and I - to my subsequent deep regret - never asked them about it.

My Mother had a strong antipathy - almost hatred - for the Catholic Church. This may have originated in her Low Church upbringing but was certainly deepened by living in Ireland.

When the war broke out, they came home to Minehead In the chaos of 1914 they lost most of their furniture, much of it antique and much prized. My copper jugs were amongst the few things that arrived safely. They are measuring jugs from an Irish pub. There was also a pint jug, which was given to Jim

My father volunteered for the army and joined the Remounts with a commission. He ended up as a major - a title he continued to use for business advantage after the war. His job was to organise replacements for the hundreds of thousands of horses and mules that were slaughtered. It must have been a very painful job for a horse lover. He never talked about it.

Maud spent the war in Minehead living with the two little boys with Granny W. Granny was deeply religious. Church attendance twice on a Sunday was compulsory with bible-reading in between. Maud's novels, if seen on a Sunday, were confiscated. The regime in the vicarage in Devizes had been liberal by comparison. It is significant that Jack and Will both became life-long atheists; Maud remained a believer till the end although she seldom went to church.

At some stage Granny lost a lot of money and had to sell her house in The Parks and move to a much humbler terrace house in Glenmore Road near the sea. This is the house where I remember Granny living and where I have imagined my mother spending the war. It could have been here that Stephen died of meningitis in 1918. He was 5 years old. Whether Bill was there or in France I don't know. Neither of them talked about him. I must have been 9 or 10 before I discovered that the little boy called Stephen whose photograph hung in my parents' bedroom was my brother.

I was the replacement - after several attempts. My mother had at least two miscarriages. She was 41 when I was born.

I was born at Northend Farm, near Hurstpierpoint. Why my parents rented this house way out in the Sussex countryside I have no idea. It was a part of the country they had no connections with and I don't think there was a polo ground anywhere near. It seems a most inappropriate place for my mother to have been left on her own to have a baby. Pap - will call him that from now on although the name was invented by Jim much later - was in Egypt when I was born living in style at Shepherds Hotel. I surmise he was there on a government contract to arrange the sale of horses and mules surplus to army requirements after the war. I believe he had a similar assignment to deal with the horses and mules that had survived on the Western Front in 1919/20. Mother had spent some time with him at Lille and occasionally referred to the grim conditions people were living under. This - apart from Ireland - was the only time she ever went abroad.

Peggy, Jack's second daughter, came to stay with them at Northend for about two months to help and keep my mother company during her pregnancy - which at 41 after a series of miscarriages she was doubtless dreading. Peggy thoroughly enjoyed the stay; she remembers the household as one of laughter and happiness which surprised me. They wanted her to stay on, but Jack refused his permission.

Soon after I was born, Jim was seriously ill. I was told later that he had had double pneumonia. There is a photograph of him in bed in the garden. 1921 was an outstandingly fine summer. Nevertheless putting a pneumonia patient out in the garden seems a little strange. I wonder now whether he had T.B., especially since the doctor stressed to my parents that he must have an outdoor life if he was to survive. In 1921 T.B. would not have been an acceptable middle class disease.

Jim did not have a happy life. He must have felt Stephen's death deeply, and probably deep down resented my arriving and taking Stephen's place. No doubt a lot of fuss was made of the new baby and jealousy was perhaps almost inevitable. I can never remember him taking an interest or playing with me. I can remember him complaining about various things 'the child' had done. My academic opportunities later deepened his feelings of resentment.

The illness disrupted his education. He went for a short time to a public school, Dover College. Where the money for this came from I can't imagine. However he was ill again and ended up after a longish gap at a day school in Leatherhead, near which we were living. It turned out to be an excellent school, but it was too late for him to take exams and have a chance to prove his undoubted ability.

The doctor's strictures about an outdoor life led inevitably to Jim helping his father with the polo pony business. This was fine for Pap, but was not the right life for Jim. He needed to be independent and as the years went by he became more and more resentful. He finally escaped into the army. A family friend in Fleet, Colonel Stokes, pulled strings and got him a commission in the Royal Army Service Corps a year before the war when the regular army was being expanded. He did very well, was in a relatively safe branch - although he did go through Dunkirk - and ended as a Lieut. Colonel.

In 1922 Pap gave up trying to make a living out of horses and landed a management job in a pipe factory in London (Smoker' pipes not drain pipes.)

We went to live in Wembley near the stadium. For the first time my parents had to buy a house to live in. It was the only time that we had electric light and lived in a town. My memories are limited to our ginger cat, Bono; to making mud pies outside the garden gate, and to a red lampshade with beaded tassels - probably because it was carefully preserved although we never had another electric light to put it round.

Commitment to the pipe factory did not last. He was soon back to horses again. It was probably in 1924 that we moved for a few months to a cottage at Effingham Common near Epsom. I can remember nothing of this, except that it was here that Miss Brickell first appeared.

I can never remember my mother having good health; she clearly could not cope with looking after a three-year old, so Kitty Brickell was taken on as a mother's help to live with the family, help with the housework and with looking after me. Pam, as I called her, stayed with us till I was 8. For most of this time she had to share a room with me - a thing which no-one today would put up with.

Our next more permanent move was to Montrose, a small modern detached house just outside Fetcham, Surrey. It was recently built but still had no electricity. Pap was going in for training and selling polo ponies and had taken some stables near Stoke D'Abernon Polo club on the outskirts of Cobham. In charge of the stables was stud groom Reginald Ball who was to stay in Pap's employment till the war.

It was here that we first had a car - a Morris Oxford, with a collapsible hood and a dickie where they put Jim. I was squeezed on the front seat between the parents. The first memorable Journey down to Minehead for the annual holiday stands out in my memory. They were determined to see as much as possible so we "did" Salisbury cathedral and Stonehenge en route. The Journey was punctuated by frequent stops to put the hood up or down. I can't remember what happened to the dickie passenger when it rained.

Driving was a very casual affair. One of Pap's friends, Kenneth Dawson, regularly read the newspaper while driving.

Down the road in a mansion lived Stella Randall. She was the same age as me. I seem to remember going to some lessons at her house. What I can remember much more clearly is a Nov.5th bonfire at her house. There was a bought guy dressed in beautiful paper clothes including riding boots. I was devastated when he was burnt.

I did not go to school regularly until I was nearly six after we had moved to Turners Green Farm in the autumn of 1926.

WITHYCOMBES

The name must come from the village of Withycombe but none of our Withycombes appear to have lived there. Their roots were in Dunster where they seem to have been established as shopkeepers and publicans.

According to Pap, his grandfather left the Luttrell Arms in Dunster to his youngest son, John, in 1858. John was then 21. His older brothers went to Australia -, probably in the 1860's - where their cousins, the Whites had emigrated about 20 years previously when land was going cheap. The Whites prospered and made much money, the Withycombes arrived too late to become wealthy, but they made a living. Pap's cousin, Ruth, married one of her White cousins; their son was Patrick the novelist,

My grandfather John sold the Luttrell Arms and bought the Castle Hotel in Taunton in the early 1870's, (See W.W. Castle Hotel) It seems to have been a grand establishment catering for the gentry, I still have some of the Sheffield silver plate and Spode blue china which was used in the hotel dining room, It must have been a big change from a country inn like the Luttrell arms, As well as the hotel, John had a farm near Dunster, Rowe Farm, which had also been left him by his father.

My grandmother, Elizabeth Gidley, was born in 1848. The great event of her childhood was attending the 1851 exhibition at the Crystal Palace. Her father was an estate agent somewhere near Wellington. (I have visions of Mr Garth in Middlemarch,) Grandfather Gidley collected porcelain, the blue man on stilts plate, the two large mugs, and several other pieces were his, He inspired a life-long interest in antiques in his grandson, Willie.

Elizabeth had a sister, Mary, who, according to family legend 'married beneath her'. She emigrated with her husband to South Africa and the family lost touch with her. Elizabeth did not keep up a correspondence with her as she did with her husband's brothers and their wives who were going up in the world in Australia

The Castle Hotel provided a good living and John and Elizabeth doubtless lived in style, (W.I.W. Castle Hotel) Their three sons were kept in a nursery at the top of the house with two nursemaids to look after them, During school holidays the boys were often sent with a nursemaid in charge to stay at Rowe Farm, There were ponies to ride there, and Willie's passion for horses took shape, There were other excitements too such as hay making,

There was less than 18 months between each of the three boys, Jackie, Robbie and Willie, which suggests that Elizabeth could have been 30+ when she married and perhaps explains why, unlike many of her contemporaries including my grandmother Devas, she was blessed with a small family, Pap had a stock of "Willah Stories" about the exploits of Robbie and Willie which he trotted out at regular intervals. Robbie and Willie were clearly great companions who ganged up against Jack, In later life Pap had much in common with Jack, the socialist atheist, and very little in common with Robbie, with his colonial background.

In 1887, Jubilee year, John and Elizabeth travelled to the Trossachs in Scotland, a major expedition in those days, and an expensive one - further testimony to the profitability of the Castle Hotel, My old green trunk

bears the initials E.W. Doubtless it carried Elizabeth's finery to the Trossachs, Half a century later it carried my more hum-drum possessions - including a heavy typewriter - by luggage in advance to Aberystwyth where UCL was evacuated to in 1939,

In 1889, when Willie was 8, the Castle Hotel was sold and the family went to live in Minehead, John's health could have been the reason, Hereditary Withycombe asthma would probably be incapacitating to a man in his fifties without modern drugs. Pap in his Willah stories often referred to his father's bad temper especially with Robbie, Ironically Robbie, too, was a lifelong asthma sufferer, who died in his fifties and was similarly intolerant with his son Peter, Patrick White was another Withycombe asthma victim ,

The family went to live on The Avenue in Minehead, the main street from the town centre to the sea front, It was a smart address, The three boys went to Tommy William's academy for young gentlemen, (WM, Prep School Days) Later Willie, and Robbie I think, were sent to a public school at Newton Abbott in Devon, It does not seem to have been a happy experience, The appalling food featured much in Willah stories,

John Withycombe endeavoured to establish his three sons in sound occupations: Jack was to be a surveyor; Robbie, an electrical engineer - perhaps the electrification of the Castle Hotel was influential here; Willie was to be a brewer. Only Robbie, who laid on electric light in Zanzibar, completely fulfilled his father's ambitions, He married Gladys Hunt. The story of their three children is a sad one,

Dorothy (born c, 1915) and Peter (c,1917) had typical colonial childhoods; i.e. they were sent home to school and boarded out with relatives and others during the holidays, Dorothy was sent to Queen Anne's, Caversham, near Reading, She sometimes came to stay with us during the holidays, and later, when she was training as a nurse at Bart's in London, she often came for weekends, I remember her as a prim young lady with bulbous eyes suggestive of thyroid trouble, She married Michael Lance, a solicitor, whose family also came from West Somerset, They came to live in Farnham where Michael's practice was, They had one son, Peter. Mike had had polio as a child and was badly handicapped, His disability got worse as he got older, Sometime during the war he killed himself by means of a gas oven He made sure that a friend, not Dorothy, would find him_ Dorothy had firm ideas about what was proper for a married woman, and in spite of wartime needs would not go back to nursing, which might have been her salvation, She lived on at Garden Cottage Farnham, living on memories of Bart's_ She visited Fleet fairly regularly. I remember her arriving with a most joint of cold meat when my mother died, The men had to be kept fed, She sent Peter to Marlborough College, where her brother Peter had gone, He went on to qualify as a doctor and ended up emigrating to the U.S.A. where prospects were better. She moved after her mother's death to live with her sister Jane in the family home, Darjani, in Dunster high St, After Jane's death she bought a cottage in Dunster, and eventually moved to sheltered accommodation in Minehead, where she died about 1990,

Peter, after Marlborough, went up to Cambridge. He was killed in the Sicily landing in 1944. There is a memorial plaque to him in Dunster church,

Muriel (Jane) b, 1923, escaped the colonial childhood - Uncle Bob retired

to Dunster to nurse his asthma and take up tomato growing about 1930. Instead she was condemned to life at Dunster and a third rate education. While still fairly young she developed MHS. After Bob's death, she helped her mother run the tomato business. She died - of breast cancer - about 1970.

TREVORS AND DEVASSES

My memory of Granny was (Devas) was of a frail old lady dressed in black with an ear trumpet down which one had to speak to her. She had a paranoid fear of wasps, and was always armed with a wire flail in the summer_

Louisa Trevor, after whom I was named, came from Nether Stowey, a village about ten miles from Bridgewater. The Trevors owned a large Georgian house in the village centre, and had apparently lived there for several generations, but what the source of their income was I never knew, , The main thing I can remember about the house was a huge mulberry tree in the garden, Grannies sister Arabella, known as Aunt Bo, lived there with the youngest of the family, Aunt Mary, who was younger than Louisa's oldest daughter, There was an brother, Edward, a solicitor in Bridgewater who ended up in prison in his eighties (WM. Uncle Ted)

Louisa married the Rev, Arthur Devas when she was 19 and went to live in Devizes, where he had a living, but not that of the parish church. They had at least nine children - ten if the mystery baby in the surviving family photograph was theirs. There may well have been other casualties,

When Arthur died in 1901 he left his widow comfortably off, The Devasses had made money in industry. I once had to write to the J.M.B. Examining Board about a pupil I was convinced had been unfairly treated. To my surprise their office was in Devas St, Manchester, Family tradition held that the Devasses were French Huguenots, and since many Huguenot refugees were textile workers, it seems probable that the Devas fortune came from cotton. A Devas cousin with whom Sarah was in touch had traced the Devasses back to a Stephen Devas in Yorkshire in the C.18, Arthur's father owned a mansion at Wimbledon and had interests in the city.

Granny was able to buy a substantial house in The Parks, Minehead, She later had a smaller house, Cleeve Cottage, built nearby where she went to live with daughters Dolly and Bertha when the others had left home, Cleeve Cottage was on steeply rising ground. You came in through a swing gate, and climbed a steep red gravel path - to a sunny terrace in front of the house. A very des, res, except for the kitchen which faced a sunless courtyard at the back,

Here Aunts Dolly and Bertha lived on after Granny died in the early 30's; Dolly, who was my godmother, devoted much time to her garden, won many prizes at flower shows, and grew luscious peaches and figs, What Bertha did I know not, After Granny died, we always stayed at Cleeve Cottage on our annual August visit to Minehead, rather than with Granny W. at Glenmore Rd, near the, sea, It was a long walk down to swim from Cleeve Cottage and an even longer one back in a wet costume under a mac. In those days no-one undressed on the beach, One consolation though was that Aunt Dolly had a superb stock of romantic novels, In her will she left me 4 large illustrated volumes of Hutchinson's Story of the British Nation which when very young had always passed time with when visiting Granny,

The oldest daughter, Florence (Aunt Flossie), settled at Rye, Sussex, with her four children after the early death of her husband Edgar Meek. She had a beautiful house and was comfortably off. She sent wonderful Christmas presents, Marjorie, the oldest, married a man in the RAF. The marriage

failed and she returned to Rye to bring up her daughter Pam, My parents were very fond of Marjorie, and after Mother died Pap was persuaded to go and live with her, He did not fit in in Rye and soon fled to us in Nottingham. Ralph, who was my godfather, was an odd character, He was in the RAF for a time, then retired to Rye to live with his mother, and was referred to by relatives in hushed tones, His hobbies included knitting and embroidery, He died while still relatively young, long before Aunt Flossie who lived into her 90's, Then there were the twins, Nancy and Phyllis, who were a year younger than Jim, Nancy married a local doctor. Phyllis stayed on with her mother, her occupation was breeding dachshunds.

Aunt Helen and Uncle Arthur I never knew, Helen was immured at the Asylum at Virginia Water, It seems incredible that no-one as far as I know ever visited her. She died when I was about 12, I remember because her black strap shoes were passed on for me to wear at school. Arthur according to WW "Uncle Ted" fled from the Trevor solicitor's office to join the army, I had always imagined he was killed in the war, but Betty Withycombe told me long afterwards that he died from an infectious disease - probably typhoid - some time before, From WW. "Uncle Ted" I now realize he may have volunteered for the South African War, He could have been in the huge British force - the largest army ever mobilized at that time - that Kitchener recruited to defeat the Boers, Possibly he died in South Africa, How I wish I had asked about them both,

Horace, known as Jack, was close in age to my mother and they were very fond of each other. He became a doctor, What he specialized in I never knew but he was never a GP, He was in the navy during the war, His ship visited Australia - again I don't know where. There he met and later married Valerie Davenport, They lived at Shepperton close to the river, There were three daughters, Elizabeth, a year older than me; Joan, a year younger; and Rosalind, three years younger, My mother was persuaded by her brother to send me as a boarder to the school where they were day girls. I think she hoped we would become close friends. This didn't happen. I was very occasionally asked over to spend a Saturday with them, but never felt very welcome. The fact that I had been put in a higher form than Elizabeth didn't help.

Earnest (Uncle Ernie), after failing to prosper abroad (Canada I think) returned to run a chicken farm in Kent, He and Aunt Kitty had two daughters, One died in early childhood, the other, Susan, who was mentally handicapped while in her teens, Aunt Kitty also died and Uncle Ernie, whom I remember for his generous tips when he visited us, ended up living in a hotel in Tunbridge Wells, He, Betty, Dorothy and Jim were the only people at Mother's funeral at Brook wood Crematorium, I had to stay and look after Pap who was ill.

Jocelyn (no e), Mother's youngest sister married Arthur Spittall. He was gassed and lost an arm in the war. They lived on a farm in the Isle of Man, I remember one wonderful holiday there when I was about 10 - such a change from Minehead. There were two children; Lois who married a parson, Robin Eliot, and went to live in Dublin; Peter, who joined the marines and after the war went back to the family farm,

One of Mother's cousins, Anthony, went to the Slade School, and made a career as a society portrait painter, Characteristically, Vi persuaded him to paint Sarah and Virginia, Another cousin became a monk. Less was heard

of him,

Jim kept in touch with the relatives - especially the better off ones, but did not keep me informed - or even tell me when any of them died.

PEGGY

My cousin Peggy Garland / Withycombe died in June aged 95. This seems a fitting time to put together what I have gathered about her life. For many years Peggy had very little contact with the Withycombe family - only partly because of living in New Zealand. Alienation from Betty and lack of rapport with what she and Tom would have regarded as stuffy Tory relatives may have been factors. I only got to know her at all well during the last few years which I deeply regret. We had much in common as well as much about which we disagreed including feminism.

During my visits to her at Eynsham and later at Windham House in Oxford she told me a lot about her childhood and her relationship with her sisters especially the antipathy between Betty and her. Her memories were often bitter and doubtless biased, but I felt they were worth recording and wrote most of the following account in August 94. Patrick White in his autobiography "Flaws in the Glass" gives a vivid account of the family set-up at Southampton and refers to the hostility between Betty and Peggy.

* * * *

Jack Withycombe (Uncle Jack) had his first job as a surveyor in St. Albans about 1900. There he met Ellen Bell (Aunt Nin). Her first sight of him was of a handsome young man riding a horse down St. Albans high street. The horse reared and she marvelled at his skill in handling it. It turned out that Ellen's sister worked in the same office. She arranged a meeting resulting in due course in Ellen and Jack getting married.

Ellen, who was an elementary school teacher, was 5 years older than Jack. Her father was a shoemaker - Betty told me the girls always wore his hand-made sandals. Her family may have been working class but they were well read and had a musical tradition. Ellen's brother became a professor of music at Capetown University. They were doubtless a much more cultured lot than the Withycombes. Ellen must have been a forceful personality. Patrick White gives a glowing account of her in "Flaws in the Glass". She took Jack in hand, and persuaded him to give up the surveyor's office and become a painter.

To finance this he persuaded his mother to advance him what would be his share of his father's estate when she died. Peggy thought it was about £8,000 (a lot on those days). With this he went to Westminster Art School to learn to paint. They then set up home in East Bergholt, Suffolk, where Jack was to paint and, hopefully, earn enough for them to live on. Ellen acted as his agent, arranged exhibitions, and cultivated contacts.

They stayed at East Bergholt for 8 years - during which Betty, Peggy and Joyce were born in quick succession.

Jack and Ellen were already socialists and vegetarians, and had rejected religion. They decided to bring their daughters up accordingly. They decided not to send them to school. Ellen as a teacher could teach them; they would then not be corrupted. They could not afford school fees and, Peggy thought, never considered sending them to the village school. It

would probably have been a church one. Perhaps too, although they were socialists, they retained an element of innate snobbery. Middle class people did not send their children to elementary schools.

Peggy was born only 11 months after Betty. Her birth was a very difficult one - so difficult that Ellen rejected the baby and refused to nurse her or have anything to do with her. A village girl, Julia, was brought in. She in effect became Peggy's mother substitute - a relationship that lasted throughout life. Peggy only learned that her mother had rejected her years later when Julia told her about it.

When she was two Peggy developed osteomyelitis, a bone infection which was apparently quite common amongst children at the time. One of her legs was badly affected and she spent 6 months in a London hospital. During this time, according to Julia years later, no member of the family ever came to see her. (Could risk of infection be the reason?) After 6 months she went home and was treated by a very skilful local doctor. This doctor, Dr Ridge, was described by one of the men Ronald Blythe, author of "Akenfield", interviewed. The doctor used to lay her on the kitchen table, give her a whiff of chloroform on a handkerchief, talk gently to her - she particularly remember s this - and treat the bone which had to be kept exposed. She was apparently very lucky not to have ended up with one leg shorter than the other. When she was 3 she had another spell in the London hospital and again, no-one visited her. Peggy thought that this experience traumatised her. Apparently she did not speak while she was in hospital, although she was already talking when she went and recovered her speech on return.

Peggy believed that this absence, following her rejection by her mother on birth, led to her being a kind of outcast in the family, and to Betty and Joyce leaving her out. She did not learn to read till she was 10 (dyslexia?), which in a highly intellectual family would in those days have been regarded as a disgrace. A local boy was taught with the girls. He, too, couldn't learn to read. Parents were upset and put much pressure on him. Ellen just sent the boy and Peggy out to play while good little Betty and Joy got on with their work. The boy was sent to prep school. After only a short time he developed meningitis and died. The doctor told his parents it was "brain fever" due to too much pressure being put on him to learn to read. When Jack and Ellen heard about this, they were frightened for Peggy, and relaxed the pressure on her.

By 10, Peggy could read. She couldn't remember much else being done to educate her. Betty later had special tutors. Peggy seems to have been regarded as not worth educating. Her Uncle Billy (Pap) later recounted what Jack had said about his daughters:

"Our Bet's going to be all right. She's brilliant; she'll go to Oxford and become a writer.

Joy'll be all right too. She's got talent. She'll go to art school and be a painter.

But I don't know what we can do with Peg. . . ."

"I didn't do too badly, did I?" said Peggy when she told me this. Patrick White rightly picked her out as the most talented of the three - a talent tragically never fully realised.

After 8 years at East Bergholt Jack and Ellen decided they needed more money to bring up their daughters - and most likely they wanted a change for themselves. Jack took a job in the Malay States surveying tin mines in order to determine which firms had rights to particular seams. He went out alone to start with, but within a year Ellen joined him. The girls were left in the care of Mrs Weston.

Mrs Weston lived in a large "Georgian style house in The Parks on the outskirts of Minehead on the Porlock road. It was near to Granny Withycombe's house. (My other grandmother lived in The Parks too.) Mrs Weston boarded and educated them until the outbreak of the war. Betty was miserable there and resented being left with strangers. I remember her showing me some of the letters she wrote to her parents. For Peggy, though, it seems to have been a happy time. Julia, who was engaged to a young man from Porlock who had worked for my father, was living nearby and often called to see them.

Peggy remembered being taken to St Michael's church on Sundays to sit in Granny's pew. Parents had left instructions that they were to have no religious teaching, but could go to church on Sundays - doubtless to pacify Granny. Peggy, who had never been to church before, was indignant that God expected her to kneel, and in spite of Mrs Weston's efforts she remained obstinately seated with head erect. She caught Mr Etherington the clergyman's eye, and he smiled at her. She knew then that someone understood.

They visited Granny regularly. She was very stately and received them in her very fine drawing room. She employed two maids and a gardener as well as having a companion, Aunt Fanny - a distant cousin. There was a huge kitchen in the basement where the girls loved to go.

[During the war Aunt Fan was sacked by Granny because she was too old for her work. She was sent away practically penniless and died shortly afterwards. She had no other relatives. When Bob and Billy, who were both away, heard about this they were both furious and tried to do something to help, but it was too late. Jack who was in the country did nothing.]

When the war broke out, Jack and Ellen came home. Jack joined the Royal Engineers. Years before he had been in the Territorial Army, but had resigned when the Boer War started because he disapproved of it. His territorial experience led to his being commissioned. He was posted to the Ordnance Survey in Southampton. He stayed there for the rest of his life, having a civilian appointment after the war. He had landed on his feet. The work was interesting and well paid. Amongst the things he later did was to design the "O.S. Map.

During the war he was producing maps of the front, and instructing officers about to be sent to France how to read them. Many of these young officers were invited round to the house. Peggy remembered how depressed they all were on hearing that so many of them were killed - often only weeks after leaving Southampton.

In 1920, when Peggy was 16, Billy and Maud, my parents, invited her to go and stay with them at Northend Farm, near Hurstpierpoint in Sussex, where they were then living. Peggy stayed for several months. She was treated as an equal. It was a happy household with much laughter in contrast to Southampton. She was able to ride which she enjoyed very much. She described going to Northend as being rescued from her family. Jim was away at school as a weekly boarder where he was not happy. She talked about how happy he was to be home at weekends. When I was expected they wanted her to stay on, but Jack and Ellen said no; she had to go home to Southampton. [In retrospect they were right; my father went off to Egypt for nearly a year over the time I was born.]

Instead she went to stay with another uncle, the professor of music in Capetown. He was determined to find something she could do. There seems to have been a belief that every member of this magic family had a talent for something. How it was discovered that Peggy's was for sculpture is not clear, but discovered it was - and Peggy was off on her career.

She seems to have made rapid progress in the art. I think it was at this time that her negro bust was accepted at the Royal academy in London. It is the only one of her sculptures I can clearly remember.

Jack and Ellen were suddenly proud of their misfit daughter. She was brought home after four years to go to the Slade School. Peggy and Joyce went up together. Peggy stayed at the Slade less than two years. Her professor said it was not worth her while to stay to take the diploma; she should get out and practise. If you had the talent to survive by selling your work, a diploma was superfluous; you only needed one if you needed to teach to supplement your income.

Peggy left and returned to South Africa for a further four years. She was employed as a tutor at the university without a diploma. Father, though, thought his daughter's talents were being wasted in a colony and persuaded her to come home for a visit. When she got home she found that he had arranged an interview for her at the Bournemouth School of Art. The principal was keen to have her, and although she had no diploma offered a good salary. Against her better judgment she accepted. It was a disaster: she got to know no-one else on the staff; the students were uninspired; working conditions unsatisfactory. Within 8 months she quit.

At this time she was involved in a bus accident and fractured her skull. The skull mended quickly, and she got £500 compensation. Her father asked her to deposit the money in his bank account to help his relationship with the manager. She deposited £250 and with the rest went to Majorca, where living was cheap and various "arty" Britons were gathered, to sculpt and paint for a year. He wished she had been better informed about the art scene. She should have gone to St Ives where she might have got to know people who could have helped her gain a foothold in the English art world.

After a year she came back to England and decided to spend the remaining £250 on taking a flat in London. She had difficulty getting the money out of her father but eventually succeeded. In London she set up a teaching studio with a friend and was doing quite well taking pupils..It could have developed further. She was going through as crisis with her work, but the direction she needed o take was emerging.

At this stage she was going out with Dr Tom Garland. She had met him on her return voyage from South Africa. He was the ship' surgeon, having taken the job so that the sea air could aid his recovery from a mild attack of T.B. Peggy agreed to marry him. It was her major mistake, she said.

Tom worked in preventative medicine. He was employed by Carreras Tobacco Company the research the health of their employees. Soon after they were married he took a job in Northampton. They lived for many years at Desborough. Here Thompson, Nicholas, Sally and David were born - and sculpture languished. [I took her to Desborough when she last came to stay and was surprised to find that she had difficulty in finding the house they lived in.]

I once asked her whether Tom was to blame for her abandoning her art career. She was most emphatic that it was not his fault.

Both Tom and Peggy were members of the Communist Party. She was very vague about when or how they joined or when they left or who joined first. I suspect it was Tom. Peggy did not seem to have very clear political views. They had very little contact with the family, and I had no idea they were party members until I visited them in 1943. It was a lovely surprise. They were living at King's Langley, Herts. when I was doing my W.A.A.F. fitter's course at Halton. I cycled over to visit them. I can remember it vividly. Tanya was a baby. The Russian resistance heroine after whom I assume she was named was fresh in memory. Tom gave me a left book club copy of Palme Dutt's "World Politics"; a seminal book which I still have. On a second visit I took a friend Iris, who came from Morpeth. She was baby mad and had a wonderful time. I had never had anything to do with babies and was more interested in Sally, whose long fair hair I remember, and Tom and Nick who had reached a sensible age.

After the war the family emigrated to New Zealand. Philip, who was brain damaged, was born there. In between bringing up her six children and doing all the housework - no domestic help was available in N.Z. - Peggy did some painting and sculpture and became, I think, a local celebrity. She went on two delegations to China, and did some broadcasting.

The marriage was breaking up. Tom had various mistresses, and - she found out later - was supporting three children. This accounted for the fact that they were always short of money. She never knew how much he earned.

Nick was showing considerable artistic talent and wanted to come to England to the Slade School (the principal had written that he would take any child of Peggy's!). Tom was very against any of his children having artistic careers and at first refused to help. He finally did help but with Peggy paying most of the cost.

Thompson took an engineering degree course in New Zealand. However he suffered from severe depression and never sat his finals. [He came to visit us at Claremont Gardens accompanied by his N.Z. wife Diana, a striking large-scale blonde now married to someone else. Tom boasted about belonging to MENSA which we thought very odd and distasteful. I now understand that he would have wanted to prove his intelligence in spite of having no degree.] Tom now lives in Oxford. He has been out of work for a long time. He used to visit Betty regularly and read to her. He now reads to other blind people.

About 1960 Tom left Peggy to cope with 6 children - one severely handicapped, and came back to England. He married again twice. He appears to have behaved very badly including trying to come to live in Eynsham where Peggy had settled. His most malicious act was to tell Sally and Tanya that they were not his daughters and naming two friends of Peggy' as their fathers. Both girls were very upset and Peggy had difficulty persuading them it was not true. Tom refused to take a blood test, and only finally admitted he had lied when one of the men wrote showing that it couldn't be true because of his geographical location at the time. Peggy was very bitter about her marriage; hers is of course only one side of the story. Shortly before he died (mid 80's?) Tom broke his leg, and the children persuaded Peggy to let him stay in her studio to recuperate. This she did.

About 1962 Peggy brought the remaining members of her family back to England and settled at Eynsham. Philip's disability grew worse; he became violent and had to go into a home. He died while still in his teens. The others dispersed on their various careers. Peggy had bought a cottage which she later sold for a huge profit. The proceeds invested in a building society provided her with a secure income and enabled her to buy 70 Acre End where she lived for 30 years.

It was a characteristic village street dwelling with a series of one-storey outhouses running back down a long narrow strip of garden from a house opening on the street. Peggy let most of the house apart from one room at the front and adapted the series of adjoining outhouses to her own use. At the end was the studio, which she later used to let. Her bedroom / sitting room opened onto the garden, which she had created and loved.

Betty kept us informed about Peggy's house and her family, but when we suggested we might visit her, she implied that Peggy was far too occupied with her family to want to see us. We did once arrange to take Betty and Peggy out to lunch in Oxford. The first time I went to Acre End was for Peggy's 90th birthday party. What I had no inkling of was the long-standing antipathy between the two sisters.

Peggy believed she was always the odd one out and that the other two resented her. She harboured some bitter memories. When she returned to Capetown after the Slade, she left some very good clothes behind. There was no trace of them when she came back. Betty and Joyce finally admitted to sharing them between them "We didn't think you wanted them.

Many of the sculptures and paintings she left behind also disappeared. Did Joyce destroy them? Joyce was an odd character. She told Sally she always voted Tory, but never told anyone. "That's my joke," she said. "I don't like change."

The odd thing is that Peggy chose to set up house in the Oxford area in the first place, and that Betty and Joyce bought a cottage at Long Hanborough less than 5 miles from Eynsham.

Betty - according to Peggy - guarded her family relationships very jealously. I was Betty's property - not to be shared with Peggy. She told Peggy that we were too busy to go and see her.

Peggy and Joyce did once go and visit Jim at Studham. She talked about this several times. She did not know about the poor relationship between Jim and

me. When I told her about it, she immediately said the cause was jealousy, and that there was nothing I could have done about it. This was a comfort as I had always blamed myself as by implication had other relatives.

Betty worshipped her father. Peggy put the fact that she never married partly down to this. Peggy had a very different view of him. He was mean over money. He was a snob; he had smart arty fiends in London whom he often visited including Lady something who owned a house in Mentone, where Jack was invited several times, but never with Ellen who was very hurt. Was he ashamed of his elementary-school teacher wife who never dressed smartly?

There was a family tradition that Ellen's grandmother was a gypsy. While Peggy was at Desborough a gypsy woman came to the door selling pegs. When she saw Peggy she apologised profusely and said "We never sell to our own people."

Years later Peggy and Joyce were out for a walk with a dog. They saw a gypsy woman approaching carrying a large bundle accompanied by a dog. There was an encounter between the dogs and they got into conversation. The woman seemed distraught, and when they asked her what was wrong told them she had just left her family and was going off on her own. Peggy persuaded her to go back. Several weeks later Peggy met the woman again, this time with a companion. She greeted Peggy and thanked her for sending her home, where all was now well. She had known she must do what Peggy advised because she recognised Peggy as "one of us"

Who had been sent to guide her back on the right path?

It is ironic that Peggy ended up living in Windham House where Betty had lived for about 15 years, Joyce having got her in there to start with because she had done voluntary work for the Red Cross that owned it. Peggy seemed to be very happy there; she liked the company and appreciated the comfort of central heating etc after her spartan abode at Eynsham. I stayed in the guest room there twice, and enjoyed taking her for a meal at the Garden pub opposite her room where we had so often taken Betty when we called in on her on journeys south.

August 98.

ME

MY SCHOOLS

I have thought a lot recently about the impact of the three schools I went to and the women who taught me. After making due allowance for my good fortune in not being one of a class of fifty in an elementary school, I used to feel resentful that my parents had not had the good sense to send me as a fee-payer to a grammar school. Such an idea would of course have been outside their comprehension. Recently, however, thinking back I am grateful for some of the seemingly inconsequential bits of knowledge I acquired. For example I enjoy being able to recognise all our main English trees - except conifers - and to know them from their buds in winter. This comes from having to take twigs to school in spring and watch them come out. It seemed ridiculous that our only science was botany and not biology. As a gardener I am grateful that I know the botanical families (compositae, rosaceae, etc) and understand seed dispersal. For school cert Geography we did the British Empire. When I went to India the time spent on drawing sketch maps of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Indus brought long delayed rewards. The lists of crops learnt off by heart at last made sense; when our guide pointed fields of what he called mustard, I realised at long last that this was the oil seeds that had never been explained; i.e. oil seed rape.

Most of all I owe much to two teachers: Miss Frances Dough and Miss Esme

WARDIES'

I did not go to school till Jan. 1927 when I was nearly six. The family had been too busy moving from Fetcham to Turners Green to have time for such incidentals as observing the law and sending me to school. Turners Green Farm was about four miles from Fleet down muddy country lanes. I was sent to Pinewood School, Branksomewood Road, Fleet. It was a small private school taking children up to about 10 run by two sisters, Miss Ward and Miss Vera. Their mother kept house for them and provided disgusting school dinners for the unfortunate few who couldn't go home. I have memories of nausea over lumpy mashed potato and runny milk puddings.

The school was tiny. Two surviving photos show 26 pupils in 1927; 22 in 1928. There were two class rooms; a large one downstairs where a room had been extended. It even had a small stage/ platform where I played the beast in a production of Beauty and the Beast. On the same platform I was told not to join in the singing at the Christmas production. I never dared to be heard singing again. My disability was reinforced at both my other schools. To return to Pinewood, upstairs there was a small room where the senior pupils were taught. In this room we were given an arithmetic exam "near to the end of my time at the school. I came top. When I proudly reported this to parents, they were "gobsmacked" - the only word for it. No Withycombe could ever do maths I was told. I almost felt I had let the family down!

I can clearly remember being taught to read. The first reader, The Blue Book, systematically taught the sound that each letter stood for. From phonetic sentences of 'the cat sat on the mat' type we progressed in the Yellow Book to basic rules such as that a final e on a one syllable word makes the preceding vowel long (hate c.f. hat). Finally in the Green Book we were introduced to the full idiocies of English spelling. I learnt to read quickly. For my 8th Xmas I had Black Beauty and Kingsley's The Heroes and read them both without difficulty. I found both were widely used as first year (11+) readers in grammar schools when I started teaching.

A down-side was that I became a phonetic speller - and still am.

Getting me to school was obviously a problem. Mother never learnt to drive and Pap was far too busy, so I was usually taken in a trap by one of the grooms. Later when we moved to live at Ancells Farm I was made to ride there on one of the ponies in the train of a dozen or more that stud-groom Reginald Ball proudly exercised up Fleet Road every morning. How I hated it! I used to walk home, (about 2½ miles).

My parents had always yearned to return to live in West Somerset. Every August we went to stay with one of the grannies in Minehead - partly to see the family but also so that Pap and Jim could play polo at Dunster ground. Perhaps some sales resulted. Who knows? - but they enjoyed themselves. In 1928 - when I had had only 5 terms at school - the family decided to stay on in the West Country for the winter so that I missed another two terms of school. They took a furnished house in the village of Holford. I remember having a few lessons from a woman who lived in the village and I was taken to dancing lessons in Minehead which I hated. More about Holford later.

Not long after our return to Hants in the summer of 1929 we moved to Ancells Farm. This made a big difference to me as I was able to develop friendships and see friends out of school. At Turners I was very isolated and lived in a dream world with my family of dolls. I can remember only one friend visiting me at Turners; Pamela Frazer. She sits next to me in the 1927 photo. I can't remember much about her except that she had lovely red curly hair and was brought out to Turners by her mother on a motor cycle, which does not suggest a conventional Fleet background.

When I went back to school, Suzanne Henslow and her brother John had arrived. Suzanne and I were companions although never close friends until the war separated us. Suzanne was beautiful on a large scale. She took size 8 shoes. She had wavy black hair, huge dark eyes and a rose-petal complexion. She was good company but not an intellectual! Nevertheless we had fun together. Her mother was Belgian and had met her father, a colonel, during the war. Suzanne married a Swedish baron after which I lost touch with her.

Pinewood School catered for the social elite. I became aware that most of the children came from more opulent backgrounds than I did where they had electric light, vacuum cleaners and maids in uniform. The boys all left at 8 for prep schools. The girls stayed on till 10 or 11 when most of them also departed for boarding school. For those whose parents could not afford this, Broughy's seemed the answer.

BROUGHY'S

Miss Frances Brough started the SHRUBBERY SCHOOL in King's Road, Fleet the year before I went there in April 1931. I was there for 2 years.

I have no idea what Miss Brough's qualifications were, but she gave me a solid foundation in French, maths and English so that I was well above average for my age when I went to Danesfield two years later. I also remember doing Greek and Roman history, which I enjoyed and found useful later, and having to learn various prayers from the Prayer Book which I did not enjoy. The main joy was poetry. We had an excellent anthology which I still have. We learnt a poem by heart every week and read a lot more including The Ancient Mariner, The Lay of the Last Minstrel and Hiawatha. I started writing poetry and stories in my spare time. When I was sent to boarding school and had no time to myself and no encouragement to write anything imaginative, I gave up. I regret this.

There were never more than about 15 of us in the school - just enough to play netball. This was a great advance. In the summer we learnt to swim in the newly opened lido and played tennis on the courts there.

As well as Miss Brough there was Miss Gardner or Giddy as we called her. She hung out in a large room built over a garage and outhouse across the garden. She taught the little ones in the morning - about 5 of them I think - In the afternoons, apart from the weekly netball or swimming/ tennis expedition, she took us for drawing and painting - I won't call it art; leatherwork; and reading Robinson Crusoe aloud. After two years we were only about a quarter way through. Why Miss Brough, who was such an inspiring poetry teacher, did not order another reader I cannot imagine. There was no science apart from watching the progress of Jars of tadpoles and twigs.

My best friend was Joan Williams. She lived with her brother and two cousins in a flat over a shop in the centre of the town. Her mother and aunt were married to Indian civil servants. They took it in turn to spend a year in England looking after both families which seemed an excellent arrangement. Joan told me a lot about India so that the world of The Raj Quartet seems familiar. Together we started Our Mag. This was a hard-backed exercise book (bought from Woolies) for which we wrote serial stories, poems and devised competitions. We edited it in turn each week and invited contributions from the other four or five members of our age group. It was passed round from girl to girl, read and commented on. Unfortunately someone took Volume one to the Children's service to pass on to someone else and left it there by mistake. We never dared to go and ask the vicar for it. Volume 2 survives.

Joan left after a year to live in Winchester where mother and aunt had found a good day school. By then Suzanne had arrived from Pinewood. Another new girl was Evelyn Sparrow Wilkinson. She and her much livelier younger sister Daphne lived out at Crondal. Our parents became friendly and I saw a lot of them after I had left Broughies. Another arrival was Joan Cross. She lived in what seemed to us a mansion and wore immaculately pleated kilts that we all envied. Joan later married George Strackosch, a wealthy young man who came every weekend to play polo at Fleet. He became a close friend of the family and after the war bought a farm and installed Jim as the manager. By that time his marriage to Joan was over. She had had an affair with someone else.

Mention of Joan's kilts reminds me that we had a uniform. Brown pleated skirts and a nice flecked pullover for the winter and brown cotton dresses in the summer, with a brown blazer and a beret with a badge! Other members of our age group were Corinne Brough, niece of the headmistress and dentist's daughter, and Jeanne Noel, who lived with her aunt Mrs Yule and had recently come from Christmas Common. At the time I thought nothing about this strange coincidence. Then there was Nancy Davis, who had the misfortune to be very fat. There were 7 Davis children. An older sister, Mary, and twins May and June came to Broughies.

There were about 4 girls in the older age group. One of them was Jean Orr. She, like Jeanne, lived with an aunt. When I visited the Hart Centre on a nostalgic visit to Fleet in 1995, I saw a plaque commemorating the opening of the Centre by Councillor Miss Jean Orr.

My two years at Broughies were very happy ones. I now had a bicycle and as well as cycling to school was able to visit friends independently of parents. There was the local cinema to go to; the swimming pool just down the road; and I had time to myself at home to draw and paint and write, cultivate a garden, look after cats and go riding.

Why and oh why did they have to go and send me away to a boarding school? Largely of course because Broughies was too small and was not growing as had been hoped. The obvious answer would have been Farnborough Convent which I could have gone to by train, but my mother was frightened that I might be converted. Aldershot grammar school was never considered. Doubtless they didn't even know it - or Odillam Grammar School where Beryl Ball later won a scholarship- even existed. Nor as far as I know did they consider Eriva Dene, another mixed private school which I cycled past every day. It was a larger establishment and seemed to be thriving, but perhaps it catered for those lower down the social scale just as Broughies was lower than Wardies. Perhaps, too, a mixed school was equally out. Anyhow I was not consulted and was packed off to the school my three cousins went to Danesfield at Walton on Thames, as a weekly boarder.

GROWING UP IN THE COUNTRY

Only now I am in my 70's when it is now longer of much relevance do I find myself able to speak in public without worry. I have been thinking a lot about the origins of my innate shyness and why now in my old age I am so different.

I think a lot goes back to my very lonely childhood. Thinking back I can never have played with other children apart from perhaps the odd hour until I went to school when I was nearly 6. Apart from being in effect an only child, this was due to living in the country and being middle class

On the credit side I grew up self-sufficient, able to get on and do things by myself. And it instilled a deep love of nature and pleasure in the countryside and a love of animals - particularly cats.

The first house I can remember was Montrose, one of a row of "modern" 3-bedroom boxes strung out along a straight country road somewhere between Church Cobham and Fetcham. We lived there because it was near Stoke D'Abernon polo club. It must have been a very lonely place for my mother. We lived there for two years but I can remember very little about it. Two photos survive of me in a badly kept garden, one with our dog, Vixen. I can't remember a cat there.

The house that stands out in my memory is Turners Green Farm where we moved in the autumn of 1926. I can remember the move very clearly, including the pre-move visit when we picnicked by the stream and Jim drank tea from a broken thermos with consequent panic about him swallowing broken glass. The furniture did not arrive on time and I can remember the family sitting on the floor in the "drawing room" until late into the night.

Turners were an old house. It was claimed to be Elizabethan, but I doubt that. There were some fine oak beams and part of it could have been 2 or 3 hundred years old. There was of course no electricity or piped water, only a well and an outside earth privy - a three seater. My mother finally put her foot down and an upstairs W >C. was installed and a bath. The water though had to be pumped up to the tank manually every day. I seem to remember that this was Jim's chore.

Turners was literally miles from anywhere down a narrow lane - not tarred when we first went there and nowhere near any other houses. However it had stables, a barn and a large field for schooling ponies. And about four miles away was Fleet Polo Club where wealthy Sandhurst cadets played who might buy or hire ponies.

Getting me to school in Fleet must have been a problem. I can remember being driven there in a pony trap by one of the grooms who looked after the ponies. I think I was fetched back by car. To start with I attended only in the mornings - I assume everyone started mornings only which meant we were short-changed in comparison with a state school. When I graduated to staying for afternoons, I had to have Mrs Ward's dinner and can remember feeling sick at having to eat the lumpy potatoes. I have disliked old boiled potatoes ever since. During the lunch break, Miss Ward took the 3 or so who stayed for dinner for long weary walks round the residential neighbourhood. Presumably I was fetched home by car.

I can only remember one school friend visiting Turners, Pamela Frazer whose mother brought her over on a motor cycle. She - the mother- must have been quite a character. Pamela had curly red hair. I am sitting next to her in the first Pinewood photo.

My main companion at home was Miss Brickell, "Pam", the mother's help. With her I explored the neighbourhood, the most exciting thing was the stream which I now realize was the Hart which flowed out of Fleet pond and gave its name to Hartford Bridge. Across the footbridge a track led up to an interesting heather covered area passing on the way a tumbledown barn known as Arthur's barn where a tramp was supposed to live. We never ventured inside to meet Arthur.

The proper road went on across a wooden bridge over the stream and up a hill to some real woods. On the way it passed the cottage where Mrs Harwood who came to help with the housework lived. In the opposite direction we passed another cottage where old John lived. I was told he had never been to school and so could not read. The significance of this never sank in.

Important companions were my dolls. I had about a dozen. Age depended on size. None were babies, even if their manufacturers had intended them to be such. All were of course girls - I don't think anyone could conceive of such a thing as a boy doll in the 1920's. I spent many hours dressing them - I liked soft-bodied ones whose clothes could be fixed with pins - giving them lessons, putting them to bed, taking them for walks - in turn since I couldn't manage all 12 at once. I had no toy dogs or teddy bears.

I was given Cicily M. Barker's Book of Flower Fairies. I still have it. From it I came to know all the common wild flowers. Every summer there was a flower show at school. I always won the prize for the best bunch of wild flowers. I also won the table decoration prize for an arrangement of corn marigolds, which grew in the field behind the house.

I learnt to ride while we were at Turners. I was taught by Mr Ball, the stud groom - not Pap. I wonder why. I had a little black pony - Exmoor? but I can't remember much about him/her. Ponies never became individuals for me like dogs and cats. Perhaps because I was never involved in looking after them, and only much later learnt to saddle and bridle one. An opportunity missed. Perhaps this was why I never really took to riding - or plain obstinacy because it was the family job.

I had a different country experience for the winter of 1928/9, that of living in a village, Holford, between Bridgewater and Minehead. For the first time we had neighbours - but I didn't go to school. I don't suppose it ever entered their heads that I could go to the village school. Instead I missed a term and a half of lessons and company my own age. I did though attend the village children's party laid on by the local squire. All I can remember is that the kind squire gave us all an orange and a sixpenny piece.

Another memory from Holford is of my pony running away with me. He turned and bolted for home down a steepish hill. I pulled in vain on the reins. Whoever was with me, who was on foot shouted at me to fall off. So I took both feet out of the stirrups and flung myself onto a leafy bank. I was shaken but unhurt. The pony took himself home. This took place near Alfoxden, the house where Coleridge and Wordsworth lived for a short time.

I was told this at the time and although I couldn't have had a clue who they were, I remembered it.

Soon after we returned to Hants, we moved to Ancell's Farm.

Ancells was still the country - and better country than Turners with Fleet Pond nearby, the Minley Estate and the army land to ride round. But it was also on the outskirts of a town with a cinema and within reach by bus of an even bigger town, Aldershot, which had Woolworths - the mark of a proper town - even if it had no public library. Later on there was even an outdoor swimming pool five minutes down the road. Ten minutes walk away was the station. Steam train to Waterloo took only 55 minutes - probably much the same as electric ones today.

Looking back on it, I realize I had many advantages in living in such a place.

DANESFIELD

I started at Danesfield, in the summer term, 1933 when I was 12. My parents did not know there was such a thing as a school year.

I think I was quite excited about going to a boarding school, I had been taking *The Schoolgirl*, a girls' weekly, which featured a serial about Cliff House, a boarding school inhabited by admirable hockey-playing characters and Bessie Bunter - the female equivalent of Billy Bunter, and like Billy a creation of Frank Richards who wrote under a female name for *The Schoolgirl*. Most of the girls I had known at Wardies were already at boarding schools.

The polo business must have been doing well as sending me away to school was obviously going to be expensive - even if the school was a third rate establishment, The uniform had to be bought from Bourne and Hollingsworth in Oxford Street, It was hideously expensive and hideously ugly involving black stockings, which we all loathed, butcher-blue blouses - not my colour- and black velour hats, Even underclothing was prescribed including knicker linings to be worn under black bloomers, A velvet dress was required for changing into for the evening meal, We even had a special Sunday uniform for going to church. This included a shantung silk coat for summer wear. A special trunk was purchased for transporting this lot to school. As I was taken there by car, I don't know why a couple of useful suitcases wouldn't have done just as well, but no doubt a trunk was prescribed as it would have been for a public school, However, there were never more than 15 boarders,

There were about 120 girls in the school plus a few small boys in the junior department. The school was housed in two late Victorian 3-storey houses set in large gardens. They were linked together by a series of one-storey buildings - a hall/gym, two classrooms where the "babies" (infants) were taught, and a dining room, One house was the school; the other was the headmistress's residence where the boarders lived, Beyond the living house was the field with a 'hockey pitch and hard tennis court, Alongside it ran the main London to Woking line,

I was miserable for the first term and far from happy for the next two. I remember a horrific morning when I found I had wet my bed. I managed to conceal what had happened and my sheets and pyjamas gradually dried out. I had of course no idea why this should have happened, I only really settled down when at my own request I became a full-time boarder instead of a weekly.

On the first morning, the three girls in my dorm, Knotty, Gilly and Zoe, took me over to their classroom, introduced me to the form teacher, and found me a desk, Whether I was meant to be there I don't know, but my cousin Elizabeth came to look for me and said I was meant to be in her form, I think it very likely that my uncle had kindly arranged for me to be with Elizabeth, Although she was a year older than I, she was in a lower form so it was lucky for me I stayed put, Unfortunately relations with my cousins were somewhat soured and I was only once ever asked to spend the day at their house in nearby Shepperton,

There were gaps in my knowledge: I had done no Latin or algebra or geometry

or botany - the only science taught, I had never played hockey and could not march in step in the 15 minutes drill we did before lunch every day, I soon caught up with the Latin and geometry, both of which I enjoyed but could see no sense in algebra and no attempt was ever made to explain why we had to do it, I came to loathe it so much that I got a parent to write a letter saying I was to give it up. Fortunately the teacher refused to allow me to do so, my future school cert was saved,

The timetable was sparse in comparison with a grammar school. We had lessons in half-hour periods in the morning only. There were about 16 in my form, in the afternoons we did prep interspersed by games twice a week and extras such as gym, music, and elocution, for which parents paid extra. The games and gym mistress was a tartar, She was perhaps influenced by her husband's fascist ideology. One term of gym was enough for me; I did not take to hockey either,

For the first year I took things easy and did the minimum to get by, We had weekly marks, I was always somewhere in the middle but managed to come top in some exams, I was lectured by disappointed parents for not trying, What really changed my attitude to work was I think the arrival after I had been at Danesfield for four terms of Miss Esme Thomas who became our form mistress, She taught us English, history and Latin and made all three interesting. Miss Evelyn Baker arrived at the same time and maths became more congenial. They made me aware that school certificate lay ahead and it was worth doing well, I started working. Before long I was marching up every Monday morning at the end of prayers to receive the top of the form badge for my form.

When we were in the upper fourth (aged 14/15) Miss Thomas and Miss Baker suggested that the form should start to cover the School Cert syllabus, and if we got on well enough, some of us might even be entered for the exam a year early, This encouraged me to work hard, and it was decided that another girl and would be entered the following summer alongside the 5th year, I think the two mistresses probably saw career advantages in this - but it was certainly to my advantage, Because I was a boarder, they were able to give me extra help and encouragement. I dedicated myself to work in the holidays as well as at school. I was allowed to go to empty class rooms in the evenings and get on in peace, I learnt the all-important lesson of how to work on my own, My companion, Daphne, being a day girl did not have this advantage and did not pass. I passed with the necessary credits to obtain London matriculation exemption which meant I was qualified to enter London University without passing further exams; I found later that Bedford College - fortunately - would not accept me because I had left school at 15. University College did.

I found relaxation from my workaholism in breaking school rules. I collected order marks in equal quantities to the merit marks given for good work, and I talked on the stairs, giggled in church and played racing demon in the dormitory. I was never a favourite of the headmistress,

The main disadvantage of boarding was the limitation on one's freedom, We were not allowed outside the school gates without a member of staff, Our main outings were a half hour walk in a crocodile to the local sweet shop after tea every day and a rather longer expedition on Saturday mornings. Shops such as Woolworths that we would have liked to go to were out of bounds, On Sundays we walked to church - not into town to Walton but across

the fields to Hershams, The headmistress was a Christian Scientist so she never accompanied us, We just about never went anywhere else, I never once set eyes on the Thames while at school at Walton on Thames, We once went for a walk to St George's Hill, Many years later I discovered that this was the land of the Diggers of the 1640's. We were 10 minutes' walk from the station, but the only time we were ever taken to London was to see Julius Caesar, our school cert play, at the Old Vic, We never went to the cinema and had no access to a library, Miss Thomas tried to start a library mainly with her own books,

There were few opportunities to read anyhow as we had very little time to ourselves and reading in bed was forbidden, This applied even when you were ill, You were removed to the sick room and made to lie there all day doing nothing, I discovered an interesting store of romantic novels in a cupboard near the boarders' cloakroom, Unfortunately the matron found me with one and the store disappeared, There were few opportunities either to draw or paint or write. Nor were we allowed to listen to the radio or see a newspaper. The only broadcast I can remember hearing was Edward VIII's abdication broadcast which we were summoned into the headmistress's sitting room to hear.

A close relationship developed between the boarders and the five or so members of staff who were resident. They were required to do evening and weekend duties supervising us, Their rooms were in a converted stable which as far as I can remember like our dormitories had no heating, There was no staff room, so staff who were not on duty sometimes also spent winter evenings in the boarders' sitting room where there was a blazing coal fire, The conversations and discussions round that fire were important for our development.

One thing I must give the school credit for was the food, It was excellent, At meal times I was taught table manners that I had not learnt at home; not to sit holding your knife and fork pointing up; to eat your sweet with a fork; to break your toast into pieces, At the time I found this humiliating, but looking back I am grateful,

I will end with the school song;
Danesfield to you our voices we raise
Not in merely a song of praise
United in all our little blue band Shoulder to shoulder bravely stand,

NOTES

See also essay on My Education written at the I of E in 1947, Danesfield did not teach me to spell, I had to learn on the job when I started teaching.

Miss Thomas's ambition was to get a job in a state school. She got a job in a school in Oxford, Years later during the war when staying with Betty I passed what I thought must be her school, I enquired and was able to see her and tell her about my II/1 that she had helped me so much towards.

UCL

When I took school cert, a year early at 15 and came out with London Matric, exemption which was supposed to entitle you to enter for a London degree, parents, I think, decided they had a "clever" daughter for whom they ought to do their best,

The polo pony trade was doing well in the late 30s: customers had included characters like the Maharajah of Jaipur, and there was a steady income from hiring out ponies for Sandhurst cadets at the Fleet Polo Club, of which Pap was conveniently the secretary. They could afford to send me to University,

I was lucky, If your parents had not got the cash, and if you failed to win one of the few state scholarships, the other main route was to "sign the pledge" - to commit yourself to teaching when you graduated.

There were two limitations to my choice; it had to be a college that would accept students at 17, and one that honoured matric exemption as an entrance qualification and did not require you to have Higher School cert or sit an entrance exam, Cousin Betty became my careers adviser, Bedford College - women only in those days - was the first choice. I was informed that I should go back to school and take Higher. I then applied to University College (UCL), was interviewed and accepted. Betty gave me moral support and came with me to the interview. I owed her much and endeavoured in later years to repay.

Those who had not done Higher School Cert, did a one year Intermediate Arts course to be followed by a two year degree course, Those with Higher did a three year degree course, Since we were all put together in the second year, it is hard to see what advantage the extra year gave them, For Inter you did 4 subjects, one of which had to be Latin. I also did History, which I then wanted to do for my main degree, and English, Economics was suggested, as my 4th subject,

Inter was in effect a crash A level course, done in one year with no frills and four subjects. For me with my inadequate school background it meant very hard work, but I thoroughly enjoyed the work - far more than I did my English degree course, I enjoyed Economics most, especially the economic and social history course, We also had to do economic theory and study the financial system, which I found much less interesting, One of the tutors was Hugh Gaitskell, the future Labour leader. By the end of the year I had decided to abandon history, and change over to a BSc. Econ. The war put paid to this,

I greatly enjoyed history too, We did European history - the whole broad sweep from the Barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire to the Great War, I was fascinated, The degree syllabus, though, was much narrower and was almost entirely British history, Moreover it would involve writing endless essays which I did not enjoy. I decided in the end - at Aberystwyth - on English,

The inter English course was far from exciting, We did a couple of Shakespeare plays: Richard III and Much Ado; some Chaucer (Troilus and Cressida Book II); Bacon's New Atlantis and the poems of Gray and Collins - and a general survey of Eng Lit from C15 to 18. In the degree course too,

we read nothing written after 1820, It did not inspire one to go on with English. Nevertheless I got a 1 in inter English and only 2.1 in the other three subjects. These results were stuck up on a notice board. We were never given certificates, which now seems to me quite extraordinary, I put down my first to Chambers Encyclopaedia of Eng, Lit which I discovered in the library and used as a short cut to reading endless rather uninteresting texts,

Latin was compulsory, It had no relevance to other subjects, Its dominance in University Arts syllabuses until very recently can be compared to the dominance of French in school language teaching, Latin and French teachers had to be kept in demand, We had to translate passages about modern life into Latin and find ways of expressing things the Romans never had such as motor cars, It was very difficult and private tuition was advised, Many of us took it, The tutor turned out to be a sister of one of the lecturers! We had to study Roman life, an interesting subject, but unfortunately the lecturer had a speech defect - he sounded like Donald Duck - and even in the front row you had difficulty in understanding anything he said, Since Latin was compulsory, there were about 150 students at the lectures and not one of us dared complain! I did enjoy the set books, though: Catullus and Tacitus (Agricola),

I worked very, very hard during that one year in London - perhaps too hard and perhaps I was too young, for university life, I spent much time in the library, I had not got the money to buy books apart from essential set texts, However I fitted in many visits to the theatre - always in the gallery which cost 6d, for a stool to get a place in the queue and I think about 1/- admission, I also frequented the Academy One Cinema in Oxford St, where they showed foreign films, If you went in the morning or afternoon it didn't cost much.

Most UCL students lived at home, The University provided a women's hostel, College Hall, which was near the back entrance to UC. My friend Marjorie lived there. Conditions were luxurious by my standards: a spacious study bedroom with a wash basin but it was far beyond the family means - even if I'd wanted to go there, which I didn't, I started at a private hostel in Highbury, where I had a horrid room: a one third partition of the former front bedroom of a Victorian house, I didn't like the woman who ran it or the long journey to college, so I tried commuting from Fleet but soon found this wasn't a good idea. It was all travelling and no college life, Pap came up to help me find an alternative, We found a nice self-catering room in Bloomsbury, After about a month I found I couldn't cope with being on my own - something I'd never experienced, so I looked for somewhere else.

I found Walsingham House, a Catholic students' hostel in Bedford Way - 10 minutes walk from U.C. The cost was reasonable and I had a large attic room next to a fire-escape where I was able to sit in the sun and work, The women who ran it were kindly and in spite of Mother's worst fears, made no attempt to convert me, They even offered to have me back next session, The building, sadly, was bombed during the blitz,

UC was a huge institution, There must have been well over 1,000 students using the buildings + the medical students at UC Hospital across Gower St, it was not easy to get to know people - especially if you were as shy as I was, I had three friends; two girls I spoke to on the first day who both did economics, neither of whom came to Aber, and Marjorie Harris, who

remained my "Best friend" throughout the 3 years. Marjorie and I were thrown together by chance because we sat next to each other at a social. She had been to a public school and was a natural conformist, I was unable to convert her to socialism, She came home for weekends and I went to stay with her at Alderley Edge near Manchester from where we went youth hostelling in Dovedale, Her parents delivered us by car to within a mile of our first stay.

THE PARTY

I joined the Communist Party on my 21st birthday, Feb. 21, 1942, at Preston,

I became a socialist when I was 15 and still at Danesfield, Quite an achievement for a private girls' school and certainly not one envisaged by the proprietor/headmistress, I owe my conversion to two mistresses - particularly to the music mistress, Miss Eardley.

It was 1936; Moseley's Blackshirts were recruiting fast. One recruit was married to our part-time games and gym mistress - a hockey sadist. She persuaded the headmistress to invite her husband to talk to the school. Most of the staff were horrified, and during discussions round the fire in the boarders' common room this came through to us, Miss Swift, the art mistress, waxed eloquent on the importance of democracy backed up by Miss Eardley, but countered by Miss E's best friend, Miss Kaye, who was friendly with Miss Vaughn, the games mistress, Just the thing for getting political 15 year olds thinking.

This was during my one term in the 6th form, There were only four of us: Sonya Geldard, Gina Woolf, Annette Mills, who were all 16, and me, The school didn't know what to do with us, Candidates had been entered for School Certificate for the first time ever the previous June, The four of us had passed well. I even had matric exemption. Our parents obviously thought we deserved more education. I was still only 15 anyhow and middle-class girls were expected to stay at school till 16. The school made no attempt to prepare us for Higher School Cert. as it should have done. Instead we were given a cosy isolated attic form room and various members of staff were delegated to teach us miscellaneous subjects. I can't remember any very clearly except that we started learning German and had Miss Eardley for The Lives of the Composers, This rapidly turned into a general discussion group and amongst other things we learnt about what was going on in the Soviet Union, She lent me the first book I ever read on the subject. It was by Maurice Hindus,

During the next year, before I went to UCL I became increasingly politically aware, I read whatever I could get hold of, but with no public library available, my field was restricted, At some stage - I'm not sure when - I read the Webbs' "Soviet Communism - A New Civilisation" and agreed with them that it was. I can also remember reading articles in The Reader's Digest about communist cells and thinking how exciting it would be to work in one. When I actually joined the party I was rather disappointed to find that no such cells existed. With hindsight I realize that the short-lived existence of Uncle George and Auntie Mary of the early war years was all about forming cells,,

My parents by the late 30's had given up the Daily Express - through which I had joined the Rupert Bear Club - for the News Chronicle, This was exchanged with a neighbour every evening for their Telegraph, so a range of opinion was coming into the house. The Spanish Civil War had shaken my parents out of the cosy conservatism they had grown up with, Pap admitted to me later that he had been a special constable during the General Strike. By the end of the war they were Commonwealth supporters, We discussed politics a lot. Jim, though, remained a Tory to the end, and did not think

it funny to have a sister in the CP.

I joined the Soc. Soc. during my first week at UCL at a meeting addressed by Ellen Wilkinson, famous for her part in the Hunger March, The soc soc sub was 2/-. I went to a number of meetings and talks but I was painfully shy and never joined in discussion or got to know anyone well, However, I did take part in a number of public events, On November 9, 1938, I marched down Oxford St carrying a sandwich board calling for Arms for Spain, We had to walk in the gutter about 10 yards apart, so were able to hear comments by bystanders on the wickedness of getting young girls to take part in such an exhibition. I collected money for Spain - I'm not sure from whom - but the amounts are noted in my diary, My diary also tells me that I went canvassing during the borough election in Holborn, Unfortunately I have no memory of this interesting activity. My outstanding memory is of the London May Day march, which before the war was always held on May day, It rained all day, but was an exhilarating experience to be part of what was a huge procession - probably on the scale of the nuclear marches of the 80's.

In December 1938, Mussolini was demanding the return of its former colonies, Corsica, Tunis and Nice, (JCL organised its own impromptu demonstration - or "rag" as the Telegraph called it in the large photograph they published. The theme was "Give us back our Colonies - Britain demands America - We want Washington- what about Calais etc?

Some soc soc members must have belonged to the party, but I was never aware of this, and no-one ever approached me to join. I never got to know anyone in the soc soc well - none of my inter arts friends joined, The only people I can remember were Kathleen Cadbury - perhaps I remember her because she belonged to the chocolate family, and Dorothea Davies and Clare Cassey who turned up at Aberystwyth,

At Aber the soc soc hardly existed, although Clare and Dorothea who were at Alexandra Hall as I was, seemed very busy in what seemed to be a closed circle, They were not welcoming and made no attempt to draw me into activity. This was of course a difficult time for the C.P. Pollitt had been expelled for supporting the war, and the Daily Worker had been banned. The one soc soc highlight that stands out in my memory during the second year at Aber was the visit of Pat Sloan to talk about the Soviet Union. Pat later was secretary of the BSFS.

It took me four months to get a job after graduation, I was still below conscription age (21) and, I found, below the age for recruitment to the sort of jobs that graduates went into, I didn't know what I wanted to do, only that it had to be socially useful and to do with people. I decided I wanted to work in the north and meet the real working class! I was influenced by a teacher, Gladys, from Lancashire who was spending part of her summer holidays picking potatoes at Ancells Farm, in order to be near her boy friend who was stationed at Aldershot. She invited to stay with her at Ashton under Lyne, while I looked for a job.

My friend Marjorie Harris (VC Inter Arts and English) had already got a job as a Labour Officer at ROF Chorley, It sounded to be just what I was looking for, so I wrote and asked for a job, I don't think Marjorie was very pleased. A three year friendship came to an end. Chorley interviewed me, but because I was under 21 could not take me on as a Labour Officer. They did however offer me a clerical job at £2 p.w. with the promise that I

would be taken on as a Labour Officer (£4 p.w.) when I was 21, (This later led to objections by the union, the CSCA, but one month after my birthday I was upgraded to Labour Officer and no longer had to count every penny.)

On Wed, Nov, 5th 1941 I left for Chorley, travelling on the night train to Preston I was offered accommodation at the factory hostel, This, like the canteens, was run on class lines, Industrial workers had to share rooms with double bunks (wooden base,) Clerical workers like me were allocated to a separate block - also with double bunks, I was lucky and got such a room to myself. Admin grade got single rooms with spring-based beds. Clerical workers ate with the admin grades.

Going to work was a culture shock after the relative freedom to make my own time I had always enjoyed, I was working in the main office block outside the factory proper which in itself was frustrating. The work was boring - exactly what it was I can't remember - and the day, 9 till 6, seemed never-ending. There were occasional treats when I accompanied the woman I was working for, a kindly middle-aged lady, when she went on visits to surrounding towns to sign on new workers. Later I moved to work with a much younger woman, Audrey Preece, who had grown up in Bermuda, We got on well. She did not take the job too seriously and we had many a laugh over the material we were dealing with. We were processing applications for release from the factory, Once you had been taken on at an ROF you had to have special permission to leave. Most applications were from married women wanting to leave for domestic reasons. If you were of conscription age about your only way out was to apply to join the services. which was what I later did.

For the first time ever I was able to join a public library. I started reading Left Book Club books amongst other things. I decided I wanted to join a political party. My university experiences had put me off the C.P. so I wrote to the Labour Party and asked to join. I never got a reply, A few weeks later I wrote to the Preston branch of the C.P. and did get an answer: I was invited to a women's meeting the following Sunday afternoon, which happened to be my 21st birthday,

LEFT BOOK CLUB BOOKS, Alan Hutt: The Post-war History of the British Working Class. Edgar Snow: Red Star over China. Palme Dutt: India Today. A.Lilorton. A People's History of England,

ROF CHORLEY, a filling factory i.e. filling shells, bombs etc with explosives and fitting detonators. It covered a huge area and employed thousands of workers - mostly unskilled and former mill workers. It had its own station and ran special trains. People came from as far afield as Clitheroe and Wigan. It had its own internal bus system using buses like those now used at airports. There were six sections. No 1 doing detonators had the most accidents. The workers here were mostly young women who had the advantage of manual dexterity. Section 6 filled big bombs. Here the workers were mainly male. There was a canteen on each section, as well as one at the Main gate. Labour officers were able to summon a special car when on night shift to take them to the admin. canteen at the main gate so that they did not have to eat with the workers,

All the workers were issued with special woollen clothing - wool because it gave most protection against fire, Overalls were washed at the factory laundry - it was strictly forbidden to take them home to wash, Inevitably

they shrank in the wash causing problems for large people, who usually had to be issued with new ones. One of my jobs on Section 3 was issuing new overall permits. I once signed myself J. Overall. I had a difficult dispute with a foreman who considered himself entitled to new overalls every time to maintain the dignity of his position. I disagreed, but he got his new suit when I was away on leave.

PRESTON

Diary entry 21 Feb, '42, Birthday but didn't seem so, joined C.P. in Preston at

Woman's meeting, had tea with secretary Eleanor Haley and stayed on to social where met everyone - fight for bus - feeling extraordinarily happy,

My time in the communist party in Preston determined the whole future course of my life, I would never marry anyone who was not a party member - and one at least as long standing as me, Whatever career I eventually followed it would have to enable me to be true to my socialist ideals, Teaching which I had never considered before became a possible aim for after the war, if not before. I actually applied for a job at a grammar school while I was at Chorley, but realized from the interview that with my limited school background the training year was essential.

The party had its own office at 9 Tenterfield St, in the town centre near the market building. It was a fairly large attic room which could be used for meetings and socials. Here I met the comrades and the word came to have real meaning. You felt you belonged to a far-flung family - that wherever you went you would be taken in and made welcome,

This certainly applied in Preston, My diary tells me that next day I went to lunch and tea with the McGurks, Peter and Jean lived in a council flat near Dick Kerr's, the big engineering factory where Peter worked, Jean, who came from Kent, was an overlooker (inspector) at the ROF, which was why I think they invited me. They welcomed me round on many a Sunday thereafter and doubtless I learned much through talking to them - the first industrial workers I had really got to know, Memories of their front room are still vivid: a big picture window looking down over rows of nineteenth century working class houses; a blazing coal fire; egg shell blue china on the table. Years later I bought some like it. David never really understood why.

Another family who made me welcome were the Withingtons. They lived in a semi in the suburb of Broughton; their house then looked out over fields. Mr Withington managed a hat factory. They made the basic felt shapes that were later made into trilbies and others. Men still wore hats then. Mr W. (Harry) had only recently joined the party and was regarded with some awe as an intellectual, Mrs W, (Margaret) was a more long-standing and active member, They had two sons, Peter and Jimmy, Peter was in his last year at Preston Grammar School, He won a scholarship to Cambridge for after the war, Meanwhile national service loomed as soon as he left school. He was already a committed socialist and active in the YCL, His self-confidence amazed me, I can still see him standing on a soapbox doing a street meeting, He was tall and good-looking with darkish red hair, We became firm friends, but the fact that I was three years older than he and already a graduate was a barrier - and there was his long-standing girl friend Zena, who understandably worshipped him.

At Easter I cycled to the lake district with Peter, Zena, and other YCL members, On the way back my three speed broke, Peter and another boy tried to help by pushing my back to help me on hills, In the end I had to give up and hitched from Lancaster to Preston while the others nobly took my bike

on, I had several other days out with the YCL,

'A lovely lady' best describes Mrs Withington. If it were not an insult to her memory as a marxist and a communist I would call her a true Christian. She taught - yes taught! that we should live as communists in all aspects of our lives, I can remember feeling ashamed when she got up on a bus before I did to give her seat to an older person. I think she would have liked my relationship with Peter to have developed further. Mrs Withington's great friend was Mrs Archer who made a living from a stall at Blackpool. What she sold I can't remember, although my only visit to Blackpool before the 1990 LP. conference was with Mrs Withington who was going to help Mrs Archer.

The Withington family always made me welcome. When I was in the WAAF, homesick for Lancashire, I paid them several visits. I tried to repay in kind by giving Jimmy Withington my parents' address when he was stationed at Aldershot. He went to see them but I think they let me down and Somerset hospitality did not equal Lancashire's. Parents complained to me later that they were bored with Jimmy's endless talk about his girl friend. They didn't understand how he missed her.

I was quickly involved in party activities at Preston. There were two main campaigns: Lift the Ban on the Daily Worker - it had been closed down since 1939 because of the party's original opposition to the war,- and Speed the Second Front. These were the darkest days of the war. The Germans were deep into the USSR; central Europe was occupied; bombing raids on British cities continued, (Preston suffered little, The only bombs I was ever close to were the two that fell on Cambridge in August 1940), The CPGB was growing fast. Admiration for the Soviet resistance was certainly a factor in this. Red star badges with the hammer and sickle became fashionable - much as the CND broken cross did forty years later, The main propaganda weapons were pamphlets which we sold in the streets and where possible at work. I took some into the hostel but never to the factory. On two occasions during my time in Preston, the party hired a cinema for mass meetings - one with Harry Pollitt and the other with Willie Gallacher, the only communist MP, As well as this there were regular meetings and schools at Tenterfield St, I enjoyed the street campaigning at Preston, led by the branch chairman, Harry Barnes,

By the summer there were plans to start a party group at Chorley - in the town not the factory, One of the Labour Officers, Margaret Harries, turned out to be a party member. Another party member, Doreen Moody, had just been appointed to the Labour department at the factory. For a short time she lived at the hostel. I got to know her well and she was very helpful later when I was turned out of the hostel. One of our activities was to organise a Labour Monthly Discussion Group. Only three people - all party members - turned up to the first meeting. Eventually, though, the Chorley branch did take off. One of the people I got to know then was Brian Almond who worked at Leyland Motors. He was up in Marxist theory and began my education in the subject.

My increasing party activity had not gone unnoticed. Upon returning from a visit home on a week's leave I was given notice to leave the hostel by the end of the week. Next day I saw the warden who told me I was being watched as a communist and because of this I had to go. I was very upset and decided to leave immediately. I was on morning shift so was able to go into

Preston and appeal to Eleanor Healey for help. She gave me a bed at her flat until I had found somewhere. After a few days I found temporary digs in Chorley while I continued my search for self-catering digs in Preston, where I really wanted to live even it meant a longer journey to work. I finally found Mrs Gosling of Rose Lane, Holmeslack, Preston. She had a six year-old son. Her husband was away in the army and she was lonely. She was glad to let the front bedroom of her council house and allow me the use of the kitchen. The arrangement suited us both well. I was pleased to be living in a council house; it was part of escaping from my bourgeois roots!

By this time I was an Assistant Labour Officer and was working shifts, Mornings 6 to 2; afternoons 2 to 10; nights 10 to 6, We changed shifts every week which made it very difficult to adjust your sleep patterns, We worked a six day week, When the factory first opened they had two twelve hour shifts, This lasted less than a year; absenteeism through exhaustion forced a change. The six day week was still far too great a strain - especially for women with families, many of whom regularly took Saturdays off to do their shopping, One of my main jobs was interviewing people who wanted to leave and helping them to fill in the application forms - the same forms that Audrey and I had dealt with when I was a clerk. Their main reasons for wanting to go were the long hours + travelling. The applications were sent on to the Ministry of Labour, and even if we recommended release, as I usually did although my boss often overruled me, it was usually refused. The shells had to be filled by someone. Although the work was quite interesting I was not happy with it. The fundamental problem was being part of the management when as a communist my sympathies were with the workers.

I was on Section 3 where anti-aircraft shells were filled. It was near the Leyland gate on the Preston road, which reduced my travelling time. To start with my boss on the section was Annie McDowell, a very likeable but scatty character. She had beautiful iron grey hair although she can only have been about 40. She didn't say much about her past which was a pity as I suspect it would have been interesting. I enjoyed working with her. Later I moved shift to work for Margaret Adlington. She was much more professional and efficient, and was left-wing; but I didn't enjoy working with her as I had with Mac, and I loved it when Margaret went on leave and left me to it.

My friend Liz, Elizabeth Baker, also worked on Section 3 but not on the same shift. Liz had arrived at Chorley at the same time as me. Since she was over 21 she had become an ALO straight away. She too lived at the hostel and from her I knew a lot about the work. Liz came from the lake district where she had been an uncertificated teacher in a small village school to which she cycled over the mountains in all weathers. She often had to mend punctures on the way and impressed upon me the need to always carry a puncture outfit. We went cycling together. Liz wrote to her fiancé Evan every day which was a never-ending source of amazement to me, How boring I thought. They got married the following summer before Evan went overseas. I hope he arrived.

Another of my friends at the hostel was Rowena Audus, She as a lot older, was married and was a scientist, Her husband, who was in the army, was missing. She later heard that he was a POW in Germany. She often joined Liz and me on cycle rides and visits to the cinema. On a cold wet June weekend Rowena and I cycled to the Trough of Bowland. We had intended to stay at

the YH but it was full so we went to a private house instead recommended by the hostel where we had to share a double bed.

Towards the end of my time at the factory I was moved onto days to be the ALO for the Tailor's Shop. This was a small section that produced various small requirements for different sections - mainly washers. I enjoyed it here and It was a relief to be off shift work. By then, however, I was well on my way to leaving Chorley. When I look back and consider the three frustrating years in the WAAF from which there was no escape, I realize how stupid I was not to be more patient. In the end, though, I might have become a personnel officer like Olga Spicer and not a teacher and never have met David . .

By April I had decided labour management was not for me and started investigating other possibilities. I wrote to the University appointments board who were as useless as they had been when I was originally looking for a job. I couldn't face doing teacher training while the war was on. I had an interview at Standard Motors in Coventry for something to do with draughtsmanship which I didn't like the sound of and turned it down. I started to consider the services. They seemed to offer adventure, a chance to see different places and mix with a cross section of my age group - including young males who, apart from Peter (who was only a schoolboy!) were almost nonexistent at the ROF or in the Preston party. Life was passing me by while I signed overall permits. There was an intensive advertising campaign during the summer and autumn of 1942 to get women to join the services. The Daily, which by then had been unbanned, carried these adverts and I have to admit that they influenced me. I decided on the WAAF. Growing up near Aldershot put me off having any connection with the army, and the WRNS seemed snobbish. My school friend, Dora Dalzell, was a wren and her letters seemed to confirm this. I filled in an application form, three weeks later had a medical (A1), applied for release which was granted, and left the factory for Fleet just before Christmas. In the first week in January, 1943 I joined the WAAF at Gloucester. I had been at Charley only just over a year. It had perhaps been the most formative year of my life,

When the party heard that I was joining up, I was invited to go and see the district secretary in Manchester who would be able to give me some advice. He gave me the address of Uncle George and Aunt Margaret. If I wrote to them and told them how I was getting on and where I was they might be able to put me in touch with other "relatives" stationed nearby. This I did when I was at Hednesford I blessed Uncle and Auntie for enabling me to meet kindred spirits when I was very, very depressed. Unfortunately shortly after this Uncle & Auntie went out of business. I think there was fear of causing trouble for people with MI5. I came across no party members for over two years until I found Frank Myerscough through the 1945 election campaign. That did not mean to say that I was politically inactive.

PETER

Peter and I corresponded throughout the war, We had many shared interests, including the fact that we were both musical illiterates, He used to say that coming bottom in music at school helped to counteract the bad effects of being top in nearly everything else. He was called up and went into signals in the army, He ended up in Burma but was never as far as I know in any fighting. However, after about a year, he contracted a nasty tropical

illness, sprue, and was sent back to England. He came to see me at Salisbury once and also came on a visit to Fleet. I remember taking him swimming at Minley. He was released from the army early to take up his Cambridge scholarship, He read History. I went to see him there once and he came once to Derby Road.

Peter and Zena had got married soon after the end of the war. Peter ended up as head of history at a grammar school in Sheffield. Then disaster struck, Zena died shortly after their second daughter was born about 1953, He came over to see us at Claremont Gardens shortly afterwards. He was giving up teaching and taking a management job in a factory in Liverpool where his parents were living so that his mother could look after the children. I remember saying goodbye to him at the back gate before he rode away on his motor bike down Fern Avenue and out of my life. How I wish we had kept in touch. I don't quite know why we didn't. Peter had left the party some time before Hungary. Perhaps this was why.

4 7 3 7 6 5

On Jan, 20, 1942 I wrote to Mac from RAF Compton Basset where I was doing my 3 weeks square bashing. The letter was returned address unknown. I quote from it,

I got my calling up papers on Xmas day of all times and had to go to Gloucester on New Year's Eve. It was quite the weirdest New Year's Eve I've ever spent - shut up in a wooden hut with 35 strange females whom I've never seen in my life before and probably never would again, - everyone dead tired and thoroughly depressed,,

We stayed at 6, 5 days, most of which were of course spent doing nothing, i.e., waiting for other people to be attended to. I shall never be dismayed at the sight of a queue again. However we finally emerged from Gloucester having had every imaginable particular taken, our intelligence tested, been rigged up in brand new uniforms and paid 10/- for 5 days queuing.

We had to get up at 4 am for the 40 mile 6 hour train journey to Compton Basset, Wilts for our 3 weeks disciplinary training

Our time here has been divided between drill, P,T, which has been so feeble it wouldn't exercise a fly, lectures and above all marching backwards and forwards from one wooden hut to another, We have lectures on various subjects including chemical warfare, hygiene, first aid, religion, current affairs and above all RAF rules and regulations. Some lectures are interesting. The best one we've had was from the OD, (other denominations) padre on the fall of Singapore - he was there till 3 days before the end.

It's amazing the number of restrictions there are in this show. It's practically impossible to go through the day without breaking some rule or other, I haven't been had up yet, but the sergeant watches me out of the corner of her eye when I talk on parade or put my hands in my pockets without thinking.

I'm now beginning to feel rather dubious about the trade I've chosen, flight mechanic.

I had decided on this before joining up largely because it was a practical job, usually done by men, and also because it promised to be an outdoor job where you wore battle dress not a skirt. I opted for it at Gloucester spurred on by the fact that you had to do well in the intelligence test - they were surprised at my poor arithmetical showing though - and because it was one of the best-paid. Another possibility had been meteorology (which Jean did). My diary tells me that I tried to change to met, both at Gloucester and at Hednesford but the system did not allow for second thoughts. I also investigated admin, but this would have meant applying for a commission which, as a party member, I was determined not to do.

As regards actual physical welfare conditions are far better than I'd expected, The food is super - far superior to the hostel or factory canteen and almost as good as home. We sleep in wooden huts which aren't too bad once you succeed in getting the fire to go. . . I haven't got used to wearing uniform yet - the thing I really dislike is the cap. They're Ok on some people, but mine looks like an inverted pudding basin. To make matters

worse we have to wear our hair one inch above our collars here which means tucking the ends under a bootlace. Once we leave here everyone's hair will I expect return to normal. . . . When I went home on my first leave Mother met me at the station and collapsed with laughter at the sight of me in my cap, I didn't find it funny.

The other girls here, or at least the ones I know, are very nice crowd although most of them have the mentality of people who read "Woman" and write to Evelyn Hope for advice. . . . I've met one girl I'd really like to get to know well but she's doing a different trade so I won't see her again after I leave here,

The girl was called Eve, I didn't see her again My diary for 1943 is full of the names of people - women and men - whom I met, briefly got to know and like, and then one of us got posted. Sometimes we exchanged letters, even met occasionally - but then lost touch. Ships that pass in the night. This is one reason why I always resisted leaving Nottingham once we had settled here. I felt a need to be permanent somewhere. Things became more stable after I went to Boscombe Down where I remained over two years. The only WAAF I am still in contact with is Alex (Doreen Alexander - now Laver) partly I think because she lived at Guildford so we were able to meet after the war, and she was a great correspondent.

Most of the girls seem to be clerical workers, and most of them wanted to do clerical work in the WAAF, but for some reason they've closed all clerical trades and are making would-be clerks become batwomen or cooks or do general duties i.e. all the dirty unskilled work from scrubbing to running messages, It is a criminal waste of ability; there are some really intelligent girls who are going to be batwomen.

I did not mention inoculations in this letter. We had two jabs a week apart and they really did make you ill. We were allowed 48 hours off duty after each. There were no disposable syringes. The needle was dipped in disinfectant and used on the next in line. By the time it had been used 30 or so times it was getting decidedly blunt and was very painful. It paid to be at the start of the queue.

On Jan 27 I was posted to Hednesford for a 4 month Flight Mechanic's course, The camp was situated on Cannock Chase and was surrounded by a 12 foot wire fence, I don't know what its origin was, but it certainly looked like a concentration camp. The course started with 'basic' which meant filing - by far the most boring part of the whole course and since I never once had to file anything once I started working on aircraft it seems completely unnecessary. I was soon utterly depressed and missed the friends I had made at Compton Bassett. To make things worse, two girls I particularly disliked there were in the same hut. One of them, Madeleine, came from Nottingham! Years later I met her in Boots and we were glad to see each other.

After 3 weeks were given a 48 hour leave, I went home with a persistent cough which turned out to be measles and bronchitis, I must have been pretty bad, I see from my diary that I only began to read after 5 days in bed, and did not get up for another week. There were of course no antibiotics; rest and warmth was all that could be prescribed. It must have been very hard on Mother. I remember with affection and gratitude how she nursed me. To crown it all, three days after I got home, Pap broke his

wrist.

I was away three weeks meaning that I moved from entry 73 (473765) to entry 76, Alex and Iris who were to be my best friends at Halton were in this entry but I never got to know them well,

Shortly after I got back Uncle George and Aunt Margaret's system worked. I was contacted by a sergeant who was on the permanent staff, I never got to know him - perhaps he was justifiably being extra careful, but he put me in touch with others, I noted in my diary great to have someone to talk to. The others were Bill Courtie and Ken (?) Capon. Bill was a corporal and a bandsman, I'm not sure what he was doing at Hednesford, I went for walks and cycle rides with Bill and we had long political discussions, We disagreed violently on feminism. He was in an unhappy marriage - perhaps this was why. He was posted before I left H, and wrote to me. I didn't keep up the correspondence for fear of entanglements. Ken Capon was more of an intellectual and a formidable figure. We had long discussions,

I let my politics be known in all the groups I mixed with and had already come across a left-wing intellectual - Lois Stott, who turned out to be another contact, She told me my handwriting revealed my background, I wonder now whether she was related to the Stotts of The Guardian,

I had registered my religion as agnostic. It seemed less provocative than atheist, (David did the same). I managed to avoid the monthly church parade by staying in the hut. Through this I met another non-believer, Peggy Fairbrother. She wrote to her parents about me, who invited me for a weekend - to Nottingham, my first ever visit. We hitched there; I remember coming down a hill into the city, Derby Road. Peggy lived at Arnold. We went for a walk on the Sunday morning; it was spring and the country was beautiful,

I came across one other graduate at Hednesford, Esme, She was an Egyptologist, and had joined up for similar reasons to mine without the political element.

All the time I was homesick for Lancashire, and hitched to Preston for several weekends. It was an easy road, which I once did in only two lifts, I stayed with the Withingtons - Peter was away in the army - or the McGurks or Doreen Moody and visited all my friends including Brian Almond for lessons in Marxism. These visits strengthened my faith in the party,

Towards the end of my time at Hednesford I fell in love with Jean Thompson. She came from Nelson, had as far as I can remember been a textile designer - she had a talent for drawing - and was engaged to someone she never sounded enthusiastic about. We found we had a lot in common, and soon found ourselves going for long walks holding hands in the glorious summer weather - there was beautiful country near the Trent at Rugely. The Lesbian element in our relationship came to worry us. It was not acceptable at that time, and we decided it was dangerous. Perhaps this was why Jean took so long to answer my letters when I left Hednesford. At the time I was very upset and grieved for our lost friendship.

I passed out from Hednesford as an ACW 1 and was posted to Greenham Common.

GREENHAM COMMON

RAF Greenham Common was like a holiday camp after Hednesford, I spent three very enjoyable summer months there July to August 1943, WAAF's were billeted in a large house with a garden stretching down to the Kennet, a fast flowing chalk stream, It was ideal bathing, We were working outside doing daily inspections on Oxfords, which in good summer weather was pleasant work. We did the same jobs as the RAF - for which as far as I can remember we got half the pay, NCOs were all RAF and most had served RAF apprenticeships.

Greenham was a Training Command station. WAAF mechanics were never sent to active service stations - a fact you were not told when you joined up. Our Greenham was very different from the USAF cruise missile base, The main Basingstoke road, now diverted, ran through the camp. As far as I can remember there were no fences even round the runway. It trained for night flying so there must have been some way of stopping traffic when flying was in progress.

Hitching to Fleet from Greenham was easy usually only taking about an hour, so I went home a lot - sometimes just for a half day. The road to Basingstoke was beautiful with wild clematis and scabious. I had my cycle with me as did most of the others. A favourite evening ride was to Kingsclere where there was a good YM canteen in a magnificent barn. (I have since tried without success to identify that barn.)

The Services' canteens and hostels were very useful, There were hostels in most major towns which I made much use of on my hitching expeditions. London ones were particularly useful making theatre visits possible, A uniform opened many doors. Looking back it seems very unfair. Girls conscripted to factories like ROF Chorley worked much harder and for longer hours than we did, were away from home living inferior hostels with inferior food but had no such facilities, nor did the Land Army.

For other entertainment there was Newbury and the Americans, There were several US bases nearby that invited us to dances, The main attraction was the food rather than the G.I.s most of whom were boring. There were WO exceptions, I got to know David McGeon because I happened to tell him I was reading War & Peace. I went out with him several times. He was a film script writer and was fairly left wing. He was interesting, but too introspective to be easy company, Then Stan Sobolewski took over. I met him at a dance at the Corn Exchange in Newbury from where we walked through the park by the river orchestrated by thunder and lightning - but no rain. I saw a lot of him during the next two weeks He was tall, dark and handsome and very attractive, but not political. He was of Polish origin and came from Detroit, Two weeks later the blow fell: the Americans were taking Greenham over and the RAF had to move. Stan and

I corresponded for several months and met once in London, but the magic had gone. I had had a lucky escape.

The news of the move was devastating to everyone, We all liked Greenham We had one week's notice. A special train was provided for the move. The whole station packed up and moved. Our destination was Long Newnton, Glos. It was an unattractive camp and the nearest town, Tetbury, was no compensation for

Newbury in spite of its lovely old buildings. I was there less than a week before I was posted yet again - to the Fitters' Course at Halton.

HALTON 6/10/43 - 2/2/44

I have no clear memories of the actual camp. It was a huge permanent base where RAF apprentice mechanics were trained in peace time. There were a lot of other courses in progress besides the 4 month crash course to turn WAAF flight mechanics into fitters. It was an interesting course - almost entirely theoretical - and did something towards filling the huge gaps in my science education.

Girls who had passed out ACW 1 or LACW (practically unknown) from the flight mech's course were automatically recommended for the fitter's course so they tended to be intellectual elite. Two girls from 176 entry at Hednesford were in my hut; we quickly became a trio and did everything together - in fact I really can't remember anyone else from Halton days except one Austrian of whom more later.

Iris Reid came from Morpeth where she had lived all her life and for which she was incredibly homesick. She was a lovely kindly girl full of goodwill towards everyone. She came with me on several of my visits to the Garland family at nearby Kings Langley; I shall always remember her enjoyment and delight in the baby, Tanya An experience utterly foreign to me. I thought babies boring and disgusting.

Doreen Alexander - always known as Alec - was outstandingly gifted: she was highly intelligent; she was musical - she sang in various choirs and tried in vain to educate me musically; she was athletic, hockey being her main love, (It restored my self-esteem a little to find that I was a far better cyclist than she was!) On top of all this she was very good-looking, She had dark brown, naturally wavy hair and could get out of bed in the morning without it even needing combing. She had been an executive grade civil servant before joining up and had commuted to London from her home in Guildford.

Iris and Alec were both sympathetic to my political views, Although neither ever came anywhere near joining the party, they both read, and I think enjoyed, my Daily Worker, which, as at Greenham and Boscombe Down I had delivered to the Guard Room. Encouraged by the support of Iris and Alec, I started passing the Daily round to an ever-widening circle. It was probably the only paper they had a chance to see. I also started collecting money for the Daily Worker Fighting Fund. The Daily's circulation was far too small to keep it going. Sales had to be supplemented by donations from readers, for this there was a Fighting Fund run by Barbara Niven, sister of film star David

About this time the Beveridge Report came out and was widely discussed. There was a debate in Parliament about family allowances. Edith Sommerskill MP, was campaigning for these to be paid to mothers instead of male breadwinners. She had taken up the case of a woman who had been unjustly treated under the current system and was taking it to the house of Lords. My WAAFs were all for family allowances for mothers and women's rights. Alec and I collected money for Edith Summerskill's campaign and got 36 others to sign a letter to her, I still have Edith Summerskill's reply encouraging us "to take an active part in public affairs" in the post-war world. Family allowances were, of course, paid to mothers when they were finally brought in.

Later we organised a letter to the War Minister - I cannot remember exactly what the issue was but we got our action reported in the Daily.

The WRAF fitter trainees at this station much appreciate the work the Daily Worker is doing, The recent action of the War Office aroused great indignation among us all, and we sent a letter of protest to Sir James Grigg.

Iris had got to know an Austrian, Erich Hartman, who was also doing a course at Halton. She introduced Alec and me to him and the three of us often met in the

canteen and had long interesting discussions. Erich was a lot older than us. He had to go to England as a refugee some time before the war. He never told us his full story, but he was a socialist and we learned a lot from him.

Towards the very end of my time at Halton Jean arrived for her fitter's course, We renewed our friendship and wrote from time to time thereafter. Hers were good letters, thick with accounts of interesting encounters and her ideas for the future. Mine seem to have been appreciated too, or was she just a very good writer?

Oh how I enjoy your letters, Jos, they're so - so, you! What a contrast to the usual gossipy, stilted duty. letters that are a bore to read and a bore to answer, I read your manuscripts through and through and they're still a constant delight to me after the fourth or fifth time of reading. It is as refreshing and spontaneous as a verbal conversation with you. . .

Jean should have become a novelist. Perhaps she did. Who knows?

I lost touch with Iris fairly soon; she was posted back to Morpeth where I'm sure she kept the red flag flying. Her first letter, written when she was on posting leave is testimony.

I've done it!! Last night I let loose and talked these good people's heads off till my throat got dry, How I did it goodness knows, but no duff gen was handed out. Old Mr Powis and I are good pals now as - I know what I'm talking about - and "Iris is on the right lines, She's a replica of what I used to be when I was young" (The old story) Yes we got on rather well together and shot Trevor down in flames much to Mr Powis's delight. After this build up imagine my disappointment when they don't want to get the D.W. . .

Iris was always very quiet and lacking in confidence at Halton, Erich had done a good job aided by the DW, and perhaps me.

Alec and I still exchange Xmas cards, She was posted to a station on Salisbury plain so we met from time to time including hitching round Wales together. She got married in 1945 to a former school friend in 1945. He stayed on in the army and eventually she went out to join him in Egypt. There she did clerical work for Security Intelligence Middle East, Our bosses in the UK are MI5 - so you can use your noodle about my work! I'm afraid my eyes are going to become permanently out on stalks! Some of the things I read and have to deal with just shake me rigid. They had one daughter, Pauline; then the marriage broke up, Alec came home with Pauline

to Guildford and got a job in a shoe shop, Later she more appropriately became a driving instructor and ran her own motoring school. She got married again to another ex-school friend and now lives at Godalming.

From Halton we were all posted back to our former units. For me though this did not mean Long Newnton where my friends were, but the main station where the maintenance hangar was where fitters were sent to work on major inspections, This was called Babdown Farm, It was miles from anywhere on a bleak hill surrounded by Gloucestershire mud, I decided this was not for me, Armed with a medical certificate about my ailing elderly mother, I applied for a compassionate posting nearer home, It worked, On March 17 I was posted to Boscombe Down, One highlight at Babdown Farm was a low flying flight over the Bristol Channel

BOSCOMBE DOWN

I arrived at Boscombe Down on 17 March, 1944, and was to stay there until I was demobbed on 21 June 1946. My settled way of life is perhaps reflected in the fact that entries in my diary are few for the rest of the year being mainly records of films and plays seen. My diary for 1945, election year is missing, so I am entirely dependent on my memory.

If one had to spend two years with the RAF, Boscombe was probably one of the best places to do so. It was an experimental station and was linked with the RAE at Farnborough, (Ronald's former workplace) and employed civilians as well as service personnel. The experiments were in the main minor adjustments to planes already in service such as Lancasters, Halifaxes and Mosquitos. Occasionally a brand new plane arrived although I never worked on any. Most exciting was the first jet fighter some time towards the end of 1944.

Boscombe was on a down - a lovely place, too good to be polluted by a permanent RAF station. It was half a mile down the hill to Amesbury which provided a cinema and, in the summer, the River Avon to bathe in. There were buses from the camp gate to Salisbury, (10 miles) where there were cinemas, services canteens, a public library and, of course, the cathedral, which I often visited for quiet contemplation.

Salisbury also had The Garrison Theatre. One result of the war was the development of serious live theatre away from the West End. I went to many performances in Salisbury. Famous names such as Googie Withers and Edith Evans did spells in residence. I once returned early from leave to see Edith Evans as Mrs Malaprop. Later on a hitching leave in Scotland I saw a wonderful performance of The Cherry Orchard (Chekov) at a similar little theatre at Perth. Nottingham Playhouse was a later result of these wartime garrison theatres.

I went to a lot of London theatre during the war years. I usually fitted a play in on my way to and from Preston, always travelling on the overnight train. I took my services travel warrants - as far as I can remember we got four a year - to somewhere a long way off such as Preston or Scotland which involved going via London. There was a convenient YWCA hostel near Selfridges. I was lucky in never being in London during an air raid, but the sight of people camped out for the night on the underground platforms was a constant reminder of what they were going through while we enjoyed peaceful Salisbury Plain. Particularly memorable performances I saw at the New Theatre where the Old Vic Company had taken up wartime residence - The Old Vic theatre was destroyed in an air raid - were Lawrence Olivier in Oedipus Rex and Richard III, and Ralph Richardson in An Inspector Calls.

Salisbury Plain was great cycling country - especially so in war time since there was very little motor traffic and double summer time meant that long rides were possible after work. Stonehenge was three miles away; in those days you could walk among the stones. One of the EVT instructors with whom I later worked, Phil Rhatz, was an amateur archaeologist. I was invited to see the private excavation of a barrow near his home in the Mendips that he and his wife were engaged on. This was the start of my interest in prehistory and led eventually via Gordon Childe's What Happened in History to the Marxist pre-history course I taught to the first year at Long Eaton

Grammar School. When David went to High Pavement he developed my course further. Unfortunately I never taught history again. Phil Rhatz later became a professional archaeologist.

When I first arrived the WAAF's were living in the married quarters, which meant two or three girls to a room - a big improvement on the usual 20+ to a hut. To our dismay we were later moved to a huge barrack block near the main gate. We were told this was for our safety. None of us ever felt in any danger! At least it was convenient for picking up the Daily Worker from the guard room every morning. Later towards the end we moved back to M.Qs.

At first we were working out on the flights, I was on D. per T. a mile or so from the main buildings. As at Greenham we were doing daily inspections in the open air. Later, however, it was decided that our extra training should be used, and all WAAF fitters were sent to work in the hangars on major inspections. This was much less to my liking since it meant indoor work. Aero engines on bombers are ten foot or more above the ground so we did most of our work on mobile wheeled platforms that could be adjusted for height. Once when moving one it collapsed and my thumb was badly cut - had I been holding it a hair's breadth further in it could have been severed. I had several days off work. Neither on the flight nor in the hangar was there really enough work, and we spent a lot of time sitting about in the sun or in the crew room, which meant many opportunities for political discussion. I learned all about cycle maintenance and including how to true a wheel. Friends elsewhere also found themselves without enough work while industry was desperate for more labour.

The WAAF fitters at Boscombe were a wonderful crowd to be with. They came from all over the country and had varied backgrounds. Closest to me politically was Sheila McMillan, who came from Glasgow. She read my Daily and took part in the 45 election campaign. Her close friend was Monty (Monica) Fawcett who was proud to be the great granddaughter of Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the women's suffrage leader, of whom I am ashamed to say I had never heard,

Sheila had been in since near the beginning of the war and so was one of the first of us to be demobbed. I took a leave rail warrant to Glasgow and went to visit her. Seeing the conditions her family lived in shocked me. They had a flat in an old tenement block. It was several storeys up and was approached by a stone staircase. The parents' bed was in a built in alcove in the one living room - rather like the peasant bed over the stove. There was one other tiny room where Sheila slept and a small scullery. The shared toilet was across the stairway. There was of course no bathroom. I had read about these Glasgow tenements, but finding someone I knew well actually living in one had a deep impact on me. Sheila couldn't settle to life in Glasgow again. The last I heard of her was that she had joined up again.

Then there were May and Kay. May Whitty, who came from Glandford, was left wing and helped with the election campaign. May was badly let down by a sergeant at Boscombe to whom she was engaged. He was posted abroad and never answered her letters although she found out that he was safe and well. Kay Leake, from Kings Lynn, was a formidable six footer whom I remembered from Halton. She was older than most of us and had worked as an institutional manageress. Kay was not political and did not really approve of my activities. She enjoyed the theatre though, and cycling so we often went out together. Another interesting girl was Daphne who had worked at

the Inns of Court as a lawyer's clerk.

I got on particularly well with Lorna Wildish from Paignton, a former local government clerk. She had an adventurous spirit and was a good hitching companion. She was a champion swimmer and used to tour round entering swimming galas in order to collect the prizes. I hitched home with her on a 48 and had my first sight of the red cliffs of South Devon.

When you joined you were issued with "irons", knife, fork and spoon, which you kept in the breast pocket of your battledress and brought to every meal. We also carried our own mugs. I came to realize how unnecessary much of the washing up done in the home was. Food at Boscombe was good and helpings generous. Nevertheless there were the inevitable complaints and somehow or other I found myself on a messing committee representing the WAFs. Orderly officers used to come round at meal times asking "Any complaints?" Few people dared to say anything so to their credit the camp authorities decided to put some other ranks on to the job and set up a committee to hear their findings. So we had to go round asking opinions. It was an interesting excursion into democracy symptomatic of the times.

There are no references in my diaries to the progress of the war except an entry "The second front" on 6.6,44, what the party had campaigned for for so long had finally happened. We had been aware that something was about to happen from the increased numbers of troops in the area - the huge army camp of Bulford was near Boscombe. I remember the Canadians particularly since I had a date with a Canadian I met at a dance at Bulford. He never turned up. On June 6 I understood why.

After V .E. excitement mounted for the approaching general election. Voting registration forms had been available for some time and we encouraged people to register. By this time I had come across Labour supporters amongst the RAF we worked with, as well as the WAAF.

Sometime in May 1945, one of the civilian engineers who worked at Boscombe noticed that Sheila was reading a Left Book Club book in the NAAFI, and got talking to her. Through him - Alan Yates - we were put in contact with the Labour election campaign. We started going down to the Labour committee room - then known as the Labour Hall - in Ameshury every evening.

Because of paper shortages there were no leaflets. Open air meetings were still the means of getting the message over to the electorate. Salisbury was a rural constituency with widely separated villages. The Boscombe WAAF group undertook organizing Labour meetings in the villages. We would cycle to the villages a day or so beforehand, stick up posters if we had any and chalk notices over the ground or any other convenient place. There was plenty of natural chalk lying around to use. We then formed a core of supporters at the meetings. The speakers were almost all civilians working at Boscombe. Among them was Frank Myerscough. He enjoyed speaking but because he was a communist the Labour Party would not let him speak in Salisbury. They probably didn't know what the Boscombe group was up to out in the country. After the election I got to know Frank very well.

By this time we were allowed to go cycling in "sportswear" i.e., civvies. This was essential for our chalking activities. It was glorious summer weather, the evenings lengthened by double summer time. It was great fun.

I took leave for the week of the election and went home. Pap had joined Commonwealth, a new political party started by Sir Richard Acland. There was a Commonwealth candidate for Aldershot - Tom Wintringham who had fought in Spain. There was no Labour candidate; they left Commonwealth to fight the hopeless constituencies. They won no seats and disappeared soon after the election. Nevertheless I did my best for Tom Wintringham on my week's leave. The organisers came from the RAE in Farnborough. I can remember canvassing Fleet Road with them. It was a strange experience to go round the back of the shops one knew well and find unexpected support. About this time someone painted TORY TOWN on the canal bridge at the town boundary. Perhaps this was when the Tory was elected. On election day I drove the car out in the country near Turners Green Farm where we used to live taking people to vote. They were tenants of the Elvetham Estate; I had to remove the Labour poster from the car in case they were seen and reported to the "Lord of the Manor". Some intensive canvassing had been done to find these people and arrange for them to be fetched. Some were several miles from the polling station. My own vote was a proxy cast by Pap.

We had to wait three weeks for the results while the overseas services votes came in. There was wild rejoicing in the hangar and a lot of people were surprised. I wasn't. I'd known we would win.

After the election we tried to get a discussion group going in Amesbury. We thought it would help if we could get the WEA involved. I can't remember where we met or whether the WEA did help - there were certainly no fees or enrolments. Frank was the tutor at the first meeting on "Soviet Democracy", I noted in my diary: Rather a failure - could only get a few from camp - old timers - quite a lot of civilians, Harry's contacts from Durrington etc, By today's standards one would rate this a major success!

In the meantime Sheila, May and I enrolled for a "real" WEA course in Salisbury on The Theory of Political Economy, We found it dull, Our Amesbury effort was much better. I made notes at the time of a chance encounter - typical of war time -on our way back from this meeting. We had missed the last bus, so had to hitch hack to camp

Frank comes with us to the bridge, the hitching point, I send him back, He would spoil our chances.

We stand on that corner some minutes, two airborne drift up
'Blast them! They'll finish us,
'Don't speak,"
Car whizzes by -,
Airborne; 'Must be a capitalist,"

May pricks up her ears, Speaks to them. Soon in the middle of a political howdy. Lift on hack of lorry, Continue talking to airbornes, Officer and sergeant. Officer a party member, sgt near, Tell them where we'd been; Marxist discussion group Whew! Officer off to Germany tomorrow, (disappointed - he was rather nice) Sgt. will come to Amesbury D.G. and bring others. They walk up the hill with us. I with the officer - forgotten his name - Bert, the sgt, told me later he wrote poetry,

'Will you keep your heart free for me, Jo?

Like so many others I never saw him again, Ships that pass in the night. .

Our next Amesbury discussion group was a great success. More came from Boscombe, and Bert turned up with friends. Subject; Problems facing the Labour Government., again introduced by Frank, who had to leave before the end as he had no lights on his bike leaving me to carry on.,

Aug, 6 1945 - the day they dropped the bomb - fell on August bank holiday. We had the day off and I had retreated to the WAAF crew room in the hangar for a peaceful read.

Frank had come in to work - I don't know why. Knowing about my retreat he came to tell me what had happened. I can remember our horror and also our conclusion that this was so terrible that there could never never be another war. The idealism of youth in 1945!

After D Day the RAF had started planning for after the war. EVT - the Educational and Vocational Training scheme was announced and anyone with any educational or technological qualifications was invited to apply to be instructors, I put in an application and in November 1944 was sent on a two week training course to RAF Snitterton near Stratford on Avon, (Babs Briant, the fortune teller, whom I had known at Hednesford was stationed there permanently. I was glad to see her again.) It was an excellent course. The ordeal was having to give a lecture - something I had never done before. I hitched home to Fleet at the weekend to collect some university notes and gave my talk on the French Revolution. I think I decided this would be easier than talking about a pre 1820 writer, (Literature for the London BA, ended in 1820)

After VE, they started to adapt the gas decontamination building for use as an education centre. Once windows and interior partitions had been put in, it served its purpose well. Courses did not start, however, till after V.I. day. In mid August I went to the Education Officer "Johnnie" and demanded an EVT job. To my amazement I got one, On Mon, Aug, 27 I gave up fitting and became an English teacher. Johnnie was a former teacher from Stockport Grammar School (Direct Grant). He was easy going and on the whole left us to get on in our own way. I taught English and History. I offered to teach civics as well, but he said MI5 would not allow that. This was quite a shock to me. No doubt my election activities for the Labour Party had been noted as well as the Daily at the guard room.

The scheme was well planned with syllabuses and text books provided. As far as I can remember there was a certificate for those completing so many sessions, I can't remember there being any exams. Most of the students were RAF with a fair sprinkling of NCOs. For disciplinary reasons EVT instructors were promoted to sergeant, but it was January before this went through the official channels and we could sew on our tapes and get all the back pay owed to us. I then got a room to myself of which I was glad, but had to go and eat in the sergeants' mess which I hated. There were only about 6 WAFF sergeants on the camp, and the men were mostly regulars and not friendly.

To start with there were only four instructors one of whom was Phil Rhatz. For a long time I was the only WAAF. Later another fitter, Dorothy Charlesworth, who had served a tailoring apprenticeship, joined us and

later still a girl from Peru to teach Spanish. Towards the end of my time two ex-air crew arrived. It was a stimulating group to be in - far more so than some staff rooms I experienced later.

Early in 1946 I went on another course - this time for intending teachers at Reading University. As well as lectures we visited different types of school and spent three days in the type of school we were hoping to teach in. I landed Kendrick Girls' Grammar, I had intended to stay at the YW in Reading, but after one night found it so awful I went home to Fleet and successfully hitched to Reading for 9a.m every morning - about 20 miles,

Soon after this I applied to the London Institute of Education (housed in the University Senate House in Gower St.). I was interviewed by Miss Nancy Martin, who I later discovered was a party member. She told me I was just the sort of applicant the teaching profession needed! I was accepted for September 1946.

The last few months were difficult ones, First Frank left for a job with Lever Brothers. Then one by one my WAAF friends left to be demobbed. Married WAAFs were let out first, which put all the rest of us back and was greatly resented. The singles were demobbed on the basis of length of service and age, Sheila, Kay, May and Daphne all went long before I did.

About this time I made my further acquaintance with the WEA, Phil Rahtz and I went to an art appreciation class in Salisbury. The tutor was one of my election campaign contacts.

Finally my turn came, Obedient parents brought the car to Boscombe the preceding Sunday - they had farming petrol throughout the war - and collected my possessions, cycle, bomb box (The box we kept our clothes in; now covered with green material and mounted on castors), various books the Education Officer had allowed me to take from the EVT library - bless him! - and many other things. I shall always remember Mother's horror at the dirty untidy EVT crew room where I had assembled my stuff. One night at Wythall near Birmingham, and on Fri, June 21 I was out with a travel warrant to Falmouth to stay with my old school friend Dora at St. Mawes.

I had been a WAAF for 31/2 years.

DEMOB LEAVE SUMMER '46

I made the most of my leave; I travelled far and revisited amongst others my relatives,

I took my demob warrant to Falmouth, My Danesfield friend Dora -formerly Dalzell now Carlisle - was living at St Mawes across the estuary. My train arrived after the last ferry had left and I was faced with a night in the open, Nothing daunted I knocked on the nearest door and asked them to take me in, it turned out to be an undertaker's! However the kindly lady who answered the door befriended a lost ex-WAAF and gave me a bed for the night, In spite of my entreaties she refused to be paid, Next morning I took the ferry to St Mawes.

Dora had joined the WRNS, and soon on the strength of her middle class background was commissioned. After a couple of years she got married to a naval officer, left the WRNS and had two babies. Just after the youngest was born, her husband was killed. A WREN friend, who came from a wealthy family living at St Mawes, got her a cottage there that belonged to the family and was unoccupied. Dora was in luck. It was a lovely little cottage near the harbour just suited to her and her two little girls. Soon after she got there the son of the family whom she had met some time before through her friend, came home and they decided to get married. This was a month or so before I arrived. She was waiting for him to be demobbed.

Dora hadn't changed and we had a good time. She was very much tied by having two small children to look after on her own. I was slightly horrified when she locked them in their room's midmorning for a rest and took me sailing, leaving them alone in the house. When I became a mum I couldn't have done this. This was the first time I'd ever been in a sailing boat.

From Dora's I explored Cornwall hitching to Lands End and staying at the youth hostel there. I was disappointed in Lands End; Cape Cornwall was more spectacular and beautiful.

While at St Mawes I looked up Babs Briant whom I had known at Hednesford and met again at Snitterfield. Babs claimed to be able to tell fortunes. There certainly was something about her that impressed us all. She told me things about my past which it seemed to me she had no means of knowing. Who knows? I wrote down what she said. Some of it did come true - but perhaps she could have deduced this from understanding my character. She said for example that I would seek one ideal type of man and marry a business man with money. David did have money but was the antithesis of a business man. Babs was shaken to find I was staying with a Carlisle. They apparently owned most of St Mawes and were not I gathered particularly liked.

From St Mawes I hitched to Plymouth. One lift was from a man who was running a Ministry of Agriculture holiday camp (holidays working on the land) across the water from St Mawes. I decided I would go there in August when my demob leave was over and I could no longer stay at services hostels. After Plymouth on to Exeter. Here I was impressed that the woman at the YW where I stayed did not as they did everywhere else ask me to spell Withycombe. It was a local name.

From Exeter I made to Dunster for two nights with my Aunt Gladys and Cousin Jane. They were still in the greenhouse business but were growing other things as well as tomatoes. Jane had the beginnings of M.S.

From Dunster on to Compton Martin in the Mendips for two nights with Phil Rhatz and his wife. I was taken to work on their barrow and afterwards for a lovely evening swim in Blagdon Lake, a disused lead mine. Then home to Fleet.

I was at home for a fortnight except for cycling to Oxford for two nights at Betty's and hitching to London for a day. Then I was off again hitching to Liverpool via Shrewsbury to see Frank briefly before going on to the Withingtons at Preston. From there to Liverpool by train this time - to see Frank again before sailing for Dublin.

My cousin Lois Spittal had married a minister from Belfast, the Rev. Robert Elliott. Lois had spent a lot of time at Fleet before she got married. Mother thought she should repay this hospitality by providing me with a holiday in Ireland. By this time they were living in Dublin. However, Lois and her two children were away in the Isle of Mann where she had grown up. I think she thought this reply would put me off but it didn't. I wanted to visit Ireland so I went to Dublin to stay with the Rev. The poor fellow must have found me very difficult and I certainly found little in common with him. However he did provide board and lodging even if as my diary notes his bread was green with mould.

I saw Dublin and was shocked by it. I had never seen children begging in the streets before; the slums were worse than Glasgow. I sought the Abbey Theatre. It was booked out for a militant Catholic play The Righteous are Bold. However I did get in to see Sean O'Casey's Shadow of a Gunman at another theatre which I enjoyed. Prices were cheap ranging from 5/- to 9d. Dublin shops were packed with things we hadn't seen in England since the beginning of the war. I borrowed the Rev.'s bike and cycled out of town towards the hills, and another day to the sea where my diary records a lovely bathe. The Rev.'s bike was old and heavy and very hard work and I was beginning to get tired of Dublin and him. Fortunately he had to go to Belfast by car and offered to take me there. I found Belfast ugly and clearly English - unlike Dublin where you knew you were in a foreign country. I spent the night at the YW and next day walked round Belfast before taking a train to Larne, I sailed overnight for Stranraer, fare 6/3.

I started hitching at 6 am and got to Carlisle by lunchtime. Dead tired, I fell asleep in the NAAFI club. Then on to Kendal and overnight at the YM there. Then on to Liverpool to see Frank over a weekend. On the Monday I set out for London,

I remember one very long lift down the A5 from a kindly lorry driver who tried to warn me about the dangers I faced in hitching by myself. Perhaps that was why I took a train home from Waterloo.

I allowed myself one day to recover before setting off for London again to fix up lodgings for October. My demob leave was about to end and I would no longer be able to stay at service hostels. I booked a bedsit with Mrs Turner at 86 Leathwaite Rd, Battersea, I also saw another O'Casey play at Unity Theatre, The Star Turns Red,

I was home for 10 days before setting out again. During this time I visited Alec in Guildford. She was about to leave to join her husband in Egypt. And Dora called at the Pavilion with her two kids. She had left St Mawes for the time being so I would not see her on my forthcoming trip to Cornwall. This turned out to be the last time we met. We kept writing; she sent me her karricot for Michael; but when we moved from Derby Rd the horrid woman who bought the house sent none of our letters on and I lost touch with a lot of people, Dora was one.

I set off for my agricultural work holiday via Minehead to visit the aunts, Mother's sisters Dolly and Bertha. I hadn't seen them since 1939. They were very pleased to see me. While I was there for the first time I walked the length of the North Hill from Minehead to Porlock. A great walk overlooking the Bristol Channel. I also visited our old mother's help, Miss Brickell, at Wooton Courtnay. She was still in the job Pap had got her when she left us in 1929 - keeping house for Noel Docker, one of Pap's rich polo friends, She outlived him, and he left her his house and an income to match,

The agricultural work holiday proved a fiasco in that there was practically no work so we couldn't pay for our board. We spent our time going for walks in the neighbourhood or hitching to places further afield including St Ives. I stayed only just over a week. On my way home I had a record long lift from Honiton to Hartford Bridge where I left the A30 for Fleet.

Next week I started 3 weeks preliminary teaching practice at Cove senior elementary school.

The I. of E.

The Institute of Education was housed in part of the University Senate building in Malet St., We had lectures etc on Mondays, Weds and Fridays, and teaching practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There was a final 3 week teaching practice in May. It was a good system combining theory and practice. I enjoyed the course very much, including the teaching practice.

My teaching practice was at Nonsuch Girls' Grammar at Cheam. This meant a very expensive, if convenient, journey by Southern Fly from Clapham junction. I could have protested and got moved into an inner London School, but I liked the school and decided to stay. The fares would have made a huge hole in my grant so I decided to buy the minimum number of tickets: a monthly return which I always kept with me to cover the whole journey should an inspector come round, and returns to the next stations to Clapham and Cheam, It was incredibly easy, and I imagine many other people were doing the same thing. Railways would soon be nationalized by the Labour Government so there was no sense of guilt.

At the Institute I was soon in touch with the Soc Soc. There were about a dozen activists and unsurprisingly most of us were party members. David was one. We decided to run a literature stall at lunch time on the days we were at the Institute. I was the Lit. secretary and had to obtain supplies from Colletts in Charing Cross Rd, and later from the Fabian Society. Party policy was to campaign for multilateral schools - later called comprehensives; the Fabian Soc. had produced an excellent pamphlet on the subject which sold well.

I can remember very little about our political activities at the Institute. We had occasional meetings with outside speakers such as the well-known communist head teacher, G.T.C.Giles, and ran a successful campaign to get David elected as president of the students' Union. I was seeing a lot of David. I can remember going to Daily Worker dance with him, after which he walked home with me to Battersea - about 6 miles. He then walked back again to Bloomsbury.

Since I had to pay my rent anyhow, I stayed in London over most of the two vacations. I had my cycle in London - Mrs Turner allowed me to keep it in her front hall which was very kind of her. Jan. and Feb. brought the great freeze so I didn't use it much. I remember the snow lying on the ground on my first visit to the Barn. During the Easter vac, we cycled to Canterbury for two or 3 days. We decided to get married immediately after the end of teaching practice; we actually took the last day, May 16, off to go to the St Pancras registry office. So I left 86 Leathwaite Rd and went to live in Highbury - address forgotten - for the rest of the term which included the exams. I had to pay back the remainder of my grant which brought home to me for the first time that I of all people had married money!

In July we went to Yugoslavia to work on the youth railway. In August, after brief stays with both sets of parents, we went to Nottingham to find somewhere to live and to find David a job. I already had one, at Long Eaton Grammar School.

OMLADINSKA PRUGA

I'm not sure when I wrote my account of our holiday with Omladinska Pruga, the Yugoslav Youth Railway in Bosnia. It must have been after our return. I regret I didn't continue with an account of Dubrovnik and our return journey - now a distant memory.

We were enchanted by Dubrovnik and were determined to return, which of course we did, (1964?) No motor vehicles were allowed inside the city walls, the first pedestrianised city centre in the world? Not that there were many motors in 1947 Yugoslavia. We were there for about five days before setting off on the return journey by coastal steamer to Split - another voyage I longed to repeat. We had time to see something of how Diocletian's palace and been turned into a city before taking the train back. How slow it was and where we stopped I can't remember. We had decided to get off at Strasbourg and make our own way back from there.

I found the Strasbourg I visited in 1995 quite unrelated to the small medieval town we stayed in where women were doing their washing by the river. We went by tram to St Odile in the Jura and walked along a huge prehistoric wall. We continued via Paris about which I can remember little except how revolting the food was - especially the bread which contained a high proportion of maize flour.

Prominent amongst the English Brigade on the railway was a charismatic young man called Edward Thompson, who had a band of devoted followers. His brother had been killed fighting with the partisans in Bulgaria; we remembered reading about him in the D.W. Edward Thompson became well known as E.P. Thompson, historian and anti-nuclear campaigner.

The first central C.P. meeting we went to in Nottingham in 1948 was about Tito's break with the USSR. David made a pro-Tito speech. Events of the last few years vindicate Tito's Yugoslavia; neither in 1947 or in the 60's were we aware of "ethnic" divisions or frontiers between the republics,

We didn't move much earth on the railway, but it did lead us to return to Yugoslavia for six holidays. On the last to Krk and Cres in 1988 with the WEA we learnt that our youth railway was no longer in use.

NOTTINGHAM

My diary for the momentous year of 1947 is the only one that has got lost, so I have only my memory to rely on for our first months in the area in which we had chosen to make our home.

It was a considered decision, We wanted to get away from London and its surroundings and make our life in or near a city large enough to give scope for us both to find jobs. With fond memories of Preston, I longed to return to the north, but David was less keen and the distance from our families had to be considered. We agreed that the other would go wherever the first one got a job. Bristol came up first. I was invited to an interview for what sounded like an ideal job involving the integration of English and history - something I was very interested in - but the interview was cancelled. Nottingham came up next with the job at Long Eaton Grammar School.

After a few nights at the Portland Hotel, still there overlooking the canal near the Midland Station, we took two furnished rooms with Mrs Carlin at Gwenbrook Avenue, Chilwell.

Mrs Carlin lived alone with a snappy fox terrier. Her previous tenants had been angels and we quickly fell short of expectations: we opened the bedroom window at night; moved some books from the shelves in our sitting room to make room for our own; and sometimes had lights on in two rooms at once, Nevertheless we spent four happy months at Gwenbrook Avenue. Before term began we used to walk down Meadow Lane to the Trent to swim. We lunched frequently at the Beeston British restaurant which was still flourishing - the period of maximum rationing which was to include potatoes was just beginning. Later in the autumn on Sundays we walked the outskirts of Nottingham - Bilborough, Strelley etc - later to be built over and made our first expeditions into Derbyshire.

The first job David applied for was at the Adult Education Centre in Shakespeare St. which was in the process of restoration and re-organisation. With his army experience in Education after VE, he thought he had just the right background, but they told him he was over-qualified. Was it fear that he might move on or fear of someone with obvious left wing views? Looking back it was a tragedy. It was a job he would have loved and in which he could have achieved much.

He was determined not to work in a grammar school. Instead he took a job at The People's College, then housed in the Albert Hall Institute (now demolished) next door to the Albert Hall. Most of his students were Post Office messenger boys on day release. He taught them English and maths; and - since they might advance up the P.O. promotion, ladder from postman to sorter - post office geography of the U.K. He only stayed in this job a year. Early in 1948 he met John Murray through the NUT who persuaded him to apply for a job at High Pavement Grammar School.

We gave ourselves a holiday from the party during our four months at Chilwell, We both found the first term of teaching quite exhausting. One party member did, however, discover us through contacts with the Youth Railway. He was John Marshall who lived nearby and was reading Economic History with Prof. Chambers at the University. He went on to become a

leading light in the economic history world.

On New Year's Day, 1948 we moved into 284 Derby Road. It was a solidly built late Victorian house. It was too big for us, but the location was ideal. The bus to Long

Eaton passed the door and it took David less than 10 minutes to get to the Albert Hall. He wore out many brake blocks going down Derby Rd hill. We decided the answer was to let some of the house. It was a lucky decision. At the time we had no idea how ideal this arrangement was going to prove when we had children. Without it I might never have got back to teaching as early as I did.

John Marshall, I think, found us our first tenants: Jim and Jean Austin and their two children, Margaret, who was just starting school, and Alan. David carefully worked out a fair rent to charge so that we made no profit from the arrangement. Jim, who was ex-service, was in the first year of a French degree at the university. They stayed with us for the four years we lived at Derby Rd, by which time Jim was completing his teachers' diploma. It was an amicable relationship and even survived the two occasions on which we let the gas boiler we used to heat our bath water overflow and deluge their kitchen sitting room below.

LENTON BRANCH

Once established at Derby Rd we got in touch with the party through the district office at 4 Fletcher Gate. A measure of the strength of the C.P. was the fact that there were offices with full time workers in most major cities. 4 Fletcher Gate (now demolished) was owned by Alf Marshall. He had been to prison as a C.O. during the first World War and was an old-style socialist. He ran an estate agent's business from the ground floor and let the top floor to the Party. There was a bookshop, an office with a duplicator, and a small room for the district secretary, Mick Jenkins. There were three other full-time political workers (Fred Westacott, John Peck and someone from Leicester whose name I've forgotten) and a clerical worker, Meryl Bent,

We became members of Lenton branch, There were two party branches in Nottm South constituency, Meadows and Lenton. They were very different, Meadows, with its decaying nineteenth century housing - most of it now gone - was almost entirely working class. Here lived Mick himself and John Peck, newly arrived from Scunthorpe with his teacher wife, Roma. Lenton was predominantly middle class with pockets of working class housing in Lenton round Willoughby St, and Dunkirk. One of our most memorable comrades, Arthur Noon, lived in one of the few surviving back to back houses off Willoughby St where the Willoughby flats now are. Arthur and his brother had come up through the YCL. He was a window cleaner and one would often meet him cleaning shop windows in the city centre. He was later re-housed at Clifton. Arthur was later able to re-live his days in the JCL when he helped to get the Woodcraft Folk going in Nottingham.

A leading comrade was Mrs Evans who was a lot older than the rest of us - probably in her late fifties. She was an authority on Marxism and was a tutor at party schools. She lived near us in Seely Road with her son, Bill, who was in the process of qualifying as an architect. Marjorie Griffiths, who taught at a special school, and her husband, Charlie, a fellow French

student with Jim Austin, were two others who lived near us. The party solicitor, Ken Parvin, was also a member of the branch. His wife, Betty, wrote poetry. Both were remote from basic party activities like Daily Worker drives, (Ken was our family solicitor until he retired.)

Increasing the sales of the party's newspaper was one of our main objectives. A group of us would target a group of streets and go round from door to door selling the paper and trying to persuade people to take it regularly on Saturdays, or better still place a regular order through a newsagent. If we got orders we then had to deliver them every weekend. I had a regular round in Dunkirk. The annual Daily Worker bazaar was an important fund-raising event. I believe it is still going on even though the Worker is now the Morning Star.

The Daily was our most effective propaganda tool. It was widely read outside the Party, and was to be found in public libraries and even in school libraries, such as to my amazement - Rushcliffe Boys' School. They took it at The Barn, not just, I think because of David. It was a slim tabloid sized paper - slim because it lacked advertisements. It survived because the USSR and other E. European countries placed large standing orders. There were some first rate contributors such as J.B.S. Haldane, whose popular science articles became famous, and the cartoonist, Gabriel (Recent. Guardian obituary).

In 1949 Nottingham was due to celebrate the quincentenary of the granting of its charter. The party decided to produce a pamphlet outlining the history of the city from a socialist viewpoint. I was asked to co-ordinate the research and produce a draft. I was at home expecting Michael so had plenty of time for this. A number of people volunteered to help - among them Peter Price and Heinz Dessau - and we had several meetings, but I ended up writing most of it except the final page which Mick Jenkins rewrote as a rallying call for people to join the party. There was a socialist parade during the celebrations with people dressed in historical costume. Roma Peck and I were puritans, (Photograph in Nottingham in Old Photographs p.28/29).

David never took to street campaigning. He was happier at committee and education work. For the first year we were in Nottingham he was on the national council of NUS which took him to many weekend meetings in London and elsewhere. One of the things he was proud of achieving was getting Training College (later Col. of Ed.) students to join NUS. When the year was over he soon found himself on the East Midlands District Committee of the Party which he stayed on till we both left the party in 1957.

The one person he seemed not to hit it off with was John Peck. John was undoubtedly a very valuable party asset. Here was a tall, good looking young man from a working class background, intelligent, fluent - and ex-aircrew with a DFC. Mick described him as "a good physical type". John, though, was understandably interested in John's career. It was important for him to go to party congress as soon as possible. So when David was nominated as a delegate by the district committee, John pulled hidden strings and got himself substituted. David was furious.

The party often had difficulty in finding the wages of the full-time workers. John was the one who most often missed out. The fact that he was married to a teacher earning a good wage was undoubtedly a factor in this.

Roma greatly resented having to keep the family and protests came from the Lenton and Meadows branch. When their marriage broke up about 1960, Roma talked to a Sunday paper, and doubtless recouped her lost earnings. John's misfortune was not to be able to leave the party with the mass exodus following Hungary in 1956. With his undoubted talents he would have become a leading Labour politician. To their credit all the East Midlands full-time workers remained loyal.

MICHAEL

In a fit of depression after two terms at Long Eaton, I handed in my notice and almost immediately regretted it, I applied to Nottm City for a 2 Mod job, Only grammar schools advertised in the Times Ed. in those days; 2 Mod appointments - apart from headships - were dealt with by the office. I was interviewed by the legendary Mr Hutchinson who had a reputation for holding career details of every teacher in the city in his head. He remembered me again five years later when I applied for supply work which I found sinister to say the least, M,I,5 again? I was unjustly suspicious. Mr Hutchinson died recently. In his obituary in The Post, his fantastic memory for people was commented on.

The prospect was uninviting; I would get an appointment but Mr Hutchinson could not say where, On the strength of this we decided to bring Michael forward by a year. I had intended to do at least two years teaching before taking time off to ensure getting back again - which I had always been determined to do. David thought we were already old to be parents at 27/29, I decided to have the autumn term off and not take one of Mr Hutchinson's jobs,

Michael was amongst the first batch of babies to be cared for from conception to birth and onwards by the NHS, We were registered with Dr Pettigrew in Lenten Boulevard. She was in practice by herself and didn't even have a secretary. There were no appointments in those days so visits to the doctor meant long waits. Dr Pettigrew referred me to The Firs Maternity Hospital in Sherwood - now sheltered flats- and I went to ante-natal clinics there.

I found pregnancy dreadful, I was constantly tired and had a lot of backache. In January I had a quite severe attack of bronchitis and had to go to an antenatal by taxi. Dr Pettigrew paid several home visits. I can still vividly remember feeling frighteningly weak and scarcely able to dress.

I did a lot of reading about childbirth and child care and in particular I read Dr Grantley Dick Read on relaxation. It was not yet accepted that relaxation could help to overcome pain, but Reid's book seemed to me to make sense. I decided to try it, and following the instructions in the book I taught myself relaxation, When finally arrived at the Firs in labour, I told the nurses I wanted to try relaxation. They clearly thought I was mad, but left me alone to try it. My labour was painful certainly, but not agonising - and I needed no stitches, It was very different from Ian's birth at home with an unsympathetic midwife who made me walk about. It was hell - and I had to have stitches.

They looked after us well in the Firs, Everyone was kept in for at least 10 days -longer if there were complications, so you went home feeling strong and able to cope. The regime was somewhat authoritarian by today's standards. The babies were kept in a separate nursery, which meant peaceful nights, and were brought in at regular 4 hourly intervals for compulsory breast feeding during the day. Each mother had a jug of water by her bed and was commanded to keep drinking. I was in a pleasant ward with 4 others looking out over the lawns where the daffodils were in flower. I enjoyed my stay.

Communication with fathers was not so good, David came with me in the ambulance to the Firs at about 8 at night on March 20, Michael was born at 12.40 am on the 21st. David phoned for information at regular intervals throughout the first day and from early morning on the second. Every time the message was "No change." Finally late on the second day he asked what this meant and was told "Mother and son doing well". Michael was not brought to me to be fed for 12 hours after he was born, I was assured he was all right and was resting. We wondered later whether something was wrong, and that was why they continued to say no change.

Some things have changed for the better; fathers were allowed a one hour visit daily and were not able to hold their babies.

We were not allowed to get out of bed for a week with the result that we lost the use of our legs. The same thing had happened when I had my appendix out in 1938. About 1 pm one night there was a crisis and no nurses were around to put our ward light out. Not one of us dared to get out of bed to switch it off. When I had Ian at home, I put my feet on the ground every day to make sure I would be able to walk when I needed to.

Dr Cochrane, the big chief, ran an efficient hospital, but his behaviour to individual patients could be abysmal. The woman in the next bed to me was married to a Pole. Dr Cochrane on his rounds noticed her name, asked her about her husband and proceeded to storm at her for having married a foreigner. The ward was furious but none of us dared say so.

Before Michael I had had absolutely experience of babies or small children and no interest in them, in fact I found babies rather revolting.

Michael changed this from the start he took over our lives; we found ourselves talking endlessly about his development and sitting watching him at meal times.

He was a "good" baby, The regular feeding regime established at the Firs worked. We had few disturbed nights. The one snag was that he absolutely refused a bottle. He started solid food in good time and, as far as I can remember, was weaned in 6 months. I still have a notebook recording his progress.

BSFS

Not long after Michael was born, Mick Jenkins invited me to Fletcher Gate to tell me that the party had decided that I should become secretary of the Nottm branch of the British Soviet Friendship Society - BSFS. I was not a member, and the BSFS already had a secretary, a well-meaning but not very efficient lady who was not a party member. It was an embarrassing situation that I was not fully aware of until I attended the AGM and was duly elected to the obvious annoyance of the former secretary.

The BSFS had developed out of the wartime Russia Today Society. The aim was to keep friendly feelings for our wartime ally alive and promote interest in what was going on there. With the cold war developing, this was an important political job and fitted in well with my long-standing interest in the Soviet Union.

One of our main activities was organising the showing of Russian films. The key person here was Bill Newbold, a quietly dedicated young man who owned 1) a large car and 2) an ancient 16 mill. film projector. The films, all black and white of course, were hired from Plato films, another party sideline run by Stanley Foreman, who was later involved in setting up Progressive Tours. Our main venue was in the old lecture theatre of what was then the Nottm & District Technical College, had been Nottm University College, and is now Nottm Trent Univ. We were able to hire this hall on Saturday nights. Well over 100 people used to come and sit on hard wooden seats to see Eisenstein's classics as well as more recent offerings.

We showed the film in Nottingham, and when possible took it to outlying places during the following week. Ilkeston, Heanor and Mansfield were the usual venues. And there were shows for children. Having been to one, Michael made a projector and, using toilet paper for film, ran film shows for his little brother. A photograph survives.

The great annual event in November was the visit of the Soviet Artistes - a mixed team of solo singers, dancers, violinists, etc who were sent by the Soviet Society for Cultural Relations with foreign Countries to be deployed by National BSFS round the country. We put them on at the Victoria Baths. In the winter they used to board over the main bath and use it for boxing. The boxing ring provided an ideal stage enabling have a performance in the round. There would also be a speaker.

The Soviet organisation regularly invited national BSFS to send delegations to the USSR. The members were M.P.s, councillors, T.U. officers and others with some local standing, with a couple of BSFS workers as secretaries. I was offered a turn in 1951, which I had to turn down, but another chance came later. Our local job was to publicize the visits of any local delegates and get them as many speaking engagements as possible. The Trades Council helped greatly by sending out our notices free with their circulation to trade unions.

Two local delegates stand out in my memory, George Rose, secretary of Hucknall NUM, because Michael aged one, made a puddle on his parlour carpet, and Mrs Hamilton, a Bulwell city councillor, a lovely woman with whom I stayed in touch and who did some good meetings for us. When I came back from my own visit to the USSR in 1954, I suggested to her that Minsk

would be a more effective twinning for Nottingham than Alma Ate which had been adopted during the war. She took up this idea, Nottingham is still twinned with Minsk.

I was BSFS secretary for about four years; I have kept just about no records - not a single one of my many circulars to members survives. These had to be a single sheet of foolscap, which could be folded without an envelope and posted at the cheap rate - still as far as I can remember 1d. I used to run them off at the party office in Fletcher Gate. I still have, though, some of the sticky labels I used for addresses. Three lots could be done at once with carbon, I also still have some of the carbon paper donated by the Derbys. NUM secretary Bert Wynne. We had over 200 members.

Literature was of course an important tool. Besides our own magazine, still called 'Russia Today', as during the war, the Soviet Society (VOKS) provided publications in English. There were various monthly periodicals. There was a big glossy one rather like a Sunday newspaper magazine, called, I think, Soviet Life. More interesting was Soviet Literature, a solid publication consisting of recent Soviet novels, the longer ones in two parts. These were available either free or at very low cost. Once you applied for them, delivery was said to go on forever. It was some achievement that I succeeded in getting my address changed when we moved house. Another international communist publication, For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy, known as For For, was also said never to cease arriving. We tried to get the address changed when we moved to Claremont Gdns, but For For never arrived there. The woman who bought 254 Derby Rd, who happened to be German, never forwarded any mail. We thought it might be because she was outraged at receiving For For every week. The BSFS ran The Russia Today Book club through which you could obtain Russian novels.

The BSFS national council met about four times a year. When the family situation became easier, I went to several meetings. Overnight hospitality was provided by London members. On one occasion I stayed at the Red House in Bromley, famous for being the house that William Morris built for himself. It had been divided into flats. Although I went to national council times and Nottingham was one of the most successful branches in the country, I never summoned up the courage to speak at any of the meetings,

In December 1953 I was offered another chance to go on a delegation - this time one specially for BSFS workers. David insisted I should go, Gwen agreed to have Michael; Anita, who looked after Ian for the two afternoons I was at work, agreed to come full time; the fact that Xmas holidays would cover some of the time was a help, So I went. Another story.

By this time a lot of new people had got involved with the BSFS, and I had managed to pass on the secretaryship and was dignified with the title of area organiser. Nottingham BSFS made no attempt to make use of my visit to the USSR. I had thought that they would at least inform the press and arrange at least one meeting - as I had done for previous delegates. Instead I had to set to work myself and send out my own notices offering to speak to organisations. In the end I did just over 50 meetings to audiences ranging from 100+ retired postal workers in a room over the old G P.O, to 3rd year Russian pupils at High Pavement. But I got no press coverage and an opportunity was certainly missed - I think because of jealousy and an element of male chauvinism on the part of the new BSFS secretary, (Ray Babot)

About 1954 the Co-op film society was started in the new Co-op education building in Broad St. The audience for Russian films on hard seats disappeared, At Party instigation I stood for election to the Co-op Education Committee and became involved with the Co-op film society. In September 1955, I started half-time teaching at Carlton Le Willows Grammar School and had little spare time for the BSFS. In 1956 came the 20th Congress and Hungary.

LEAVING THE PARTY

About a year after we left the CP. we went to a Humanist meeting where an ex-Catholic described the traumatic experience of leaving the Catholic Church. She was describing the experience we had been through in leaving the party.

There had since the thirties been rumours of labour camps in the Soviet Union. These resurfaced after the war but were generally dismissed by the left as cold war propaganda. Many of us were repulsed by the adulation accorded to Stalin and by the ubiquity of his most unattractive portrait. It was pointed out that the Russian people were accustomed to having a father figure, a leader, and it was necessary to replace the tzar. When Stalin died, as BSFS secretary, I had, reluctantly, to send a telegram of condolences.

Khrushchev's revelations to the twentieth congress of the CPSU in Feb, SE was a devastating bombshell which many of the left just refused to accept. There were long arguments in the party and many meetings were called. We went to a conference somewhere in Yorkshire called by "dissidents". I can remember nothing of what was said, only a glaring unshaded electric light bulb hitting me in the eyes. Was this symbolic?

But to return to our party activities in the early fifties . . .

When we moved to Claremont Gardens on July 4th, 1952 (Am. Independence Day) we were transferred to Central branch C.P. The camaraderie that had meant so much to me in the wartime Preston branch and which had still shadowly existed in Lenton branch was non-existent in Central. We never really got to know Central branch or to become involved in its activities - if there were any. This perhaps made it easier to leave the party after Hungary than it would have been in the cosy Lenton group.

For much of time David was not officially in the branch anyhow. About 1954 the three party members on High Pavement staff - John Murray, Harold Worthy, and David got the go ahead to start a workplace branch in the school. Workplace branches existed in factories but there were very few in schools. The three of them had regular lunch hour meetings in our front room at which they plotted activities in the NUT and discussed how they could further the re-organisation of the city schools on comprehensive lines. David was soon on the NUT black list. Leo Jordan, a party member and Michael's teacher, was told not to vote for him by her headmistress. David tried in vain every year to get on to the Nottm NUT committee,

David was also the secretary of a party teachers' group. He had started

this while we were at Derby Rd and it continued to meet largely at our house. Through this we got to know Betty Coates, who with her husband Ken, were our first upstairs lodgers at Claremont Gardens. Other members included Leo Comery (later Jordan as above), Alma Smith, Betty's sister, John Daniels, Peter Price, Wally Allen from Kimberley, John Taylor (married to Dorothy Field), Bill Cheeseman, Bill and John were members of the anti-feminist NAB: but could not be persuaded to move to the NUT.

In conjunction with a parallel teachers' group in Leicester they organised week-end schools at Whitsun based on a boarding house in Matlock. I used to go, but spent my time taking the boys on walks so felt very out of it.

After the '57 exodus, the teachers' group formed the nucleus of the Nottingham branch of NALT (Nat, Assn of Labour Teachers later S.E.A.) of which David was the first secretary. Following the election of the Wilson government, their main activity was planning the comprehensivisation of the City education system, outlined in "Education for all" 1965.

David's ambition was to be head of History in a comprehensive school. During the mid fifties many secondary moderns began to enter candidates for O levels. The County Director, J.Edward Mason - who incidentally later committed suicide under a London underground - forbade his schools to do so. Resulting parental protest forced the county council, which was then Conservative, to create more selective school places. A wave of new grammar and grammar-technical schools resulted including Carlton le Willows in 1954 and the Rushcliffes in 62. Many head of department jobs were going, but David would not apply for any of them, he was determined to wait for the first city comprehensive. This was to be Fairham - a huge boys only comprehensive on the newly built Clifton Estate. Boys only + the location + the choice of head meant that the school was doomed from the start. The head, one Thom, had been on the same staff as Jim Austen, so David wrote for his views. A cryptic card came back by return of post: 99% of our staff including me say DONT. Nevertheless David did. He applied, was interviewed, and, fortunately for him, rejected. The NUT blacklist for once worked in his favour, although he did not think so at the time. It is ironic that I should turn out to be the one who had the chance to be in on the beginning of a comprehensive, and that this should have arisen out of my taking a Head of Dept, in one of these new selective schools.

To return to leaving the party, Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin to the 20th Congress of the CPSUB early in 1956 came as a bombshell to Western communist parties. There were aspects of the Soviet system that many of us were not happy with such as the glorification of the leader. There had been many rumours about labour camps which the Worker had stoutly repudiated. However the scale of the repression came as a shock to everyone. Several meetings were held at the Trades Hall in Thurland St. (owned by the Trades Council and long-since closed) at which many viewpoints were expressed. A largish group led by John Daniels were for leaving the party immediately. The majority including us were for staying in.

The local party leadership throughout defended the Soviet party line including the sending of Soviet tanks to crush the Hungarian uprising in November. This was the line taken by the Worker and it was this unqualified acceptance of the line from Moscow which led to the mass resignations of 1957 and in effect the collapse of the British party as a significant political force. There was endless discussion and soul searching. More

aggregate meetings, Heart to hearts with Mick Jenkins, Various "dissident" publications appeared. In April we went to the "dissident" weekend school at Wortley Hall in Yorkshire which decided nothing. I can't remember - and the diaries don't say - when we left or which of us went first.

I received a letter from Mick Jenkins regretting my decision and thanking me for my work for the party. This was gracious. David got no acknowledgement, perhaps because he had been a member of the district committee to the end. This was mean. He had been slanged by the local dissidents for staying in so long and was now allowed to go without protest by the party had worked for so long. The wounds went deep.

I continued to work with the party through the Coop. I had been first. elected to the Education committee in 1955. Apparently I topped the poll. The reason confusion with an unrelated Wood family who were big names in the Coop + the party vote. I had been attending half yearly meetings and asking questions. My special subject came to be vegetable prices. I collected comparative prices between the coop and private shops. Early in 57 co-op party group decided to press for a rules revision committee to investigate the composition of the Board of Directors which was almost entirely composed of employees. We thought it important to ensure there were some outsiders, it was through this that I first met Eric Jessup. We congratulated ourselves on getting his support since he was not a party member - or so we thought. Years later when met Eric again in Radcliffe I discovered he had been an undercover party member for years and still was. We did not succeed in getting the rules changed, but we did, I think, alert the those concerned to the danger.

While I was on the education committee I attended two Co-op Education Conferences - one at Skegness and one at Clacton. At the Skegness one there was a demonstration by the Woodcraft Folk. I was impressed. We clearly needed the Woodcraft Folk in Nottingham. I managed to interest Roma Peck. She got going and Nottingham Woodcraft Folk got going. The Education committee supported the venture. They met in the guild room in Bulwell where the Pecks now lived. Michael joined. He used to go by bus to Bulwell. He went on various walks (including the one where he was kicked by a horse) and in 1962 took part in the Aldermaston March. Arthur Noon, the window cleaner who had been one of the Lenton comrades, became a Woodcraft enthusiast and re-lived his youth on the YCL.

The party continued to support me in elections for the education committee and in 1960 for the Board. Two years there was enough, I took a conscious decision to concentrate on my teaching career, my political activity would be through my school work, not through serving on committees.

Soon after leaving the party - I think late in '57 - we applied to join the Labour Party and much to our surprise were accepted without question. We were in Forest Ward. Leading lights in the ward were Frank and Betty Higgins who I had come across as co-op youth leaders when I was on the education committee. Both were soon to become City councillors. Frank pioneered the pedestrianisation of the city centre. Betty was Labour group leader of the city council in the late 80's/90's. Their son was at High Pavement and through him Michael joined the Young Socialists.

We attended branch meetings and I canvassed at election times. After the political discussion we had been used to in the CP., L.P. meetings were

dead boring, and L.P. members not particularly friendly.

Some years later we went to a Humanist meeting at which an ex-Catholic described the trauma of leaving the church. She described exactly what we had experienced in leaving the Communist Party.

Our leaving the party coincided with changes in our working lives which doubtless helped. Having failed to land the Fairham job, David decided he must widen his experience and asked to be transferred from High pavement, where he had been 8 years, to a secondary modern from Sept. 57. At the same time he enrolled for a part-time M.Ed. at Nottingham University.

The school he was sent to was Greenwood, another boys' school, with a catchment area including Sneinton and Bakersfields. The culture shock was horrific. After two terms he applied for a sabbatical term to get on with his M.Ed. This was granted and he spent a pleasant summer recuperating with Michael Lewis, John Daniels and others at the Nottingham I. of E. In September he started as an assistant lecturer at Nelson Hall College of Education in Staffs. This meant living there during the week: and only being at home at weekends. He was isolated from the Nottingham political scene. This was still effectively so when he moved to Loughborough Coll. of Ed. two years later. He forever regretted not living in the place where he worked. Moving was not on however. Our roots were sunk in Nottingham, I had a job and the boys were settled at school. Later Pap bought the house next door without telling us. A little earlier, though, he had been unofficially invited to apply for a job at the Durham Coll. of Ed. He wouldn't even consider it because it was a C. of E. College.

In autumn '55 Ian started at Haydon Rd Nursery Class. I got a part-time job at Carlton le Willows Grammar School, Gedling, which was convenient for delivering Ian to school on the way. In Sept '57 Ian started at Claremont Primary and I was able return to fulltime teaching at Mundella.

The Jessops.

I lost touch with Eric after the Co-op Rules Revision Committee was wound up. We met again through CND when we moved to Radcliffe. Eric and Louise were still taking the Morning Star (the Worker re-named). Eric joined David in starting up Nottm U3A and was its first chair, David started a discussion group - he called it Futures, at the International Community Centre. Eric and Louise took over organising this. However, when the U3A sub, had to be raised to cover a levy to the national office Eric refused to pay and left the U3A. David went on going to the discussion group which came to be called "Let's talk". I am deeply grateful to Eric and Louise for taking David to the meetings when he could not have managed a bus on his own. They now live near their daughter in Sutton Coldfield, Eric is much as David was.

SCHOOLS TEACHING TEACHING EXPERIENCE

LONG EATON GRAMMAR SCHOOL 1947/8

I came here fresh from my diploma course at the London I of E and was soon in trouble. The head refused to give me any information about what I should be teaching before the beginning of term. So I arrived on day one with nothing prepared and had to spend every evening and weekend for the first few weeks preparing lessons.

I was to teach English and history up to the third year. It was characteristic of old fashioned grammar schools to give new young teachers no senior work. There was no head of English; it was the head's subject but he did nothing as head of department. He gave me no help whatsoever. In fact he told me that I was not to put any delinquents in his Saturday morning detention. There was no English syllabus and no prescribed text books. The stock cupboard was chaotic; you grabbed what you could find. I based my work on the syllabuses of the school where I had done my teaching practice, Nonesuch Girls' Grammar, Cheam. One advantage, I suppose, was that I was able to do what I liked,

The head of History, Evelyn Baker, was friendly and helpful. I had two first years and my own 2nd form. There was a syllabus but she did not insist on you keeping rigidly to it as long as you kept broadly to the prescribed period. I constructed my own pre-history syllabus for the first year on sound Marxist lines based on Gordon Childe's What Happened in History. David later took it over and developed it further at High Pavement.

The school was in the middle of the town in a 1902 type building. It was 3 stream entry. There was a top "L" stream, and parallel lower streams. Children were drawn from the surrounding areas - some fairly deprived - as well as from Long Eaton itself.

As in most old mixed grammar school there were separate staff rooms. Staff lunch was served in the Women's staff room and an excellent meal it was. The kitchen staff also provided coffee at break for which we did not have to pay. Children's free milk was used with no questions asked.

There had to be a man and a woman on duty, which meant, since only a third of the staff were woman, that we did far more duties than the men - and of course for less pay. No-one complained. Later at Mundella I learnt that the same had once applied, until the women refused to co-operate.

I have fond memories of the women staff, but not of many of the men. An exception was Mac who had just returned from working at an emergency training college (one year courses for ex-service people) and celebrated the abolition of capital punishment at lunch one day. I had political discussions with him which I think made some other staff decide I was a potential threat to discipline.

The best things I can remember about LEGS were the 1st and 2nd year Christmas parties. They were great fun with traditional games including a singing nursery rhymes. The best children's parties I ever went to. The worst thing was the bone-idle headmaster.

PART TIME

Clarendon College of F.E. 1949 -51

The college was still in its original home in Clarendon St. and its principal still its founder Miss Dorothy Moore, whose achievement in founding it no-one I think appreciated at the time. Most of the day-time students were day-release, a scheme introduced just after the war to encourage employers to release young workers for a day a week for further education. The groups I can remember most clearly were the Coop and NALGO, which was how Local Government employees were referred to, perhaps indicating how they came to be sent to Clarendon. Employers, of course, wanted their young people to learn something useful to their employment, so English was on the books. I also taught civics, which I had not been allowed to teach to the RAF. Hopefully my course, which I was very free to choose, was helpful to future L.G. officials. I also did some geography. We were supposed to be preparing students to sit R.S.A. exams, but I can't remember any being held. In fact the whole thing was very free and easy, other teacher's good company and the students friendly and appreciative. I enjoyed my two afternoons a week at Clarendon. They helped to restore my confidence in getting back into teaching.

Clarendon was ideally situated being within easy walking distance of 254 Derby Rd although I usually cycled there. Jean Austen, our downstairs tenant, looked after Michael.

During my second year Miss Moore retired and Miss Waters, who was to act as a new broom, took over. In 52, I applied to her for more part-time work - I remember going to see her taking Boffy with me - but she said there were no vacancies. Looking back I wonder whether she was suspicious of women with young children being unable to cope.

On July 4, 1952, we moved house to Claremont Gardens. There was much to do in sorting out the house, getting alterations done to enable us to live upstairs and let the ground floor. We also had to find tenants for downstairs. Since the flats were not self-contained, we had to find people we could get on with, i.e. who broadly shared our views. They had to have children and be prepared to share baby-sitting with us, and one of them, in those days the mother, be prepared to look after the boys if I got a part-time job. We found Betty and Toby Cave for downstairs and Ken and Betty Coates for upstairs, Betty Up and Betty Down as they came to be known. Both as far as I can remember were contacts of Peter and Audrey Price. The Caves were only with us about a year. In their place came Maura and Phil Wykes. With this upheaval I gave up looking for a job for the time being. I was also taking Michael and Jenny Peck to nursery school in Dunkirk (Housed in the University cricket pavilion). I had put his name down soon after he was born when it was the nearest nursery. We both thought it important for him to take up the place. With hindsight, I wonder whether we were right. Roma Peck taught at Dunkirk Primary so I gave her a lift too. The Pecks lived in Great Eastern St.

Nottingham & District Technical College 1953 -4.

The Newton skyscraper was yet to be built. The college had outgrown the former university building in Shakespeare St., part of which still housed the central library. It had acquired various buildings in the surrounding area - a forerunner of Nottm Trent University's takeover of the Shakespeare St area. I taught English for Engineers in Black's factory, a former hosiery works off Mansfield Rd - now demolished; and geography -to whom I cannot remember - in the front room of a house in Clarendon St - now also demolished. I have few recollections except that I enjoyed both classes - afternoons again. The engineers -all boys - were far less formidable than I had feared.

There was no contact with other staff as there had been at Clarendon where we met for tea at afternoon break. This made it a less satisfactory job than Clarendon. I remember the man in charge with gratitude though; first for his encouragement when I was doubtful about tackling British Regional geography; second for giving me leave to absent myself for two weeks to go on the BSFS delegation to the Soviet Union in December 53. He was delighted and I think impressed that I was going. A pity that I couldn't teach Russian geography.

Sometime in 54 I applied to the City Education department for part-time work. Nothing much came of it except two week's supply at Cottesmore Girls' which I did not much enjoy. I was interviewed again by the legendary Mr Hutchinson.

Sometime during 55 I did two short full-time supply stints at the Girls' High School teaching English. I think I got these through Miss Pretty, the Head of History, whom David knew through the Historical Association. It gave me a valuable insight into a very successful school. Michael by now had started school, and Maura looked after Ian. On the first occasion I took over the timetable of a woman who had recently joined them and insisted on going on a 2 week skiing holiday she had already booked. I had to take on her O level work. The set book was Conrad short stories. She asked me to do "The Heart of Darkness". I had not read it and am ever grateful to her for introducing me to it - and the rest of Conrad. I remember being made very welcome in the staff room, and the Head of English being very helpful.

Carlton le Willows 1955 - 7

In September 1955 I started teaching mornings only at Carlton le Willows grammar School. It was a half-time appointment, although I did more than half time - 4 a.m. periods as opposed to 3 p.m. for which another part-timer also go half pay. I was too overjoyed to get the job to worry about this.

It was a dream school: only open a year, a new building in a beautiful campus on the edge of the built-up area, a young enthusiastic staff, a mixed staff room - unlike Long Eaton. Above all, a superb head of English, Ike Stamper, from whom I learned much about teaching

English and running a department that was to come in useful at Rushcliffe

Ike ran an organised department. There was a syllabus with topics to be covered each year and texts allocated for each year. The language book was English Today by Ronald Ridout - a beautifully logical course which included systematic spelling rules - something seldom included in language course books. 3 sets of private readers were allocated to each form for a term then exchanged with another form. I adopted this system at Rushcliffe. It did much to extend the range of pupils' reading. Many Carlton titles would be found in the Rushcliffe English stock cupboard.

The county, which was Tory at the time, was in process of extending its secondary selective provision as a result of parental demand. It had been one of the lowest in the country. The only grammar provision for greater Nottingham suburbs outside the city were Brincliffe for girls and Henry Mellish for boys- both located in the city, and West Bridgford Grammar School. Two new grammars, Bramcote Hills to the west and Carlton le W. to the east increased the provision, but more was demanded. The idea that the number of children who could benefit from an academic education was limited was still widely held, so a lowered tier of technical-grammar schools were planned for those lower down the 11+ list. The first was to be on the Bramcote Hills campus. Children and staff destined for B>H> Technical Grammar were "ghosted" to Carlton le Willows for one or two years before it opened.

Michael was in his second year at Claremont Primary. Ian was starting at Haydn Road Nursery class. I was able to take him in the mornings and go on over the hill to Gedling and fetch him before Michael came home in the afternoon. I had an hour or so in the afternoon to get marking and preparation done. Sometimes David did the nursery delivery and I cycled. It was a steep walk up Private Road to Mapperley Plains then a wonderful 1 descent down Westdale Lane. The reverse coming home was less fun.

I was very happy at C. le W. and would have liked a full-time post there. However during my second year there I had unavoidable absences. I had mumps with the boys; then later on both David and I were quite ill with a virus infection which came to be called Nottingham meningitis. Finally I had to take time off when Mother died. Ike told me that although he had strongly recommended me for a full-time post, Marshall, the head, would not consider me because of my absences which he was certain were really to do with my children, and that women with young children were unreliable. I encountered this attitude at subsequent interviews, and was asked more than once how I could manage a full-time job.

MUNDELLA 57/62

After two years in the heady atmosphere of a new school Mundella was a culture shock. Nothing had prepared me for the sink the school appeared to be. I was acutely depressed but realized I was trapped; if I was to have successful teaching career I had to stick it out. I was to stay five years at the end of which I was sorry to leave.

Full-time Jobs for women with young children were not easily come by. I had had several weeks off at Carlton le Willows when the boys and I had mumps and Nottingham meningitis. Because of this the head regarded me as unreliable and vetoed my appointment full time there - so Ike (head of English) told me. At two other interviews I had been asked how I could manage full-time work with two young children. When the Mundella Job came up I was doubtful but someone from High Pavement who had recently moved to Mundella assured David it was a good school. So it may have been by his standards, but High Pavement standards were not mine as I later discovered when I attended parents' evenings there for the boys..

I was interviewed at the Council House. My first visit to the school was on the day before term began when the first year had to come in to be sorted out. I discovered to my amazement that I, a new member of staff, was to be a 1st year form teacher. A case of the blind leading the blind. The woman I was replacing had had a first year, so I was automatically plonked in her place. This was characteristic of the way the place had been run and the lack of attention to pastoral matters.

The building with its dirty old floors, glass-partitioned classrooms and general lack of facilities appalled me. It was far worse than Long Eaton and gave the impression of having had no improvements since it was built at the turn of the century.

The school had been let go. The previous head, a kindly character who took holy orders shortly after retiring, had left the staff to their own devices. For some that meant dedicated work; for far more taking life easy. A new head, Mr Stephens, had been appointed to tighten things up. And he certainly did. By the end of the term he was generally loathed - not only by the old hands, but also by us newcomers.

One of his first actions was to have windows inserted in all classroom doors so that he could patrol the corridors and see what was going on. He found the glass partitioned classrooms were useful. One day he came into one of my lessons. He told me to carry on; he was not interested in my class. He spent the lesson sitting at the back of the room watching the teacher in the next room.

Certainly there were a number of lazy staff; the head of geography, a venerable lady, could for example regularly be seen reading detective stories while the class copied out the text book. But blatant spying was not the way to gain staff co-operation.

Within a few weeks of his arrival he applied for the school to have a full general inspection. When the report of this finally arrived, the staff was not allowed to see it. A few sections were read out at a staff meeting, and

Heads of department were summoned to hear the report on their departments. Today no head would get away with such behaviour. There would be deputations to the office and the governors. Through the Co-op Education committee I knew one of the governors. He let me have a quick look at his copy. It was obvious why the head had not let us see the document. One of the main criticisms was of the way he was handling reforming the school. Stephens lasted three years before departing for a job in the south. His replacement, Mr Moody, was immediately popular. Within a term he had got the hated glass partitions replaced by soundproof boarding. About this time we also got a new hall with a proper stage, and modern science labs. This was probably a result of the inspection. The snag was that we had nearly a year's teaching to the accompaniment of a pile-driver while they were being built. External exams were held that year at the Meadows Boys' Club.

The school was 4 stream entry and was rigidly streamed. The form initials were taken from the school motto Mundella School Go Forward. M being the A stream. It was argued that the pupils did not realize this! One of Stephens's innovations was to introduce form marks. Every three weeks marks in all subjects had to be added up and a form order produced as for an exam. Since this was before the days of cheap calculators, it meant an enormous amount of extra work for form teachers. I was lucky in having a son, Michael, who could be paid to do the addition and percentaging for me. On the basis of these marks and exam marks - we had exams twice a year - Stephens planned to move pupils up and down between the streams and even to recommend that non-performers be moved to secondary moderns. There were, I am glad to say, vehement staff protests and Stephens had to give in.

I liked Mundella pupils - with a few exceptions! They could be tough, but if you took trouble and showed you cared, they responded. They were markedly more appreciative than Rushcliffe pupils from West Bridgford. In my first year I had a tough 3rd year, 3 F. Three of my five periods with them were last periods in the afternoon - always a difficult lesson. When they presented me with a set of liqueur glasses for Christmas, I knew I had won.

Another form I well remember was 2G who lived in a hut outside the main building where they could make a noise without attracting Stephens. David Pleat who later played for Nottingham Forest and is now a club manager was in this form.

There were separate men's and women's staff rooms. Later, under Moody, a 3rd mixed staff room was opened where the younger members of staff tended to spend frees, but as far as the women were concerned, not breaks. This was because of the coffee ritual in the women's staff room. Miss Dorothy Onions, whom I would call the mistress of the staff room, would be found when you arrived every morning preparing proper coffee for break. None of that instant stuff. There was a rota of those free in period 3 whose job it was to heat it up ready for break. Woe betide you if you forgot, or worse still let it boil over.

Miss Onions had a first class maths degree; she was said to have repeatedly refused the head of department post. She lived with her great friend Doris Barlow at Long Eaton. They had both been at the school many years. There was I gather gossip about them in the men's staff room. Miss Onions had long fair hair worn in coiled plaits over her ears. Another early morning sight was Miss O. brushing her hair and plaiting it. She was much respected

as a gifted teacher who worked her pupils hard and did her best for them. Altogether a great character. A second Dorothy, Miss Crossley, was a close friend. The three always had lunch together, taking their serviettes over to the dining hall.

Miss Crossley taught English. Doubtless if she had been male, she would have been head of Department. She looked after her elderly mother which meant she could never go away on holiday. Unlike Miss Crossley, Miss Winfield was a free spirit who gloried in having her own house and garden and going on holiday with Ramblers. She taught commercial subjects and English. Two other members of the older generation who stand out in my memory are Miss van Raalte (German) and Miss Walters (PE). Miss Walters must have been in her late fifties but was still active on the hockey field.

They were the last generation of teachers to have their lives dictated by the marriage bar. I think I may have been the first married woman with children to be appointed full-time as opposed to part-time. I would not blame these older women for feeling bitter that women like me could now have children and a career, but there was no sign of this. In fact it was a very pleasant staff room.

Usually. One day people coming back to the staff room after lunch were surprised to find the police there asking to inspect their hands. For some time money had been disappearing from bags and coats left in the staff room. Miss Onions had reported this to the head who had brought in the police. They set a trap leaving a bank note marked with an invisible substance that would stain the hands of anyone touching it. The note had disappeared from the bag it had been left in. The only person with stains on her hands was a part-time unqualified woman who had been brought in to help with girls' games. She was a good tennis player; the club she belonged to had apparently had mysterious financial losses. She was never seen in school again. The police prosecuted; she opted for trial at crown court, employed a top barrister, and was found not guilty.

Three senior men arrived the same term as I. Mr Hoard, tall, soft and gangly was the new deputy head. He and the senior mistress had a very unhappy time with Stephens Their main functions seemed to be to sit as statues on either side of him at assembly. Mrs Houseman, the mistress, was "a lady", always immaculately dressed without a hair out of place. She taught English, very inadequately learnt later from the sixth form. Neither seemed to be given any part in administering the school. Mr Sweetland, who later became a County adviser, also arrived, as did Mr Orchard the new head of English who set about getting some order into the English department. I got on well with him, and the following year I got more rewarding forms to teach and in due course some sixth form work, which would be essential for getting a head of department. Mr Orchard left for a headship after 3 years. I refer to these men as Mr because if I ever knew their first names I have forgotten them. Everyone was Mr/Miss/Mrs except amongst the younger women. Boys were of course called by their surnames. I called my first form boys by their first names, an unheard of thing to do and heartily disapproved of by many of the men.

MUNDELLA

With the departure of Stephens for Chippenham Grammar School in 1960 (?), there was a marked change for the better. The removal of the glass partitions between classrooms and the building of the new hall, which had a proper stage and science labs had a big effect on staff morale. At the time we all put this down to the efforts of our new head, Mr Moody (I have no idea of his first name). However looking back on it I realize that the report of the inspectors that we had not been allowed to see was probably the real reason why new money was allocated to the school, and why Stephens departed. The LEA must have written him a glowing testimonial to get rid of him.

The war-time/ post war bulge was reaching the secondary schools. More schools were being opened. There was a particular demand for more grammar school places; Nottingham city had one of the lowest grammar school intakes in the country. In the county secondary moderns had started doing O level until this was banned by the director J. Edward Mason. The county opened new grammar schools: Carlton le Willows, Bramcote Hills, and Arnold High School. In the city, High Pavement was moved to new premises at Bestwood, and a new grammar school, Forest Fields opened in its vacated building. It had been planned to move Mundella to a new building on the new Bilborough estate, but Mundella staff resisted the move, so a new school was opened in the new building, Bilborough Grammar School. It was time to improve facilities at Mundella.

Earlier the staff and governors had successfully resisted attempts to make the school single sex - as they had done with High Pavement.

As well as the new building, the school acquired the Colleygate infant school premises next door. This became a sixth form centre and a library. I can't remember the previous library if there was one. The regime became more liberal, the senior master and mistress went round with smiles on their faces and staff morale generally improved. We no longer had three-weekly form marks, but form term positions were still taken very seriously and pupils were still moved between streams. However the threat of expulsion to a 2 Mod was removed.

Mr Orchard's departure was a loss, but his replacement as Head of English; Mr Jacobs - again I have no idea of his first name - was easy-going if not inspired. At last I got some 6th form A level work. I was already doing English for 6th form scientists. One of my students was John Wilde who later turned up - already grey-haired - to become head of Chemistry at Rushcliffe Comp. He was also one of my form tutors and I think helped my relations with the science mafia.

Staff retired or left for other jobs. I particularly remember Jean Ritchie who joined the French department, later became head of languages at The Dukeries Comp and eventually as deputy head at Huntingdon. [Shirley Greenwood, strikingly good-looking and dressed in the latest fashion - stilettos were just coming in, came to teach geography. Not long after she arrived, she got talking to a woman on the top of a bus, who, apparently, decided she was just the daughter-in-law she wanted. She introduced her to her son and romance blossomed into marriage. They eventually came to live in his parents' house in Musters Rd and I occasionally came across her

while I was at Rushcliffe.]* Eileen (English) and a scientist whose name I have forgotten also livened up the women's staff room.

Orchard had started a lunch-time club for the 3rd and 4th, the 34 Society. I took it over when he left. We had debates, discussions, slide-shows, etc and occasional outings in school time, We visited the Raleigh factory, Players (still on Radford Boulevard) and the co-op dairy in Meadow lane amongst others. The highlight was a coach trip to Dovedale, which we walked down. I still remember the excitement and joy of one or two girls who had never been to such a place before and marvelled at the clear water.

My time at Mundella was the age of the scooter. I bought mine, a red Vesper, from Blacknells in Arkwright St. I passed the test first time. I took it in Basford. In the course of it a dog ran out into the road barking. The examiner assured me it had not been laid on deliberately to see if I could cope. I enjoyed the scooter immensely. I often went for rides at lunchtime visiting various co-op shops - I was on the NCS board at the time. I got to know the new Clifton estate, old Meadows, W. Bridgford and convenient short cuts in the city centre. I shopped on my way home since the scooter, unlike a car could be parked almost anywhere. My route took me direct through the centre, Pelham St, Wheeler Gate (convenient parking at the side of M&S) Arkwright St. I had to abandon the scooter during my 2nd year at Rushcliffe when I injured my back. I was then on my second one. In its place I bought a little Fiat 500 with an opening roof. I came to love this too.

The Mundella building was demolished in the 70's following the re-building of much of the Meadows. When the City re-organised secondary education in the mid 60s it lost its sixth form and became an 11 - 16 comprehensive. The loss of population in the area and the opening of a new school across the river at Wilford Meadows led to declining rolls and closure. The site is now occupied by sheltered accommodation flats. The Colleygate building survives.

RUSHCLIFFE

After four and a bit years at Mundella I realised that if teaching English was not to become more and more frustrating, I had to get a head of department job so as to design my own syllabus and - most important - choose my own texts. Secondary education was expanding and changing as the post-war bulge moved through the system and middle-class parents objected more and more to their children failing the 11+. Nottm City and Notts County had one of the lowest grammar school intakes in the country. The city experimented with its first comprehensive for boys only at Clifton - the worst possible choice of district. The county went in for a second (lower) layer of grammar schools to be called grammar-technical, although the technical element never really existed. The Rushcliffe schools were amongst these. Single-sex schools on the same campus on the outskirts of West Bridgford. Parents were to be given choice of school; highest scorers in the 11+ having first choice. A West Bridgford pecking order soon emerged. No. 1 after the High schools was W.B.Grammar School; no. 2 = Rushcliffe; No.3 Lutteral 2 Mod with its attractive modern building; No4 Musters Rd 2 Mod in a turn of century building that had originally been the Grammar School.

Although I disapproved of single-sex schools, my experience at interviews made me realize I had little chance of ever getting a head of dept job in a mixed school against competition from younger men. I was interviewed and appointed at Rushcliffe girls' while David was on a visit to Hungary. Had he been at home, I might well have refused it.

Conditions were a teacher's dream, especially after Mundella; brand new building; books of one's own choice; enthusiastic, dedicated colleagues; and classes of 12 to 15 for the first year. We had an entry of about 150 and 15 staff. The only snag was the headmistress and she became more and more a disaster as time went on.

Miss E.M.Crabtree, known to her intimates but not to any of us as Maisie, had come from a girls' grammar in Lancashire. I suspect she got the job because she impressed the governors as being genteel and therefore appropriate for West Bridgford.

The gentility was soon apparent. Some examples: straw boaters were part of the summer uniform; there was to be no provision for cycles (the boaters might blow off!); the deputy head was asked not to cycle to school as this would lower the tone of the school; even the staff room was gentrified: we were asked not to bring mugs but to pay into a fund to buy a set of "nice" cups and saucers. Green Beryl was chosen. I took mine home when we went comprehensive and still have it as a memento.

It was soon apparent that the job of setting up a new school was utterly beyond her. Her main problem - apart from a lack of administrative ability, was that she wanted to be involved in everything herself and was unable to understand where to delegate. An early example was stocking the library. Not long after my appointment I had the honour of being invited to accompany her to wholesale booksellers in the city to choose the library books. I suppose I was invited because the head of English used traditionally to be lumbered with the library as an extra unpaid responsibility alongside the school play and magazine. I pushed a trolley

while Miss C. filled it with books off the shelves. She had no list; occasionally I was allowed to add something. Many of the books she chose were quite useless; departments had been deprived of the chance to build up a basic reference library.

This insistence on being involved in everything ran right through her whole administration.

We had no departmental allowances. We simply had to put in our orders to her and hope for the best. I suspect that the school did not use its full allowances - or they went to Miss C.'s favourite subjects - French and music. Both these subjects had a difficult time with Miss C. frequently taking an active part.

Miss C. refused to appoint anyone to be in charge of Careers, although someone volunteered to do it unpaid. The result was no careers room and no advice beyond routine interviews by County Careers Department. Miss C. herself advised on higher education and made available the information she considered appropriate. She issued a recommended list of Colleges of Education. There were no mixed colleges on the list. When she left - for another headship! - I was asked to clear out the cupboards in her room. I found stacks of old prospectuses that had never been made available to the girls.

One thing Miss C. was good at was making staff appointments - after all she did appoint me! For the first three years we had a wonderful team and some very gifted teachers. She was not so good at choosing men. When our original art mistress left, she appointed a flamboyant man who knew how to flatter her. He was bone idle and what had been a first rate art department collapsed. He was the only head of department who was not appointed to the comprehensive school.

In spite of Crabtree I enjoyed teaching at Rushcliffe, and I enjoyed being a head of department. In particular it was wonderful to be able to choose ones books. Being a new school there was no inheritance from the past. I spent hours going through catalogues, and sent for many specimen copies. In drawing up my syllabuses and choosing books, I was much influenced by the experience I gained at Carlton le Willows, where Ike Stamper was building up a first rate English department, and by my memories of the English department at Nonsuch Girls' School where I had done my teaching practice. Experience at Mundella and Long Eaton taught me what to avoid. I gave a lot of attention to finding novels with female main characters that girls could identify with, something that publishers had given little attention to. Later, when we became a mixed comprehensive, I was glad to have these books for the boys to read. Many came to appreciate Jane Eyre.

RUSHCLIFFE COMP

West Bridgford went comprehensive in Sept. 1969. The decision to make Tory Bridgford one of the first places to be re-organised was triggered by the head of West Bridgford Grammar School announcing his retirement. Preparations for the change were started two years before and consultation meetings for teachers and parents held. I spoke out in favour of change from a seat next to Miss Crabtree much to her amazement. At the parents' meeting Dinah Thurman made an impassioned speech to save the girls' school. Surprisingly she was appointed senior mistress of the comp.

Lutteral Secondary Modern was to join West Bridgford Grammar in a greatly enlarged building, including a swimming pool. The Lutteral building was to become South Notts College of F.E. - again with extensive extra building.

The Boys' and girls' grammar technical schools and Musters Road secondary modern were to be amalgamated to form Rushcliffe Comprehensive, with the Musters Road building one and a half miles away remaining as an annexe. There was to be no extra building apart from limited conversion of toilets. It was an unequal deal. West Bridgford was clearly a more favoured school with new buildings and the inherited aura of the grammar school. It also had the more privileged catchment area in its immediate surroundings. The Rushcliffe catchment area was more scattered and included Lady Bay and most of Ruddington. Children living in the immediate vicinity of the school went to West Bridgford.

Both schools though started with a majority of selective pupils from the former selective schools, many of whom came from outside West Bridgford. We still had school buses. A particularly badly-behaved bus was the one from Radcliffe. The area that produced the most problem pupils during the early years was Ruddington.

The education officials had the difficult task of fitting staff into the new structure. They must have heaved a sigh of relief when the head of the boys' school (Bateman) decided to retire, and Miss Crabtree managed to land herself another headship - they must have given her a glowing testimonial. The Girls' deputy head, Val Belton, also departed for a plum headship in Birmingham. Only two senior outsiders were appointed: the head, Littlejohns, and the head of Art. Miss Crabtree's boy for mysterious reasons did not get the job.

All senior posts were advertised internally first; we had to apply and go through an interview. Some new posts were created to accommodate particular people. One of these was Head of Lower School to which the head of Musters Road was appointed. He retired within two years and the office lapsed. If there was a Head of Lower School there had also to be a Head of Upper school. I was persuaded to take this instead of Head of English for which I had applied. This left English for Bernard from the Boys' school. Bernard, too, only lasted about two years. He retired because of ill health and Sandra, my second, got the job where she has been ever since.

Dividing the senior posts between the men and the women was not easy. In our innocence we had assumed they would be fairly apportioned. We were not prepared to find that the men expected to get all the jobs and resented some going to women. French, music, history, and careers went to girls'

school staff, and 3 of the 5 year tutors were women, two from Musters Road.

The local authority got their heads the wrong way round. The man appointed to West Bridgford was a progressive with enthusiasm for change. He quickly upset his traditional grammar school staff. Our man, Dr Littlejohns, was a grammar school traditionalist with socialist leanings. He was a little man physically which probably didn't help when large angry men stormed into his office. The head of P.E. - a burly type - always seemed to get what he wanted.

Lj laid down two principles from the start: there was to be no streaming and no corporal punishment. These were adhered to, although we did hear rumours about the use of gym shoes by some of the men. No streaming applied throughout the first three years but the division between O level and CSE inevitably led to some streaming in the 4th and 5th. No streaming was surprisingly accepted by the staff with just about no protest. This was in marked contrast to West Bridgford school where streaming continued in spite of the disapproval of the head. Our no streaming policy didn't help our reputation in Bridgford; nor did the unconventional behaviour of the head and our reputation for being "good with the backward" - we had an excellent remedial department.

The first term was a great adventure - if a traumatic one. Three staffs had to get to know one another and learn to work together, particularly difficult for the boys' and girls' staffs who had been discouraged from contact by the former heads, who loathed each other. The girls and boys had to learn to mix, and the boys to respect the girls' abilities. We had to learn to teach mixed-ability classes. And we had to cope with a split site - the Musters Rd annexe, where the second year was placed. The annexe consisted as well as the old school building - it had started life as a higher grade (grammar) school - of a house in next door and Midland Cottages, a series of prefabs on the other side of Rectory Rd used as labs and workshops. The second year was brought to the main site once a week for games and the sixth form went to Musters for general studies.

The job of Head of Upper School provided wide scope for interesting developments - developments of which I suspect Lj had no inkling when he devised the job as a way of disposing of a surplus head of department. Nominally it involved oversight of the pastoral care of the 4th and 5th years - and in passing of their year tutors, and responsibility for the sixth and seventh years including doing their references. A problem arose early when I refused to share a room with the 5th year tutor if smoked in the room. My name was mud in the B block staff room, but the head that had a large notice in his own room saying NO SMOKING had to find Pete, the 5th year man, another room. He has since died of lung cancer.

Smoking led to citizenship. The head started suspending people caught smoking his line to them being only adults can smoke. I suggested that we needed to educate them as to why they should not smoke. The effects of smoking on lung cancer and heart disease had only recently become public. I suggested a health education course for the 4th and fifth years using material available from the health education department. Having won a double period in the timetable we had no difficulty in filling the time first with other health issues such as sex education and first aid. The Red Cross used to come with resuscitation dummies so that every pupil in the 4th year had a chance to learn mouth to mouth. Careers and R.E. came in

with us. The head of R.E. a former parson was an enthusiastic member of the team. We invited outside speakers on a wide variety of subjects. Ken Coates came and spoke about poverty - he had just published Poverty in St Annes. We invited the police. There was one disaster here when the main speaker made a racist joke in spite of there being a coloured girl sitting in the front row. When we raised this with him afterwards he didn't seem to realize it mattered. A topic we dealt with ourselves was what to do if you are ever arrested.

Although we called the course citizenship, we never tackled the difficult subject of the mechanism of government. Following the reorganisation of local government in 1974, County Hall was offering a Local Government course for 6th forms with officers coming to talk about the work of their departments. They came to the sixth, but refused to face the 4th or 5th. A pity. Both citizenship and sex education are now of course an accepted part of the national curriculum. In the seventies we had complaints from some parents about time being wasted on a non-examination subject.

RUSHCLIFFE SIXTH FORM

My main responsibility as head of upper school was for the sixth form, always referred to as years 6 and 7. Lj, the head, established a number of staff committees/councils. The first was what he entitled The House of Lords consisting of himself, the 3 deputies, and heads of Upper and Lower school. We met as far as I can remember weekly at lunchtime, and as a member I was able to have considerable influence on the development of the school in its first formative years. There was also a curriculum committee for heads of Department which I attended as i/c General Studies and Citizenship; and a pastoral committee for heads of year. These met after school. After a time there were regular meetings of form teachers and year heads. The school developed a reputation for having an excellent pastoral system, especially in the upper school. As far as possible the aim was that form teachers should teach their forms and thus get to know them and follow them up the school; i.e. the same team was kept for years 1, 2, and 3 with an inevitable change for 4 and 5.

On average we had 80+ in Yr 6 and 60+ in yr 7. We had 5 tutor sets in year 6; 4 in year 7. We made profitable use of morning "assembly" time for form tutors' meetings, year meetings, and a compulsory form period. We broke the law in having no "collective act of worship". Before the days of Ofsted, no-one ever complained. There was a 6/7 council with reps from each tutor group and a chairperson - not a chairman. This never functioned particularly well. One reason for this was antagonism between the two years.

General Studies was a key part of the set up, and I got it accepted that everyone took it. And that some written work was required, wherever possible in essay form to ensure that scientists remained literate! For yr 6 we ran 10 compulsory 5/6 week courses. The forms rotated taking 2 courses at a time in turn. This enabled me to have teaching contact with everyone in the year, which was particularly important when it came to doing references. Wherever possible courses were taught by group tutors, but this was seldom possible. We encouraged everyone to sit the GMB General Paper at the end of the year. It is a pity that so few Higher Ed interviewers realized what an excellent test of general education the paper was. For the 7th year there was a choice of one term courses. Staff experimented with new subjects. Psychology was particularly popular. Those who wished to could enter for JMB General Studies A level, which was in effect a test of their absorption and application of their education up to O level; it included maths and science questions and a foreign language question. Not many entered but those who did on the whole got good results.

I called my 6 week Gen. Studies course "Sociological Studies". I experimented with various topics. The most successful was an outline history of British education during the past 100 years, the main aim being to give some understanding of the comprehensive revolution that we were taking part in. Essay choices included writing about a previous school and interviewing an older person about his/her education. Both produced some very interesting results. I learned about the Radcliffe Junior head who specialised in standing naughty pupils on a table in front of the school, and was saddened at the number of grandmothers whose parents had not allowed them to take up their grammar school places. Population studies was one I became particularly interested in. Another topic I ventured on was

Women's Studies. When the boys got over their resentment at the subject, I think they enjoyed it. With equal opportunities legislation and other changes happening, it was topical and, therefore I thought, important.

In the 6th year we required study periods to be spent in school... This first of all provided opportunities for study, which was important for some who did not get down to it at home. Space for this was available in the library, and later in a special 6/7 study room, the former boys' school staff room. This infuriated the die-hard ex-boys' school staff who did not want to use the mixed staff room in the new leisure centre. A member of staff would be around much of the time to ensure reasonable quiet. Staying in school also provided socialising time, which could be valuable. For this a common room was essential. For the first few years this was a converted girls' school locker area. Parents donated comfortable old chairs. Later, when Rushcliffe Leisure Centre was built, the basement youth wing became the sixth form common room. For one morning weekly it was used by a pensioners' group; this led to many complaints on both sides which I had to sort out.

We decided from the start that there would be no prefects. We did, however need sixth form assistance in running the school, so we had a duty system. Duties ranged from supervising dining room queues to library duty and included voluntary jobs like helping the staff member responsible for keeping the audio-visual equipment in working order. Everyone had to do something. Duties were generally accepted as recompense for the extra money spent on 6/7 pupils. We did not stress that they earned the school extra funding!

Years later in Singapore I met ex- Rushcliffe girls who had done valiant service on the bus queues marshalling passengers at the airport.

We observed the tradition of Wed. pm. being games afternoon. There were alternative activities for non games people - some of them sporting, e.g. skating. An important development was social service, organised at first by my assistant year tutor, Judy Baker, whose husband, usefully, worked for, social services. We sent people to garden for the elderly, help in infant schools, and to various other activities. A placement which proved particularly rewarding to those who took it was at Saxendale Mental Hospital, sadly long since closed down. Several of those who went there decided on mental nursing as a career.

Another very successful Wed. p.m. venture was archaeology. This had started before reorganisation when the county archaeologist had asked for helpers with a rush excavation e an Anglian burial site had been found in constructing a roundabout on the A46. The Rushcliffe group went on to help excavate an abandoned medieval church at Flawford, and to take a major part in excavating the Broadmarsh caves, one cave being named the Rushcliffe cave. The leaders of this group were the head of music "Lucy" Lockett, and Doreen Gower, who later became a CND activist.

Another site they tackled was windmill hill at Cotgrave. Their target was a former windmill the foundations of which they uncovered. A few years later when laying the foundations for a house on Windmill Hill, a large Anglian cemetery was discovered. including what was clearly the grave of a

chieftain who could have given his name to the village: Cotta's grave. .
Our Rushcliffe archaeologists had been digging only a few feet away.

Another useful Wed pm opportunity was doing a typing course which we arranged with the college. Many girls took advantage, but I was unable to persuade many boys that being able to touch type might be very useful in the future. Learning to touch type - after a fashion- was one of my false starts for which I am grateful.

Writing UCCA references proved an overwhelming task. At first I conscientiously tried to do it all myself and was even driven to getting permission to stay at home and get on with it at the height of the rush. Then I sought the help of the form tutors, and it became established that if you became a sixth form tutor, you drafted your form's references. We produced a number of forms to help with collecting the necessary information including one to be filled in by the student. At first Lj insisted on writing references for any one applying to Ox/bridge himself. When I saw the irrelevant rubbish he wrote I succeeded in getting him to give this up, along with signing everything himself.

Advice on university/ college choice was another vast undertaking. Early on I went on a week's course at Loughborough which was very useful. We were also lucky in our County Careers adviser for Higher Ed. Mr Lawson. He later became a Tory Borough councillor on the strength of having organised a campaign to prevent the open space on Central Avenue, W.B. being built on. That was later though. We organised various careers events including inviting former pupils who were at University/college to come and talk/answer questions about what they were doing.

Miss Onions used to say of Mundella "Never a dull moment". This certainly applied to Rushcliffe Comp. Most were enjoyable, but some less so. Some of the Boys' school staff were unco-operative and at times positively unpleasant. Particularly tricky was getting them to correct mistakes in their comments on reports. I particularly remember a comment by the head of Geography, now deputy head: "He must do something about his awful spelling". He had to be shown a dictionary before he would agree to cover the e with an enlarged 'w' - something I could not do myself without making the correction obvious. I agree his spelling was logical and should be the accepted one, but parents would not appreciate this. He never forgave me.

Another unpleasant experience was discovering on checking records that some of my first sixth form had been in trouble with the police over drug taking. This had been dealt with by the deputy head John Hastings without telling me. When I raised this with him, I found that the head distrusted me as a communist. I traced this piece of gossip to Pat Ford, a lower school year tutor, later senior mistress at Dayncourt, with whose son Michael used to cycle to High Pavement. I crossed Littlejohns again later on by taking up with the NUT his promotion of the head of maths to deputy head without advertising the post or conducting an interview. It was done to remove an incompetent head of maths about whom there had been many complaints, as I knew to my cost in attempting to make excuses for him to parents. He systematically failed to set homework, and understandably got dreadful exam results. As the NUT man pointed out I had been jumped, but this was not why I took the matter up. I was just appalled at having such an unsuitable deputy dumped on us.

A joy of the job was working with what became over the years a marvellous team of form tutors. They included survivors from the girls' school staff, Sandra Appleton, and Mary Lodge from English,; Jean Cherry, Head of History and i/c exam admin; Dr Hermina Barz, who I first met at Mundella, Others were Mrs Bury, head of French and one of 3 women on the boys' staff ; - we were never allowed to call her by her first name Gertrude for fear the pupils would call her Gertie. (I found out later that colleagues at her former school called her Leila.) Chris Francis, chemist, now head of years 12 & 13 at Dayncourt; John Wilde, head of Chemistry who was in my English for scientists set at Mundella; Eric Vernon Head of workshops was a fairly late recruit whose presence considerably helped my relations with the boys' school backwoodsmen, called by Lj the Ancells Bitter men. Three who played a main part in building up the system were Judy Baker, French teacher, already mentioned; Sue Ollerenshaw, chemist, who was appointed my assistant after Judy left to have a baby because Lj wanted to keep her in the school. She was an outstanding teacher and tutor, but adventure beckoned and she left for a job in the forces school in Hong Kong. Finally John Powell, graduate from Loughborough, appointed to teach history, started A level sociology and succeeded me as Sixth Form Year Tutor - but not H.ead of Upper School. By this time Lj had retired and been replaced by Peter Chambers who had more profitable allocations for his senior teacher posts. John is still at Rushcliffe, like Sandra, and Margaret Lane he has taught nowhere else.

Two years into the Comprehensive, the county came up with the long promised extensions to the school which would enable us to dispense with the Musters Road annexe. A leisure centre was to be built with swimming pool, sports hall etc, a basement youth centre to be available for the sixth form in the daytime; extra classrooms , offices, and a staff room on the first floor. For the next year and a half we lived with a building site. There was a general re-organisation of accommodation when we took over our new building. A block had been the girls' school. I was moved from my lovely form deputy head's room looking out on roses in A block to a bleak room - again former deputy' s - with a bleak outlook over a grass bank in B Block, and the former boys' staff room became to 6/7 study area, the passage their signing on area. Their makeshift common room was developed into a class room and they had the use of the youth wing, which was not part of the school as such, and therefore inevitably led to problems. The English department, of which Sandra my former second in the girls' school was now head, was allocated the new classrooms. The head moved from a strategically placed room off the entrance hall in A block to a room tucked away in an upstairs corner of the new building: a disastrous location. It came to be called the ivory tower. Peter Chambers, Lj's successor, was soon out of his depth and spent more and more time in his room, cut off from what was going on in the school

I was lucky to have been able to take part in the building of a comprehensive school, having been part of the movement calling for an end to secondary selection since I was a student at the I of E. It was David's ambition too, but that was not to be.

Sixth Form handbook (herewith) produced both to guide the sixth year as to what was on offer and- most important - to outline what staying on entailed and help to stay losses to the College, which was becoming a problem. It did not help that one of the fifth form county careers advisors as far as we could see did her best to encourage 5th formers to go to the college for

A levels. I remain firmly convinced that the school offered a much better experience and avoided the problems of settling down in a new environment with new teachers who had only three terms without pastoral contact to write those all important UCCA references.

4.2.01

WOODS

ALASTAIR

David's brother Alastair died from kidney disease at the age of 30 in 1950.

Al was only a year to 18 months younger than David and I think grew up very much in his shadow, following him to Spyway, a private prep school in Dorset, and later to Queen's College, Cambridge. David, however, followed Al to Bryanston, a "progressive" public school. Even before Al died, David talked very little about him. It seems they were never very close.

The oval-framed painting of Al suggests a very attractive little boy - very like Michael at a similar age. The painting of his older brother suggests a boss boy - not at all suggestive of the man he grew up to be. I remember Al as a very handsome young man with a mop of wavy dark auburn hair, and remember privately thinking that he was far better looking than his older brother!

Symptoms of Al's kidney disease appeared early but were not recognised. He wet his bed for which David said, "He was blamed as he never should have been." There was no understanding of the underlying causes of bed-wetting in the 1920's; it was regarded as a sign of weakness which the child must learn to control. Even after her experience with Al, this view lingered on in Gwen's mind. Michael was still not dry at night when he went to stay at the Barn when Ian was born. Gwen's great triumph was to return him to him to his inefficient parents "toilet trained". Michael continued to have occasional lapses. We realised later that we should not have sent him away at that time, and certainly not for a course of toilet training. Al also produced frothy urine. I remember David keeping an eye on Michael for similar symptoms. It was a relief that there were none.

Most boarding schools did not take boys who wet their beds. Spyway was chosen for David because it was prepared to accept Al; Gwen would not consider day schools. Ronald had never been away to school and this had made him soft; she was determined that her boys should be real men! David had been put down for Stowe as soon as he was born. They refused however to take bed-wetting Al, so he went to Bryanston, where he was very happy. David, by contrast, loathed Stowe and everything it stood for. After school cert he persuaded parents to let him go to Bryanston, where he too was very happy and got a scholarship to a Cambridge college.

As far as I know Al's problem resolved itself in the course of time. A single experience of mine gives me an inkling of what Al must have suffered. During my first term at boarding school I woke up in a warm wet bed. I vividly remember my shame and how I managed to cover up the disaster. Looking back I can see it to been linked to stress and insecurity.

After Bryanston, Al went to Queen's College, Cambridge to read geography. This would have been about the same time that registration for men of 18+ was brought in following Munich. Al registered as a conscientious objector. Because he pleaded on political and not religious grounds he had a very difficult time and I think had to go before several tribunals - I was never told the full details. Eventually he had to attend a medical board. The

result was that he was excused from all national service and advised to see his doctor.

The shock must have been dreadful. He had advanced kidney disease and was given a year to live. Thanks to Gwen's care and a strict diet he lasted another ten.

Jean tells me that Al and Patience Brookes (Winnies's daughter) were in love. After his terrible news Al distanced himself from her. Patience always sent us a Xmas card. I now understand why.

He lived at the Barn where Gwen devoted herself to looking after him. Whether or not he completed his degree I don't know. In spite of his illness, Al had considerable muscular strength and he did a lot of outdoor physical labour such as cutting up firewood. He may have helped Meta on her fruit farm. A key person in keeping him going was Fusty.

Fusty (Hayne Constant) was a colleague of Ronald's at the RAE (Royal Aeronautical Establishment) at Farnborough. When they lived at Farnborough Gwen became very involved in the social life of the establishment; Fusty was one of her particular friends. (Another was Eric Meredith who used to lodge with them and introduced David to Marxism.) Fusty was a regular weekend visitor at the Barn; he and Al were very close friends. The thing that stands out in my memory is endless joking and clever repartee between them. It must have been very important to Al; I think Fusty was genuinely fond of him and of Gwen. Ronald, I think, tolerated him for Al's sake. Fusty took an interest in our boys, but not it seems in Jean's girls. He gave wonderful Christmas presents which he took great trouble choosing. A green wooden engine which could be unscrewed and put together again was a particularly popular one. I still have it.

After Al died Fusty still came to the Barn, but less often. It was he who found Ronald in the apple store after his heart attack. He was able to do one last great service to Gwen in helping her on that dreadful day. After this Gwen seems to have had less contact with him. One factor may have been that he acquired an excellent housekeeper, so that the home comforts of weekends at the Barn with Gwen's excellent cooking were no longer so important. Years later when visiting the Museum of science at S. Kensington we came across a display about Fusty and his work in developing jet engines. His achievement was considerable.

Al was a sailor. He had a large old-fashioned sailing boat which he kept somewhere on Chichester harbour. He used to take himself off for days at a time to work on it. It was big enough to live on but must have been difficult for one person to manage; Gwen used rightly to worry about this. I think Fusty sometimes went with him. We went out with him once. We ventured out into the open sea on quite a rough day. It was one of the most exhilarating experiences I have ever had. Coming back disaster struck: we ran aground on a sandbank in Chichester harbour. We spent the night sleeping at an angle waiting for the tide to float us free.

After we moved into 254 Derby Road in January 1948 Al came to stay with us

for about a month to help David work on the house. Al was a good handyman and put up a lot of useful shelves and did other jobs while we were at work. I think he enjoyed being with us. David inherited his tool box, parts of which still survive.

In August 1949 Gwen took a furnished house, Crud y Gwint, on the Dovey estuary in Wales. It was a very successful family holiday with Gwen, Ronald and Al. Jean and Peter, who by that time had Anne, were nearby staying with Peter's parents. Al was able to go sailing with the Trubs, while David and I went out on our tandem. Betty, Fusty's housekeeper, and her daughter Morag came too and helped Gwen look after Michael when we had a tandem break.

During the autumn of 1949, Al began to weaken and have to have spells in bed. In Jan/Feb he went into a rapid decline and died within a few days. There was no funeral; he left his body for research.

Long afterwards while on holiday on a Greek island we met a man who was forever happy and cheerful, almost irritatingly so. We found he had just had a kidney transplant after several years on dialysis. Perhaps Al had helped to bring this about. If only it had been in time to save him.

D.W. C.V.

The 1944 Education Act abolished fees in state schools, made statutory the right of all children to secondary education and required equal funding for all secondary schools. It did not abolish 11+ selection. The Party had long campaigned for all children in a given area to go to the same secondary school - usually referred to as multilateral since the concept of abolishing streaming was almost unheard of even in party circles. The London Institute of Education, where we both did our teachers' training course after the war, routinely sent its students to grammar schools for their teaching practice. David was determined to do his teaching practice in a secondary modern - not an out-moded grammar school. After a few weeks at Highbury Boys' Grammar School, he succeeded in getting transferred to a secondary modern in Bethnal Green. Since Ronald was County Councillor for Bethnal Green, I think Ronald may have had something to do with his getting the transfer. The school was tough. He did not enjoy his teaching practice as I did, mine being in the pleasant environment of Nonsuch Girls' Grammar at Cheam.

He played a prominent part in the students' union at the I of E and ended up as president. He was also elected to the committee of the NUS for 1947/8.

The ideal of teaching in a multilateral - or comprehensive as it later came to be called - stayed with him for many years. Grammar schools were out when it came to applying for jobs. Further Education seemed the best alternative. I have explained in NOTTINGHAM how David ended up teaching day-release classes at the People's College and how John Murray persuaded him to move to High Pavement.

David stayed at High Pavement for eight years. Although it was a grammar school, he was happy there and enjoyed more genuine friendships than anywhere subsequently. The key was a benevolent head, Harry Davies, who kept the staff happy, although he should undoubtedly have done more to deal with the lazy ones. The head of history was an old-fashioned grammar school teacher of limited vision, but he left David alone to teach as he wanted. David was never really interested in history. If he had been a few years younger he would have done sociology.

As I explain in LEAVING THE PARTY, when he failed to get the job of his dreams, head of history at a comprehensive school, he took the brave decision to move to Greenwood Sec. Mod. in Sneinton. This incidentally meant giving up the special allowance he had at H.P. for A level teaching. The private income was a disadvantage in enabling him to do this. Greenwood was a traumatic experience. Two examples: keeping boys in after school meant facing angry parents outside the gate. The school had just had radio installed in the hall so that the BBC schools religious service should be relayed at assembly. The head thought it necessary to explain to the assembled boys that God was not really up in the roof of the hall.

When he had been on the NUS executive David had been involved in getting students at Training Colleges - as they were then called - accepted for NUS membership. He had visited several and been appalled at the restrictions imposed on the students. He became interested in teacher training.

This now seemed the field to move into. Nelson Hall interested him in that it was taking male students for the first time. It would be a temporary move. A Nottingham College of Education was being planned, and he had a job there in mind. Another ambition destined not to be fulfilled.

He stayed at Nelson Hall for two years - not very happy ones because although he enjoyed the work, he hated only being at home for weekends. For the first year term he had a room in the college. Then he had to find his own accommodation, first at the rectory next to the college, then with Lucy, a crippled lady who let him the upstairs of her house that she could no longer reach. I never saw either. Apart from breakfast he had meals at the college and spent most of his time there. At weekends he came home. The college obliged by not timetabling him on Mon. morning or Friday afternoon. The college principal was Miss Malloch, a formidable fat lady. After a prickly start I think they got on reasonably well. However she did him a great disservice in refusing to back his application for his research into concepts of social relations to be accepted for a M.Ed. at Birmingham University. Work was being done there in his chosen field which made it more appropriate than Nottingham where there was no-one involved in the field. She probably objected to a member of her staff doing work not directly connected with the work of the college. It was a similar attitude to that of Crabtree who objected to staff having a day off to attend the annual NUT teachers' course.

I still have two green-banded breakfast cups and a saucer, survivals of his equipment for living with Lucy.

Dating David's moves is difficult, as he did not keep his diaries. It must have been in September 1960 that he went to Loughborough College of Education. Mainly because of Pap's buying the house next door without telling us, we could not leave Nottingham. Choice was limited, and when an opening came up for a lecturer in Education at Loughborough, he took it. I can't remember what grade the job was, but it was promotion from Nelson Hall which mattered for future moves - and he was desperate to live at home again.

Loughborough was the main men's P.E. training college. It also had a post-graduate course. Academic standards were good and he enjoyed the teaching. He liked the principal, but, as at High Pavement, a pedestrian but kindly head of Education, Cecil, was frustrating. The only answer is to run your own department, as I found at Rushcliffe.

Apart from that, the main disadvantage was the travelling. He usually went by car - by now we had two - but occasionally he went by train on the Central line from Victoria (later closed by Beeching) taking his cycle free for transport at both ends. Despite this, the years at Loughborough were happy ones. He was there for eight years.

After Pap died he started looking for head of department jobs. With Ian still at High Pavement and me looking forward to Rushcliffe going comprehensive in the near future he could not go far from Nottingham, although we could now move house. He became Head of Education at Leicester College of Education (Scraftoft) in Sept. 78. Harry Davis told him that the principal was impossible, and strongly advised him not to go there. This was reminiscent of Jim Austen's warning about Thom, the head at Clifton. As before David ignored the advice - this time very much to his cost.

Fisher was indeed a difficult man to work with. He had been appointed the previous year to tighten the place up after the happy-go-lucky regime of the previous principal. Camaerts, a charismatic character who had worked with Maquis in France during the war - he was bi-lingual- was immensely popular with the staff. The situation was similar to Stephens at Mundella; Fisher was soon loathed by everyone. David, since he was Fisher's appointee and had new ideas, came in for some of this opprobrium from some of the staff. This upset him greatly at the time. Later things changed and he got on well with his department.

Fisher had a twin brother who was head of the new Sutton in Ashfield Comprehensive. When a group of Scraftoft students went on a visit to Sutton, they were surprised to be greeted by their principal when they got off the bus. They did not know he had a twin. Later I met some staff from Sutton; the two Fishers seem to have been similar in character.

For the first year, David had to have b. and b. near the college while we looked for a house and Ian completed his first year in the 6th. Old Dalby was an unsatisfactory compromise. We were now both living away from our workplaces and cut off from any political activity locally. Radcliffe with easy access down the A 46 is actually more accessible to Scraftoft than Old D. (Note by Ian. This is not true as Old Dalby is also just off the A46 but nearer.)

I applied for two jobs in Leicester unsuccessfully. I think I would have loathed both of them.

In 1976 the college was amalgamated with Leicester Poly. Fisher retired, and departed for Israel - he was Jewish - and was never heard from again. There was much reorganisation and many changes - most for the better. The former deputy was in charge of the campus.

The amalgamation coincided, however, with the D of E discovering that they were over-producing teachers. Intake had to be reduced and inevitably a reduction in staff numbers had to follow.

This would reach critical stages for the academic year 79/80. David decided to retire at 60 rather than face the trauma of staff redundancies.

Post Script

I find writing about David's career profoundly depressing. He was so talented, so true to his ideals, and yet so unappreciated.

His ideals were the problem. He was early blacklisted as a communist which made his appointment to Fairham (Clifton) Comp or the Nottingham Coll. of Ed. unlikely.

Those who got on in the Poly/ Coll. of Ed world published articles and did higher degrees - often at the expense of their teaching commitments. For David commitment to staff and students came first - leaving little time for research and publication. For example, when Scraftoft was amalgamated with the Poly, the man who had been in charge of teacher training in art at the Poly was made 2nd in the Education department, and promoted to be the first Professor of Education at Leicester Poly. He had a list of publications. When David retired he became Head of the department and quickly revealed that he was quite incapable of running an efficient department. We were told that members of staff who had grumbled about David when he was first appointed longed to have him back.

When he started at Greenwood, he also started a part-time course at the Nottingham Institute of Education. It was a diploma course; it would have been more appropriate if he had started an M.Ed. but no-one advised him on this. He applied and got a sabbatical for the summer term to finish the two-year diploma course in a year and set to work at the same time on research for an M.Ed.. His thesis subject was Concepts of Social Relations in Childhood and Adolescence. Birmingham would have been the most suitable university at which to enrol for this, but since Malloch would not help, he had to do it at Nottingham where there was no-one appropriate to invigilate him. He got his M.Ed in 1964.

When he retired he immediately enrolled with Nottingham to do a Ph.D. in some aspect of Adult Education. I tried in vain to persuade him to choose a subject other than education. Thatcher had just come to power and swinging cuts were being made in education. Fees went up dramatically, but he carried on. Then came his heart attack. An utterly unsympathetic administrator refused to allow him to delay his work until he had fully recovered. The greatly increased fees still had to be paid. So he abandoned the project, instead he started the Nottingham U3A which proved a far more productive enterprise.

HOUSES

3 Wharf Lane is our 4th house. The first was 254 Derby Road. It was a four-bedroom late Victorian house on Derby Road, Lenton - half way up the hill where the buses changed gear. We bought the house, which was leasehold, from an ample Jewish lady, Mrs. Goldstein. She sold us her large hall mirror, which we moved to the bathroom, gave amiable advice on gas cookers - we should not buy a cheap one - and bequeathed us her cleaning lady, whose name I forget, and her knickers. These made a marvelous floor cloth. Unfortunately they got tipped down the loo with the dirty water by mistake.

We moved in on New Year's Day 1948. We chose the house largely for its central location - 15 minutes walk from the city centre, and its convenience for both our jobs - the buses to Long Eaton passed the door, and David could cycle to work in ten minutes; he wore out many a brake block on the hill. It was too big for us, so we planned to let the downstairs and live upstairs ourselves. There was already a loo downstairs, so all that was necessary was to convert the back bedroom into a kitchen. We would share the bathroom. No-one in those days was into self contained flats.

We found our tenants through our friends Marjorie Griffiths..Jim Austen was doing French at the University with Marjorie's husband Charlie. Jim and Jean, who was a Scot, had two children, Margaret and Alan, 5 and 3 as far as I can remember. They were with us for the four years we lived there. David calculated the rent so that we did not make a profit from letting to them but just covered expenses, so they probably did well out of it. We did the same at Claremont Gardens. We were not going to be profiteering landlords.

Although we had not planned it, sharing a house turned out to be ideal when we had Michael. We baby sat for each other, and later Jean agreed, for a payment, to have Michael when I started teaching at Claremont College - then in Clarendon St. so conveniently nearby cycle - two afternoons a week.

The best part of the house was our upstairs front room. It had a long window from which you looked out over the Trent Valley to Beeston in the distance. The kitchen being to our own design was convenient. One snag was hot water. We had an ascot heater in the kitchen, and to save using hot water heated by the Austen's kitchen fire, we heated bath water in a gas boiler in the bathroom and siphoned it into the bath. We filled it up with a hose pipe. Since this was rather a slow process, one tended to go away and do something else while the boiler filled up, twice we forgot it - David both times - and water descended on the Austen's downstairs. They were shall we say - understanding.

There was only a tiny front garden - a patch of lawn to sit on - we cut it with shears; it didn't deserve a mower - a border against the Bulwell stone boundary wall where we could grow a few flowers. At the back were a yard and a cycle shed, and a flower bed which we turned into a sand pit.

A hazard for a small child was the stair case. It went straight down with no turns to a hard tiled floor. David made a fine gate which he fitted up at the top with a self closing mechanism. Nevertheless Michael managed to fall down them, and bite his lower lip so that it needed stitches. He made

his first trip to the children's hospital. (His second was years later when he was kicked by a horse when out with the Woodcraft Folk and thought he had broken his leg. He refused to rise from his bed. An ambulance was summoned. He was taken downstairs on a stretcher. When the ambulance arrived at the hospital he got up and walked in.) One of the attractions of Claremont Gardens was that the stairs had two turns. Nevertheless Michael managed to fall down the within a few days of our arrival and was sick all over my head when I picked him up!

The lack of a garage was a major disadvantage when we got a car. You couldn't park in the street without lights then. The nearest garage we could find was in Dunkirk over a mile away.

Lenton was a good area to live in. It had everything nearby; shops; Lenton and Radford recs for swings for Michael; baby clinic and doctor (Pettigrew on Lenton Bvd); and most important a receptive party branch. It was almost like being back in Preston.

Members ranged from Arthur Noon the window cleaner who lived in a back-to-back off Willoughby St to Betty and Ken Parvin in their rather grand house in Park Road. Ken was a solicitor who advised the party on legal matters. He became our personal solicitor until he retired in the 70's. Peter Price and Audrey Bowns (later Price) also lived in Park Road. Like us they let part of their house. Dorothy Field the artist lived there for a time.

They both acted at the People's theatre (Co-op amateur dramatic society). Audrey was a brilliant Major Barbara, but her real interest was in costume. She later became a wardrobe mistress at the National Theatre. Peter was an emergency trained junior teacher. He was a manic depressive. Later he had to retire on a disability pension. This enabled him to take up full-time politics. He became a city councilor and with Ken Coates and others was a thorn in the flesh of the right wing. But this was years later. .

Up the hill on Seely Rd lived Mrs. Evans - never known by her first name. She was a Marxist guru who ran party schools. Meetings and socials were often held at her house. Her son Bill, ex-service and doing an architecture degree at Waverley St lived with her. Down in Dunkirk near the canal lived Des Atkinson, who worked at Raleigh, and Mary, who like me got hay fever and first told me about the existence of histamines. Des and Bill soon recruited me for Daily Worker drives. We went round from door to door on a Sunday morning selling the Saturday edition and trying to get regular orders for the Saturday paper which we would deliver. I took on a regular round. David never enjoyed street work, canvassing etc. He was soon involved with the NUT young teachers and with organising a party teachers group which used to meet at our house. He was also soon on the district committee.

There was a feeling of belonging to a movement. It was not the same when we moved to Carrington, but perhaps this was because times were changing.

When Ian arrived we realised that 254 much as we loved it - and love it we did- was too small and we had to find somewhere else. After much searching we found Claremont Gardens and with some difficulty because of the leasehold succeeded in selling the house. We sold it to a German woman whose bus to work at Stanford Iron Works passed the door as mine to Long Eaton had done. She was an awkward buyer in that at the last moment she

renege on buying various extras from us. We were so angry that we stripped the house of everything we could remove from curtain rails to two huge planks in the attic; the remains of one acts as a chopping board on the compost heap! She won in the end though. She forwarded no mail to us so that I lost touch with several friends. Amongst the mail she would have been receiving was the newspaper of the Communist International, "For a Lasting Peace; For a People's Democracy" - known as For For. Perhaps this was also why she sent nothing on.

We moved out on 4th July 1952. Michael was very deeply affected by the move. "Never see Derby Road house again" became his plaintive refrain.

CAMPING

At first David resolutely refused to entertain the idea of a camping holiday. He had had enough of sleeping under canvas in the army, thank you. Instead, in 1955, we did a week at Prestatyn Holliday camp in North Wales where you lived in civilised waterproof cabins, had your meals provided + camp entertainment and babysitting arrangements. It was a great success and we went back again in 1956. In 57, the year of petrol rationing following the Suez crisis, we went to Guernsey, where Michael first swam and Ian was fascinated by standing stones: the beginnings of his interest in geology? I still longed to go camping, inspired by the experiences of friends such as the Pecks. The turning point was a night David and I spent sleeping out on car seats in the New Forest. He admitted it had been an enjoyable adventure. Camping was on. For the next 15 years we camped every summer and sporadically after that in between package hols when the boys had left. Our last expedition was back to Wales in 1992. He could not be persuaded to give up.

We joined the Camping Club, assiduously read their magazine, and bought a tent - or rather two. Our friend, John Daniels, had just done a trip with an igloo. He was full of how conveniently and rapidly it could be put up - and let down. No messing about with poles and guy lines. We bought one. However it was obviously going to be too small for four of us, so a small tent, the kestrel, was bought for the boys. They would be able to put this up themselves - and pack it away again, which would keep them usefully occupied.. We had already acquired a primus (paraffin) stove for picnic use - one of my preparations for bringing David round to camping. We bought lilos, sleeping bags and other basics, and in August 58 set off for central Wales.

At Clarach, near Aberystwyth, we learned to camp. It was wet and windy and we struggled. An experienced neighbour congratulated us on our gallant efforts. Our encampment is recorded in photos. The makeshift cooking shelter rigged up to the igloo entrance caused particular problems. John Daniels in his enthusiasm had not pointed out the problems of cooking for four in an igloo in wet weather...

After a week at Clarach and exploring old haunts near Aber, we moved on to a site near Tenby, remarkable for being one of our only three towns to have kept its town walls. It also has an interesting beach combining rocks and sand.

1959 - the first expedition to France. We had replaced our little grey standard SAL 902 with a green standard estate car. On both we fitted a roof rack. Loading the roof rack and covering it with a green tarpaulin which David had had made for the purpose was a ritual he particularly enjoyed. Our red water container traditionally completed the operation fixed with its own claw at the back of the tarpaulin parcel. Wales had taught us that we must have adequate cover for cooking, so we bought an igloo fly sheet. This involved tent poles and so partly defeated the whole labour-saving purpose of the igloo. For one-night stops we used the igloo and kestrel only.

Another important development was to replace the primus with camping gas.

For the one and only time we flew the car across the channel from Lydd to Le Touquet. We spent the night before we flew camping in Aunt Flossie's garden at Rye. This was the last time I saw her or Cousin Phyllis. Her twin, Nancy could not spare the time to come up from the village to see us. Since this was our first foreign tour it stands out far more clearly in my memory than subsequent ones and this is helped by labeled photographs and a brief notebook diary.

I have no very clear memories of the flight except that the hostess casually informed us that this was her first flight: not very re-assuring. We spent the night at Le Touquet. The site lived up to Le Touquet's reputation for exclusiveness; it was expensive. The next night we spent at Nemours having skirted Paris. We continued south next day making for the Puy de Domes. A picture of the abbey church at La Charitee reminds me of the meal we had at a cafe there en route where, when I asked for a jug of water, I was told the water there was 'pas bon'- the only occasion this ever happened .. We spent several days at a beautiful site on Lac d'Aydat in the Puy de Dome - lovely swimming and interesting volcanic craters. My diary entry notes the profusion of wild flowers including pinks and pansies on the Puy de Vache.

The town of Le Puy was memorable for its public loos - squatters with such huge holes that David had anxious moments fearing that Ian would disappear down one. It was in fact about the dirtiest town we came across, and the one with the most giant statues of the Virgin.

The Auvergne seemed to belong to a previous age with cows pulling ploughs, and strip fields. There were few cars and you could stop where you liked in towns.

From there we travelled on along slow but beautiful roads through the Massif Central and the Cevennes spending a night at the municipal camping at Villefort. It was flat, grassy, had magnificent mountain views and was free. The great advantage of France as a camping country over everywhere else in the 50's and 60's was that you could count on there being somewhere to camp near every large village or town. Sometimes it would be camping sauvage with no facilities, but you were allowed to put up your tent. The Popular Front government was the first in Western Europe to introduce statutory paid holidays. In July or August factories closed down and the workers set off for the country. Camping became the national holiday pattern and a huge network of campsites grew up.

Our next site was Pont du Gard where the massive Roman aqueduct crossed the River Gard carrying water to Nimes. The site was crowded and expensive, but there was good bathing and magnificent views of the floodlit pont. From there we visited Nimes, with its huge Roman arena and temples and walked in its beautifully shaded streets. Then on to Avignon, where the rival popes had their palace and where the city wall survives complete. We walked on the bridge immortalized by the folk song. (Less than half remains, most having been washed away by the Rhone in flood.) On the way back we gave a lift to a young man I describe as "a bogus Scotsman in a kilt". He had found the kilt an excellent means of getting lifts. He taught at a school where David knew the head and was hitching round France. We took him back for a camp supper.

Next day we hit the Mediterranean at Montpellier where we collected letters. We had given Pap a number of Poste Restante addresses where we would be by certain dates so that we could keep in touch with him and know he were all right. (No mobile phones or easy telephone communication) We went on to camp at Marseillan Plage between Sete and Agde. The site was on sand dunes planted with vines and small aspens. There was little shade but plenty of space, adequate toilets and showers, and it was cheap and there was a sandy Med beach 200 yards away. We stayed 4 nights. A photo of Ian consuming shell fish at a cafe lunch commemorates our visit to Agde, which had an interesting fortified cathedral - a reminder of the dangers of living on the shores of the Mediterranean in the past.

Our next stop was Carcassonne, the spectacular walled medieval city in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The municipal campsite was by the river, though, I have recorded it as overcrowded and having mucky toilets.

Having "done" Carcassonne we returned next day to the coast seeking somewhere to have a seaside break for a few days. We found Camping de Front de Mer at Argeles Plage, about 15 miles from the Spanish frontier, It was a large, flat holiday site, clean with adequate facilities, and expensive. On our second night we were flooded out after a four hour thunderstorm. We decided to move to higher ground, but when we started the car it proceeded to sink deeper and deeper into the mud. Several strong Frenchmen came to our rescue and lifted the car out. We stayed at Argeles for 9 days - longer than at any other foreign site - with the result that we got to know our neighbours, the Dubois family from Paris who had a daughter, Annie, about Michael's age. Parents encouraged her to practice her English on him, but attempts to establish a pen-friendship did not prosper.

From Argeles we visited Perpignan, the historic capital of the kings of Majorca and explored towards the Spanish frontier. Franco was still in power so we were not allowed to set foot in Spain. We went on a hike up the mountain with the camp children's club starting at 4 am and returning at 5pm in a heavy thunderstorm. Not an idyllic day.

Our next site was Font Romeu, alt. 5,000 ft, in a pine forest in the Pyrenees: our most expensive site after Le Tiuquet. I have a note that that it was so dry that the washing dried overnight. It made up for it next day. A thunderstorm started at 3pm and rain continued for the rest of the day and was still going next morning. We packed up and left. We travelled north in continuous rain 250 miles - our longest mileage - to Souillac on the Dordogne.

It was a beautiful site by the river with bathing and good facilities. We vowed to return in better weather and did so several times. It is perhaps the site I can remember most clearly

(It was at this site years later when we were on our own that I returned to the tent after an early morning swim to find David standing on one leg unable to straighten the other. His knee had got jammed. He had cricked it while putting on his bathers. With help he was able to lie down. Getting to the toilet at the far end of the site was a problem. I laid out the

tarpaulin in front of him and he progressed in tarpaulin stages the length of the site. A man came over to us and introduced himself as a Dutch doctor. He offered some valium which did seem to help. After a couple of days we were able to move on.)

In 1959 we stayed only one night and continued north to a messy transit camp at Argenton our purpose being to visit the caves of Lascaux, famous for their prehistoric rock paintings. We were lucky to go when we did. It was later found that that the huge doses of tourist breath were causing the paintings to deteriorate and the caves had to be closed to the public. So they remain as far as I know.

Our next stop was Chateau d'Avery on the Loire between Orleans and Blois where we visited the very interesting chateau. We bathed in the river which I note as being thick and shallow.

Next day we made for the coast with a one hour visit to Chartres cathedral - much too brief to do it justice. This time we stayed at Berque Plage. It was the worst site ever, dirty, noisy and to crown it all the igloo went down so that we had to sleep in the kestrel and the boys in the car. Our evening meal at Berque was the most expensive we had had and far from the best. A disappointing end to a wonderful holiday.

On the way to the Barn, David set the pattern for the question he would ask every year: where shall we go next year? The answer turned out to be Yugoslavia via Germany and Austria returning via Venice and the Black Forest.

GRAND EUROPEAN TOUR 1960

Next year we were off again on our most ambitious expedition. The aim was to re-visit Yugoslavia and in particular to return to Dubrovnik. We were away 5 weeks and visited 7 countries. Mileage was not recorded unfortunately.

We spent our first night away camping in Aunt Flossie's garden at Rye, which was convenient for the Dover to Ostend crossing. The next camp was Bruges. We had a meal in the square and walked round the town and along its canals. We were not allowed to stay long as the water stank. My hay fever was for once a blessing. I smelt nothing.

Next day on into Germany. En route we "did" Ghent and saw a Van Eyck altar piece. We passed by Brussels. I remember a huge advertising balloon moored by the road. We did a hasty visit to Aachen cathedral (Browning: How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix) and spent a wet night at a river-side site at Monchau. From there on down the Rhine valley to Eberbach am Necker where we spent four nights at an excellent municipal camp site. We swam in the river Necker and also at good cheap swimming pool next door. We rested and walked in beautiful woodland nearby where signs told us to "Ruhe im Walde", be quiet in the woods. Even Da was enjoying Germany.

We followed the Necker on through Stuttgart, where we paused for a walk-around and admired the magnificent station building. We were looking for a meal but nothing was available on a Sunday evening. On for the night at another excellent site at Geislingen. Then on through Augsburg, where I have a note we had the car serviced for 5/-, Munich and the Austrian frontier. We spent two nights at an unpleasant and expensive site at Salzburg, then on via the Radstatt pass to Milstattersee. We spent 3 nights at this dream camp situated overlooking the lake, relaxing bathing, mountain walks and views to hand, and a good cafe nearby.

On Aug. 6 we left for Yugoslavia via Villach, which we remembered from our rail journey to the Youth railway 13 years earlier as the last outpost of capitalism before we entered the tunnel taking us to socialist Yugoslavia. This time we went via the Worzen pass to spend the night at Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. I noted; fair transit site by river. No milk.

Next day, on our way to the coast near Rijeka, we visited the famous caves at Postojna.

We found a good site at Martinicia next to the beach. The sea was Dalmatian though, i.e. cold because of the cold underground water seeping in from the limestone mountains. It would be even colder when the Bora blew the warmer surface water out to sea.

After 3 nights we set off down the newly built coast road to Zadar. We had originally intended to continue along the coast to Dubrovnik, but the new road ended at Zadar and it would have been rough roads onwards, so we decided to delay Dubrovnik until the new road got there. Zadar is an old town with interesting buildings - some Roman. I realize now how much we missed in our travels through not having done enough reading up in advance. I have since found that it was sacked by C 13 crusaders at the instigation of Venice that was its trading rival. On our third day a gale got up ending

in a spectacular Balkan thunderstorm.

We went back up the coast to a site we had noticed on the outward journey - Senj. This was a memorable site, and one of the few to which we returned (1964). It was away from the town, right by the sea, and quiet. Water was from a well into which rainwater drained from a surrounding courtyard. In Senj we met Turkish coffee for the first time. It was also the only place where we were ever fined - for parking at a bus stop.

I returned to the town of Senj in 1996 when on adult ed. holiday to Crk and other islands. I learnt that it had been a notorious pirate stronghold in the past.

Our return route from Yugoslavia was via Venice (3 nights at Marino di Venezia), Lake Garda (2 nights), Twelfs and Bregenz in Austria, Tittersee in the Black Forest (2 nights), Rheims with visit to cathedral, and finally on the way to Calais, a visit to Laon Cathedral, a large picture of which hung in the dining room at the Barn. We found no proper camp site at Calais - just a patch of fenced sand with no water or toilets, so we went down the coast to Wissant.

On Mon. Aug 29 we took the ferry to Dover, went on for 2 nights to the Barn, then home on 31 Aug.

Amongst my observations were that the total cost of the holiday was £130. ???

We took £5 worth of tinned food, but brought back much the same value of food from Germany. Prices were cheapest and shopping - self service - easiest. France the most expensive. Shortage of shops made shopping difficult in Yugoslavia; there were always queues. There seemed to be racketeering in Venice and one Italian meal was a swindle.

The holiday is well commemorated by a photo taken by Mick of the three of us on a mountain top.

Tourism was only just starting in 1960. Building the road down the coast was an important economic enterprise from which Croatia, having most of the coastline would benefit after the break-up. German tourists were already there, and were not popular in spite of the money they brought. Some were probably revisiting wartime locations where they had been in control. Someone who spoke English told David that the only good Germans he had ever seen were the dead ones he had seen on Senj beach. It was important to make clear that you were English and not German in shops and cafes. Tourists were issued with petrol coupons on entry. Pumps were few, so you filled up when you came to one.

It was before the days of tourist shopping, but I think one thing we did bring back was the basket that Moss still sleeps in.