



For What it is worth

The Story of my Life
Revised and final Edition

Written by Stanley William Hayes

In the year of Our Lord 2002

Revised 2005

Stanley Hayes

Prologue

How this Story could ever have had a beginning I will never know as my Parents were so Victorian in their outlook and my Mother especially, with her views on what she called “Hanky Panky” in other words, the begetting of children or what goes with it.

I suppose all kids wonder whether *their* parents ever did “It” but to my Mother it must have been a miracle and a shock that I was ever conceived although she did have at least four other pregnancies afterwards, these being my Sisters Edna and Gwyneth and two miscarriages.

I well remember her saying at one time (when she had had a few drops of Sherry)

That after the last baby was born she had told Dad there would be no more

“Hanky Panky”.

No wonder the poor old bugger was so miserable for the last 40 years of his life.

Anyway somehow or other I did arrive on the scene and was probably a little bundle of joy to them

(At least at first)

I could probably have filled twice as many pages as I have, but it would have taken too long and the reader would have become bored with too many of my many improbable, but very true anecdotes.

No doubt I did things that I shouldn't have done (haven't we all?). Some naughty, some nice, and a couple perhaps not so nice but there is nothing that I should be ashamed of.

Perhaps just to titillate the reader I may record some of these for posterity, but leave them somewhere to be read after I am gone and the Story is completely closed.

These may raise a laugh or a few comments of “The old devil!!” But remember, I WAS young *once*

I have tried to keep the story in sequence, but after all these years I may have wandered off the track a little but who knows, and who cares, it is just the story of an ordinary bloke that has had a life perhaps a little bit more chequered than some, who wanted to record it for his Family.

It is a pity that more parents don't do this, because children know little, if anything of their ancestor's history and when they are gone, it is lost for ever.

I hope you will enjoy accompanying me on my journey through Life and who knows, I may yet be able to add a paragraph or so before I finally give up the ghost.

(In this Final Edition I have done just that, and although I haven't as yet *physically* given up the proverbial Ghost, without my Dear Wife, my Life is to all intents and purposes at an end. How long I will have before we are together again, or what may happen in that time no one knows but if anything noteworthy happens between now and then, the reader will have to insert it in here as an appendix

So, for the Last time
Onward Christian Soldiers
Start “The Journey

Das Marchen beginnt

Chapter 1

And in the beginning

My story starts on the 20th April 1926.

I was born, so my Birth Certificate states, at 147 Mellison Rd in the London Suburb of Tooting. Whether this was a private house or a hospital I do not know. But in those days most women had their children at home. However some 14 days later when my Father registered my Birth, their address was given as 160 Eswyn Rd. Tooting.

My parents apparently, were always on the move, whether this was due to the work situation or what, I do not know. But only a year after my Birth I received a homemade Birthday card from my Father who was apparently working at a place called Camberley (where that is, goodness knows.) It was addressed to Master Stanley Hayes, 4 Okeburn Rd Tooting.

The time of my Birth was a very turbulent part of British Industrial history as at the time Britain was being rocked by a General strike, led by the miners who wanted a better deal. Apparently the whole country was at a standstill and was for some weeks. (See, I was causing trouble right from the start). Naturally I knew nothing about this, and throughout my childhood knew nothing, or very little of the hunger and poverty that beset the a lot of people around us as my Father being a person who could turn his hand to just about anything was always in work. Albeit apparently traveling all over England.

My earliest recollections of life appear to have been when I was about 3 or 4 yrs of age as I can recollect several incidences that happened before I started school at 4.

One in particular has remained in my memory all my life and that was the death of my little Sister Edna.

At the time we were living at 36 Chesson Rd Fulham, another suburb of London. The parents of my Fathers Brother in Law Joe Lake, owned the house that we were living which like most of those in the area was of three stories, divided into Flats (apartments) We lived on the middle floor which was reached from the road by seven stone steps, with another set of steps leading down to the lower floor or basement. How people got into the top flat, I have no idea. There must have been some more stairs, perhaps inside the house.

As far as I remember there was only one toilet for all the flats and this was in a corner of the yard so how all the other occupants got out to the loo I just don't remember. Perhaps they came through our kitchen.

That tiny back yard will always be printed in my memory as being only about the size of a postage stamp. It was bituminized, with a high wooden fence surrounding it on all sides. Even at that age, I made a mental vow that

NEVER, if I had a back yard or garden, would I ever cover it in cement or bitumen

On this particular day, my Mother had taken my Sister and me down to the pavement. Strapped my sister into the pushchair and strapped the chair to the railings which surrounded the basement area and

were supposed to stop people falling down into it. But there were no gates on these railings (and still aren't).

Mum had gone back up to our flat to fetch the shopping bags or something, leaving us there. I think I was about three and My Sister about 18 months old.

Somehow or other my Sister managed to wriggle out of her straps and toddled off down the pavement. She only took a few steps then fell down the steps leading to the basement. I cannot remember seeing her fall but I suppose I must have done, but I do remember the ambulance and the crowds. Poor little thing. Apparently died on the way to hospital. I was too young to realize the import of this, and only wondered where my little Sister had gone.

My other memory of her was just before the accident, we had been playing "tents" under the table. My Mother used to hang tablecloths over the edge to make it like a "cubby" and we had been eating raisins from a dish. I can remember afterwards though, going every week to the cemetery to put flowers on her grave. She was buried in Fulham cemetery (In 2000 my Sister, Gwyneth, whilst researching for her book found the grave site. And we thought about putting a stone on it. But it was too long ago, and like my parents, her memory is in my heart.)

On the way to the cemetery we used to have to pass through the "allotments". These were small plots of ground that people used to rent, as no one had a garden. And they would grow vegetables and flowers. Most of the men had built little huts on them. Outside of which they would sit for hours between cultivating, smoking or yarning. Most of them had a soft spot for a little boy and many knew the story of my Sister and they would sometimes give me sweets or something from their gardens, fruit, or perhaps a carrot.

Even today I can still see the great big bunches of Rhubarb growing out of the top of old buckets or cans. Of course there was plenty of manure about in those days as most traffic was still horse drawn. Sometimes, on the way back Mum would take me into the park for a while. But not for long, as I think it must have made her too sad, as it was there that she had often taken both of us to play.(Picture was taken in that park just before Edna's accident.)..

One day there was great excitement in the street as an airship floated over the houses. I always thought that this was the ill-fated R101 but I believe that happened earlier. Could have been the Hindenburg. It was like a great silver sausage with ropes hanging from it. No one had ever seen one before. (Unless they were around during the First World War).

It was around this time that I started my formal education, at 4yrs of age. The first school that I went to was Star Rd School.(making enquiries in 2000, I discovered that this school had, after many changes, been assimilated into Queens College).

The only thing that I remember about that school was that one morning, whilst lining up to march inside, I had told my Mother and the Teacher that I wanted to go to the Toilet. Both of them told me that I would have to wait.

Now I ask you!!, telling a little boy to wait when he was "bustin". Yeah, that's right, **I shit myself in class**. Did Teacher try to clean me up? Not on your Nelly.. I was sent home and had to find my way alone. Fortunately it wasn't very far but I was scared stiff and my Mother when I eventually arrived home stinking to high heaven was not amused, either with me or the Teacher. But it was **both** their faults. When you "gotta go, you gotta go".

I remember going home shortly after this, proud to appraise my Mum of my first scholastic achievement. And that was that I could pee up the toilet wall higher than any boy in the school.(Dirty little bugger even then)

Even at that age I was always inadvertently in trouble. I wasn't a naughty boy, but trouble always found me (as it has done throughout my life).

In those days, there were very few cars around so we used to play in the streets.

Well, One day whilst we were playing at throwing stones across the road. What should come along, but one of these new fangled vehicles. *Somehow*, my stone and the car's window collided. There was an awful bang. And we all took off. Unfortunately for me I was only little and couldn't run that fast, so the driver saw where I had run to and followed me. Naturally, neither the driver nor my Father was very amused. I cannot recall getting a pasting as my Father wasn't like that, but I must have been punished somehow. And I guess Dad had to pay for the damage. But I didn't mean it, honest. It wasn't my fault.

Another time, I was shot in the eye by another boy, with a potato gun. These were a toy gun that fired small pieces of potato at quite high velocity and were quite dangerous. I was lucky not to have lost my eye.

My Mother always kept a nice table with tablecloths on at every meal and there was always plenty to eat. Dad was a stickler for manners at the table, and both

Then and during my childhood it always irked me that I had to behave and mind my manners at the table. There was no way that I could "get down" until everyone was finished. The same as we could never start eating until all, including Mum were seated and ready to start (I am still the same today). But in later life I appreciated this drill as it saved me embarrassment when I went to dinners etc. by knowing what to do. And there is an old saying that "Manners maketh Man"

As posh as we tried to be I used to delight in slipping across the road to my friends' house to have something to eat. They were pretty poor, and lived in a dingy, dark, basement flat. The kids were always in tatty old clothes but that was nothing unusual in that area of London then. The kids were probably lousy too, but Mum used to comb our hair out every night looking for nits.

His Mum never used a tablecloth (probably never owned one) but used to put newspapers on the table .I thought that was, as they say today "cool". We were lucky to get a slice of bread and dripping or jam. But to a hungry kid that was nectar.

More than once I saw them eating dog biscuits and I can recall sometimes going with my friend to fetch a pennyworth of dog meat from the little stall that was set up on Saturdays at the corner of the Street. But they didn't have a dog or cat. And it wasn't until later that I found out that it was horsemeat that they would have had for dinner. My Mother was horrified when she found out that I was eating over there. But try stopping a kid

Sometimes he would come over to our house for tea, but even at that tender age, I was disgusted at the way he would eat his food but the poor little beggar was too hungry to care about that.

Shortly after my Sister died we moved away from the area, as people were horrid to my Mother regarding my Sister's accident. Even the so-called relatives whose house we were living in were nasty.

I don't know where we went too then, but I recall we lived in a horrible lower floor or cellar flat. We could hear every sound from the one above and at night when in bed I could hear the tube train rumbling along underneath the house. I hated it there, as did my parents.

Whilst there (or it may have been the previous place) one 5th of November, which is Fireworks and Bonfire night in England, I and my Mother were watching through the window onto the tiny back yard where other tenants were letting off Fireworks etc. She thought it was too dangerous for me for me to be out in the yard, especially with the tragedy not far behind us.

Suddenly everything appeared to have gone wrong as everyone was running into the house for his or her lives. A spark had somehow fallen into the box of Fireworks and they were all going off together.

It was **much** more fun than watching silly ones and twos being let off. That is until they started hitting the window and starting fires in the rubbish lying around the yard. Mum snatched the curtains over and ran with me into the other room. Good stuff I thought at the time.

Whilst living in this place I started going to North End Rd School. (I have since found out that it was bombed and demolished in 1941. Having put a class photo on the internet I have received e-mails from two people who also went to that school).

Can't recall much about this time except that Hampstead Heath was not far away and Dad used to take me there to fly a kite. And I have a faint recollection of Dad taking me to see the Crystal Palace. A huge glass building which housed an exhibition. Later burnt down. (No, not by me!)(Or was it Earls Court?

My mind has always had a blank spot regarding this period in my life. But of course I wasn't very old. Could have been some sort of reaction regarding Edna's death, I don't know.

However for some reason or other my Parents decided to move **again**. This time almost back to where they, and I, had started (they were married in Tooting at St Peter's Church and I was born there.) (No, stoopid, not in the Church). I have no idea what the attraction for this area was, but they seemed to have moved around and around within a matter of a few miles. Probably Dad's job. Anyway it was a new start for all of us.

(Amazing how small the world is. In 2004 I met a lady who had also lived in Chessom Rd just opposite us)

Chapter 2

Tooting

On leaving the Fulham area we moved into the lower flat of 7 St Cyprian St Tooting. Our street was very nice with all private houses (albeit turned into flats) but all around there were many Council Houses. Many of them, due to the type of tenants, virtually slum. The owner of the house was a Mr. Wiltshire.

The flat had I believe, only two bedrooms, as my room always seemed to double as a lounge room whenever we had company. I remember that there were two Japanese patterned vases on the mantelpiece. And I hated!!! "Those things". Whenever I had an occasion to go into the lounge room Mum would yell at me "Mind my vases" The bloody things were almost like a holy icon. They didn't hold water (or so we thought) and were the repository for spare pencils, pins etc. I believe Dad had

bought them when they had gone somewhere for a holiday. Possibly before I was born. (Will appear again in later chapter) The Living room and kitchen were combined, with a stone sink in one corner. Even at that age I vowed that if ever I had a house of my own there would be no sink where I was having my meals, or at least it would be out of sight. And that still goes today. Out the back was a small scullery with a wood and coal fired boiler to wash the clothes in.

It was here, (Not in the boiler) that for the rest of my life I developed a “thing” against the Flower “Lilly of the Valley”, as the garden of this house had a border and centerpiece with just enough room for a path around it. Both the border and the centerpiece were smothered in these plants.

The Landlords wife who often came home from an asylum would sit in the upstairs window for hours combing her long hair. If I should even step out into the garden, there would be an almighty yell “You mind my Lily of the Valley you horrible little boy!!!” and she would keep yelling until either her husband shut her up or I had slunk back in doors. Or sometimes disappeared with a quick scramble over the back fence into the next road. It was quicker than walking right around.

I cannot recall the name of the junior school that I attended and cannot remember anything about it other than being forced to lay down on a mat every afternoon to have a sleep. That wasn’t me. (Incidentally in 2002 I received an E-mail from a lady who told me that her Mother in Law had gone to this school. Also that her husband had been born in Mellison Rd too).

Later I went to St Franciscan School.(Or was it Franciscan Road School) I think I got the cane on about the first day, for chewing a gobstopper in class. Today the teacher would have been sued for assault. But it didn’t do me any harm. The school was completely divided both in the classrooms and playground. Boys and Girls, and never “shall the twain meet”

There was wooden fence between the playgrounds but over the years, enterprising young boys, or perhaps girls, had dug out little holes with their penknives, or found knotholes so that we could peep through. What we expected to see God only knows but I suppose it was part of the “growing up” process. Although sometimes we were lucky enough to see a girl doing handstands, showing her dark blue knickers.

Then there would be fight for the peephole. I didn’t know what they were getting excited about as I knew nothing of life and must have been a slow learner regarding this sort of thing. Saucy talk or swearing was never heard in our house.

There was a high brick wall right around the school broken only by small gates.

If one were late getting to school it would be a mad dash through these gates trying to avoid the Prefects who would be hiding just inside to catch the latecomer, and take him to the head master. Sometimes it was better to hang back until they had caught someone else then make the dash through.

In those days children could have a third of a pint of milk to drink every morning it cost parent 2 1/2 pence per week but it was surprising how many parents couldn’t afford even this low cost. What was so humiliating about this morning ritual was that we had to drink it at the early morning assembly when all the other kids were present. It was awful for those kids whose parents couldn’t afford it as they had to watch the more affluent drinking theirs and even at that early age I was disgusted.

I didn’t really like the milk, as in those days it wasn’t homogenized and the cream would be thick at the top. Sometimes it made me feel quite sick. Eventually I asked my Mother whether if I didn’t drink all mine I could give it to someone else. This she agreed to but had to give written approval.

Many of the children didn't even wear shoes to school. Not like Australian children who did this from choice, but because they just didn't have any shoes to wear.
I was lucky and always had shoes and decent clothes.

As I said in the previous chapter, there was very little motorized traffic therefore we could play in the streets with comparative safety and we used to roam far and wide.
In England during the summer months it does not get dark until sometimes 9.30 to 10.00 therefore kids would be roaming around until quite late. I was supposed to be in by 8.0 and in bed by 8.30.

Just around the corner from us was a row of shops, one of them being a Chinese Laundry and I was petrified to pass this place even in the daytime. Goodness knows why, but I suppose I had heard stories of Chinamen doing all sorts of things to little boys.
Sometime during this period a market was built at the end of our Rd. It was quite large and a source of joy to little shits like us, as we used to roam through of an evening, upsetting the shopkeepers with our pranks. There were always decorations up in the place, many of them using balloons and it was one of our great joys to wander through, shooting at these balloons with spaghetti guns.

These fired little pieces of chopped off pieces of hard spaghetti. Something like the potato guns. Of course, they were dangerous, but nobody seemed to care then. The spaghetti makers never had it so good as one could buy a bundle of spaghetti stick for about a penny, and we were always running out of ammunition.

Outside the main door of this market was a slightly sloping concrete patch and when the market was closing, the fish shop and grocers which was just inside the door would wash out their shops swishing the mucky water across this patch and into the gutter. Consequently this patch after hours became a slippery skating rink for the kids.

One Xmas I think just about every kid got a scooter. I had a beauty. We used to go down to this patch with our scooters and practice "squealies" for hours. Or make "slides". By the time we had finished, no-one could even stand up on the patch and many an unwary pedestrian found himself on his bum. Much to our delight.

Then one night, loud bangs and cracks and the sound of Fire bells awakened us. On getting dressed and going to the end of the road we could see that the market was on fire.
There were dozens of people around as there was little in the way of entertainment in that area. And this was first class stuff. Not only that, but the Fire Brigade had managed to get the main door up only about two foot.(600 mm) and it had stuck there. As the stalls inside were collapsing, what with all the grease and oil from the fish place and the grocers, their wares were sliding out through, under the door. And everyone was helping himself or herself. I tried grabbing stuff like everyone else but got a belt over the ear from Dad, as he didn't believe in that sort of thing.
Eventually the Market virtually collapsed and the entertainment was over.

There was one thing I did not like whilst living here. That was that having no bathroom, and I cannot remember us even having the ubiquitous zinc bathtub. Dad would take me down to the Public baths once a week to have a bath. I hated that place, it stank, not only of steam and soap but dirty bodies. And the baths were none too clean either. Most probably whilst we were there, Mum was having a good old wash down at home. In those days and indeed for many years after it was the common practice to have only one bath a week and change your clothes at the same time. The only concession that was made was that men changed the collar of their shirts a couple of times a week if they got a bit

grubby. But the shirt itself stayed on all week regardless. I suppose people then just did not have the amount of clothing that we have today. But I don't recall anyone being smelly for all that I don't know what we did about a bath when dad was away from home. I suppose we must have just had a wash down at the sink

For some reason or other, whilst Dad was away Mum and I had been trying to make friends with a little mouse that kept popping out of his hole whenever we sat down to the table for a meal. He started to get quite tame and would come out as far as my feet to pick up little scraps of food. We should have put down a trap for him, but we had got fond of the little fella.

Anyway, one evening whilst Dad was home and Mum had gone out somewhere. We were sitting down to tea when out popped "mickey". He wasn't to know that Dad hated the things was he? And I didn't get time to tell Dad about him.

As soon as Dad saw him, he leapt out of his chair and started to chase the poor little thing all over the kitchen. He had a shoe in his hand and kept taking swipes at it.

Eventually the mouse ran behind the kitchen cabinet and Dad, in exasperation shoved the cabinet back against the wall, squashing my poor little friend. I was heartbroken, but Dad because of all his exertions and excitement almost had a heart attack I had to run out and find Mum for her to come and see to him. Served him right.

I can assure you Dad was NOT amused when I blurted out that it was my tame one.

As said before, many of the people that lived around our area at the time were very poor. We always had plenty of food etc but I can well remember some Sundays going down with Betty and her brother to the little dog meat stall that used to come to the end of our road to get their Sunday dinner.

All sorts of vendors used to wander around the streets in those days with small wheel barrows or stalls selling many types of foods. Our favourite was Winkles. These are tiny snail like crustaceans which are boiled, then dug out of their shells with a pin. Dipped in vinegar and salt and duly popped into the mouth, they were bought by the pint. i.e. a pint pot was used as a measure.

However I believe it were these that almost killed Dad one weekend, or it may have been fish. He had popped some into his mouth but almost immediately spat it out, saying "these (or this) are/is off". Within half an hour, he was desperately ill from fish poisoning and lay at death's door for ages.

Needless to say fish and winkles were definitely OUT from then on.

There were many things that we ate with relish in those days but today I don't think that I could face any of them. One was bread and dripping. This was the fat from beef and other meats (which no one seems to even see these days) spread thickly onto a piece of bread, with lashings of salt and pepper.

Just about everything that we ate in those days was cooked in animal fat and I would eat two helpings of dinner anytime. We had sugar on just about everything but one very rarely saw a fat child or adult.

Technology was catching up with us. Until now we had only had gas lighting. The gas lights were pretty feeble but we knew nothing better. (Dad did of course, as was an electrician, and had met Mum who was servant girl, when his firm were putting electricity into Llannover House in Wales. (The wall candleholders that we still have came from there.)

The mantles were always giving off little pops. Then the money in the meter would run out and there would be a scramble in the dark to find some money. Then came the big day when the gas lines were taken out and we had electricity.

After the gas, it was like coming from night into day. Then we could have various appliances. Not that there were many available then. Even the radios still ran off of batteries. We still had a meter, which had to be fed with shillings, otherwise the lights went out.

The meter reader used to come around every couple of months to empty the meters.

This was a heyday for most housewives as invariable too much money had been put in the meter and they would get a considerable rebate. The silly thing about these meters was that they always seemed to be put in stupid places, like in a cupboard or under the stairs. So half the man's time was taken up either finding the meter, and or fighting his way through a cupboard full of junk. He used to sit at the table, or later, on the stairs counting out the money into little piles with the housewife and kids watching to see how big their pile was getting.

Once the main electricity lines were in, Dad, being an electrician came into his own and was very busy in the area. He wired two of the local cinemas and I often used to go with him as the electricity being a new innovation was a bit temperamental and he would have to be on duty at the Cinema "just in case".

November the 11th was, and is still celebrated as Remembrance Day in England and in those days people used to flock to a local vantage point to hold the Two Minutes silence and watch parades going by. One November Mum took me down to Tooting Broadway. The Main thoroughfare through Town, to watch. There were thousands there packing the footpaths. There were barriers around the crossroads to stop people going across the road other than the designated places and we were squashed up against this, Mum thinking it would be a good spot for me to see what was going on.

Suddenly there was a chorus of screams and shouts; naturally we looked towards where the screams were coming from. There had been some roadwork going on on the other side of the crossing.

As it was coming up to the "Silence" time at 11 o'clock the machinery including a huge steam roller that was working there was being shunted off the road. As the roller had been backing, a little boy had run onto the road and gone under the roller. I saw him go under, but Mum grabbed me quick and turned me away. There was absolute silence for ages, and then people started to scream and shout and rush towards the accident.

Amongst this the "maroons" (Big bangs made by a special type of firework) went off signaling the two Minutes Silence. Other than those around the accident everyone still observed the "Silence" then quietly broke up. The parades were cancelled or diverted and I can well remember Mum holding me close whilst we both cried our eyes out. She probably was relating to her own grief. Then we went home, never again to go to the Remembrance Parade in Tooting.

Every Year on "Derby Day" (that's when the big horse races are held at Epsom,) crowds would form at the Broadway and the Main Rd leading to it for miles, as most of the Punters used to travel down from London to Epsom in coaches. After the races, many of the coaches going back to London would bear the names of the horses they had backed, especially if they were winners (apparently all the passengers on the coach would back the same horses). As these coaches came into sight a great roar. (Mostly from the hundreds of kids), would arise "Chuck out yer mouldies"

(Mouldies were spare cash)

Whereupon many of the passengers that had won money at the races would throw out handfuls of pennies and halfpennies and sometimes silver, then there would be a great scrabble by all the kids to collect this money. This often led to fights and squabbles. No-one ever thought of the danger of being

run over by following coaches. The Police hadn't got a hope in hell of controlling anything so just stood back and let everything take its own course.

As soon as it was light next morning there would be dozens of kids scouring the roads for any "lost" coins. Even pulling up the road drain grates.

For some reason or other Mum and Dad became friends with a couple who lived opposite us. A Mr. and Mrs. Morrissey. She was a large lady and he was a skinny little guy (Like Laurel and Hardy) they and my parents were so different but they must have had an affinity with each other as they remained friends for life, and my Sister and I kept in touch with them long after Mum and Dad had gone and until they both died. They had a son named Vernon. I could never stand him but our parents insisted that we be friends, at least on the surface.

I was always a lone bird even then and preferred my own company but there were a couple of kids in the St that I palled up. I can only remember the name of two of them one was an Eva Pole. She was a little older than I was. They talk about kids today being promiscuous, well she was. Not that I knew the meaning of the word then or what they were on about. But one day I was invited with several other boys to go and play on Tooting Bec (a large common, or park)

When we got there they clustered around Eva who for some sweets or something would take her knickers off and show the boys something they appeared to be interested in. (I suppose we would all have been about 8 then.)I honestly was not interested and went home, Bugger giving up sweets for "that".

The other little girl was one called Betty Baxter. She and her brother had beautiful auburn hair. She became my first girl friend. But wouldn't let me kiss her unless there was a biscuit on offer. But we used to sit in the front garden for hours holding hands. Or just playing. (Games) Bloody females, mercenary even at that age.

Dad wasn't very often home as his job apparently took him all over England, Ireland and Scotland. (We still have a brass camel that he brought back from Ireland.)I was never close to Dad but one time when I contracted Scarlet Fever and they wanted to cart me off to an Isolation Hospital I refused to go until Dad came home. I made that much fuss they thought I would exasperate my condition. So they left me until he got there.

It was horrible in the hospital as I wasn't used to being away from Mum, and I can even today visualize the long ward and Dad coming in the door in a long white gown.

As I have said, we didn't see Dad very much only at weekends and sometimes not for weeks if it was a long job. Sometimes he would come home and say to my Mother."

"Pack up gel' we are going to somewhere or other" And he would shove us all on or in the motorbike and sidecar and off we would go and stay in lodgings.

Sometimes I was sent to the local school, but usually it was only for a week or so, so they didn't bother.

One place I do remember was Stafford, We were staying in a lovely house and I well remember the old gardener teaching me to tell the time by a huge Grandfather clock.

But it was here that I nearly had a bad accident as the place where we were staying had racing stables and numerous horses. One day I wandered into one of the stables

and tried to make friends with one of the horses. But she didn't like little boys, and possibly me in particular.

She got me into a corner, and then tried to roll on me. Fortunately I was only small and managed to roll right into the corner, screaming my head off. The grooms got her off but not without a fight. But I got a thumping for being there in the first place. I wasn't hurt but it put me off horses for life.

Sometimes when Dad was home for a weekend we would all pile into the motor bike and sidecar and shoot off down to Chatham where Dad's mother and Family lived.

At that time Grandma owned a small corner shop which sold everything from firewood to bacon and bread. She was a very hard sort of Lady and I could never get close to her. I can faintly remember my Granddad but he died very early in the piece so I have no memories of what he was like.

They had a dog called Teddy. An Airedale, which was always tied up in the backyard near the back door. To get in the door one had to pass this bloody animal. His tether was just long enough for one to pass without him reaching you, but I was petrified of the thing.

The place I used to love going to down there was Grandma's "Country Cottage". At Walderslade.(Now a Town).

This was a tiny timber house with I believe, two bedrooms and a lounge and kitchen. With a small verandah out front.

The toilet was a bucket out the back and the only water came from a pump in the front garden. The house was set in about ½ acre of woods and the whole area at that time was just a rural retreat. There were a few modern bungalows along the road and my Uncle Charlie and Aunt Mabel owned one of these.

Many of the Family used to congregate there sometimes over holidays and we kids, (cousins Leslie and Stella) had a whale of a time in the snow, or in the summer, roaming through the woods.

One Xmas I remember Dad and a couple of the men playing a rotten trick on my Aunt Doris (Dad's youngest Sister). She apparently, was a very heavy sleeper and wouldn't get up in the mornings so, on this particular Boxing Day the men crept into my Aunt's house where Doris was staying, and carried her still asleep, and in bed, out to the front gate and left her there. The snow was about three-foot deep and it was freezing cold.

Don't know what she said when she woke up and had to trudge through the snow in her bare feet and with only a nightdress on. But I can see us now, all crowding into the front room window waiting for her to wake up. Rotten bums.

My Aunt Mabel must have had one of the first washing machines. This looked something like a butter churn, and was made of wood. The clothes were put in, the lid clamped down and then one had to turn the handle that went through the lid. This in turn rotating the agitator inside.

It was hard work, but much easier than scrubbing the clothes on scrubbing board or stoking the boiler up all day.

Sometime during this period I was sent off to my Nanny's in Wales Nanny being my Mothers Mother.. That was one of the happiest periods of my life, as I loved it there. Even if I did have to go to Goytre School) (I found out years later that Mum had had a miscarriage.)

Nanny lived way out in the country in a little village called Penperllenni which lies between Pontypool and Abergavenny in Monmouthshire, South Wales. (Now Gwent)

She was a rather tall, buxom woman but very lovable and not short of cuddles and hugs for us grandchildren. Not like Grandma Hayes .She had at this time about 6 grandchildren but somehow I always felt I was her favourite. Possibly because at that time I was the only grandson.(There were others later)

The old chap (Edgar Thomas) that lived with her was not my Grandfather but he was a wonderful, scruffy, grubby man but we loved him and we all treated him like he was our Grandfather. And I know he loved all of us kids.

He had a large white moustache, and as he always drank his hot tea from the saucer and this moustache invariably dipped in it, it was stained brown at the ends. He was a very short stocky man (typical Welshman) but very powerful as he had been the village blacksmith for years. He couldn't read or write but noone could ever "diddle" him.

The village consisted of about a dozen houses. One "proper" shop and post office. A shop in an old shed and the Carpenters Arms, (later renamed the Goytre Arms) and the School. Also a small builders yard, and the Blacksmiths shop.. There were a few other houses and farms scattered around the area.

The Railway line ran through one end of the village and it was always good fun to stand on the bridge and be enveloped in smoke and steam as the train thundered along below. Nanny's house was a semi detached one standing at one corner of the cross roads.

There was no sanitation in the house other than a bucket. The toilet was in a small outhouse and was emptied as required. Other than that one used the "po" as they were called from under the bed and chucked it out in the morning. Nanny always had such a wonderful show of peas and beans etc in the garden. I often wondered how she did it.

Water came from a pump over the sink that pumped up rusty tasting water or a large rainwater tank outside the back door. One always washed out in the yard from a bowl with water from the tank. This water was lovely and soft, but the little wriggling things that were always in it always intrigued me. (I now know that they were Mosquito larvae). When finished with, the water was chucked out across the yard or onto the garden, as there were no drains there at all.

They had a small farm. Only a couple of acres, but all the kids grew to love that field and spent many many happy hours playing in it. There was a stream running through the middle in which we could paddle or pick watercress. Even today, my cousins and I still reminiss about the "Nanny's field" and the picnics we had there.

In one corner there was a hay barn full of hay. For growing up children this was a wonderful place to start learning about life as we use to play Doctors and Nurses and all sorts of things as we got older.

There were few boys in the village and I had two girl cousins whose acquaintances were girls, so my childhood particularly in Wales, revolved around the opposite sex.

(They say that early childhood experiences often affect ones later life.)(That's my story anyway)

But many are the secrets I can tell about unknown and unseen birthmarks etc that some of the girls in the village have.(Dorothy Dobbs has a large red mark on her left breast). But it was all innocent stuff. This was of course a bit later on in life when I used to go down there for holidays.

Even today I can still recall the wonderful smells in the village shop. A mixture of just about everything. (With my Sister's permission, I will refer the reader to her publication regarding the house etc.) Even reading that brings tears to my eyes. There are so many memories of that wonderful place.

There, I was free to wander over the fields and up to the Mountains to pick Winberries, or go fishing in the canal. It was a boy's idea of Heaven. Sometimes we would go out to other farms to help with the haymaking. This was real fun.

An Aunt and Uncle of mine Will and Min (Min was Mums sister) also lived in the village in a quaint little cottage called the "Gables" They had two girls, Joan and Mary.

The cottage was always spotless and smelled of polish and the garden was a dream. A typical English country garden. They kept chickens and a pig. That doesn't sound exciting, but to someone from the City it was wonderful when many of my contemporaries at school had never seen a live cow or pig or been out haymaking. Or ridden in a horse and cart taking pigs to the market

One day Edgar took Mary and I (or it might have been Peggy, another cousin) to the Markets with him to buy some pigs. These were duly loaded on and we set off home.

It was only a very small cart and with a fairly heavy man, two kids and about three or four pigs it was pretty full and heavy. We had just pulled away from the Market when some part of the harness broke, and the cart tipped up backwards, pitching us all out onto the road. Fortunately no one was hurt but what a game we had catching those ruddy pigs. Just about everyone in the Main St was trying to catch them. Eventually the cart was mended, the pigs caught and we proceeded home. However the story had got there before we did I don't know. Did poor old Edgar get a ribbing? But we had had fun.

As Dad was always away from home Mum would sometimes take me on trips into London to see the sights and often we would have tea at the Lyons Corner House. This was the elite coffee or tea place in London in those days. Where the waitresses all wore frilly aprons and caps. It was a treat beyond compare.

Other times we would go to see my Aunt Flo (Dad's Sister). She lived in a block of flats called Queen Anne's Mansions. These were the dreariest most horrible places I think I have ever been to.

To get in, there was only a very narrow doorway and passage. Flo lived on about the third or fourth floor. The passage and stairs was always dark, as there were no windows. Sometimes in the winter or at night there would be feeble gas jets burning.

Although once inside the apartments it was quite nice, and Flo's apartment being on the third or fourth floor had wonderful views out over London.

I have no idea how old I was at this time, but when ever we went to Aunty Flo and Uncle Joe, there was no way that I would walk down to their toilets and bathroom on my own. It was sheer stupidity, but I had an absolute terror of passing their bedroom for over the door there was hung a stuffed crocodile, or alligator, which apparently they had brought home from somewhere in Asia or India

Joe (her husband) worked as a caretaker for Scotland Yard. The then, headquarters of the CIB in London. Previously I believe he had been a detective. He was a large, fat man, but Flo was as skinny as a rake. They had two children, Marjorie (who my Sister was named after) and Eric. They were both a lot older than me but we always got on well. Eric was huge and real tough. He became a detective in the Metropolitan Police.

Sometimes when we went to see them we had to walk for some distance over Lambeth Bridge and alongside the Thames River as the trams couldn't run due to the heavy fog that used to permeate London in those days.

You couldn't see more than a foot or so in front of you and everyone would be coughing and choking from the filthy stuff.

Apparently, one time when we visited, Flo fed me up on chocolate cakes which I loved.(I couldn't have been very old at this time).And on the way home in the tram, the cakes went through me like the proverbial "dose of salts" and I pooped myself. As I only had shorts on one can imagine the mess I was in. Mum was not amused.

Another time Joe took me along what is called the "Arches"and the Lambeth Walk" he wanted to show me how the other side lived or "existed".

The "Walk" runs along the railway line and was a sort of Market, but in those days the stalls were all "barrows" (stalls on wheels) and the vendors were not allowed to stay in one spot longer than to serve a customer. The local policeman would spend his days moving them on, so there was a constant movement. It was quite funny to see the vendors, plonking their barrows down as if on a permanent site then as the Copper started his rounds, progressively they would move forward or backwards just a few yards until he had gone. It was sheer Stupidity. Although that law still exists today for itinerant food vendors in Western Australia.

The "Arches" and the "Walk" were areas of about the poorest homeless people in England. The houses were slums, and the Arches were underneath the railway line. Something like caves.

In these, generations of people had lived, brought up Families and died. They were **awful**. The floors were strewn with thick layer upon layer of newspapers, which had been trodden down, year after year. (Plus all the muck and dirt) I don't know what people did for sanitation, as there was none. The smell told one that. A few people had a couple of sticks of furniture. But most, apparently just slept on the floor. How they slept I don't know, as every few minutes a train would pass overhead shaking the very foundations with the noise. There were kids and dogs and cats everywhere. (Probably a lot of vermin too.) But the people there, although poor, dirty and down, were quite respectful to my Uncle (I think they thought he was still a Detective) and nice to me. But it upset me greatly even as a kid. Mum was furious when she found out where we had been but Joe said it was something every child that lived like we did should see.

The other relation that lived near us was my Uncle Arthur (Dad's Brother) and Aunt Winnie. (She was apparently related to Winston Churchill (Spencer –Churchill) Arthur was my Godfather, but one would never know it.

They were that tight fisted, rather than pay three' pence for a bundle of sticks to light the fire. She would wait until I went there and then get me folding newspapers into little "bricks" for a penny. They had no children, but rotten buggers never left me a penny. I think either my cousin got it or the home for lost pigeons.

Dad's older brother Bert lived at Clapham which was not far away but in a very "Posh "area. He lived in a three-storied house that was always full of the latest "gadgets" Even in the 1930's he had a TV set. Not like they are today but something that looked like a radiogram with a lid that was lifted up and the picture was projected onto this lid. He also had what must have been the earliest Washing machine/Dishwasher, it consisted of a deep sink into which went the dishes, or the washing. Over the sink was something that looked like a motor. When this was switched on

there was no sound that one could hear but the water would agitate as though it was boiling. Apparently it was worked on very high frequency sound.

When he died there was a big scrabble to hide all the money that he had stashed away in the house as he was supposed to have been bankrupt (third or fourth time).

I liked Bert and got on well with him. In later life it was he that loaned us the money to buy our first house.

Somewhere around 1933-5 I was sent off to stay with my Uncle Ernie and Aunt Francis in Rochester or Gillingham.

They had two children, Roy and Rene. I liked my Uncle, but hated going to their house as Roy was retarded and couldn't walk or talk properly, and he frightened me, although he was harmless enough. He was a bit psychic too as he always knew when we were coming to see them, even although we hadn't known ourselves, until perhaps a couple of hours before. He would always be waiting at the corner of the street for us, having told his parents that "Uncle Bob and Auntie Gert were coming today."

During the war he would often get up and struggle down to the shelter, long before the air raid warnings sounded as he knew that "they were coming what happened to Roy and his Sister Stella I don't know as I lost all contact with them.

Ernie was an artist. Even his signature was a work of art. During the time that I stayed there he worked hard at trying to teach me calligraphy and also showed me how to do glass engraving. I never bothered with that for most of my life, but for some reason after I retired, I got interested in it again and found that I had an affinity with it.(more on this later in the story).

I must have stayed there for a couple of months and when I arrived back home I found that I had a new baby Sister, Gwyneth.

Then, one weekend, Dad piled us onto the Motor bike and sidecar and took Mum and I on a Mystery journey across London.(don't remember where the baby was.)

When we eventually arrived at this mysterious destination we stopped under an arched metal sign which read "Stag Lane Aerodrome". Wondering what we were doing at such a place we looked around and saw that there was a wide, grassed verged road running from the gate, across the fields. With new houses being built on both sides.

Dad then announced that this is where we are going to move to as soon as he could afford the deposit for a house.

The area **had** been the old Aerodrome. And was in fact called the Stag Lane Estate. The new main road was called Mollison Way (After Amy Johnson-Mollison) in Memory of the great woman pilot who had always used that aerodrome.

As I stated in the Foreword some of the events and incidences in this chapter may be "out of place" or the dates incorrect. But after about 70 years I think I can be excused absolute accuracy.

It wasn't long after the first sight of what was to be our new home that we made the move. I understand that Dad sold the Motorcycle and other things to find the deposit.

Queensbury

Chapter 3

In the few months that it took Dad to raise the necessary deposit for the new house and the time that we moved in, either in late 1934 or early 35 the old aerodrome had almost disappeared. There were houses everywhere, and the whole area for dozens of square mile was a hive of building activity. It is doubtful whether anyone will ever see again such a massive building project being carried on by dozens of building firms.

When we had first been to the area to have a look, there was a beautiful country lane called Honeypot Lane. It was a typical, narrow English country lane with hedges on both sides and we thought what a beautiful place to come and live. By the time that we moved in, this had disappeared, having been replaced by a four-lane highway although it was, and still is called by that name.

The economy in Britain at that time must have been picking up as thousands of working class families were buying their houses.

I believe that the one Dad bought.(36 Reynolds Drive) cost 400 Pounds.He had had to find 25 Pounds for the deposit and I understand that he sold the motor bike to raise this. Repayments were about 1 Pound per week. But that was about a quarter of his weeks wages. Houses in Mollison Way, which backed onto our houses, were considered the “posh” area as they cost about 450 Pounds.

Most of the houses were in “fours” with only the end houses having room at the side for a garage. Not that many folks had cars in those days.

The house had three bedrooms, or rather two bedrooms, and a tiny “box” room upstairs, along with the usual Bathroom and Toilet, which was a new innovation in London as very few houses had Bathrooms, and toilets were usually out in the garden or yard. Downstairs, there was a smallish Living room and quite a large lounge, which was a “Holy Place”. This room was always kept nice, with the best furniture in and noone went in there to play, or anything else, without permission. But it was nice to have somewhere “ posh” to use on Sundays and high days.

Very often on a Sunday, especially in the winter Mum would light the fire and we would have tea in there. That always seemed to be something special.

I suppose that it is because of this that we still tend to keep our lounge today a little “special” and not used every day.

I remember one Sunday very well.

Mum had lit the fire and laid the table and we were going to settle in for a lovely afternoon. During this time, she removed the fire guard so that she could put some more coal on. I suppose she had to go out of the room to get this. But both Dad and I were in the room. Suddenly the door burst open and my Sister Gwyneth who was still only a baby, rushed into the room tripped on something and fell headlong into the fire. As she fell, her hand got caught somehow and she was badly burned. Dad grabbed her immediately and rushed upstairs to the bathroom where he plunged her into cold water. The doctors afterwards said that this probably saved her life.

God knows what it would have done to my Parents if they had had another tragedy.

There was also a very small kitchen. It was so small that if someone was in there working and the door opened. That person would have to squeeze up to allow someone else to pass. Dad soon fixed that by fitting a sliding door.

Because of the smallness of these kitchens, a new type of kitchen furniture was invented. This consisted of a narrow set of cupboards with the door of the central cupboard dropping down to form a small work surface.

For London, we had a great long garden opening out into a “back alley” which was a great boon; because it was a damn long way to walk all the way round to or from the front door.

In those days, very few people had refrigerators, but we did. I think it was a big commercial one that Dad had acquired from some job that he was doing. But this “thing” almost killed the lot of us one day.

Refrigerators then were gassed with a type of ammonia which as a gas was lethal.

Anyway, this particular morning, we awoke coughing and choking, on going downstairs Dad discovered that the ‘Fridge was leaking gas. It was awful, we couldn’t breath. I don’t know how Dad stopped it or whether it just ran out of gas, but we had all the windows and doors open for hours whilst we sat in a neighbor’s house.

Another “innovation” that nobody else had was one of the first “built in” vacuum cleaners.

This consisted of a huge cylinder in a cupboard under the stairs with pipes running under the floor to various points around the house where Mum was supposed to plug in the hose. She hated it as whenever it was switched on, the house virtually shook. I think it was about then that she took a chance and bought an Electrolux cleaner off of a door to door salesman. Dad was furious with her and 40 years later she still had that damn cleaner although it had as much suck as a lemon. But Dad wouldn’t buy another one. (I bet she bought one when he passed on)

At first I didn’t like the place at all. Like all kids being moved from one environment to another it was a big shock. I had been used to a fairly poor area and then to move to this modern one WOW!.

I was always a “loner” and didn’t make friends very fast also I didn’t like many of the kids that I met as they all swore and were to me, “common”. Bad language was NEVER used in our house and manners were paramount. Eventually however I palled up with two other boys. Jimmy Fisher and Joe Carter. We became inseparable until the war intervened. Unfortunately we lost track of Jimmy but Joe and I despite having

lost contact for many years have remained friends to this day, and regularly correspond.

I have no idea what the name of the first school I attended was as it was only a small wooden, “Ranchlike” building with wooden verandahs. Probably it had just been slung up to cater for the early “settlers”.

It wasn’t long however before a new modern school was built. Which I had the honour (to me) of being the first boy to ever step inside. The first girl was a Barbara King, the Headmaster’s Daughter. This school by popular ballot was called Stag Lane School. (After the road that led into the estate)

Some 50 yrs later, whilst we were living in Australia, I received a piece of cake and a book mark souvenir of the 50th Anniversary of the school.

Joe and I had lost all contact after the war but at this Anniversary celebration, he and my Sister Gwyneth met up with each other and he was able to find me again, which was wonderful.

(Not that anyone is really interested in all this trivia, but it *is* part of me so either put the book down and stop reading, or put up with it. So there!!!)

As I have said before, the scale of the building in the area was tremendous. Whole streets were being erected at once. As only one firm was building our estate they had a central depot on a high spot where all materials were dropped. From this point small train lines radiated in all directions. The foreman in charge of probably 20 houses on requiring materials would send a message to the depot and within minutes a train would come trundling along with the required goods.

This was wonderful for us kids as despite watchmen and workmen we would often jump on and have a free ride. After hours, although they tried to lock these trains and “skips” up the kids would always find a loose one and often it was wrecked as noone thought about applying the brakes until it hit the bottom. How noone was killed is a mystery.

They grumble about kids today but many on that estate were worse. The watchmen couldn't possibly watch every house and many a wall got pushed over (accidentally of course) because it was still “green” by kids clambering all over it like bloody ants.

Being in the main, a new, young family area, there were kids by the hundreds. And as they usually played in the street in groups it was no wonder the householders used to get irate and throw buckets of water at them.

On a large vacant plot in amongst the houses the builders had constructed a large, deep dam or pond into which had been poured hundreds of gallons of creosote where they used to soak all the wooden fencing and posts.

Stupid buggers used to leave all the creosote drums lying around and at night the kids would stuff paper into these just to watch the flames shooting out of the bung hole.

This was ok and good fun, but one night some silly idiot rolled one of the burning drums into the creosote pit, which naturally caught fire. With all the creosoted timber what a fire that was. The flames must have been up several hundred feet. In those days the Fire Brigade did not have foam to put out his sort of fire so it burned for weeks.

Nobody was amused, particularly the housewives as the filthy black smoke got into everything. One can just imagine the washing.

Of course it wasn't just the kids that were nicking things. The grown ups were just as bad.

With so much building material just lying around, it was heaven for the new owners who in the main, like Dad had just managed to raise the deposit.

Every now and again, there would be a big police and Building firm raid and if anyone couldn't produce a receipt or other proof of legitimate ownership. Whatever materials were in question were confiscated.

Next to our estate was another being built by Taylor Woodrow, these were all

“posh” houses and they didn't want to know the scruffy lot from our side, so a wooden fence had been built, like the much later “Berlin Wall” between the two estates.

As this estate was a bit behind ours in being built, there was still a fair lot of vacant ground and to us kids this was paradise. There was a lot of building materials on it

plus a lot of turf's where they had been excavating for the foundations. These made wonderful “cubbies”. Especially over the weekend when there were no workmen around. Sometimes a carload of watchmen would turn up then there would be a mass evacuation, with kids going over the fence in droves, just like rabbits during the plague.

The Watchmen always carried thin sticks and if you weren't fast enough going over the fence you got a whack across the bum or legs. So we were all the fastest fence climbers in Queensbury.

The workmen had toilets in various places. These were just Hessian-screened pits dug into the ground which “ponged” to high heaven. One day when I was using one of these I spotted a long handled hammer sticking up out of the #@!@#.

That night I heard Dad say to the neighbor that we could do with a big hammer to ram some posts in, so next day being the dutiful son that I was, I decided to try and get the hammer out of the “bog” if it was still there. It was. I tried all ways to lasso the handle without avail. Then tried many other ways with the same result. Finally in desperation I went home and got my Wellington boots and jumped down into the pit. It was however a bit deeper than I thought and I got a bootfull of \$#@\$.

But I got the hammer out. Fortunately it was summer time and I washed myself down with a hose on a building site before going home.

Dad wasn’t pleased as he thought I had stolen the hammer; however I eventually convinced him that I had found it on the road but didn’t dare tell him where in reality.

We hadn’t been in the house long when the Country became excited over the prospects of the “Jubilee” of King George and Mary. All of London especially was flung into the throes of preparation for the great event. I must have been about nine or 10 at the time.

When the great day arrived Dad took us all up into London to see the Parades etc. Being a kid I managed to get right to the front and it was a wonderful spectacle. The sort of thing that only England can put on.

In those days of course, Britain had an Empire of which we were very proud, and there were contingents of soldiers from just about every country, in their varied Uniforms. Mum and Dad were not too happy as my Sister Gwyneth was in hospital having an operation on her mouth. But I didn’t know anything about this. (Or was it the coronation?)

The celebration went on for a couple of weeks with street parties and shows everywhere.

After the celebrations Dad came home a load of plywood sheets with crowns and pictures on them, all flotsam and jetsam of the Jubilee. With these he built a shed, and boy, did we have the prettiest shed in the street. Until the Council made him paint it.

It wasn’t long after the Jubilee that the old King passed away and history, which isn’t part of MY story, will reveal the story of Edward and Mrs. Simpson. Then came the Coronation.

I can remember Dad flogging of a load of Welsh and Scottish Flags and bunting that he had scrounged from the Jubilee. He would do anything for a shilling or so.(and you wonder where I get it from)

This wasn’t as exciting as the Jubilee had only been a couple of years before but we still had more parties etc. We went into London, but this time saw little of the parades, as even I couldn’t get through the crowds. We had periscopes to try and see over the top but it wasn’t the same.

After the coronation, Dad came home one day with a massive flagpole that he had “acquired” from somewhere. It was about 50ft (15Mtrs) high with a golden crown on the top.

How he ever got the thing up no one will ever know, but he did. Boy! Was I proud of our pole? with the Union Jack and Welsh flag flying on it. Unfortunately it was only up there like that for a couple of years as when the war came along. The Authorities made Dad take half of it down as they considered it to be a landmark for German bombers coming for Hendon Airfield about 4 miles away.

How stupid could anyone be, because if they had found their way across Germany and England to that spot they could see the bloody airfield anyway but many stupid decisions like this were taken during the war.

Most holidays I would go down to my Nanny's in Wales. God!! Those holidays were wonderful. I never wanted to come back. A couple of times Joe came with me and what a time we had. On one of the journey's down to Wales ,Joe and I who were both avid collectors of cigarette cards (every packet of cigarettes used to have a small card in with pictures of just about any subject under the sun) walked up and down that train asking every man whether he had any cards. I collected three or four complete sets and in fact still have most of those today.

As I said in Chapter one I can never, ever, describe the feeling I still have for those holidays in Wales. Even writing this brings tears to my eyes.

I think it was on one of these trips to Wales with Joe that we went along with just about everyone in the area to the local "Flower Show and Fete".

I had been to this show several times over the years but never had I seen, like this time, so many people.

I think it was because it had been advertised that Lady Godiva (a historical lady who had ridden through her city starkers as a protest) would be coming to the show "as she would appear today." (just shows what a rotten dirty minded lot they were even in those days)

What a shock all these dirty minded lot had when she turned up on horseback just as she had ridden before **but was only a skeleton**.with long hair.

After all they **had** said, it would be "**as she was today**"

Another time whilst on holiday down there. My cousins Joan and Mary and myself went into Pontypool to a fair. Whilst there, like everyone else we had a go at the various penny in the slot machines. One of these we somehow or other found out would, if tickled in the right spot drop the jackpot. We managed this two or three times until the owner caught us. Of course we took off like rockets. But we had a wow of a time on the proceeds.

I was always one of the lucky ones as another thing that few other kids got was a visit to Bertram Mills Circus at Xmas time. At this time, this was about the biggest Circus in the world. Dad used to get free tickets for us as the firm that he worked for did the electricity and lights. And there was always a party afterwards.

When I was about 11 I moved to Camrose Senior School which was about another mile further away. Can't remember much about that school except catching Miss Morgan and Mr Baggs the sports teachers doing something in the cupboard which at the time I thought was naughty, but didn't know what. (Shortly after this, they got married so I suppose that what ever they were doing was ok)

The Head, was a small fiery man who would stand in the passageway as we were marching in, tapping his cane, (which he wasn't averse to using,) on his leg .The line of kids would swerve out around him leaving a gap of several feet. I think he really enjoyed his power.

Corporal punishment in those days was the "in" thing for any child that played up. It didn't really hurt; just stung but it was the ignominy of it.And everyone swore that "Swally" kept a "cat o nine tails " in his cupboard

One lady teacher we had, had a habit with the boys if they played up of rolling their trouser legs up and putting the ruler across their legs. One morning she picked on a friend of mine. Derek Prussia. She started to roll his trousers up but he wouldn't have it, and belted her one across the face. Taking off out of the classroom like a rocket.

He disappeared completely and there was a hell of a row. Eventually we learned that he had joined the Merchant Navy. Later joining the RAF and was killed over Germany.

Dad didn't drink very much but one Sunday he had been up to Petticoat Lane Markets with a couple of workmates and came home a little worse for wear. Goodness knows what he had been up to but he had brought home a little monkey of all things. It was around for a couple of days then disappeared. I never found out what happened to it but I have a feeling Mum put her foot down.

Another time he brought a beautiful Irish Red Setter dog home. I loved that Dog, but we couldn't keep her in the garden, she would clear the six foot fence at the end as though it was not there. Dad rigged up a tipping board at the top of the fence which flummoxed her for a while but she was smart ,and found she could get out better by jumping over the dividing fence and then over next door's back fence. She too disappeared one day whilst I was in school. I was heartbroken and searched for days. It wasn't until years later that Mum let slip that she had had her put down.

One Xmas, just about every child in Britain received a set of roller skates (many many years later my wife told me the same thing had happened to all the kids in Scotland too)

These skates unlike the ones of today did not have plastic wheels, but steel ones so one can imagine the noise in a street when 20 or so kids were playing hockey or the like. They made a lovely noise when one was travelling along the footpath clackity clackity clack.

I wasn't allowed out on mine on the Xmas Day (and funnily nor was my future wife. We had so much in common right through our lives).

Just around the corner from us was a parade of shops outside of which was a pavement about 20 ft wide. At night this made a wonderful skating rink for dozens of little horrors, much to the chagrin of the shopkeepers. One in particular, a Mr Garfield, the Chemist, would get so mad that he would wait inside his shop doorway with a bucket of water and wait until he saw a skater coming and then let fly. It was very rare that he copped any of us as he never ever realized that coming down the hill we could see his reflection in a side window and knew just when to duck down. But the pavement always got a good washing down.

People grumble at kids of today, but I suppose that in our way, we were no better.

At one corner of the shopping area was a large Pub called the Bald Faced Eagle and next door to it was an off license (bottle shop).In those days, all bottles had a deposit paid on them, I think it was about one penny.

Anyway, they used to stack all the returned bottles in a yard at the back of the shop and it was no real effort to shin the fence, "nick" a couple of bottles, then go around to the front and hand them in to claim the deposit. Little feeves.

One day Dad came home from work with both his arms in slings and braces. He had been blown off of a Cinema canopy whilst erecting a Neon sign and had broken both his arms. He could do nothing for himself.

The following Sat he asked me to go to the shops to get a paper or something and of course I had to go everywhere on my skates. I was a bit slow getting my skates on as I couldn't find the key (those days,

skates clipped onto whatever shoes one had on and the front grips were fastened by tightening them with a key. Straps around the ankle held on the back.)

He threatened to belt me around the ear if I didn't get a move on, so in fear, and not realizing that this would be impossible with both his arms in slings, I took off on one skate. Coming back, I tripped arse over tip on the road and what did I do. Yeah!! I broke my arm.

When I came back from the doctors, I wanted to go to the loo. Mum asked if I could manage ok and of course, being of an age when I was getting bashful about such things, I said "of course I can)

In those days there were buttons on men's fly's not zips. And have you tried undoing buttons with your right hand. (men that is)So it was a case of swallow my pride and MUUUUUUUUM!.

Like most boys, I had joined the Cubs and graduated to the Boy Scouts.It wasn't often that my parents could afford to let me go away to camp but this one year, they did ,and we went to a place called Shanklin, on the Isle of White .We were camping on a farm about 1 mile from the beach. I wasn't too happy about the camp as, as I have said before I was a "loner" and just didn't like being with a crowd.

It was at this camp I believe, that the first instance of my somewhat vicious temper became evident.

The lads were larking about one day having fun, when like all crowds of men or boys they started to pick on the smaller quieter boys, stripping off their clothes and chucking them into a water tank. They had left me alone for a while as I was apart from them reading a book. When they decided that it was my turn to be dipped, they found out that I was the wrong sort to put up with that, as when they grabbed for me, I picked up a branch of blackberry, which has rather nasty thorns and laid into anyone who tried to touch me.

I can remember the Scout Master who had been keeping an eye on things saying "What's wrong with you Hayes, it's only a bit of fun and the water will cool you off, just mind you don't hurt anyone with that ".

I had already put a few nasty scratches on bare legs and didn't give a damn. I just flailed around keeping all at bay. Eventually the Scout Master called a halt to the "fun" and I was left alone. None ever bothered me again. The Scout Master told my Parents that I was a vicious little beggar. But when I explained to Dad he saw my point (for a change) and said it served them right.

Both Joe and Jimmy were also in the Scouts and it was during this time that we learned the Morse code. One Xmas Joe and I were both given signaling sets with which, we had the greatest fun. These sets had both audio and flashing lights so as our house backs faced each other only about 300 ft apart Joe and I would spend hours flashing Morse to each other after dark.

I also joined the Rechabites. This was a temperance society, dead against alcohol in any form. They tried hard to get us to sign a Pledge that we would never in our lives, drink alcohol. Dad was furious saying that how could kids of that age know what they would be doing in later life and as far as I was concerned, if I signed it he would expect me to honour it. Therefore he refused to let me sign.

I think too that we joined the church choir. As when I was a child it was the done thing for us to have to attend Sunday School although I don't ever remember my Parents ever going into a church.

Most Sundays, Dad would send me out to a particular sweet shop to get chocolate nut whirls for Mum. As the shop was about 1.5 miles away it took some time and of course we never hurried. One Sunday, I remember going for the sweets and just trying *one or two thinking that Dad wouldn't notice*. Ha bloody ha. He wasn't as silly as I thought and I got a right rollicking that day.

Like all up and coming teenagers I was starting to get a bit cocky.

I was supposed to be home each evening by at 8.30, but very often this would be stretched. How was I to know the time without a watch?

Several times when I was late. I would find the door locked, but Mum would always leave the fanlight window over the back door unlatched so that I could reach through and unlock the larger window and climb through.

Then one night there was a calamity. As I climbed through the window I knocked over several milk bottles and that must have woken the house. Nothing was said next morning but Dad must have guessed what Mum was doing and the next time I was late and tried to get in I found *Everything* locked.

I was too scared to wake the old man up by knocking so I decided sleep in the laundry wrapped up in the dirty washing for warmth. Nothing was said next morning, but I was getting the message. However some weeks after, I was later than I should have been and Dad being still up, was furious .he started getting on to me then, because I gave him a cheeky answer gave me a whack across my face. At this, being as I said getting to be a little cocky, I punched him one back.

If I did!!!! I got the biggest hiding I ever had. He said, "If you think you are big enough to use your fists, let's go"

I can even now remember seeing Grandma Hayes who was staying with us at the time, sitting in the chair holding her heart and saying "Bob, stop it, you will hurt the boy"

To which Dad replied "I'll kill him if he ever raises a hand to me again, or doesn't do as he is told" Whop whop whop!!!!.Guess what? I never did it again, AND tried to get in early.

I think it was that Xmas that Dad gave me a Gold Hunter Watch.(Which got broken the following day by Jimmy punching me whilst we were sparring about.)

Mum decided by now that I needed some culture as did Jimmy's parents and they bought us violins of all things. Sending us off to lessons each week. I think the violin cost 30 shillings and Mum paid it off at about 6 pence per week. Once we became a little proficient, we used to have some lovely musical evenings at home; as Mum could play the piano quite well, as could Joe.

Naturally being youngsters we were soon into the modern "swing". Dad hated it calling it rubbish (as we do the modern "music") so whenever he was home. It was all classic stuff.

One night coming home from lessons Jimmy and I had been fooling about as all boys do and I put my foot up onto a low, front garden brick wall to retie my shoes. As I put my foot on the wall it fell over, causing a domino effect with the one next door as well. Did we scarper? We never ever went back down that road but walked about another half mile round to lessons "just in case"

Amazing as it may seem, some **60 years** or so later whilst out camping near Perth in Western Australia, I was relating this story when a man about my own age said, "so it was you buggers" It was his parent's wall that we had pushed over. He even told me the name of the road and just where it was. So it must have been true. What a coincidence.

One thing I did hate in those days was having to collect horse manure (years later my wife told me that she had to do the same thing). There were few cars about, and the Coalman, Milkman etc all had horse drawn carts.

As all the houses were new, with new gardens and gardeners, there was a tremendous call for manure and few could afford to buy it. So when a horse was heard coming along the street. Mum or Dad would listen and rush to the front room window to see where it was stopping.

If it stopped anywhere near our house I would be ordered to grab the shovel and bucket and get the manure if it had dropped any. As just about every kid had the same orders, there was sometimes quite an argument and even fights if one tried to “steal” manure that was in front of someone else’s house. Once, Dad offered to pay me for the manure so I made a small wooden cart which I would trundle around the streets in search of [sh#@#.Not](#) that I found a lot as everyone else was onto the same game.

There was *one* cart that we all kept a watch out for and that was the “Ice Cart”.

We had a refrigerator but very few others did and relied on a regular supply of ice for the ice chest. The ice was delivered on a large cart with massive great blocks of ice sitting on Hessian sacks. When the vendor had to take some into a house he would hack chunks off of the main block of ice with a type of pick.

Naturally, pieces would fly off everywhere onto the road. Then there was a scrabble, as the kids would be hanging around the back of the cart like flies around a jam pot. One would have thought that we had received a real delicacy if we managed to grab a piece. It was cheaper than ice cream.

The only ice-cream that we saw was peddled around the streets by “Walls” The vendor having a small cart which was attached to the front of a bicycle sort of arrangement.

On the front of the cart was always a sign “ Stop me and Buy One” This being another example of the law that said itinerant food vendors can only stop long enough to serve a customer. That bloke must have cycled many miles every day as he couldn’t stop somewhere and wait for customers to come to him

The Baker didn’t have a horse and cart for some reason. Probably hygiene, He had a cart with two great big wheels, which they used to pull around themselves like a horse. (Something like a rickshaw.) But it was amazing to see how fast they could travel once they got the balance right.

Most Saturday mornings I like many others sought a day’s work helping the milkman it was good fun. Especially if he had a good horse that knew all the stops so that you didn’t have to run back very far to pick up another crate of milk.

These horses were marvelous, better than any mechanical conveyance as they just wandered along unattended stopping outside the right house every time.

Although one Saturday, I was helping the United Dairies Milkman who had a horse named Mick, which was a bit on the savage side especially if he didn’t get the right tidbits.

Towards the end of the round, I climbed onto the back of the cart to get some more milk when Mick started to move forward at a trot. Despite the milkman and I yelling at him to WHOA he broke into a gallop (with me still on the back step) the bloody thing raced all the way through the streets and didn’t stop until he was in the stable yard. As much as to say. “You were running late, and it my Saturday afternoon off”.

The milkman said that I should have climbed over the top of the cart and grabbed the reins. But HEY I wasn’t Wyatt Herb (or whatever his name was)

I got a job delivering newspapers for a while. That was hard work, as the sacks were huge and heavy and if the boy didn’t have a bike or trolley to carry it on they really **earned** their money. The papers

were not just chucked on the lawn as in Australia, but each one had to be put through the letterbox in the front door.

Most of the doors were about 20 ft from the road but woe betides anyone who just stepped over the little dividing walls between houses to save your legs. It meant walking about 40ft to deliver two papers when the letterboxes were no more than sometimes 6 ft apart.(The postman still has this problem)Sometimes I had about 60-80 papers to deliver, plus magazines etc.over about two miles. It wasn't too bad in the summer, but the winter mornings were hell. (As a bit of trivia. During this period the first editions of the **Beano and Dandy** were issued).Occasionally I would put my skates on to do the delivery, but some customers complained about the small amount of noise they made early in the morning.

For all this carrying and delivering at 6 in the morning I got the princely sum of 2 Shillings and Sixpence. And Mum took half of that.

It was around this time that I got myself another girl friend Bridget Barnard. I don't know whether I went with her because I liked her so much but her Father was dustman and was always coming home with piles of comics and Boys Magazines. Such as the Wizard, Hotspur, Adventure.

It couldn't have been a very strong relationship for when I caught German measles my so called mate Jimmy took over. Then he caught them and I got her back for a while.

It was around this time that the peaceful life that we had known was to come to an end as in Sept of 1939 War was declared.

Dad must have been working away from home around this time as just prior to the outbreak of war everyone had to Register and get a National Identity Number.

Our family Number was BIHZ 241 with Mum being 1, me 2, and My Sister 3.

But Dad's Number was EDKA 70/4 Where the heck was he on the night of registration???

I can remember all of us sitting around the wireless listening to Churchill's speech telling the Nation that it was at war with Germany.

Obviously we kids had no real idea what this was all about but it sounded as though it would be fun.

A few minutes after the end of the speech whilst everyone was still sitting around discussing the news, the Air Raid Sirens sounded. No one had heard these before and it was the most eerie of sounds as the wailing rose and fell. Even today a sound anything like that sends shivers up and down my spine.

Immediately there was a dash to put on our gas masks. Goodness knows why, as a gas attack was to be signalled by rattles but it was probably just a panic reaction.

These gas masks were horrible rubber things, which one pulled over the face. It was a job to breathe properly in them and the transparent eye panel kept fogging up so that one couldn't see were one was going. Little babies were supposed to have been put into what was like a rubber bag, and the parents had to keep pumping a bellows like arrangement to keep the air in the bag. What happened if the parent was gassed or killed one shudders to think.

Anyway, after a short while, to everyone's relief, the air cleared and sounded

For us school kids the outbreak of the war was an unscheduled holiday as all schools were closed down, as were cinemas and dancehalls, It was thought there would be an immediate start to air raids. Many thousands of children were evacuated to the country .I was hoping that I might have to go down to “Nanny’s” but there was no such luck and I stayed in London.

Being in the Scouts and feeling like all the other kids that we should do our duty to God and the King etc etc .Joe, Jimmy and I attached ourselves to an Air Raid Wardens Post as messengers. We felt really important believe me. But I don’t think that the grown ups in the posts really wanted us around, and we were used mainly for just fetching and carrying. But we did get free meals. Most of the grown ups were having a ball. There was no sign of any air raids and they spent their time between practicing their first aid etc with all sorts of grown up activities.i.e playing cards, darts etc and lots of other things too, judging by the number of divorces that came up later.

For most of the war years the authorities had dozens of single deck busses lined up in side streets, ready to be used either for evacuation or as emergency ambulances. A driver and conductor staffed each bus. What a waste of man/women power and money. This state of affair also resulted in a spate of divorces as the staff had nothing to do all day and night for years.

I suppose this fun time for us kids went on for about 6 months before the schools were reopened on a part time basis.

Which was quite a blow to us kids but I have no doubt that the ARP personnel sighed with relief. On going back to school many of the senior boys, myself included were incorporated into the school Fire Brigade where we learned how to fight all sorts of fires but mainly those caused by incendiary bombs. The practice sessions got us out of the classrooms and were good fun. These days whenever there is an emergency, everyone is taught to” leave it to the experts.” Then, it was every man for himself, if YOU didn’t put the fire out then it burned your house down. The Brigades were too busy elsewhere.

We were very proud of our status, but the school issued us with armbands indicating that we belonged to the Camrose Fire Brigade, CFB. The reader can use his or her own imagination what the other kids soon interpreted this to.

Very soon, the air raids started and it wasn’t so much fun after all.

Just after the commencement of the war, the authorities had put in what were called Anderson shelters. Named after the twit that invented them. These consisted of several half round, heavy steel sheets that were sunk into the ground about 3-4 ft (approx. 1 Mt.) Then they were covered over with the soil that had been excavated sticking up out of the garden like an igloo, a concrete wall approx 6 inches thick right around the inside came up about3 ft. The inside measurements of the shelter would have been about 6ft (1.8 mtr) by 5ft 6 inches. Height about 6 ft. in the middle.

How we ever slept four persons down there I will never know as apart from the people, we were piled up with emergency rations, cooking facilities etc etc. There was sump in one corner which collected water which had to be pumped out each evening before we could use the shelter.

Mum and Dad were quite big people and I at 14 was a long lanky thing and my Sister was no dwarf even at her age.

Each night about seven pm mum would start getting the food, flasks, and bedding etc ready and we would traipse off up to the shelter at the end of the garden. The neighbors all were doing the same.

On a patch of spare ground just behind our house an 85mm anti aircraft gun had been installed. To us kids this was a source of hours of fun watching the soldiers going through their drill and sometimes during the day it would open up long range over London. This gun had the most satisfying “bang” that I have ever heard.(until I joined the Artillery). At night, although it kept us awake we were happy to hear it as it felt as though we were hitting back at the bombers whilst we crouched in the shelters.

Neighbors would stand about near the shelters chatting (evenings were too lovely and warm to sit inside)until we heard the planes coming or bombs falling close by then there would be a rush to dive under cover like rabbits. In hindsight those shelters were practically useless, because had a bomb landed anywhere near them they would have been blown apart, but they gave a feeling of security. (And something to talk about in later life.

It was always a wonderful sight to see our fighters taking off from the aerodrome as they zoomed just over our roof tops to intercept the German Bombers.. We always counted the number taking off and returning. Very often the numbers did not tally and we would realize that someone’s son or husband might not be coming home.

After several months of this going to the shelter every night, many got fed up and said “bugger it, If they are going to get me, at least I will be sleeping in my own bed” and stayed in their houses. We were lucky, as although several bombs did land in the area it wasn’t flattened like so many others.

The Authorities had now started installing Morrison Shelters in houses. These were like a large steel table approx 7ft by 7ft, with steel mesh that dropped down over the sides. Probably a better idea than the “Andersons” as one could remain in the warmth and comfort of the house.

There were many ideas and Regulations during the war that in hindsight were sheer stupidity and a waste of money.

One of these occurred near us at Queensbury Railway Station.

Of course once the war started there were the inevitable shortages and food was rationed. As was coal and just about every other commodity. Although rations were down to only a few ounces of meat, butter sugar etc and there were the inevitable queues outside shops, but contrary to many stories in books etc we never went hungry. Clothing was worn until it fell apart, but I don’t recall anyone looking shabby. It just shows how much we can do without and still survive.

Obviously there was a black market going, although if either the seller or the buyer were caught there were severe penalties.

One of the biggest rogues in England must have been my Uncle Arthur (Mum’s Brother, who lived in Bedford.

We would sometimes go to see him, perhaps for a sack of coal or something. And he could always oblige. He got away with murder just about as everyone knew he was “flogging” stuff. One weekend whilst we were there, there was even a policeman waiting in the lounge to be served.

We didn’t know until after the war that he was also in “poofster” ring with many of the towns leading dignitaries. When it came to light, they were all imprisoned and fined but he got away with it. Probably dobbed the others in.

Back to YOUR story Hayes

Prior to the war, many factories had been built in the light industrial zone which was to the North of the Station. When the war broke out, the Government requisitioned at least two of these, one on each side of the main road. For easy access from one factory to the other they built a steel “bridge” across the road. Fine for those using it, but it was several inches lower than the rail bridge next to it.

Double deck busses that came along this road in either direction every few minutes only just cleared the rail bridge as it was. So guess what ! Yeah you have it. The Busses, when empty, wouldn't clear the new gantry bridge. So with typical beaurocratic stupidity, rather than raise this bridge a few inches the bus company had to install a man in a little hut under the rail bridge whose sole job was to check the busses coming through to see whether they would clear the temporary bridge. If they were full they would just do it due to the weight, but if empty they would not, and he had to let the tyres down enough for them to clear, and then blow them up on the other side. (The tyres that is). This went on for several years to my knowledge.

Other stupid ideas were the taking down of all directional road signs and the blackout.

Even station names were obliterated so that if the Germans landed they wouldn't know where they were. This would be after finding their way to that spot in the first place. (Perhaps they didn't have maps).all cast iron railings were confiscated and there was always collections for aluminum pots and Pans to help build planes. What a load of ruddy bullshit.

No one was allowed to expose any light at night, even lighting a cigarette in the dark was a crime, in case there was a plane overhead and he used the light to guide him.

A chink of light coming from a window incurred a heavy fine. Especially with so many Air raid wardens who thought they were policemen wandering around.

The Blackout was probably the worst nuisance, as although previously the gas light street lights only gave out a feeble light over an area of only a few feet. There were also other lights, from houses and shops to guide you. When all of these were extinguished, it was frightening at first, as it was impossible to see where one was going and trying to find your house at night was a real problem. People were walking around like the blind with hands outstretched in case they walked into anything. After a few months though, people got used to it and coped.

It brought some bonuses especially to dirty minded young lads like us growing up as most houses had square bay windows. Instead of putting blackout curtains on the short side windows, most people had painted the glass. Our house and the one next door had such windows, which faced each other about 7-8 ft apart over the front doors.

My room was in the small "box "room over the front door. One day Jimmy and I, sitting in my room discovered that by maneuvering the opening window in my room we could get a mirror effect which enabled us to see into the young lady next doors bedroom which was next to mine. She was older than us and often entertained her boy friends upstairs when her mother was out.

Good job my Mother never cottoned on as my ears would have STILL been ringing.

At 14 I left school. Mum had found me a job in a metallurgical laboratory. The job would have been ok as I received 10 Shillings a week with a 2 Shillings and Sixpence rise in pay every three months as long as I worked there. It wasn't really me, as my education hadn't really been first class. Plus the fact was that the Boss's son wanted a job too. So I lasted there for only a few months. But I must have learned something there as some 50 yrs later I was called upon by a school to get rid of some highly unstable and dangerous chemical which no one appeared to know how to handle.

As I had handled it quite a lot in this particular job, I did.

From there I went into a factory making small electrical appliances and a lot of war materials. My soul-destroying job was what was called deburring the end of pull throughs for rifles. These were small tubes of brass, used as a weight on the end of a piece of string which soldiers dropped through

the barrels of their rifles for cleaning purposes. I must have “deburred” hundreds of thousands of these bloody things. I am sure there must have been a hundred for every rifle made. My thumb and first finger were torn to bits by the damn things catching and spinning round. Sometimes I would be able to get onto the machines making other bits for the war effort and this was good.

One of my mundane jobs as the “youngster” was to sweep the floor every day. And get the tea for everyone.

To get the tea I had to jump on my “bike” and cycle perhaps a mile or so to the shops.

One day, coming out of the shop, I jumped on my “bike” and unconcernedly rode back to work. My “bike” was a battered old model that Dad had used for years.

At the end of the day I came out of work and couldn’t find my bike in the rack.

The only one there was a beautiful Rudge Whitworth three speed model.

So I took that and rode home. I guess I must have inadvertently jumped on the wrong bike outside the shop.

Dad made me report it to the Police but I never heard a word from them, so became the proud owner of this lovely Bicycle.

AS I said before, I also had to sweep the floors. WELLLLLLL one day, whilst doing this I got to the electrical side where the men stood on duckboards. Either as insulation or to keep their feet off the cold concrete floor. What ever, when I tapped the board with the brush the men would sweep the junk off their benches and then lift

the boards for me to sweep under. This particular day, when I did this, the man on the board ignored me. I tapped nicely again. Went around him, and then came back with another tap and “excuse me”.

Once again he ignored me, so being a naïve rather silly young feller I stuck the handle of the broom up his bum and yelled BEEP BEEP.

He just about jumped over the bench and was NOT amused. It transpired that he was the big boss. Once again I was on the road.

Not that this was a worry as jobs were for the asking at that time.

For a short while I worked in a war factory but couldn’t stand the smells and being in that dark dirty place. I was lucky, as the Father of a lady who I worked with was a General Foreman on a building site and he gave me a job.

It was during these early working days that I met a young lady called June Ashton we became very close for a while but then she had to leave home as she had caught T.B and go to a Sanitarium. After we broke up I was for a while heartbroken as she had been my first “serious” girl friend we never got back together as sweethearts, but we remained friends for the rest of our lives.

She passed away from Cancer in about 1995. I “walked out” with several young ladies after this but there was never anything serious.

Right to the end, Joe, her and her husband Stan and I kept in touch with letters and Joe and his wife often visited them in Wales.

The job that I now took on was a complete change for me, and damned hard work as I started labouring for the bricklayers.

All of the Tradesmen working on this site were quite elderly or exempt from war service.

The area had been severely bombed and it was the firm’s job to try and rebuild or renovate the houses. I was amazed at the standard of work these men were doing,

Especially the Plasterers and the Bricklayers who would repair a wall or ceiling (if possible) back to exactly the same as it was before. Making their own moulds and cutting the fancy bricks. They would work like hell all morning, then play cards for a couple of hours over the lunch break and into the afternoon.

After only a short while at this labouring, the boss asked me whether I would like to take up and apprenticeship as a Plumber. I jumped at the chance and was assigned to Mr Rice who was quite old and had retired, but been called back. He also had his own firm and some afternoons he would take me off to do a job somewhere else, Funny thing is that nobody seemed to care.

The first job that I ever did with him should have put me off of Plumbing for life as we had to repair or replace toilet pans in all these bombed houses. Many of them were full of \$\$\$#! Right to the brim, as there had been no water on for months. And the Irish labourers who had first cleaned the rubble etc up couldn't care less where they went to the toilet.

We made up a type of scoop to get the worst up but down the bottom, it was a rubber glove, hands on operation. Talk about STINK.

Old George used to keep puffing away on his pipe to try and hide the smell but it was awful. He suggested that I go and get a pipe, which might help.

This I did, getting a huge cherry wood thing. And a half ounce of tobacco.

I thought I was big, puffing away on this thing as I had never smoked in my life before, not even tried a cigarette.

Every time that it went out I would relight and puff away.

I had about 6 miles to cycle home that night, and how I made it I do not know. That night and all next day I was that ill, I think it put me off smoking for years.

Dad was not amused and played hell with the old fella. Still, I survived

One afternoon we had to go the Kensal Rise Crematorium to do a job. Crematoriums were a new thing in those days and very few people even tried to guess what went on in them.

Anyway, we were working in the little control room, putting in a new sink etc. As I had little to do I wandered around just looking, and happened to peep through a little green glass window,(Just being nosey)

What I saw frightened the living daylights out of me for days and I was gone@@@ faster than that.

As I looked through the glass I could see a coffin lying in there and then the burners came on. In seconds the coffin had burned away and I could see the corpse. Still fascinated although petrified I continued to watch. Then the body started to sit up. SHIT that was it!!!!!!!!!!!!. I thought the poor bugger was still alive.

I don't think I have ever run so fast in my life, sobbing my heart out.

One of the attendants caught me before I got very far, but it took ages for him and my boss to calm me down and explain that most bodies do sit up or move in the heat as the moisture in the body dries out. But they had to take me home, I was so upset

Most lunch times the men used to play cards (brag) and eventually got me into it. I couldn't play cards to save my life but this game was quite easy. One lunch time however (and I never realized until some time after, how close my head had been to the chop). I had been losing (we only played for pennies and halfpennies) but suddenly got a good hand. Excitedly I started to bid against all of them. The kitty

got up to about 10 shillings .I had forgotten in my excitement that I had only about a farthing left and if I went down, couldn't pay my debts.

Then fortune smiled on me I discovered that although all the men were turning away from me to hide their cards I could see all their hands reflected in a picture hanging on the wall. I knew then I had a winner and carried on. Fortunately all the men eventually gave in and I scooped without having to show my cards.

I can still remember the picture, it was one of an old seaman sitting on his boat at the water's edge pointing something out to a little boy.(I think he must have been pointing something out to me too, 'cos I never risked cards again.

I had been with George for some time when he was forced to retire sick. I thought my apprentice days were over, but one day the Boss called me into the office and said that another branch of the Firm doing heating and ventilation were looking for someone like me. And asked me whether I would like to transfer. He said it would mean travelling and would I mind that. Naturally I said I would love to That night I told my parents that I would be leaving home in a couple of days and going to Southampton to work.

I don't remember them getting upset, or putting any obstacles in the way.(Perhaps they had had enough of me.)

So, a few days later off I went.

Southampton had been in the thick of the bombing up till then and parts of the town flattened.

But I found lodgings at a small village called Swaythling, some distance from Town with a Mr. and Mrs. Ware.I was still only a kid, and they were good to me in every way. Like many houses during the war they had two or three lodgers. I think there were two others whilst I was there. Both fairly young men exempt from war duty for some reason or other.

Being young, the war, to me, was still an excitement even the air raids just added to it. Horrible as that may seem.(That's because I never got hurt) And I enjoyed my life to the full away from parental control, going to the cinema just about every night, or dances.

But unlike youngsters today I did not once get into drugs, vice or even smoking. It was all good innocent fun.

We used to play cards most nights, just for fun (no money) and I can well remember Mrs Ware, sometimes when I had beaten everyone, reaching down, grabbing me where ladies don't usually grab and saying "You little devil you."

Looking back, I suppose if I hadn't been so naïve and innocent there could have been something going on in that house. Or was it just fun? One of the other lodgers in the house must have been into the Black Market or something as he would often have real silk stockings and other rare bits and pieces to sell. Several times I took a pair of stockings home for Mum.

I have few memories of this place but one does stick in my mind. The approach road into Swaythling was a very steep hill, up and down which, ran double decked trams.

Usually when the trams were descending the hill the brakes would be on most of the time, squealing and sparking as the wheels slid on the rails.

Some nights however, the driver of the last tram, being packed mainly with youngsters and troops (the tram that is, not the driver) would let the tram run. It would rock and sway to the great delight of most on board. God knows what would have happened if anything had got in the way and it had tried to stop. But I never heard of any accidents.

We were working in an aircraft factory, installing heating etc. The roof of this factory, at that time was alleged to be the largest span without supporting columns in the country. It was also VERY high, and we had to work up there installing, the pipes.

My boss at that time was a tiny little man called "Dusty" Miller. He was like a monkey climbing all over this roof and expected me to do the same. Of course, I had to follow him (carrying tools or equipment). It took me ages to get used to it without dirtying my trousers. (On the inside that is) but I eventually did.

One day, we decided to work on over the dinner hour and to knock off earlier at night. Thank God we did as around midday when thousands of workers were out on the roads going for dinner, several Italian (so I was told) planes came in disguised as British, and machine gunned the roads, killing numerous workers.

We might have been out there too but for my boss wanting to knock off early.

I don't know how long we were there but it was a big job. On the Saturday, the bosses handed the job over to the aircraft factory as finished and we packed up to go back to London. The following day the place was flattened in an air raid. All that bloody hard work for nothing. This was only the start of my traveling.

Chapter 4

Travelling Around

After leaving Southampton we returned to London for a while doing plumbing jobs in various suburbs. But eventually we were sent to Salisbury.

Like all other Towns in Britain during the war years to get lodgings one had to go through what was called the Billeting Office.

I was given an address to go to which turned out to be a large house which was either owned by a Mrs. Jacobs of Brown St or a Mrs. Brown of Jacob's St.

On the evening that I first arrived and went into the Living room I saw about 10 or 15 men sitting around the table having dinner. I thought then, that there must be an awful lot of lodgers in this house. Little did I know?

I was shown into a very nice Front Room with two beds in. Although there was no sign of any other occupant.

I suppose I was about an hour or so unpacking and getting freshened up as the lady of the house had told me that dinner would be ready in about an hour.. When I returned to the dining room I found what I first thought were the same men still sitting there eating. But on sitting down, I found that it was a different set. So there must have been about 20 lodgers. I cannot remember much about this period, or

what we were doing there. Although I suppose I must have had a good time going to dances etc almost every night.

As for the house. One Saturday, I decided to stay in, and went looking for another young fella that was staying there. The landlady told me that he was “next-door”. It was then that I found that two houses had been knocked into one and there were beds **everywhere**.

On talking to several of the inmates I discovered that there was in fact something like 30 people staying in this house. Some of the men were doubling up i.e. whilst one was working the other was using the bed and visa versa. Apparently I was the lucky one having a room to myself.

Although after a couple of weeks, the landlady told me that her son Con was coming home to stay and would be sharing the room with me. I didn't worry, but my Boss was furious and apparently very worried as it was alleged that the son was a homosexual. This, in those days was almost like being a murderer.

I knew nothing about this side of life, so it didn't really concern me until the boss went to the billeting Officer and complained. I was called into see them and asked whether this young man had made any overtures to me or done anything that might indicate that he was “up to no good”.. I really didn't have a clue what they were talking about, but for several nights after that, I didn't sleep wondering what he might do.

But in all fairness I can say that he never said or indicated to me in any way that he wasn't “normal”.

We didn't stay in Salisbury very long and from there we were sent to Coventry”(not ignored). There, we were working in the SS Cars factory, which at that time was engaged in the repair of crashed aircraft. Mainly bombers. Some of the sights we saw with these Bombers were sickening, as they were towed straight from the airfields or wherever they had crashed or landed, to a part of the factory where they were cleaned out. In some instances there were still bits of bodies sticking to the turrets. How the people doing the job stuck it I do not know, but I suppose, like everything else they would just get used to it.

Some time previously, Coventry had been almost flattened by German Bombers and was in a hell of a mess. Fortunately for Coventry and the war effort, very little damage had been done to the industrial area or the outer suburbs, although the central district was flat. Well that's not strictly correct as there were still mounds of rubble everywhere.

I was billeted out in a private house in the Foleshill area. I cannot remember the name of the lady with whom I was billeted, but she was only a young woman whose husband was in the Army. There were two other lodgers there at the time one was Bill and the other an older woman named Kay

I had a whale of a time there. Although I didn't drink, we always seemed to be having a good time. If there was anything going on there between Bill and the others, I never saw any indication of it.

One evening we were extremely merry, and the women got Bill and I to dress up in their clothes.

They curled our hair and made us up, then dared us to go down to the shops to get something or other. We were stupid enough to take on the dare. Fortunately the blackout was strictly enforced and there were no lights anywhere.

I wouldn't go into the shop but Bill did, and nobody even made a comment. We were in hysterics over this all night. The only trouble was we were unable to get the curls out of our hair so had to go to work next day like a pair of “fairies”. Boy was I ribbed. But it was all good clean fun.

Only one thing upset me whilst staying there and that was when one evening the cat gave birth to her kittens on the mat in front of the fire.

Kay and the Landlady tried hard to drown them in a bucket, but it was surprising the strength that those poor little things had and they kept struggling.

Whilst they were attempting this, Bill came in and taking the situation at a glance, he grabbed the kittens out of the bucket, went out the back door and smashed them against the wall. Killing them instantly. We were horrified and sickened, but as he said "What you were trying to do was a lot crueler. This way they died instantly"

I suppose he was right but that night we all went to bed early.

During the war, whilst there were dances on almost every night of the week in one hall or the other. None could be held on a Sunday.

But there was nothing to stop anyone giving dancing lessons so all over Britain hundreds of Dance Clubs blossomed.

Dancing Instruction was given and in a way these clubs were better than the dance halls as they were never packed out and there was always supper and no nonsense. (not that I ever saw any fighting or nonsense in any one of the hundreds of dances I attended.) Also one seemed to meet nicer young ladies there.

My social life was one whirl whilst in Coventry, if I wasn't going to a dance, it was the pictures (cinema to the uninitiated). In those days entry was about 9 pence downstairs front. 1 Shilling for the back stalls (where it was always darkest and ideal for boys and girls) and if you were really flush, and wanted to impress the current girl friend, it was 1 Shilling and Six pence to sit upstairs.

In Coventry at that time, there was the Regal, the Roxy and the Odeon Cinemas. They changed their programs, usually on a Wednesday. So you could go to each of them in turn every day of the week. Which I often did.

Dancing was my only other vice. I loved it and considered myself as good a dancer as anyone else. Having been to so many "Dance Clubs". But believe it or not, I was that shy that very often I would stand all evening just watching the dances. Too scared to go and ask someone to dance with me.

Although one night I got in with a young lady and we danced all night. Not the close smooching style of today. She agreed to let me take her home and I was ecstatic.

When we got to her home, we stopped for the customary kiss and cuddle and what a shock I had. Her breath was AWFUL. It made me feel sick. Naturally, I beat a hasty retreat with the excuse of a long way to walk home and that romance never even got off the ground.

I did however get in with a young lady named Betty who worked in the firm's canteen. She had beautiful auburn hair. We went every where together for several weeks until she threw me over saying "You don't want me, what's wrong"

I hadn't a clue what she was talking about then (although I do now) .I suppose it was because I had never gone beyond kissing her or perhaps warming my hands on the parts of a young girl that nature put there for that purpose. And she wanted something else.

Leaving Coventry we were sent to Rugby, which was not very far.

Here we were billeted with an extremely nice but eccentric old couple who was very religious. Not that they ever preached to us, but they had an altar set up in the front room, where they would spend hours praying (I presume).

The first night that were there was New Years Eve. They said to us that they had no objections to us going out and staying out late. Just to lock the door when we came in.

I don't think we were very late coming home but I can remember creeping up the stairs so as not to waken them.

About 4 in the morning, both of us woke up, busting to go to the toilet. Looking under the bed we couldn't find any chamber pots. And as the toilet was out the back door, we both crept down the stairs, only to find that the door at the foot of the stairs was locked.

Well, you couldn't very well wake up the Landlord on your first night there just to tell him you wanted a wee, could you?. So back up the stairs we crept. Dashing over to the window we tried to open it as quietly as possible, intending to do what was necessary into the garden. But could we open that ruddy window? Not on your Nelly .It had been painted that often that it was well and truly stuck. And so were we buggered

By this time, both of us were getting desperate. We tried getting back to sleep, but it was impossible. By 5am we were in agony and couldn't possibly hold on until 6 when we would have to get up. Then suddenly, we had a brilliant idea.

There was a very large carafe of water sitting on the dressing table.

So guess what?? We sat on the beds and drank every drop of that water, then did what we HAD to do into the carafe. It wouldn't hold all that we wanted to pass but I watched the boss carefully so that he didn't fill more than half the carafe before I had had a go. We were still uncomfortable but at least we could hold on until we heard the Landlady moving about downstairs.

Before breakfast I crept downstairs with the carafe under my jacket so that I could empty it.

I was just washing it out when the Landlord came in and said, "You have no need to do that son, I wash and refill it every day for you".

Little did he know what had been in it

They were extremely nice people but we just couldn't broach the subject with them. So on the following Saturday, we stayed in whilst they went shopping.

During the week we had purloined a piece of thin aluminum piping also a piece of rubber tubing.

As soon as the old couple went out we drilled a small hole in the wooden window frame and shoved the tube through. This had been bent slightly so that it went down into the creeper that was growing over the outside walls.

The idea was that when the need arose, we could fit the rubber tube to it, then, using a funnel we had made up we could pee to our hearts content, at any time of the night.

Most people that we lodged with pooled all the food rations, but these folks kept everything separate. We had little jars for everything with our names on but it was surprising just how far the rations would stretch

On leaving there some weeks later we forgot to remove the tube and I have often wondered whether they ever found it and worked out what it was for

The job we were doing at that time was fitting air-conditioning and new toilet facilities in a factory making electric light bulbs..

This place was a young man's health hazard as it was so hot in this plant, with the hundreds of little gas jets, which were used to heat and shape the filaments. That many of the young women working there wore nothing but perhaps a pair of knickers, or bathing shorts and a bra.

It was disgusting; the boss had to keep pushing my eyes back into my head. Of course, many of the girls played up to us and eventually the management issued them all with light overall coats. But what a boring job they had, sitting there day after day picking up little bits of wire and sticking them on a little wheel thing that took it into the machine.

One Saturday Morning, the Boss told me that we had an overtime job on and he wanted my help. Naturally I was always on the lookout for a bit of spare cash so I agreed, until I saw what the job was.

We were to climb this BLOODY great chimney, about 35 mtrs high, and replace a lightning conductor, which had come off in a wind.

I backed off pretty sharp, but the Boss called me all sorts of coward and got really stroppy so I was forced to agree to go up.

It was almost impossible to fall off, as there was a cage around the ladder, but believe me the steps appeared to be at least 3ft apart. Remember too, I, was carrying the tools.

The Boss had told me not to look down and I would be ok. But I HATED heights at the best of times. So I just stared at the bricks in front of my nose and shit my pants at every step.

At the top, I handed what was necessary to the Boss, and hung on with both hands.

After a while, I thought I would be brave and have a look around. It wasn't too bad looking straight out over the rooftops but then; as the Boss had told me NOT to look down, I looked UP, and that was a bloody sight worse, as the clouds moving across the top of the chimney made it look as though it was toppling over.

I forgot about him at the top and the tools I was supposed to bring down and virtually slid all the way to the ground. Changing my pants at least three times on the way.

At first the Boss was extremely angry but eventually saw the funny side and for days went around telling everyone about it. But there weren't not no way would he, or anyone else get me up one of those again. Not even for triple time.

It is amazing how after all these years when one starts to think back that memories of the stupid things you have done when young come flooding back.

It was here in Rugby that I almost got a smack in the face, or worse. One morning whilst we were traveling to work on the bus which was always absolutely packed out I was sitting on the outside of a seat when several young ladies got on and were packed like sardines in the aisle. During the course of the journey one of the girls moved aside to let someone pass, and her skirt fell over my hands which were on my lap. I hadn't noticed, but my mate sitting next to me nudged me and indicated that I should put my hand up her skirt. At first I ignored him but then he bet me 10 shillings that I wouldn't do it, so slowly and with infinite care I raised my hand, being careful not to touch her. Thank goodness the bus never lurched as I would have really been in it. Although there wasn't the paranoia about legalities in those days. I would probably have just got a smack around the face. Suddenly however she just moved away and got off with the crowd leaving me with my hand up in the air.

I got my ten shillings bet, but didn't live it down at work for days. (well ,I was *young* once)

When this job finished (work, that is) we were sent was sent to a place called Powfoot near Dumfries, in Scotland. I think the place was an ammunition factory as the smoke coming from the chimneys was putrid with sulfuric acid, which fell like a very fine rain. Stinging ones face and hands. I was lodging with a Mrs. Brown in Dumfries.

She was the FATTEST lady I have ever seen. It took two people to get her out of her chair, and three to get her up the few stairs to her bedroom. But she was extremely nice. And spent her whole day sitting by the fire cooking food, with the aid of her daughter,

Where she got the food from in rationed wartime England I do not know. But our plates were heaped every night. So much so, that it was impossible to do anything other than lay on the bed for an hour or so after a meal. I used to lay there, idly turning by hand, the turntable of an old gramophone, (the spring of which was broken) that I had found in the room, The music there from wasn't the best naturally, but who cared

The only problem was that she had no imagination regarding a packed lunch. Almost every day we would get jam sandwiches of some sort or other. Lunch time was quite hilarious sometimes as we all swapped sandwiches if someone else had strawberry jam and you had raspberry.

Her husband was the local Baker and only a little man, it was quite funny to see him taking this massive lady around in a wheelchair.

They had three daughters. One a little older than me, and a pair of twins my age. Those girls worked damned hard as there were several people lodging there and Mama kept a strict eye on them believe me.

Can't remember much about that town except Robbie Burn's Statue in the centre and the weir across the river which a lot of idiots used to try and walk across.

(In about 1995 I went back there whilst touring on holiday, but could find no trace of them. The parents were probably long gone and no one could remember a Baker named Brown).

One night on returning home from a dance I cut through an alleyway, which had rooms built over each end of it. Making it quite dark. (This was about midnight) Not being partial to being out alone in the dark I hurried along this alleyway, whistling as though I hadn't a care in the world (But scared stiff). As I reached the far end, I looked up for some reason and saw to my horror a man hanging from a rope underneath a window of the room over the alley.

I took off. Bursting into the house and waking everyone up.

Some of the braver souls didn't believe me, but decided to have a look before calling the Police. So, dragging me along they marched back into the alleyway and demanded to know where the body was. I couldn't look up again and just pointed.

At first they thought, what I had thought. That it WAS someone hanging there. But as our eyes got used to the dark we could see that I had made a stupid mistake.

There was something hanging from a rope. But it was suit of clothes, which someone had apparently washed, or something, and what had appeared to be a face was in fact the moon or some light in town shining on the glass of the window.

Did I cop it that night? But, as I protested. "You all thought the same thing at first"

But for days afterwards, all I got was "found any more bodies Stan?"

I didn't think it at all funny.

I have no idea how long we were in Dumfries but after a while we were sent back to Coventry. This time I was in different lodgings, with a lady called Mrs. Murphy. She was as skinny as a rake and that tight fisted. She didn't trust anyone including her own son. Unless she was home, none of us could get into the house. Regardless of the weather.

She told us that she even slept with a knife under her pillow.

I have some recollections of one night deciding not to go home as she would play hell if we were a bit late getting in. And I think I spent the night in a derelicts hostel which was in the walls of the castle. It was clean, but there were dozens of men sleeping in this one long dormitory and the snores and farts made it impossible to sleep. Plus I was scared one of them might try and rob me or something

From there we were sent to the Isle of Anglesey which just off the Welsh coast. The Boss had gone on ahead to try and find lodgings and I travelled down from London alone.

At the time I was suffering from huge boils on the back of my neck, which were extremely painful. I cannot remember the name of the little village where I first landed up, but it was very late in the evening and I felt really ill.

In this village there were two pubs. The George, and the Dragon, right opposite each other in the main St.

It was too late for me to travel any further that night so I tried to get lodgings, firstly in the George, with no avail and then the Dragon. Here, the Landlady was very sympathetic and gave me something to ease the pain in my neck. She then showed me into a large bedroom and said I could have a sleep there.

Whatever she had given me must have put me to sleep, as I never heard a thing until about 7.0 am when I heard, or felt someone on the bed. On opening my eyes I discovered that I must have been sleeping in the same bed as a young woman all night.

All she said to me was "are you feeling better this morning sonny, you were snoring your head off when I came up last night and I didn't like to wake you, seeing as how bad you were feeling". She then dressed and went downstairs.

I wouldn't have known what to do if I HAD known she was there. But there again, if I had been awake I might have got kicked out anyway.

Next morning I travelled to where we were working it was called Llanfairpwllgwynndgillgoerichwyndroblantissiliogogoch. I think that's how it is spelt.

But it is apparently the longest name in Grt Britain. Now called Llanfair-pg. We were staying in a large Country Mansion right on the coast. It was a beautiful place.

There were a number of lodgers, or guests as they were called, as it were more like a hotel. With maids etc.

I haven't the faintest clue where we were working or what we were doing.

There was nothing in the village except a couple of shops, a church and the usual bits and pieces that make up a village. But it was SO FAR behind the times.

At dances, all the girls were chaperoned and even if you managed to walk a girl home, the chaperone was not far behind. (Perhaps this wasn't a bad idea, in those days with so many strangers on the island. At weekends there was nothing to do, so everyone went off to the mainland to a Town called Bangor. This too, was very medieval.

My boils weren't getting any better so I had to see the local doc. He was weird old fella believe me. After trying various ointments on my neck without success, he asked me to go to his surgery at about 6.30 in the morning.. Thinking this was weird, I went.

He then took me out into a field at the back of the house where there were a number of cows .I wondered what the hell he was taking me out there for, as I didn't like cows at the best of times

Anyway, whilst I stood by the gate (in case there were any cows without tits in there) he hunted around for a while then scooped something up into a dish.

I thought the man must be going nuts by this time, and even more so when he slapped some evil smelling stuff onto my boils then put a huge plaster across my neck.

When I asked him what it was, he told me that it was some of the sloppy stuff from the centre of a cow's droppings. He alleged that it made a wonderful poultice to try and draw the muck out of my boils. Boy!!! Did it pong?

I couldn't possibly go either back to the lodging or to work, stinking like that. Although I must say that it did seem to ease the pain. So I sat on a seat outside the church for a couple of hours until the worst wore off.

Eventually about midday going back to the lodgings, where I went to bed and fell asleep.

Late in the afternoon, I awoke to hear the dinner gong going so decided that I would wrap a scarf around my neck to hide the smell, although by this time it was minimal and go down to dinner, despite feeling "not at all well"

As I went down the stairs, one of the young maids came running down the stairs and passed me. As she did she put her arm around my neck in fun saying" what on earth do you want that scarf on for indoors" At the same time trying to pull it off. This naturally pulled on the poultice too and the pain was indescribable. I must have gone down like a

light and fallen down the rest of the stairs, but I knew nothing until I awoke to find myself in the back of a car heading back to London.

I had several days off after reaching home where I had to have treatment at the hospital

On returning to work, it appeared that my traveling days were over, as the Boss had decided or had been told, that I was too young to be sent around like this. This applied to a couple of other apprentices as well.

I thought we would be getting the sack, but I was sent to work with a Plumber who was working in the London area.

I really enjoyed this as we were doing "proper" plumbing in rather posh houses in the Golders Green area of London.

One day whilst we were in the middle of a job there was an almighty bang, just like a bomb going off. Although as far as I can remember there had been no air raid warning and bombing of London seemed to have stopped for some time.

We were working on the top floor of a block of flats and from the windows we could see for some distance across town.

Only a few streets away we could see a great plume of smoke and fire and hear the Fire and Ambulance bells.

At first we thought that a German bomber had sneaked through the defences and dropped a few bombs, as in the distance we could see other fires burning.

It wasn't until going home in the evening and hearing the news that we found out that a new threat was being thrown at us by the Germans.

This was the start of England being bombarded with what we called Flying Bombs, or "Doodlebugs". These were small pilotless plane/bombs which were launched from places in France towards a given target. The amount of fuel these planes carried was carefully worked out so that at the estimated distance, the engines would run out of fuel and the plane would crash to earth, like a bomb. These seemed to be worse than the proper Bombers as there were no Men involved and they were so unpredictable.

When one came over, everyone held their breath, waiting for the engine to stop. Hoping that it had gone over you before it did. Within second of it stopping, the planes glided to earth and there would come another explosion, and someone else's house was a goner.

Each day, and night they would come over in dozens. Flying through the anti aircraft fire etc. And as there was no pilot, they would not deviate for anything I think the silence after the engine stopped was the worst part, as whilst you knew there was a bomb up there, you didn't know where it was going to come down. And if you had heard the engine stop it must have been some where near you. I believe that the RAF pilots found that the safest way to deal with these things was to fly in close, then try and tip them over so that they would crash before reaching a town.

It was around this time that I started going out with a lovely young lady, Peggy Rollins. At weekends we would cycle out to the countryside. And in general had a wonderful relationship.

She was perhaps my first really *serious* girl friend. We even exchanged rings and Mum and Dad thought the world of her. But alas, this didn't last very long either.

She was a nurse at Redhill Hospital and I used to wait for her every evening.

One evening I waited for her, but she didn't turn up. On going to her home her Mother told me that she had gone out with someone else.

I was devastated, and like so many other stupid young men when Love goes wrong, I walked into the Recruiting Office and Volunteered for the Royal Air force.

Oh I had forgotten, and now don't know just where it should fit in. But Joe Jimmy and I had for some time been in the Air Cadets.

Joe was the Drum Major of our band. Jimmy and I concentrated on learning how to fly(in a simulator) These were halcyon days).

So when I volunteered I was one step ahead in getting in for aircrew.

Was I proud of the white flash that we were permitted to wear in our Cadet Uniform caps?

Incidentally Joe had volunteered too.

I don't think that my unrequited love affair was the sole reason for volunteering at an earlier age. One other reason was that at that time many young men were being called up and sent to work in the coalmines. That I could NEVER have done as I had been down one in Wales when I was younger and had been petrified.

I didn't, I say anything to my Parents until after I had been accepted. But when I got a Notice to attend for a Medical, which was in the middle of the week and asked Mum if I could have a bath and some clean clothes she wondered what was going on. As one, in those days, had a bath on Sat or Sunday and changed clothes then. Not in the Middle of the week.

I was out one evening shortly after, helping Dad who was repairing a Radiogram for someone. I thought, whilst he has his head down inside I will tell him I had been accepted for the R.A.F. Which I did.. He came up with a start, bashing his head on the machine and yelled "You WHAT".

I think he was cross because I hadn't said anything, but might have been a bit proud of me as he had been in the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War.

But nobody said much at home .I suppose they knew that I would have probably been called up on turning 18 anyway.

When one is young ,and the bugle sounds, most young men with any blood will answer the call, and at times like this in the middle of a war, they are bombarded with propaganda and patriotic stuff. Don't forget, that prior to this era, England had been one of the greatest Nations on Earth and it had been drummed in at school. We were always looking at the atlas and marveling at all the countries marked in red, which indicated the extent of the British Empire. .We were proud of our Country and it's Heritage. And couldn't wait to get stuck in.

Whilst waiting I continued my apprenticeship working around the London area.

None of us cars like the youngsters of today, we only had pushbikes. But on these we would roam far and wide. One of our favourite trips was to Windsor. Once there, we would ditch the bikes and hire a small rowing boat out on the Thames.

This way we could pick up girls who were walking on the bank. These were Innocent "pickups" just a way to spend a couple of hours in the company of pretty girls.

Another place that we would do this was at Burnt Oak Broadway. This being one of the main streets through town. Most evenings and especially Sat and Sunday, there would be literally hordes of young men and girls sauntering up and down. Occasionally we would latch onto a couple of girls for the evening. Sometimes having dates with them afterwards.

Most of this too was kiss and cuddle stuff. Nothing more.

The local park was locked up after dark but I bet there wasn't a youngster who didn't know where all the loose palings were.

For a while I "walked out" with a young lady but I cannot remember her name. But about the most exciting things we did was to go to one of the first Milk Bars that opened in London.

This was run by one of the biggest men I have ever seen. He must have been about 6ft across the shoulders. But there was never any trouble there.

One night when we were walking home in the blackout, we both decided that we wanted to go to the toilet. She knew where the "Ladies" was but I had no idea where the "Gents" was. She disappeared around the corner and I thought, as its dark I will just do what I have to in what I took to be a garden. I had just started, when a door opened and light streamed out (strictly against the law at that time) fully illuminating me in all my glory for the congregation of the Church. They were no amused, nor was I with a wet pair of pants as I tried to move quickly away.

It was whilst "going out" with this girl that I could have killed myself on my cycle.

One Saturday morning, I had had to work a bit late and this was annoying as I had arranged to meet her from work at a certain time. And I had about 20 mins ride to get to where she worked.

So off I belted on my cycle, head down bum up, as the saying goes.

Eventually I did what we all did in those days although it was stupid, and that was to get in close behind a bus. I knew that this particular “Green Line” bus wouldn’t stop until it reached its final destination, so it was going like the clappers, with me stuck right behind it.

It would have been alright, but some stupid B#@#! had left a load of wooden blocks laying in the road. Of course, I didn’t see them until the bus ran over them. It was a case of whoooooooooooooops. He flies through the air with the greatest of ease for me and I crash landed rather heavily. Fortunately I think because of my speed and the fact that I didn’t actually hit anything saved me as I skidded along the road for yards, taking the skin of knees, elbows and face. Of course the bike was buggered and I had to walk home in that state. I always remember one old dear, saying to me as I staggered along the pavement with blood dripping everywhere, “Oh! you poor dear, you have really hurt yourself haven’t you. If I wasn’t going out I would dress that for you and get you a cuppa”

Stoopid old cow.

Mum nearly had kittens when I eventually arrived home and rushed me off to the Docs.

My War

Chapter 5 Part1

I can’t remember just how old I was when my personal war started and I was first called up, but it must have been just after I turned 18. Probably because I was a volunteer. Joe had gone several months before and Jimmy and I had waited impatiently.

I was overjoyed when I got those long awaited papers telling me to report to the RAF headquarters at St Johns Wood in London. To start training as a Wireless Operator, Air Gunner. I was like a cat with two tails. (But knowing what I know now, It was a job that was tantamount to a suicide mission And I was right!

I think that I had about three weeks notice to get myself ready and report and during this time I was cock of the hoop. I had said goodbye to the lads in the Air Cadet Unit also to all my friends, not that any of them were really interested as they were all awaiting their call ups. Joe had already gone and Jimmy was awaiting his .and every other lad of my age group knew that it would come soon. But to me, I was the only new recruit that was going to win the war.

Little did I know?

About a week before I was due to report, I had all my kit ready and packed, when out of the blue a bulky envelope landed on the mat.

Opening it I found several letters and forms.

One was my discharge from the RAF. The second was call up papers for the Army telling me to report to York Barracks on such and such date.

There were also two letters. One from Sholto Douglas (I think it was) apologizing for the fact that after volunteering I was not wanted. Blah blah.. And one from Churchill, stating that the Air War now appeared to have been won and aircrews were not now the priority

The Country now required more Military power for the final push etc etc, But should that priority change I would be offered the chance of re enlisting in the Service of my choice.. What a load of Bull shit.

I was devastated as were several of my friends who found themselves in the same boat.

It's funny, thinking back, but I cannot remember my parents being at all upset about my going. Perhaps it was because it was expected." There was a war on" They may have been after I went, but I don't think so as even when I went back after embarkation leave and went to war proper they were the same.

So eventually I along with thousands of others found myself on the train heading North. And into the unknown. On arrival at York we were pushed and pulled, bullied and driven, still in civvies for a few days then shipped off to a place called Stranraer in Scotland and then shipped, like cattle to Ireland.

We landed at the little harbour of Larne. My first and only Memory of that place was the wonderful show of Fuchsias growing all along the harbour.

Packed in trucks, we were then taken to a place called Ballykinlar. (I have since tried many times to find this place on the map, and even tried the Irish Embassy without success) Although I did find something on it on the Internet (On a website belonging to the IRA) I have a feeling that the barracks were called Abercorn Barracks and some ? Lines (which is an army term for camp.)

I have a recollection that it was across a tidal bay from a place called Newcastle.

Whatever, apparently it was a Guards training depot and boy!! Did we know it?

Before we even got any kit, everyone was rushed to the barbers, to have their heads shaved off.

Here, I was in a way fortunate in that (a) my hair was already fairly short and (b) I had had a reoccurrence of the boils I had suffered from before. And the Medical Officers at York had after treating them given me a certificate allowing me certain privileges. Such as no hair cut and being able to leave my uniform collar undone.

Walking around the barracks afterwards it was I that felt the odd man out, with hair.

I must say that the barracks, a two story building was quite comfortable (as barracks go) and clean. But after all, they had plenty of free labour.

After the haircut and inoculations (My arm came up like a balloon and I was really ill afterwards..) It was then that I decided that I would never have another inoculation whilst I was in the Army..

I had found out that it was about the only thing one could refuse in the Forces. And my Pay book is stamped" refused" right through my service."

Knowing what I know now, it was probably stupid. But it was the only thing I could be "stropky" about in the Army and get away with.

Marched off to the stores we had a kit bag flung at us which contained everything that the Army felt we needed. Including a tin hat. (I was in the Army for about 3 1/2 yrs I suppose and in the Reserves for about 15 But NOT ONCE did I manage to get all that stuff back in the kit bag. There was always something left out.

The uniforms that we were given took no consideration of height or size. Some men just couldn't get into theirs and others looked as though they were dressed in sacks .It was hilarious. Although we didn't get much time for frivolity believe me. We were marched off to the tailors to have the uniforms fitted. Also to get a photo taken (for mum) The one shown here was taken on that

Sunday I couldn't do my collar up properly due to the boils etc. so as the collar was about three sizes too big for me, the Sgt stuck a cigarette packet down the back to keep the front looking tidy and to keep the back off of my neck.

Not that we wore uniforms very much at first, being dressed in sloppy looking fatigue uniforms.

The second Sat that we were there, there was a big parade to be held. We had to wear our best uniform, and boots had to be shined so that the Sgt could see his face in the toes and heels. God knows how many hours we spent spitting into the polish and rubbing it into the boots with the end of a spoon or toothbrush.

This parade was my first brush with those in charge of our very lives as the night before the parade we were all pressing and cleaning our equipment. At the time I was feeling really poorly with my boils and also had a toothache.

I wanted to go to the MO's to get something for this so one of the lads promised that he would press my uniform for me. And I was most grateful, as I had no idea how it was supposed to be done.

On the day of the parade I felt as smart as anyone and stood at attention whilst the Sgt did a preliminary inspection to see whether we were in a fit state to be seen by the CO.

When he got round to the back of me, there was an almighty roar. And the air quivered as he yelled, "What the bloody hell have you been doing to your blouse Hayes?" Not knowing what he was talking about, I was flabbergasted, when he told me to take my blouse off and have a look.

There was a damn great scorch mark in the shape of an iron right across the back. I was almost in tears, you would think that I had done it on purpose and that the crime I had committed was tantamount to Murder. Obviously whoever has been "kind" enough to iron my uniform the previous day had been too scared to tell me. The [B@#@!](#).

My other blouse wasn't back from the tailors so I couldn't change it. The Sgt went berserk just about. But I cannot remember what happened about it. Whether I went on parade as it was or not or got chucked off and given some dirty work to do. I know that the following day I was up in front of the Company Officer and given a right royal B#@!!Ing. But he accepted my excuse as the MO could verify that I had been in the surgery that day.

If cleanliness is next to Godliness, then all of us that went through that camp must have a place waiting for us in Heaven as it was spit and polish, shine and clean from morning till night.

Our mess tins literally gleamed like mirrors. No one worried about the taste of metal polish when you had to eat out of them.

Boots were also like mirrors. Even the soles.

Blankets on the bed, which had to be laid out in the prescribed manner every morning, with all ones kit on it, were folded into a neat square. Packed out with pieces of cardboard to hold the shape.

I suppose it was all in a good cause but we didn't have a minute to ourselves during the day.

We started at about 6.30 either doing P.T or going for a five mile run. Back to breakfast.

Remember, beds and kits had to be laid out before this. If it wasn't good enough the corporal in charge would tip the lot on the floor and you started again.

After breakfast, training started. Each session lasting about an hour. Between sessions we had to change into the appropriate uniform or kit for the next one. But were only given about three minutes in

which to change. This was bad enough for those billeted on the ground floor, but I was up on the second. And sometimes we had to find someone with the key to unlock the rifles.

It wouldn't have been so bad if some sense had been used so that we could more easily change, say, from fatigues to something else that needed the same dress. No! the stupid (or were they) [B@#@!s](#) would have you in best uniform for drill, then into pt kit, then into full marching kit. One didn't know whether one was Arthur or bloody Martha...

One evening I was on guard duty at the main gate. Dressed up in my finery. There was another sentry on the other side of the gate and a lance corporal in charge.

Like all ceremonial sentries we were not permitted to move a muscle. And the Lance Corporal just stood there and saluted anything that warranted a salute. About 5.50 pm a crowd of recruits passed through the gates and as they did one of them dropped a pound note. (This was a week's wages) None of us were permitted to move to pick it up. It was so bloody tantalizing, seeing this note fluttering about between us.

Just as the crowd left the gates, Last Post sounded and ALL the camp had to stand to attention where and whatever they were doing at the time. As the last notes sounded, the bullshit guard finished and we became picket. Roaming the camp at will.

Before the last note had died away, and without waiting for any instructions, we all came to life and made one concerted dash into the centre of the road to grab the note. (Thieving B's)

I cannot remember who got there first but have some recollection of us splitting it between us.

We got a rocketing off the Sgt for moving before he said, but who cared. Even in those days I would do" anything for a dollar"

I said before, that this was a week's wages and that it true. We received the princely sum of 21 shillings per week.. Out of which was stopped 1/6 for barrack room damages. (One of the biggest rackets perpetrated by the Army) 1/6 for cleaning stuff etc. leaving 17 shillings. The average civilian wage in those days was between 3 and four pounds.

Although, I was never completely broke. I didn't smoke or drink, and the only entertainment was in the canteen with a cup of tea. or the camp cinema.

The mounting of this guard was the biggest load of Bull that anyone could wish to see.

Everyone concerned was dressed in Best Uniform with everything gleaming and I mean GLEAMING.

We used to line up at the edge of the square and when the Sgt was satisfied that we were as smart as we could possibly be. We were literally LIFTED onto the square and stood in the position, ready for inspection.

At each mounting of the guard one man was picked out as the best dressed, smartest one on Parade. He would not do any guard but would trail around after the C.O as his orderly.

Which was a doddle.

To pick this man out, the C.O and the RSM would inspect EVERY possible inch of the soldier. It was always hard for him as everyone was almost perfect. The Sgts saw to that as it bounded back on them if we weren't.

Very often the C.O got down to inspecting fingernails and even teeth.

As the training progressed it became easier and easier and we got into the routine. And we actually became quite proud of our gleaming boots and smart uniforms.

One thing that I could not do was to climb a rope. Especially with a full kit on my back. So as we all wanted, for some reason, to do everything well. Three or four of us went out one Saturday afternoon to try and practice on our own. We were all struggling and one bloke actually fell off the rope and hurt himself. As he did, the Sgt arrived on the scene and gave us a right rollicking for attempting to do these dangerous things without an instructor there. But he stayed there with us and gave us personal instruction without shouting and bollocking like the corporals did.

By the end of the session we were all proficient in rope climbing, and that stayed with me all my life. (not that I did MUCH rope climbing.)

One thing I did excel at was shooting. I had never seen a rifle or Bren Gun before but took to them like a duck to water.

On the first shoot, I scored the highest mark that any recruit had ever done.

Later, this proficiency won me my marksman's badge. And a shilling a day more pay.

There wasn't a lot of social life around the camp although on Sat nights there was dance in the Gymnasium. Naturally, I found myself a girl friend. Olive. Who was in the A.T.S.

She came from Northern Ireland, the borders of which were not far away. We could see the Mountains of Mourne quite clearly.

One weekend, she took me to see her family who lived right on the border. They were lovely people and old Grandma was a picture of the true Irish Gran. Clay pipe and all.

I didn't realize until we got back that I could have been shot for venturing so far as the IRA would have loved to have got hold of a British Uniform.. But who ever thinks of these things when love is in the air.

The Lance Corporal that was in charge of us was a right bastard, as were they all. But I suppose it was the only way that they could keep discipline.

The squad I was with was a typical army bunch. We had the Professor, the idiot, the smart arse and the Comedian. And the Gullible. AND ME. But they were a good bunch of blokes and despite the rigors of Army training we had some good fun.. We swore that we would all keep in touch with each other, but none of us did.

One weekend, three of us went over to the nearest Town called Newcastle. It wasn't much more than a village in reality. But there were some shops and a pub. I didn't drink, but went along just the same.. We had a most pleasant afternoon but we realized that it was getting late and became quite concerned as it was quite a long way around the bay. And if we were late getting back in we would be for the high jump.

Some bright spark in the Pub suggested that we hire a rowing boat and row across the bay, and at the time, this seemed brilliant idea. So off down to the harbour we trotted and found a little boat. Can't remember whether we hired it or pinched it. (probably the latter).

None of us had tried rowing before but we set off in high spirits. But no newly made "friend" at the Pub had told us that the tide was on the turn, and by the time we were only about three quarters of the way over, we ran out of water.

So we dumped the boat and still had to hike a heck of a way back to camp. Arriving there covered in mud and sand. Much to the disgust of the gate Sgt. But when we told him what had happened he laughed, and said you're not the first ones those Irish Bastards have caught like that. It will teach you a lesson to stay away from them and not trust anyone out here.

I think I was at this depot for about 6-8 weeks. But it seemed like a lifetime It was hard slogging and I had never been engaged in such physical activity in my life before. But it turned us into fit young men, smart and proud of ourselves. (or at least most of us)WE never gave a thought that they were grooming us for cannon fodder. It was all an adventure.

On the morning of our departure back to England we were paraded at about 5am with all our kit. God knows why the Army has to get men out of bed at that ungodly hour. As we stood around for well over an hour. Just as it was getting light, the C.O arrived on the scene and they started to call the roll, to see if anyone was missing.

One of the first names that was not answered was the Lance Corporal from the Regular staff. (The one who was a right [B#@!@#](#)) They bawled and shouted for him, and someone was sent to his room in the barracks to see if he had overslept. But no! He couldn't be found anywhere. Naturally there was consternation amongst the staff as he was such a stickler for doing the right thing. About 6.30 as the sun came up and illuminated the barracks a great shout of laughter went up from about two thousand throats, for, hanging out of the barrack window on a rope was a bed and in it was strapped the Lance Corporal. Someone had tied him up and gagged him so that he couldn't raise the alarm. Obviously those who had done it thought that we would have been gone

long before he was discovered.. There was hell to play for a while although even some of the staff thought it was great joke as they knew what he was like to the men under him. We were threatened with all sorts of dire penalties but there was nothing really that they could do as we were entraining within an hour or so. But it was a good laugh for the end of hard period. The only thing that I was sad about was leaving my new girl friend. But she was being posted back to England too so I thought perhaps we would meet again some day.

ENGLAND.

It was a long and wearying trip back to England, as a lot of it was done in the back of trucks. And another boat trip, However we eventually arrived at a camp near Bury St Edmunds. This was a hutted camp and just down the road was a proper barracks.

We were then inducted into the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment (Swede bashers.) Here, training was just as hard but we were now used to it and it was more interesting as we were doing actual field work, learning to be fighting soldiers and not dummies in uniform. One thing that did upset all of those that had come from Ireland was that we had to get rid of all our beautiful shining boots etc and dubbin them over to make them dull. After all the hours and hours of bloody work that had gone into them.

I was crafty though, I just blackened one pair over with boot polish so that when I wore them to go out anywhere I just had to rub it off and there was my beautiful shine.

As I said, the training was hard, but interesting as we learned something new every day. Even today, some 60 yrs later, I can still hear the Sgts voice saying whilst showing us the Bren gun,

“This is the smallest part on the gun but with the longest name,. Remember it. It is the Barrel nut retainer plunger”. Which turned out to be a tiny spring loaded ball bearing which held the catch that held the barrel onto the gun in place?

I reckon I could still strip one of those in record time. The training was so thorough one HAD to grasp it. But that’s what takes to make a good soldier and possibly save your life.

The only bit none of us liked was having to go through the gas chambers and take your mask off. Why the hell they did this I don’t know, probably a bit of sadism. They also put a drop of mustard gas on your arm which you had to take off, using the anti gas ointment. Probably to give us confidence in the equipment. But it left a burn on my arm for years.

I cannot remember much about this period apart from the rigid routine. But for once, our Sgt was the gentlest man I have ever known. He was huge, about 6ft 6inches and built like a tank, but I never heard him raise his voice to anyone, and the strongest he ever called anyone was “You Stooge”. But no one ever tried to take advantage of him. He was too big anyway.

The people around the camp were wonderful to us. Most evenings and weekends someone or other would have a “tea party” or something for the troops in their homes. These were just small affairs but they were a welcome break. How these folks kept this up for all the war years I don’t know, when you consider how many men must have gone through those camps.

There was very little leave at this time but many of the men who couldn’t get a pass used to go AWOL and slip off home. Someone would always cover for them.

I was too nervous to do this but one weekend I was persuaded by a couple of “friends” to go with them. We could hitchhike into London (or wherever we were going) and be back before we were missed. Fine.

We managed to get a lift as far as the next Town which was Newmarket. Just outside the Town the driver dropped of us as he knew the ropes. We tried thumbing a lift for ages, but no one would stop so we decided to split up and I walked on down the road for about a mile when just entering the Town proper, I went around a corner and guess what!!!! There were two bloody redcaps (MPs) just waiting for twits like me. That’s why everyone else had stayed out of town trying to get a lift. I was placed under open arrest and told to return to camp and report to the guard room.. That cost me three days extra duties. I got away a bit lenient because I convince the CO that I wasn’t going any further and would have been back later that afternoon. Needless to say I didn’t try that again.

One thing I do remember was the eating arrangements. Why on earth men have to be treated like animals I do not know. I know there were thousands of us and some sort of system must be in place but here, the food was awful.

There was I think 6 or 8 men to a table. And I suppose to avoid long queues one man from each table was detailed to fetch the food in a container for the whole table. This was alright in some ways unless the bloke who dished it out had several mates at the table or if it was someone like me who was dishing out, usually got less than I was supposed to as the others would always complain that I hadn’t given them a fair share. The Officers always came around asking if there were any complaints. But there never was, as it was a waste of time.

What did disgust me there was my introduction to the method for washing your mess tins out.

This consisted of Three 44 gallon drums, full of hot (if you were lucky) water outside the mess hall .Each one had a label on. Rinse, Wash, Sterilize. Obviously the idea was to dip you mess tins into them in turn. This was fine if you were one of the first twenty or so. But remember there were probably 500 men in each hall. So if you were any later than this. The first drum was thick pig swill, the second, greasy soup and the third, Use you imagination. How the heck there were never any cases (that we heard of)of food poisoning I will never know.

But I was always getting into scrapes, (inadvertently)

On the last weekend that we were at his camp I was granted a two-day pass and went home. Coming back on the Sunday night (I had to be back by 9.30 pm) I caught the right train and settled down for a snooze (always was a tired bugger). Anyway, after a couple of hours when it was quite dark, the train pulled into a station (which was showing no lights or name plate) and I thought I heard someone say that it was Bury St Edmonds, so naturally I grabbed my kit and jumped out. By the time I got out of the station, I realized that it WASN'T Bury at all. And the train had gone. Now what the hell was I to do as there wasn't another train until next morning?

I had very little money left so couldn't get into a hotel and it was dark and miserable so what did "smart arse" do?. I went to the police station, and demanded that they accommodate me. They did. I slept in a cell all night. But they did give me breakfast and took me to the train. The Inspector also gave me a letter explaining what had happened and where I was. Naturally when I turned up at the Camp gates about 12 hrs late. I was in the muck, but once again, my excuse held good and I was only told off. Phew!!!!

It wasn't ALL go at this camp. We had plenty of time off, and I spent mine either going to dances or the cinema. Although these were always packed out with soldiers and there were never enough girls to go round. But I was happy just scrounging around on my own. I usually found somewhere to go and perhaps get my knees under someone's table for a free nosh up.

At the end of this phase of my training I was posted to a little place in Norfolk called Salthouse near Blakeny. There was nothing there except the camp, and a farmhouse, which was the Head Quarters.

It was one of the most desolate places I had ever seen, and being wintertime, it was freezing. We were billeted in Nissan huts, which are made of steel. There were a couple of stoves in the hut but it was so cold some nights that wet clothing hung near the stoves would be frozen in the morning. My bed was close to the stove thank goodness. The only trouble was that being near the stove it was used also as a communal seat often until lights out.

The beds were all double bunks and I had the bottom one.

One night I awoke to hear the bloke in the top bunk moaning and crying.

A lot of the men just couldn't take the harsh training and would often break down, but this bloke was a "toughie".So I got out and asked him what was wrong.

He slid of the bed and collapsed. He said something is wrong with my balls .At first I thought perhaps he had got V.D or something but when I got the L/Cpl up to have a look we found his testicles and scrotum were almost the size of a small football .He was in agony. So we carted him off to the M.O who wasn't impressed with being wakened at 1.0am but when he saw what was wrong, the bloke was whisked away in an ambulance quick, smart. We never saw him again.

As usual the Lance Corporal in charge of our hut was a pig of a man; one would have thought he had ten stripes on his arm instead of a lowly one.

I can take a lot (not being built for fighting or throwing my weight around), except sarcasm and this man was full of it. Particularly picking on men like me who were quiet and never said boo. Consequently something had to give, and one day whilst out on exercises I was carrying the Piat gun (this is an extremely heavy anti tank missile launcher) which I could hardly lift leave alone carry.

He wanted us to climb over a wall but I couldn't manage it so decided that a gate some ten yards away would be a better way to go. If I did!!! He flew into me something cruel

Next minute he was wearing the gun whilst sitting on the floor. I thought he would flatten me or put me on a charge, but I have to give him his due. He carried the gun back home and never said another word to me.

Here, the training was all fieldwork; there was no "bull" at all. Some days we would march anything up to twenty miles. Skirmishing all the way. It was bloody hard work trying to march on the frozen roads and my feet were in agony. I could hardly walk. I wasn't built for all this hard work, being a six foot skin and bones type.

One day whilst we were attacking a position across frozen fields, using live ammunition. I was nearly crying with the pain in my feet when a young officer started to push me yelling at me to get a bloody move on. I tried to tell him about my feet but all he could do was yell and keep pushing me. I took it for a few minutes and tried, but eventually my temper snapped and I turned on him in desperation, pointing my rifle in his face and yelling at him to bloody well listen, plus a few chosen words.

I had "live rounds" in the gun and it was only common sense that prevailed otherwise I would have shot the bastard. The Sgt Major, who was a decent bloke came running over, put his fingers through the trigger guard and said "I'll take that laddie"

I tried to tell him what the trouble was but he said that I would have to tell it all to the CO in the morning.

Next morning, now shitting myself, I was charged with threatening an officer.

But once again lady luck was with me. The CO had seen how I was hobbling and listened to me.

I was sent over to the Medical Room where the MO said "My god, son, no wonder you can't walk, and proceeded to scrape off about an inch of hard skin off the bottom of my feet.

I was given seven days: confined to camp and extra duties. But the Officer and the NCO in charge of the squad received a rocketing, as it was their responsibility to check men's feet, after every march. And they hadn't done this.

Some nights we had to go out onto Stifkey Marshes, to re lay the mine fields strewn along the coast. This was scary, as it was pitch dark, often pissing with rain and we could show no lights.

Our job was to find the mines, disable them and lay them to one side, another squad would then come along and relay them in a different position. It said much for our training in the handling of mines that I never saw anyone get hurt whilst doing this. Of course they *may* have been duds just for training but we treated them as "for real" because we had been told that they were part of the defences and moving them could fool any fifth columnists that Might be watching.

Most people only see Stifkey Marshes from the comfort of their car whilst driving along the coast road. We got to know them intimately. Probably in summer they are beautiful but we never saw that.

It was usually freezing cold and or drizzling with rain and to try and keep a little warm and dry we would wrap our selves up in our gas capes underneath our uniforms. But invariably we would trudge back to camp covered in mud and soaking wet. How we never got frostbite I will never know.

It was a good job that we hadn't wandered into the "live" mine areas as we found out that the Lance Corporal who had been made up from the recruits was virtually blind after dark, and we had been implicitly following him

Of course, we were trained in the use of every conceivable weapon. One of which was the two inch mortar. This being a short tube on a base plate into which the small bomb was dropped. These are extremely inaccurate weapons as one can only aim in the general direction of the enemy. The bomb rising to considerable height before falling "at a steep angle of decent" hopefully into the enemy trenches ,well!! One day we were on the mortar ranges and being pushed hard by the officers to pick up the rate of fire this of course got everyone flustered and aiming became quite erratic. Until one bomb going completely off course, landed amongst the VIP cars that were parked at the side of the range. Was everyone's face red? But no one could prove which mortar had fired the offending shot, so we all got a rocketing and that was that.

Another facet of training here was in booby traps.

One day we had a long lecture on how to find and destroy booby traps.

At the end of the lecture, the officer said" From now on, be prepared for anything, it could be booby trapped. Don't forget the toilet seats". Right, you can all fall out now and go to the canteen."

Naturally there was one rush, but as the first ones opened the door there was an almighty bang and everyone was showered in flour and water.

The Officer with a big smirk on his face, yelled out, "I warned you"

Thereafter no one would even open a cupboard or even sit on the loo without checking. But it was good practice for what was to come.

The folks that lived at Blakeny and Stifkey which was only a short distance away were wonderful to us soldiers. They organized entertainment almost every night and over the weekends. It was here that I met a beautiful young lady. It hurts that I cannot recall her name now. She was a smashing dancer and we got on well.

She wouldn't take me to her home as she said her Father "wasn't very nice".

On just about the last night we were there, I had walked her home and whilst we were having a cuddle and saying goodbye outside the door of her house which opened onto the Main St we heard her Father coming down the passage inside.

We pulled to one side where he couldn't see us in the dark and kept quite still. We heard the door open and her Father stepped out stood there for a moment then started to urinate onto the road. I know it was dark, but after all. She was that embarrassed it put us off cuddling and we went for a walk around to get warm before a farewell kiss.

Every Valentines Day I think of her as it was on that day that I last saw her.

(Whilst writing this story I found Blakeny on the Internet and sent a message to a Mrs June Warham asking if she would be kind enough to give my belated thanks to the people of Blakney for their kindness to us soldiers. This kind lady person promised to send it to the local paper)

Which she did. So I hope someone out there read it and knew that someone remembered.

In fact she emailed me and said that several people had contacted her and said that they had been involved at the time.

At the time we were at this camp, and no doubt whilst others were there, this part of Britain must have been the most unprotected piece of shore in England. There were mines on the beaches and barbed wire everywhere. But at night, when this part of the shoreline seemed to be the loneliest and most desolate place on earth we were supposed to walk along the coast road, meet up with some RAF guards about a mile along, and then return. There were only two men patrolling, and one was supposed to remain on the corner until the other one got back.

What the bloke patrolling was supposed to do if he saw any enemy (other than shit himself) I don't know, as we had no radios, or any means of communication. Other than shouting.. Plus no ammo for ones rifle.

We might have done it the first night, but believes me I don't think ANYONE patrolled that road after. It was sheer stupidity.

At the end of the road where the camp was, was a tramp's hidey-hole in the bushes. We soon found this and I can guarantee that that is where most of the "brave" soldiers of that Camp spent their patrolling hours. Tramps must have had a field day afterwards picking up all the cigarette butts.

Just behind our camp at the base of the hill was an RAF camp. These men and women operated the radar tower that was at the top of the hill. (Even in wartime there was a red light on the top of this). There were more WRAF girls at his camp than men, which was a great source of companionship for the lads. And most nights they would put on an impromptu dance or concert.

No one noticed one night when the light went out. And no one heard the cause, until dawn broke.

We were passing the RAF camp on our way to our mess hall when someone shouted, "Where's the Tower?"

We all rushed along with RAF personnel up the hill to find out what had happened. When we got there we were devastated.

During the night, just as the two shifts were changing over, a German bomber had crashed into it, completely demolishing it and the operating room at the top. Killing all those inside. It was horrible. We were immediately sent off on a hunt for any Germans who had not been killed. He had all of Britain to fly over and yet had to hit that slim tower.

During our stay at Salthouse we were taken off to Yarmouth for landing exercises.

We were taken out in a small ship then being loaded into small boats we approached the beach. What a bloody debacle that was. I believe we had a number of casualties when men fell out of the boats, and we were too far out when told to disembark. Consequently the water was far too deep.

It was a typical Army cockup. If this was how we landed in France I wonder the allies ever got onto land.

However despite all the hassles, cockups and other catastrophes, by the time we finished at this camp we were expert and proficient soldiers, ready for anything. All we lacked was experience and that was to come before long, as from there we were sent on embarkation leave then off to the war proper. But I will never forget my (sojourn) in Norfolk



My first picture for Mum
As Private (ratbag)148920942
Hayes

My War Part Two of chapter 5

Once again, thinking back on this leave I cannot recall my Parents showing any emotion.

I was off to the war proper. Marching down the road proudly carrying everything I was supposed to carry as a soldier, including a rifle. They never even came to the station to see me off nor do I remember them even coming further than the door. Perhaps they cried in private, or was everyone so used to seeing their sons march off? Some, never to come back. I just hoped that they were proud of me

To me, a fit young man, it was an adventure, and in later life one tended to forget the horrible and sad things that happened and only remember the funny and happy times.

So there is a lot more underneath these words that are probably best left where they are, in the Very back of my memory.

It was also queer that whilst everyone looked forward to Leave and would be full of what they were going to do. Most were glad when the leave was over and they could get back to their units. I suppose it was because these Units had now become home and the men around you, Mates, at least for the time being. At home most of one's friends would be away.

Another reason I was glad to get back was that the Germans had started dropping V1 rockets onto London and these were scarier than anything else. One never heard them coming. Only the tremendous explosion when they went off. THEN you heard them coming,(they were traveling faster than sound apparently). Quite a few had landed around where my parents lived) I was worried for them but there was nothing I could do I had to go.

I cannot remember whether I returned to Salthouse before going abroad or not, but can remember being herded onto boats at Dover.

There were dozens of boats lined up and we had to climb right across several before being told, this is yours.

Leaving shore was a very emotional thing I think for everyone on board. Especially as we saw the "White Cliffs" disappearing behind us into the mist. I don't think there was a sound from anyone of us. Not that we were scared. But we were leaving England.

We must have landed in Calais but it was all such a bustle that I cannot remember anything about it. Except that we were packed onto ex cattle trucks. Like cattle.

Most of the trucks had a sort of small observation tower at the rear end of them. Possibly for the guard. These were great to climb up into as we could see across the countryside although it was far too cold to stay up there very long.

After hours traveling like this we detrained at Amiens. My Father had been here during the First World War and had told me a lot about the place. It was nothing like what he told me.

He had however warned me about places called Red Light shops. I was still an innocent lad and had no idea what a Red Light Shop was. So because of this, the first night that we were allowed out on the Town, a mate and I were wandering around looking for something to do, a Café or something. The Town was in complete darkness due to the blackout and this was about 8.30 on a winter's night. Suddenly we saw a Red Light in the

distance. HAh HAh we thought, this must be one of these places our Fathers warned us about, let's investigate. So making out we were just strolling, we hurried towards this light. If Dad warned us about these places they must be naughty or something. (You would never believe that two 18yr olds could be so naïve) Eventually we drew near to where the light was but somehow it never seemed to get any closer. So eventually we made a run at it and found it. It was a bloody mobile fish and chips (or the French equivalent). Talk about a suck in. (and yeah!! I do now know what a red light shop is).

Incidentally, when we arrived in Perth I was amazed to see how many red lights shops they were, quite brazen, However these turned out to be Doctors Surgeries.)

Another day we visited the sites of the Battles of the First World War. Climbed down the old trenches etc. It was eerie. They had been left just as they were 25 yrs before. With tin helmets and bits and pieces of equipment lying around.

We had nothing much to do during the day except perhaps an early morning parade and perhaps a short route march to keep us fit as this was only a holding camp.

One evening this mate and I palled up with a couple of blokes from a Scottish Regiment who were stationed in the Town. They offered to take us to a Night Club or whatever they called them in those days. So gaily and innocently off we went. The first hour or so was quite good, although I still didn't drink alcohol they served a non alcoholic drink (so I thought) which was nice. The place was PACKED with soldiers of all nationalities

After about an hour, the floor show started. And BOY OH BOY!!! Was that a floor show, I have never seen anything like it before or since. I was still an innocent and that show shook me to the core. I couldn't believe that men and women could do such things in Public. I stuck it for about 20 mins, and then had to leave, I was disgusted. But I suppose it was the start of my education into life. When I got back to camp I was that sick. It must have been the drink.

The food at this place was awful and there was very little of it. Soldiers would try and go round three and four times at meal times to try and get enough to eat. You had to be crafty though because if

caught, you were for the high jump. First time one would go around with a jacket on. Next time, no jacket or borrow someone else's from another Regiment.

Then one day whilst we out on a long route march some of the men collapsed and couldn't go on.

The officers were furious as we were supposed to be fit young men. It was then that the story came out about the lack of food. When they investigated they found that the cooks were selling the food on the black market.

They were all arrested and for the last couple of days that I was there the food was marvellous.

From there I was posted to a Town in Belgium called Louvaine. This was another holding unit. Can't recall much about that place as I was only there a very short while. Except that when one went for a walk down town in the morning, there always seemed to be a lot of soldiers hanging around a certain shop window. Naturally one had to have a look to see what the attraction was.

Today, no one would even turn a hair but in those days the sight of a lady washing the floor by bending over and swishing the cloth about, especially as she was going backwards towards the window showing all her underwear. (They were the old fashioned passion killers too) was a real entertainment for all those young healthy men. (Funny, the stupid little things one remembers).

After about three days there a type of dysentery struck down me and about 100 others of my crowd. It was awful. We couldn't move more than a few yards from the loo. And the griping pain!. By the time we came out of the hospital all the others had gone. There was only us few left in the camp. (Found out afterwards that the others had been taken back to England for shipment to the Far East war. And that dysentery, some 60 yrs later, was to prove a benefit to me as I was able to receive a Veterans Affairs Pension. Which I would not have got had I stayed with those that went back to England and never saw action at all). Marvellous how fate has a hand in things.

As soon as I was better I was rushed up as reinforcement (along with several others) to join a Unit which was the 6th Btn Royal Welsh Fusiliers of 160 Brigade that was in action. Cannot remember just where it was, but I think just inside Germany. This Unit had, along with others just taken a place called Bochum, I think it was. We passed through there on the way and it was chaos. Nothing had been cleaned up, except the bodies

The first town I can remember was a place called Goch. The Btn had just been through there and the place was in ruins. Everywhere was booby-trapped and many men were killed or injured by playing around with things that they had been told to leave alone.

It was here that I received a letter from Peggy (remember the one who caused me to volunteer) saying that she had got married and could I please give her, her ring back. I hadn't the faintest clue where it was and at that time wasn't particularly interested.

I was only there a couple of days then moved up to the Unit Proper. They had been in quite a fight and several men had been killed so they were resting in a small village with the headquarters in an railway station.

The Officer said that as all his men were exhausted us new men would have to mount guards and do the work, so that they could have a rest. Fair enough.

Another bloke and I were detailed to do some cooking. I didn't mind that at all as I could cook. But we couldn't find anything to cook on (fire wise that is).

We asked the officer where the stoves and that were and he just laughed," what do you think this is soldier? The Ritz" was all we got.

He then told us to do it the way everyone else did it. Put some petrol in a drum and chuck a match in.

I thought, this sounds suspect, AND Dangerous but do as you're told Hayes, you're in the Army now. So we found a small drum, put some petrol in. Laid some bars across the top and placed the food on them. Then stood back, and chucked the said match in as instructed. **Yeah OK you know what happened without me saying it.** There was an almighty woof!!!!and the drum with the food etc went flying through the air. Everyone came running out thinking that we were being attacked. Naturally we got a roasting, but the stupid sod hadn't said anything about putting some soil or sand in first had he.

They had taught us just about everything else that a soldier needed to know but not a simple thing like that.

It is surprising, just how many times I have had cause to use that procedure over the years. Even when trying to heat the baby's bottle up when we at the beach.

That night I was put on guard from midnight until 2 am. The nearest that I had been until then to a German, was the cardboard figures that we stuck practice bayonets in. So to be told that they were only a few hundred yards away across the other side of the village was, to say the least, disconcerting.

When the bloke I was on with (an old hand) called for me, he took me through an orchard. It was pitch dark, with only occasional flashes from gunfire etc to give any relief. But they made it worse as it bugged your eyes up for the dark.

Eventually we arrived at the forward pickets, which were in small slit trenches. I hadn't seen anyone else, and didn't know whether we on our own or not.

Slit trenches are NOT the most comfortable places to be in, believe me, although someone had hacked out a bit to form a seat.

My mate just whispered to me, "Don't talk just watch, and if you see anything just give me a kick or a nudge." He then settled himself down as comfortable as possible and promptly went to sleep.

There was me Little Stan Hayes all on me Todd waiting for the whole bloody German Army to come over the rise.

I don't think that I was *actually scared*. But I didn't know what I was supposed to do if anything happened. Although I swear that every bush and tree moved that night and looked like a German creeping up on us. God know how many times I almost squeezed the trigger.

I didn't like to wake my mate up as I knew that they had been having a hard time, so just stayed there staring into the darkness and wondering whether I had a spare pair of underpants in my pack.

When our relief came, I thought we had been out there for days. And almost jumped out of my skin when someone whispered, "ok you can go. But we could have been Jerry creeping up on couldn't we; you're supposed to watch back and front." I couldn't say anything about my mate having been asleep all the time.

The following morning I was to find out just what we were supposed to be doing
And go to war proper.

It transpired that this unit that I had been sent to was way out in front of the main battle front. Our job was to go looking for "hotspots" of enemy resistance and deal with it if possible.

With us we had a detachment of tanks and several Bren gun carriers. These were small, tracked personnel carriers armed only with one or two machine guns. They carried about 6 people. They were

most uncomfortable to travel in as they bounced over every object. The only real protection was in the front where there was about an inch of armour plate. The rest was made of thin steel plating.

We also had several hollowed out tanks called “kangaroos” which were serving as personnel carriers. These held about ten men plus the driver. They were armed also with a couple of Browning machine guns. With all this armour we were to go what was called “Swanning”. The army term for looking for trouble.

The first couple of days out, I was assigned to a Bren gun carrier. Whilst these were an uncomfortable ride, they were easy to get out of when we were called upon to attack.

The first attack that I went into was against a small village which it was alleged was held by the German Waffen SS. A notoriously nasty load of whatever.

A bloke called Jack Heally, (a Canadian I think) and I were allocated Bren guns to carry. These things weighed about 36 pounds I think, which along with all the ammunition etc one had to carry was bloody heavy, and I was no Sampson. Neither was Jack.

The only thing about it was that it put down quite a rate of fire and one didn't have to reload every time it was fired, like a rifle. We realized afterwards that the reason none of the “old hands” didn't want to carry these things was because anyone carrying a machine gun was a very potential target for the enemy.

Why the army always seems to love losing men by making them march straight at the enemy I am buggered if I know.

Our tanks had pasted hell out of the Village, and now we had to advance across this open field in open order. I don't think anyone, or at least the new boys, were frightened, as we didn't know what to expect. So far, this was just like the live ammunition exercise we had had in England. With bullets cracking overhead and bangs going off further away. It was lovely winter's morning and the sun was shining. It was almost like a jaunt to us until the enemy spotted us and let rip.

We hadn't had the order to open fire, and were strolling along as though going to a picnic. Tin hats on the back of our heads and collars open.

When suddenly the bloke next to me with whom I was chatting, stopped dead and his face disappeared as a bullet or something hit him. I stopped to try and help him but an NCO grabbed me and said “keep going mate the stretchers will look after him”

I realized then that those buggers in the Town weren't playing and this was for real. My Tin hat came down over my eyes quick smart I can tell you.

They could have had us advance behind the tanks for protection. But oh no. The Germans had a couple of 88s. These were massive anti aircraft guns that had been adapted to fire at low angles making them ideal anti tank weapons. And of which all the “Tankies” were dead scared. I don't blame them.

Quite a few of our men went down but we eventually entered the village. To find that all the Germans apart from a few wounded had gone. We raced through the Village and set up defences on the other side but there was no counter attack. Thank God, I was knackered running with that heavy gun.

As went through the village to set up defences on the outer perimeter we had to go through several fields. There were dead cows and horses everywhere and what a stink. It was enough to turn the hardest stomach.

We dug in and eventually our dinner was brought up to us. Guess what it was BEEF.

I don't think anyone ate anything that day.

(I must say though that generally. No matter where we were, the cooks usually managed to get a good meal out to us. Plus we had seven cigarettes and five boiled sweets handed out every day.

Every now and again a mobile bath Unit would catch up with us and it was wonderful to scrub off days of filth and get a change of underwear and shirts.

Even in the trenches we were expected to try and have a wash and shave every morning. Regardless of what had transpired over night. I suppose it was one way to maintain morale. We were traveling light due to the type of operations we were partaking in. All our kit other than a small pack with a change of socks etc was carried on trucks back at H.Q. We didn't even have gasmasks. (It wasn't long however before us "newies" learned to scrounge tins of food etc and keep them in our ammunition pouches. Not only were they a source of emergency food but they made a bit of a shield as these pouches covered your lower chest area.)

We stayed there a day, I think whilst the Tanks were serviced. Then moved on.

The stupid part was that no one ever told us what the plan was. I suppose the Officers knew but us poor ignorant "squaddies" were kept in the dark. Just run when you're told. Fire when told, die when told. And hope it all comes out ok.

With us, we had a little dog called Nellie. She was a mixed breed Daschund come Terrier come something. She would attach herself to one of the carriers for a couple of days.

Traveling with her feet up on the front. Until she heard gunfire, then she would hide down under the armored front of the vehicle. Whilst she was in your carrier she belonged to you and expected you to feed her and look after her. It was amazing but when we had halted for a meal or something and the Boss signaled to "start up" she would take off for the carrier of the day and climb aboard. The next day however she wouldn't even sniff at the persons she had been traveling with the previously and would choose another vehicle.

A day or so after the Village we came upon a Wood, which was held by a large number of Germans. At this time, I was travelling in one of the kangaroos as they felt we could perhaps get closer in these. As we approached the Wood the Germans let loose with everything they had, including, Panzer Faust. These being a sort of bazooka especially designed as anti tank weapons.

Some of our tanks were hit and we were ordered out of the kangaroos. Yeah, Well!!! That was ok but the only way out of these things was through the hole where the turret would normally be and we could hear the bullets pinging off the top of the Tank and cracking overhead. An Officer's head suddenly appeared in the hole and he started yelling at us to bloody well get out. Next minute, his head disappeared, literally, and his blood splattered all over us.

But it made us move and we went out of that thing like penguins coming out of the sea. One big bloody jump.

For a few moments we crouched down behind the kangaroo, but the driver decided that the panzer Faust were getting too dangerous and he decided to scarper back out of range. Leaving us with only one thing to do. Get in to the Bastards.

One chap, I think his name was Chambers, who I had palled up with took about three steps and copped it. As did several others. Jack and I with our Bren guns were ordered out on to the flank Blazing away we ran around the side of the Woods and then stopped in amazement, before us was a long wide

trench, filled with Germans, who weren't even looking our way. Naturally we blasted away and suddenly a white flag went up. As we approached the trench we were horrified to see that most of the Germans in the Trench were only bits of kids. Some looked about 12 or 13 but they were all in Uniform, Probably cadets or something. But they had been shooting at us and killing our men.

Their C.O was a brave man. Although his foot had been almost shot off he wouldn't let anyone touch him until he was sure that his "boys" would be ok.

These woods were quite extensive and we put patrols out. Rounding up German stragglers. Many of them absolutely dazed and disorientated. Some wounded.

There were several houses at the other side of these woods which we took over as billets for the night. About one o'clock in the morning, I, along with a couple of others were on picket duty on the road which ran through the Hamlet when we heard the sound of horses' hooves and the rumble of wheels. The German Army used a lot of horse drawn vehicles for supplies.

Naturally we went into hiding and eventually saw a horse drawn wagon coming into the Hamlet. As we jumped out and surrounded the wagon with pointed rifles, we saw that the driver was fast asleep. I think he had the biggest shock of his life when we woke him up and told him he was prisoner. He was an elderly man and made no fuss. So we gave him a meal and sent him back, minus the wagon which was full of all sorts of supplies, food etc. Which we gratefully received. He would probably tell his mates that we were there but so what we would be gone in the morning. Although if he had any sense he would have just disappeared.

We had several nasty little fights, but nothing very big. If we found that it was too big to handle we would call in the R.A.F which would send in the Typhoons with their rockets which usually sorted things out.

We had one particularly nasty fight for one Town though; I remembered the name for years but now cannot recall it. The tanks again had pasted hell out of it and dumped us to try and take the place.

At first we approached along the road leading into the Town, but this became difficult, as the Germans had dropped trees down across the road to stop the tanks. So the Platoon that I was with had to move into the fields.

Jack Heally and I, still with our Brens, and now being a bit wiser than before decided to skirt along the side of the road behind the tree stumps thinking we would be in a bit safer position.

However the Officer spotted us and yelled at us to get over the fence and join the platoon.

Ok we thought. So I held the barbed wire fence down for Jack to climb over safely. Then he held it down for me. As I climbed over I felt a tremendous whack! In my back and I tumbled over the fence. I could feel the blood running down my leg and my back felt as though it was in two. I was shitting myself thinking, "You've had it Hayes.

When we got to where the platoon was laying down behind a ridge I think I nearly passed out. Although I heard the officer coming around and asking if everyone was ok and heard Jack say "I think Hayes has copped it Sir"

Next minute the Officer and the Stretcher bearers were there taking off my webbing. and turning me over to see what had happened.

I suddenly got a whack across the bum from the Officer who said "Get up Hayes you must be one of the luckiest bastards we have had". And he showed me my webbing. A bullet, or something had torn through my gas cape that was rolled up on my belt and a couple more had gone through my water bottle that was hanging below it. Hence the warm "blood" running down my leg. And one through my blouse. I think I almost fainted with relief. But my back was sore for hours even although it hadn't been actually touched. I said quite a few thank You's that night in my prayers believe me. But it made one realize just how venerable one was and this was no game.

Fortunately for us the Typhoons had taken all the stuffing out of the defenders and they gave in without too much of a struggle, although we did have several casualties from snipers.

It's funny, as I said before, that one tends to remember only the funny things and few of the horrible.

One of these however was when patrolling through woods we came across the body of a soldier. We couldn't tell what nationality, as he was completely burned. The Officer told some of us to move "it" off the path. The only way that we could do this was to put our bayonets into the body and lift it off. As we did, it completely disintegrated into a pile of ashes. It was horrible.

Sometimes the Army goes completely stupid or at least some of its Officers do. We were detailed to attack a small town one night. We were told that more of the Waffen SS were there and would probably put up a good fight.

Anyway, about 9 pm on a pitch black winter's night we moved in to attack. With us we had about 20 tanks rumbling and squealing along. (One can hear a tank coming for miles)

We were walking across some fields and a couple of us were whistling quietly, "what a lovely way to spend an evening" an Officer started bawling at us to stop making so much noise this was supposed to be a surprise. (With twenty tanks rumbling along and an Officer yelling at the top of his voice ?) From out of the darkness came the words "stupid bastard". which didn't do his temper any good either.

As we approached the village, we heard noises coming from culvert under the road. Naturally we skirmished around it and a couple of us burst in. It was full of civilian women and children who were petrified. Fortunately we had a chap with us who could speak reasonable German and he reassured them and told them to stay there quiet, until morning.

No shots were fired by either side and we entered the village quietly (if one could call it that) There were no signs of any German troops although they had obviously been there as some of the houses had been obvious billets.

After placing out pickets we moved into some of the houses and grabbed a bed for a few hours sleep.

Next morning some of us that weren't on duty gathered around the village pump to have a wash and shave. There would have been about ten or twelve men there I suppose. Turning to the bloke next to me I suddenly realized that whilst I had a khaki shirt, on he had a grey one, as did two or three others. The next few moments were chaos as we all realized that we were not all on the same side.

Fortunately we never moved far without our weapons and soon sorted the problem out. We found quite a few German soldiers in the houses. They had either been asleep and not heard us come in or had been out on the razzle in someone's house away from their billets. It was quite funny really, and both sides saw the funny side.

This village was like one out of the history books with only one central pump for water, and we found an old-fashioned hand pump Fire Engine.]

But whenever we went into a village or Town, there was never any problem with the Civilians.

About 8 am I was out on forward picket duty when in the distance we saw a crowd of people approaching. Not knowing whether they were Civilian or military we stood to and waited...

As the crowd drew near we could see that they were civilians. As they approached they started to shout and spit at us then some of them spotted that we were wearing different helmets and they stopped, asking if we were Tommies. When they found out that we were, they swamped us with joy, kissing and hugging everyone. Apparently they were displaced workers or "slaves" who were coming into the village to work.

On entering the Village they rounded up the Mayor and several other local dignitaries who it seems had been treating them like animals. They alleged too, that the Mayor and these other men had killed R.A.F aircrew that had been imprisoned there. They dragged the Mayor down the main St with a rope around his neck, whilst others thumped him with lumps of wood. Then hanged him from a post. It wasn't a pretty sight believe me. But we were told to back off and leave it. To have stopped it would have meant shooting many of them and there were probably 500 of them to us 100 or so.

And yet they wouldn't let us touch a German SS Officer that we had found, saying that he had been a friend to them.

The next day or maybe the day after we had to back tracks several miles as another unit doing the same as us had got trapped by the Germans and no relief could get to them quick enough from the main army.

When we got there we found that the problem was that their tanks had become bogged down and couldn't move to give them any support. The stupid buggers had "parked" overnight on a bog. One or two tanks had completely disappeared.

With our massive firepower and two lots of infantry the problem was soon solved.

It was here that the Boss decided we could have a couple of days rest. So we found a nice farmhouse and settled in. It was lovely to sleep inside, in the warm, although only a couple managed to get the beds. Fortunately for us, although it was winter, the days although cold were fine and mostly dry.

The morning after we moved in, someone suggested that we catch and kill a couple of chickens that were roaming the farmyard and make some soup.

For about an hour we chased a poor Rooster around the yard. (Another few minutes and he would probably have died of stress) Eventually he was caught. The problem now was who was going to kill it. Amongst all those big tough soldiers none of us had the guts to do it. So a mightily relieved Rooster lived to tell his war story.

On this farm too, we found a two-wheeled buggy. At first like a load of kids, one would get between the shafts and try and pull the others around for a ride but that was hard work. Eventually some bright spark suggested harnessing a young bull (we never thought of killing this) to the cart. With great difficulty this was done and half a dozen blokes piled on. As soon as the Bull was let go he took off like a rocket straight across the bridge leading to the fields. Only one thing was wrong, the bridge was wide enough for the bull but not for the wheels of the cart. Consequently the cart was wrecked and the men finished up in the cold stream below. But it was all good fun.

We weren't allowed to damage anything more that could be classified as normal when an army went through and any looting was severely punished, although no doubt many men picked up "souvenirs"

I think that it was here, that we found wads and wads of German money. Some of the notes were for Millions of Marks. And I think just about everyone filled his pockets thinking that when it all finished we would be rich.

What a suck in. It HAD been legitimate money but it was from the days just before the war when inflation had been rampant in Germany.(An egg would have cost three Million Marks) but now it was only useful for toilet paper. What a BUMMER!! (no pun intended)

We were also not allowed to speak to German Civilians other than in the line of Duty.

When ever we took over occupied premises for a billet. We were supposed to throw the civilians out but our C.O wouldn't do that but would just take over a few rooms, giving the remainder over to the owners. It would be a crush for them but it was better than having to move out completely. And we would only be there for a few days at the most.

One of our Platoon was a bloke called "Jumbo" Jarman. I never knew before where the nickname came from but found out whilst we were staying at this farm.

I had come back off patrol one evening and heard great roars of laughter coming from the kitchen. On going in to investigate I saw a crowd of blokes around "Jumbo" who had taken off his trousers and exposed the mightiest "weapon" I had ever seen on a man.

He had an erection too, and was placing Sten gun rounds on the edge of the table. Pulling his "weapon" sideways as far as it would go he would release it like a spring and see how far he could knock a Sten gun round off the table. There were even bets being placed on his prowess.

We only stayed here a couple days but it was good rest, even although we had to do patrols and guard duties, plus standing to, each evening and morning. And a couple of times we were machined gunned by German planes. One of these was one of the first "jets". It was peculiar to see this thing bouncing across the sky with no propeller

We moved out early one evening just as it was getting dark. We seemed to have been traveling for hours when we were stopped and the Officer told us that we had to go through a part of the forest. It was believed that there numbers of Germans in there and reconnaissance had shown that they may be up in the trees waiting for us to come along so that they could drop bombs etc into the kangaroos. Nasty bastards!!

We HAD to get through to the other side by a certain time so we had to go through as fast as possible, not stopping for any fight. Anyone who could operate the machine guns on the kangaroos was to do so and we were all to just fire into the trees above our heads with everything we had.

As we approached the Forest it was pitch dark and one could only see a black outline of the trees. It was bloody scary. What if the buggers had laid mines on the track as well it was only wide enough for one vehicle at a time so if one got stopped we would all be jammed in. And sitting ducks.

On reaching the edge of the Forrest, all the vehicles picked up speed and we poor "passengers" were jolted about like, I don't know what.

It was impossible to take any aim or even shoot straight. But as ordered we blazed off into the trees with everything we had. It was bedlam. We couldn't tell if anyone was shooting back, and I never saw anyone get hit.

It probably took us an hour to get through, but eventually we did. Pulling up about a mile or so clear of the forest.

Once morning came, some of the unit was detailed to go and sort out a problem, somewhere down the line. And the remainder of us had to go back and have a look to see what was in the forest.. As we approached we were met with a hail of bullets and panzer Faust. But fortunately no heavy weapons were used against us. Although several men were killed and others wounded. The tanks just drew back and poured shells into the trees. Eventually we entered the forest and found literally hundreds of dead Germans lying everywhere along then track and in the trees. Thank God someone had realized what they might be intending and our race through with all guns blazing had saved our bacon.

This area was heavily wooded and of course no one could see what was behind all the trees. It was bloody scary. These were all pine forests, and many trees had been chopped down. leaving a stump about 1 foot high. Many of these, (at least in one's imagination) looked like German helmets, and many an innocent tree stump got blasted.

Almost every day wounded and dejected German soldiers would appear out of the trees waving a white flag to give themselves up. Most times we just told them to "bugger off" as we had no spare men for guards or to take them back to the main army.

We were in one particularly dense bit of forest when we came upon a clearing. At the time we were all traveling on top of the tanks.

The Officers ordered a halt; rather stupidly with the tanks all lined up in a row behind one another, when we heard the horrible sound of what were called "Moaning Minnies".

These were multibarrelled Mortars which because of their missile's high trajectory and steep angle of descent were ideal for firing over obstructions. The missiles on their way down emitted a most peculiar moaning sound

These Mortars must have been pre ranged onto this clearing, for almost as soon as we heard the "moaning" we were straddled by a stick of bombs. Fortunatley they fell down only one side of the line of tanks and as many of the blokes had jumped off and taken cover under the tanks when they heard the mortars fire, two men were killed because they were too slow jumping off the tanks and diving for cover, and few men were wounded.

Next minute another salvo hit us, some of the tanks were hit but there was little damage done. We didn't stop and wait for the next one but took off into the cover of a low hill where we tried to "dig in". The ground was bloody hard, but it is amazing how fast one can dig a hole with a bayonet or small shovel when someone is slinging shit at you like this. Both mortars and a couple of machine guns up on the hill had us pinned down. I don't think they could see us, but knew near enough where we were and just kept firing..

We were stuck, as the tanks couldn't get around to help us.

After what seemed an hour, two of our Officers. Capt Judd and a Capt Smith decided to do the hero thing. The pair of them charged up the hill (I think they only had revolvers and maybe some grenades) we thought that was the last we would see of them as there was firing going on everywhere. The Sgt ordered us too after a while, to follow them up the hill.

I don't know what that pair had been up to or whether our covering fire had anything to do with it but there were dead and wounded Jerries everywhere. Judd and Smithy were sitting at the top of the hill waiting for us. If anyone deserved a medal those two did.

I wish I could remember the names of all these little places that we fought over but they have all gone from my Memory.

We attacked a medium sized town one morning and met some fairly fierce resistance, at least to one side.

Jack and I with our Number twos (helpers) were on the right flank, as usual. As we entered the Town Jack said to me "Shit, Stan, where are all the others?"

Somehow we had wandered away from the main attack and were entering the Town at a different spot to where we should have. We could hear a massive fire fight going on somewhere the other side of Town. It was useless to try and backtrack so the four of us crept along as quiet as possible. Eventually we got into the Main St and there wasn't a soul in sight. No Civvies no Jerries. only a couple of dead ones. And white flags hanging from every window.

We had no way to contact the Battalion to let them know what the score was and they were still pasting hell out of the other end of Town. So we did the soldier thing, found a nice quiet spot at the edge of Town, dug in and set up a defensive position.

It was quite funny really, as we sent one of the other blokes back to try and find the Battalion and let them know the Town was clear, and we made out we had taken the Town by ourselves. (Never got no medals though)

We were lying at the edge of Town watching a large farmhouse about quarter of a mile away across the field when Jack said, "Let's see if there is anyone home in there". So he fired at the upstairs windows and I fired at the downstairs.

After a couple of minutes the door opened and several people ran out, amongst them apparently a couple of women in skirts. Naturally we stopped firing and were going to let them go when one of the "women" fell over, and as she did her skirt fell down, revealing long trousers and "she" was in German uniform. They were all German soldiers.

It is horrible firing at men when they are running away but this was war and they would have probably done the same to us. Several were hit. The stupid sods would have been better to have stayed where they were and been captured.

We had several small skirmishes after this but German resistance was crumbling fast. We altered course after a while and raced for a Town called Celle I think it was.

The Independent Greys Tank Reg had captured the place after just about blasting it to hell. The place was in ruins and the stench of bodies buried in the rubble was overpowering.

As we were to be there for a while, three others and I were billeted in a small house. We had two bedrooms and the original occupants were pushed up into a couple of others.

We expected to find hostility especially after the way that the Tanks had pasted the Town, but there was none. The "Family" in this house consisted of an elderly "gran", her daughter and a couple of young children.

We were not allowed to even speak to them on pain of punishment.

Scrounging like all soldiers do, we had found a "tump" (underground store) of potatoes, from which we helped ourselves. We also were nicking eggs.

The “civvies “used to watch us trying to cook meals for ourselves on their antiquated stove. It caused them some amusement. But they could speak no English and we could speak no German.

One evening, after about three days, we were again trying to get the stove going when “gran” gave in and started to laugh. Pushing us out of the way she proceeded to cook us a meal. This broke the ice and non fraternizing rule or no, we started to become “friendly”

We started bringing them food which we had scrounged and shared our rations.

We could have only been there a week I suppose when somehow the “ mother “ seemed to know that we were going on the following morning and she indicated to us on the evening before that she would like us all to go out in the garden. Obviously we were highly suspicious as after all the war was still on and there were such things as snipers and traps.

However we eventually went out, and what a surprise. They had laid a table out there with a lovely meal and beside each plate was a small present.

No one could see into the garden as it had a high hedge all round it. If the Officers had seen us they would have had a fit. But it was so touching. There were we, foreign soldiers at war with their Country and forcibly billeted on the family, yet they could still do this. I often wonder if they ever think of us as I do them. Only wish that I had known their names.

I believe it was whilst we were here that other Units found the Concentration Camp Belsen.

Our next objective was to be Hamburg where it was envisaged that the Germans would make a stand and make a fight and none of us were looking forward to this as it would mean hand to hand fighting for every house. We had had some of it in some of the small

Towns but nothing very serious. But this would be a different matter. Leaving Celle we proceeded to a small village a few miles out of Hamburg. (I think it was called something like Geesthort.) Where we were to do some extra house to house fighting training and get reinforcements.

We were billeted in a nice little house and once again there were several “civvies” there too.

We weren’t supposed to talk to them, but each evening we would try and explain to them, with the aid of maps etc just how the war was progressing. There was no electricity in the Village, but we had procured a small generator from somewhere and could listen in to the Radio.

We had been told to be ready to move in to Hamburg within a couple of days. And quite frankly everyone was on edge. However, one evening whilst were listening to the Radio (it was May 5th) we heard the most welcome news, that Hamburg had been declared an “Open City “and there would be no fight for it.

When we told the Germans what was happening, it was wonderful. They hugged and kissed us as though we had given them a present. That night, despite the Non Fraternization order we had a party with them. Soon the whole Town was alive. One would think that they had won the war. But it was a relief as much for them as to us that it was just about all over. It was a whale of a party and even a couple of German deserters who were friends of the owners of the house and who had been hiding somewhere, turned up. They just wanted to give themselves up. Yesterday we would probably have shot them or them us, but today because the Politicians had said stop, we were friends. It was so stupid.

The following morning we left this Town and raced into Hamburg. What a shambles. .It had been subjected to massive air raids and was 50 ft deep in rubble. Although the Germans had made an effort to clear the roads. We raced through the City. Our job being to secure all the facilities such as

Airfields, Water works Radio stations etc. My particular platoon was assigned to the Harburg Waterworks.

After securing it we found billets in a block of flats on the other side of the road.

Once again, the civvies were only too anxious to be friendly.

It became quite funny though as an 8.0 PM curfew had been imposed on the civilian population and we were supposed to patrol the streets and ensure that this curfew was complied with. It was impossible, as it was now May and the weather was beautiful and everyone wanted to be out of doors.

The Populace would all be in the street outside their doors until we came along and then they would all pop inside until after we passed.

Had we been German soldiers in a captured City we would probably have shot a few. But being young English soldiers we thought it was funny too and had many laughs with the civvies.

It was here that mail caught us up for the first time for weeks. I had several letters from my Parents and some friends. June,(remember her, she was one of my early girl friends) had been sending me cigarettes by the carton. Apparently they could get them very cheap for forwarding to the troops. I didn't smoke at all, and already had several hundred cigarettes saved from my daily ration. With those that June had sent, I probably had about a thousand cigarettes. I didn't want all these so gave away about 600. Then some bugger pinched the rest. From that day on, I gave NOTHING away to any one.

On May 8th we were advised that the war was over. There would be no more shooting.

We were still "guarding" the waterworks. I think there were about 7 of us left from the platoon.

In the late afternoon of the 8th a truck arrived at our billets with a carboy of some sort of alcoholic drink so that we could celebrate.

We couldn't take the carboy over to the waterworks so each time the glasses were emptied, one or other of us was detailed to go and fetch another 7 glasses. Remember I didn't drink, or hadn't until that day.

I soon got to like the taste of whatever it was and had a few glasses. I was eventually sent over for the refills and apparently got greedy and was sipping a drop out of the others glasses as I came back.

I can remember seeing the L/Corporal crawling around the floor pushing the ball off of a window blind around the floor with his nose. When I woke up, I was in hospital as ill as could be. I don't think it was the drink as I was kept in for a few days.

What I do remember was seeing 52 men being brought in for "observation". Apparently a carboy of pure alcohol had been delivered to their company. And that is deadly poison.

Even today I can remember helping one of them to write a letter to his girl friend as he couldn't write.

Later that night, some of these men started to go into convulsions and by morning, most of them were dead. It was horrible to watch as the Doctors whilst being geared up for war related injuries etc had nothing to combat this. I and a Corporal, who was also ill, sat out in the toilet most of the night. We just couldn't watch these blokes' dying it was too horrible. They saved the life of the last one, but he went blind. But it turned me against hard drink completely for many, many years.

Coming out of hospital I didn't go back to Hamburg as my Unit had been sent to Schleswig-Holstein which is on the border of Denmark and Germany.

I was a bit annoyed over this as before having a shower at the waterworks I had hung my “dog tags” over the back of a hot water radiator in the dressing room, and forgotten it. To my knowledge they are possibly still there

The day after my arrival I was sent along with 5 or 6 others out to a lonely farmhouse way out on the strip of land that separates the two countries. It was the most lonely, desolate place that I have ever seen. There was absolutely nothing for miles and miles.

What the hell we were supposed to be guarding I will never know. We saw a truck every day that brought out the rations and an officer who looked in, asked if everything was ok and then left us.

Early one morning I was on duty patrolling up and down the road with another Fusilier when in the distance we heard singing.

We had no means of communicating with base so just had to stick it out.

I will never ever forget that song, which was coming from Thousands of German Soldiers throats. It was “Erika”.

It was the German Army that had been occupying Denmark, coming home. They had not been defeated in battle and were all in best Uniforms, Marching along in strict ranks as though on Parade. We just about shit ourselves, believe me. They could have walked all over us and no one would have ever known what had happened.

We had no Officer with us, only a L/Corporal. But as they reached us, their Commanding Officer and several other Officers halted and declared that he was handing over the ex Danish Occupation Forces to the British in accordance with the provisions of the Cease Fire.

What the hell were we supposed to do with about ten thousand German Soldiers?

He didn't seem very impressed by the fact that there was no High Ranking British Officer there to receive them. But he had been told apparently that the army as such was not to march into Germany and we were right on the Border.

Just then a dispatch rider came by and we asked him to get like hell into town and get a “big cheese” out here quick.

In the mean time the Germans were virtually setting up camp around us. They had all their own kitchens and supplies and could have gone into battle as easy as anything. They were even all-carrying weapons.

Before any British Officer had arrived these Germans had all been fed, and lined up again as though to march. Their C.O and Senior Officers stood beside us and as they marched off they saluted him and he them, as though on Parade. It was most moving and we, as soldiers knew just what they were feeling. After passing us, every man except the Officers and Senior NICO's laid down his weapons at the side of the road.

By evening we had a pile of weapons of every conceivable kind stacked many feet high. We could have started a war of our own. But even with these Germans, we sensed no hostility or enmity. We were all soldiers who respected the other, now that the fighting was over.

That night we were relieved and sent back to the Town. No one would believe us at first but when details were sent out to collect all the weapons etc they had to. I never knew what happened to all those Germans or where they went to after passing us. Perhaps they just dispersed on reaching German soil, rather than become technically, "prisoners".

A few days after this episode My Unit was ordered to proceed south into Germany to form part of the Occupation Forces. Known as B.A.O.R. British Army of Occupation Rhineland. There is a lot more that I could have filled in in this chapter, but most of it is best forgotten. In any case I have thrown away my tin hat and the iodine so that's enough of war stories.

As opposed to many others, I didn't see an awful lot of the fighting but it was an experience that in the main, and in hindsight I enjoyed. I probably pooped my pants a few times, like many others. But to young, fit men, it was an adventure. As I have already said, one tends to forget the "nasty" bits and that is how it should be. It is not until later in Life that one becomes cynical and sees the stupidity of war, usually brought about by Politicians or Religion.

Chapter 6

The Occupation

When we left Schleswig we had no idea for where we were heading except that it was south. All the Towns that we passed through showed the evidence of the massive air raids that had been launched by the Allies. Rubble was piled many feet high in the streets and there were already gangs of German men and women attempting to clear the mess by hand. Whilst others were chipping away at salvaged bricks so that they could be cleaned and used again to rebuild. Eventually we learned that we were to occupy Düsseldorf, in the Rhineland. taking over from the Americans. As we drove into this City even we were appalled by the damage. There was only single lane traffic through the rubble on many of the streets. The Bridges over the River Rhine had all been destroyed and there was utter chaos. Although other areas had been virtually untouched. My first billet was in a block of flats in a Street called Am Binnenwasser. It was quite a nice place and was still furnished. The owners had been evicted and were allowed to only take what they could carry with them. This street led directly down to the river where there were still parks and lovely walks.

I don't know even today just what our duties were supposed to have been as we didn't appear to be having any trouble from the Civilians although we mounted guards at all the strategic and some very non strategic places. We still were not allowed to talk to the civilians under pain of imprisonment, but try keeping young men and the girls apart it was impossible. Although no one would admit to even speaking to a German except in the course of duty. We still carried our weapons wherever we went.

Trust young people to find a way around stupid Regulations though. If soldiers saw a girl who appeared to be interested in chatting they would stop them and demand to see their identity cards (which was quite a legitimate excuse).

The other dodge was to stroll through the cemeteries where the Military Police would never think to go, and many a liaison was carried out on a tombstone. One evening whilst a mate and I were strolling through one of the cemeteries. Which in Europe are more like parks. We came across a couple of tombs that had been damaged by a bomb or something as the tops were cracked and open. Stephen decided that he would drop down into one just to see what was there. So after pulling the stone aside he dropped down in. Right onto a pile of bones. I know that they couldn't possibly hurt anyone but there was no way was I following him.

If there was anything down there that was worth taking he didn't get it but scrabbled back out faster than he had gone in. It was just a stupid bit of young men's bravado (not mine)

Several times whilst walking along the bank of the Rhine we would come across dead bodies that had floated in. It wasn't very pleasant even although one had got used to the sight of dead bodies.

Around this time I had palled up with a chap named Stephen Sage (Later to be known as "Toshie").

We would often go off exploring the town together and one day, (I believe THAT was in a cemetery) we met a couple of young German girls Marlene Flucht and Hanelore Verbeton

We met these young ladies several times but it was always risky. We couldn't be seen talking to them so one evening they indicated to us to follow them at a distance, which we did. Albeit being a bit suspicious and wary. Eventually they disappeared into a block of flats at No 14, in a Street called Essener Strasse. Neither of these girls seemed like "tarts" so warily we entered the building, with rifles ready for any problem that might arise but there was no need, for on the door of one of the flats was a large sign. "This property is under the protection of the Swedish Red Cross and is therefore out of Bounds to Troops".

(why, I never ever found out).

On entering the Flat (no one took much notice of signs anyway) we found that it was the home of Hanelore who lived with her Parents Bertha and Peter Verbeten. They were lovely people. Apparently she was a Belgium and he was Dutch. Bertha had been injured in an air raid and had a job to walk. But they made us so welcome. We took to each other instantly. Marlene lived with her parents in a Flat at the end of the road, but at that time would never have dreamed of allowing her parents to know that she was going with an English soldier (that was me by the way.). It transpired that her parents were very rich. Her Father being a Director of one of the Largest Metal Companies in the Ruhr(RheinMetal). Naturally we had to be very discreet about going there as we could have been in serious trouble.

Then one day we were called onto parade in the late afternoon and given a lecture by the CO about fraternization, and that it had to stop.

He had heard that some of the men were ACTUALLY going out with German girls. Of course EVERYONE denied that they were and swore to abide by the Rule.

That was about 4.00PM I think.

At 6.00 PM Battalion Orders were posted on the Notice Board stating that the "non frat" ban was lifted. Not fully, but enough. So much for no one having been talking to the girls.. Within an hour, just about everyone from the RSM down was walking about openly with a girl. It must have been the fastest operation the Army had ever carried out.

Most nights after duty, Toshi as the girls called him, and I would stroll across to Essener Strasse, and spend the evening there. These evenings were great. Our German was very limited as was their English, but we managed to communicate. We wouldn't do much, just have "family" evenings with the 7 of us (Hanelore had a younger Sister, Margaret). Some nights other German friends of the Verbetons would come in with a few drinks and a party would evolve. Their old parents lived in the flat on the other side of the landing. There wasn't much to do in the Town and we couldn't take the girls into the canteens and Clubs.

If the weather was nice we would go for walk along the Rhine or they would show us different parts of the city. I can well remember one Christmas Eve, sitting on the tiny balcony of the flat listening to the church bells playing "Silent Night" with the tears streaming down my face. And even today I cannot hear that tune without feeling nostalgic and somewhat tearful.

Until that time I had honestly been a "good" boy and knew nothing of "Life" But that was now to change. Marlene and I fell very much in Love and it was only natural that whilst we were both "innocent" we were young adults and we soon found what Love meant, in all sense of the word. Several times we spoke of marriage, but her parents were the stumbling block. They would never condone her going with an Englishman, and a lowly soldier at that. Plus there was the difference in our "status" in life. I came from a working class family but she was from the very rich class. She was extremely nervous that her parents should find out about our liaison so we never met anywhere near her house.

To get from our billets across to Essener Strasse was a walk of about 15 minutes and for part of the way we used to walk down a long alleyway. One particular night, which was extremely foggy and one couldn't see more than about 1 foot or so. We were walking down this alleyway when we bumped into a German Civilian who informed us that he was completely disorientated and wondered whether we knew the way to Munster Strasse. Of course we did, it ran across the end of Essener Strasse , the way to which, we could have walked blindfolded.

So we gave him a cigarette, and linking arms we staggered away though the fog, eventually depositing the Gentleman at his door. He kindly asked us in for a drink which we accepted. But what a shock it turned out to be especially for Marlene when we walked in with her Father.

This Flat was luxurious to say the least.

I cannot remember whether he was advised of our relationship or whether we kept it quiet, but I know that he asked us to stay to dinner. At which, Oysters were served. This was in a country where nearly everyone else was on the verge of starvation. That was s the first and ONLY time that I have ever tasted those things and it will be my last. How I wasn't sick I do not know. Although Toshi got stuck into them.

Her Father was a lovely man but Mamma was a typical hard faced German Frau and wanted nothing to do with us.

Some weeks later the "non frat" ban was removed completely and on the evening that it was to be revoked the Army had laid on a Ball at the Rhein Terrace which before the war had been a luxurious yacht Club on the banks of the Rhine. Toshi and I were fortunate to be able to procure tickets for this and there was great excitement for the girls as this was the first dance that had been held for years.

Knowing the sort of clothes Marlene had, despite all the shortages in Germany. I asked her not to dress too lavishly as Hannelore had very little.

On the evening of the Ball we went around to Essener Strasse to collect the girls. There was a dirty big Mercedes outside the door of the flats which made us think that some big noise had turned up or the army had found out that we were going into this "protected "house.

A bit nervously we climbed the stairs to find two most beautiful young ladies dressed up to the hilt waiting for us. (Marlene had loaned Hannelore a dress) Sitting on the sofa was a man in uniform of the "Control Commission". This being the civilian body that had taken over the Government of Germany.

He was the driver of the car which was waiting outside. The car was “By compliments of the Commission”, via Marlene’s Father. (The commission being the Control Commission a body set up to control the civilian Government until a new German Gov was elected)

How this had been arranged I will never know but we felt so conspicuous pulling up to the door of the Club in this luxurious car and being just to lowly squaddies in their best battledress.

But what-ever, I felt like the king with a Princess on my arm, she was so beautiful and dressed to kill. Naturally all the officers and senior ranks tried to muscle in. But I will give both girls their due, despite all the attention; they stuck to us like glue. It was a wonderful night which I, and perhaps they will never forget. After all the horror of war etc it was like being in paradise.

I thought we would have to walk home, but as the Ball finished and we came out, the car returned to pick us up much to the consternation and jealousy of many higher ranks who had to walk.

The only thing that spoiled it was that we had to walk back to the barracks from Essener Strasse at 2 in the morning which was a bit of an anti climax. But it was a night I shall remember for the rest of my days.

One of the duties we had to perform was to guard the big supply depot just outside Dusseldorf. This was a 24 hr guard but was such a doddle that men would volunteer for it

We would go on duty at about 8 in the morning and the first thing was that two men were dispatched to the depot office to collect our rations. These would consist of mountains of sausages, bacon, eggs and God knows what else. Plus, a tin of 50 cigarettes. We didn’t realize until after, that this was to try and take away the urge for men to pilfer the stores.

There were four guard posts around the perimeter each having a sentry box and a brazier with a stack of coke.

Just about all the guards did all night was to cook food, and at two of the posts, chat up the girls who would turn up each night. In those days, cigarettes were the currency and one could get ANYTHING for perhaps 10 Woodbines or Senior Service. To some of us, it was pitiful what some of these ladies would get up to just to get a few cigarettes so that they could exchange them on the black-markets for food for their families.

We did wander around now and again in case some silly bugger was trying to break in but probably the worst offenders were the guards themselves. One Morning, as we arrived back at the Billets from being on guard, there was a detachment of MPs waiting for us. They searched all the kits and found dozens of bottles of whiskey and wines. The bad bit of it was that the man whose kit it was found in wouldn’t have done it. He was the quietest bloke there. It was obvious that it had been planted on him. But that poor devil went to the glasshouse for it. Worst of all, the “soft” guard was abolished and it became a bullshit one.

Another guard that we had, was at the Lundendorf Kaserne. This being an ex German Army Barracks which had been taken over as a displaced persons camp.

Displaced persons being people who had been taken from their homes in other countries and sent to Germany as slaves workers.

At the time this camp was occupied by Russian expatriates. We were not supposed to go into this camp and had little to do with it except look like soldiers on guard.

Many of these persons were quite friendly but many were not, considering that we had freed them and were trying to send them back home.

The ones in charge in this camp were the Commissars. (Communist shithheads) who had jumped on the bandwagon and become leaders and teachers. By teachers, I do not mean that that they taught anything useful, only Communism and this they did by any means.

Most morning they would get the people out on the square walking around and around until they were just about exhausted, at the same time having to chant Communist slogans and teachings. If any of them faltered the Commissars would wade in with whips and Clubs. It was disgusting. But there was nothing we could do about it.

One morning, Toshi and I and perhaps half a dozen others were ordered into this camp to do something or other and whilst doing it we found a school in progress for children. The teacher was a young Russian girl. She was friendly, and got the kids to sing to us. It was quite touching.

However, the following morning she was dragged out in front of the assembled crowd and beaten just about to death. We wanted to go in and sort the bastards out but we were ordered to stay put. Any of those people who wouldn't knuckle down to the Communist way of thinking just disappeared. They only wanted "true" believers back in Russia

At that time, relations between East and West were at an all time low and it only needed a spark for World War 3 to start. So convinced of this were they, that many German ex soldiers tried to volunteer to fight them again.

It almost DID start one evening as whilst the guard was marching around the camp relieving the old guard we were just passing a small park near one of the corners, when a machine gun opened up on us from out of the bushes. Followed by several rifle shots.

Being still relatively fresh from the war we were still quick off the mark and returned the fire. I think one of our lads was injured. We held them there until more of the guard turned up and then blasted hell out of the park. On charging in, we found several dead and injured Russians and a couple of German Civilians who had unfortunately been caught up in the fight.

That night the camp was surrounded by troops to stop anyone getting in or out and next morning troops were sent in, along with German and British Military Police to search the place.

What they found was nobody's business. There were enough arms and ammunition to start a new war and enough evidence to show that they had been planning a big attack on the British forces.

Dozens of the men were arrested and taken away. But it put us almost back on a war footing, and shook everyone's complaisance.

Within a couple of days they were all shipped out and Italian and Yugoslavs moved in. These were a different kettle of fish altogether and in the main a happy go lucky lot who just wanted to go home. Some of them even volunteered to join the guards in enforcing the curfew that was in place on the camp.

One night or I should say early morning I was on guard with another soldier and with us we had a couple of Yugoslavs. About 2.0AM we heard footsteps coming towards us down the road. But first I must describe the situation.

Behind us was the Camp wall, about 20ft high, on the other side of the road there had been house but these were now a 20ft high pile of rubble. The verge on our side of the road was about 15ft wide with

trees growing along the edge. It was pitch dark. There being no street lights or moon light. About 200 yds down the road was a old German army cemetery which had had several bombs dropped on it

Anyway, these footsteps continued to come towards us. We shone torches down the road and shouted in English and Yugoslav and whatever languages we knew, for the person or persons to halt. But they did not, and we could see no one in the beam of our torches. We loaded our Rifles but there was nothing to shoot at and the footsteps continued walking right past us. It was most eerie. The two Yugo's took off, and believe me we felt like it to.

We were supposed to report any unusual occurrences that might have occurred whilst on guard but we felt too stupid to do so. However, the Sgt overheard us talking about it and made us cough up. It transpired that this had happened to several guards over many nights. And no one had ever seen or said anything.

So one night, once again whilst I was on guard, the army Field Security Police, MPs and about a dozen Officers turned up along with an armoured car and a battery of spotlights. These were rigged up in the trees, on the rubble and on the walls of the camp.

About 2 in the morning, sure enough, the footsteps were heard coming down the road.

As they passed between us, all the lights were switched on and the road blocked by men. THERE WAS NOTHING TO SEE. And the footsteps sounding like someone in army boots passed right through us and continued down the road. I have never *heard* such a silence amongst so many men before or since that night. Everyone was shocked, scared or simply dumfounded. Even now retelling the story I can feel cold shivers going up and down my back. To my knowledge, no one ever solved the mystery, but guards were taken off that side of the camp.

Shortly after this I went back to the UK on leave. This being the first I had had.

At that time troops going to England had to go through the Hook of Holland route. This involved a two hour journey in the back of a truck. Then about 12 hours on the slowest train on the continent, which had NO comfort whatsoever. The seats were just wooden slats. Some of us tried to make hammocks out of our blankets and tie them to the racks but this didn't work and many a man landed on top of his mates trying to sleep below.

On reaching "The Hook" we could see that the sea outside the harbour was not being nice at all. The waves appeared to be about 60 mtr high. At first, the Capt of the ship didn't want to sail, but eventually decided to.

Not being one that likes the sea at all except in paintings, I was not in the least Impressed. But I thought, "if I take a couple of Quells I should be ok."

And thought I was, until the ship left the harbour and the tugs cast off. I was just in the process of going to the toilet" just in case". When this happened, the toilet seat came up and belted me one, and the Quells came straight back up.

Almost everyone was sick immediately, it was so **rough**. However I climbed into my bunk and tried regulating my breathing to try and counteract the rolling and pitching and fell asleep. When I awoke some hours later I was squeamish but not too bad. Everyone around me was rolling in the aisles and vomiting.

I thought I was going to be ok until the bloke in the bunk above me stuck his head over the side and a torrent of vomit cascaded down past my face.

That was IT. I was as sick as everyone else after that.

By the time we staggered off that boat, in Harwich some 8-9 hours later, there wasn't a person on board who was not sick. Even the sailors were down.

I recovered a bit on the journey down to London, but as we approached London I decided to have a wash and shave. But that was stupid as the water sloshing about in the bowl made me sick again.

Funny thing was that later in life I found out that the lady I was to marry had been on that same ship. We had also been to several dances at the same time, but had never met.

Soldiers always look forward to going on leave and always boast about what the first thing they are going to do is. But in reality, after the first couple of days they get bored stiff and want to get back.

For the married ones it is probably different but for the single men their life was with their mates. At home, most of their acquaintances were away and it just wasn't the same.

For this leave, my Father had from somewhere or other procured a car so that we could get around. It was a B.S.A. Preselct gear model. (A for- runner of the automatic.) It was a lovely car, but petrol was scarce and I couldn't drive anyway. Although Dad did let me have a few goes. But somehow home wasn't the same.

I went to a few dances and met up with an old girl friend Pat Dowding. She was gorgeous too and we became quite serious in the couple of weeks that I was home. My romance with Marlene was slowing down, mainly I think from pressure from her family and I felt that as it obviously couldn't go any further it was time to call it a day.

When I returned to Düsseldorf I told Marlene that I had become engaged to a girl in England, and that finished the first real love of my life. But it was best for both of us. Incidentally, I never saw Pat again.

I still remained friends with the Verbetons and often visited them as Toshi was still going with Hannelore. In fact I remained friends with them until they died sometime in the 1970s visiting them once when I went home for a holiday.. And with Hannelore until she died on Christmas Day 1986 or 7. The Friendship continuing on with her husband and Family even after that.

On returning from leave the Cpl who shared my room and me found that we had lost just about everything. Someone had broken into our room and lockers and removed everything of value including, my radio and even photographs

Around this time I was chosen along with about 50 others to become part of an "elite" guard which would carry out ceremonial duties in the City. This was great as although we did several hours drill each day and our Uniforms etc had to be immaculate, we were excused all other duties. We all loved the pomp and ceremonies as we marched through the City behind the band to take up our duties. There would be hundreds of spectators and as we knew there would be many German ex soldiers watching and criticizing we really put on a show. Equal to anything the Guards could put on.

Most Germans thought we were some elite type of Regiment as the Royal Welsh Fusiliers have a black "flash" hanging down their backs from the neck of the uniform that no other Regiment in the British Army does. Many of them were at first quite scared thinking we were like the German SS.

After a few months of this I was asked if I would like to join the band, which I did, and really enjoyed that.. Learning to play the cornet and Trumpet.

Our biggest ceremony was playing at the "Freedom of Caenarvon" ceremony which was when the Battalion was granted the freedom of the City.

The Cpl sharing my room was a Tom Howes. He was the solo cornet player and often when we were practicing in the room I would play his music as I didn't like being the oom pa pa bit.

One particular tune that I liked was "Kiss me again" and we often played duets in the room.

One day when we were playing at a big function. Tom stood up to do his solo bit and then started coughing and lost it. Unknown to the Bandmaster, *so I thought*, I had been quietly playing his piece instead of my own.

When Tom lost it. The Bandmaster strode over to me and with his baton signaled me to stand up and take the solo part. I was petrified that I would stuff it up, and the sweat was running from me. I got through it perfectly. But when I sat down my legs were trembling and I couldn't play for several minutes.

Afterwards the Bandmaster thanked me and said what a lovely tone I had. Then commenced to blast hell out of me. The day after, he gave me a beautiful trumpet that was embossed with the Coat of Arms of the French Academy of Music. I never got to play solo again but was elevated to first trumpet.

One of the best times that we had whilst in the band was when we traveled back to Wales for the Battalion to be given the Freedom of Caenaeon

Whilst I was in the Band I met a young lady called Martha Teppe. Her family welcomed me into their home and I felt like one of the family. I was even invited to her Brothers wedding.

I even used to stay there at nights, sleeping on the sofa, creeping back to the Barracks about 5.30 in the morning. That was an extremely pleasant interlude, but I made the mistake of becoming very ill and being sent to Hospital. I was in there for quite a while and my "friend" Cpl Howes, who slept in the same room as me used to bring Martha to see me. During that time they fell for each other and he eventually married her. I even went to their wedding in the Barracks Chapel. I think Tom must have been the first British Soldier to get married in Germany.

(In about 1995-6 Whilst we were holidaying in England, I went out to Germany for a few days to stay with Hannelore's Husband Rolf and Family.

Whilst there, I found Martha's Brother and eventually her address and phone number. On phoning, her she almost immediately said" that's Stan" After all those years.

I wrote to her and Tom a couple of times but received no answer. Much to my sorrow as I would like to have known how they had fared over the years. Never mind eh?))

(In 2005 I managed to contact Tom through Hanelores son via the internet and he told me that Martha had passed away late in 2004)

Watching a City that had been so destroyed, slowly coming back to life was a wonderful experience and I think it was probably this, plus the wonderful people that I met that has given me an affinity for Germany for the rest of my Life. Since the Americans had taken the City there had been a pontoon bridge over the River.

As the vehicles went over, this rode up and down in the water. When the tide was out, one drove down hill to get on. When the tide was in, you drove UP the ramp. The day that the New Rhine Bridge was opened was a wonderful day for everyone.

There is so much more that I could write about this time which is all part of so many wonderful memories but if I did that, this story would never get written before the end and it was too late. Since, I have always felt a Love for this City

Some time later the 1st Battalion moved in on us and the 6th was no more, and the Battalion moved out of Düsseldorf, much to our sorrow. The Band and everything else was disbanded and we eventually landed up in a pretty little Town in Westphalia called Gevelsberg.

Apart from “showing the Flag” I haven’t a clue what we were supposed to be doing there as there were no major industries or waterworks or anything else to guard.

We were the first British troops that the Germans had had in the Town and at first there was suspicion. But that soon disappeared and the Troops settled in. Many just stayed around the canteen and dance hall but some, like me went off to enjoy the scenery and eventually make friends with a family

Gevelsberg is a pretty little place. Cut off on one side by the mountains, through, which runs a tunnel carrying a road, Tram and Train lines? During the winter that I was there this tunnel became blocked with snow, and food etc was either brought over the top by sledges or helicopter (think).

The Army had completely taken over part of the Town as a camp. All Civilians being evicted. Knowing the British Army, they were probably well compensated. I had a beautiful room in a house overlooking what had been a lovely garden. Civilians were allowed back into the camp for a couple of hrs each day to tend gardens etc.

It was here that I acquired my first dog. I was on guard one day when a German came behind me and whispered “ I have left the dog tied up by the guard house”. I guess someone else had paid him for it and he had mistaken me for him. She was little a Alsatian (German Shepherd) a lovely thing but that vicious.

It took me ages to get around her. Apparently she had been trained for the German Army. Once I did get around her she was a wonderful pet, but no one could come near me without a warning from her. She was wonderful to take on guard dog.

We could settle down somewhere warm and snooze whilst she kept guard. I didn’t have her long as I was sent on leave, and when I came back she was gone. The CO had apparently got fed up with all the dogs in the camp and had them removed to a log felling camp some miles away. She apparently went wild and killed several dogs before they shot her.

We had a number of Civilians working in the camp and one of these was a lady called Frau-Branstein She did the Laundry for several of us.

One day I went to her house to take some laundry and was invited in. Both she and her husband were small, rather wizened people but with hearts of Gold. There was also a Daughter who had been in the German Marine. Her name was Edith, but not once did I even contemplate having anything to do with her apart from Friendship. (Don’t know what happened)(that’s a lie, we did have a kiss and cuddle one night)

Most evenings I would spend in their company, either in the house or we would climb a nearby “Berg”(high hill) to visit a beer café. Sometimes I would go to the local café with the husband and the man from upstairs. (Eric) He was an ex soldier and had lost one of his legs.(There seemed to be hundreds of German ex soldiers with legs and arms missing).But he was good fun.

It didn’t seem possible that only a couple of years before we had all been sworn enemies.

The one Xmas that I was stationed in Gevelsberg has stayed in my mind throughout my life and each Year at Xmas in particular I think back on it as being perhaps the most poignant and wonderful Xmas of my life. To me it was the True spirit of Xmas.

On Xmas Eve the Family asked me whether I would be able to come to Xmas dinner with them. As their son was coming home from an English Prisoner of War Camp.

Knowing this and the fact that food was in such short supply that sometimes a man could walk 10kms just to get a few kilo of potatoes and meat was almost a non existent I said no, as I was on duty but I would try and call in Xmas evening. This wasn't true, but I felt that they would want time with their Son.

When I eventually arrived I was amazed and so touched, that they had *all* volunteered to hold dinner back until I got there. There was only one small chicken to go around, some soused herring and Potato Salad. Hardly a Xmas Dinner, but to me it was a banquet and even now, writing this almost 60 years later I can feel the tears welling up in my eyes.

My Mother had sent me a couple of tins of fruit for Xmas and these were put in as the finishing touch. Once the drink came out, the evening finished up wonderful.(Although I still didn't drink alcohol)

I spent the night there, sleeping in the same bed as the son.

I thought that he would be a bit funny about me being with the Family, but we became firm friends for the rest of the time that I was in Gevelsberg.

I think it was whilst I was in Gevelsberg that I had the opportunity to go to Berlin for a few days.

It was no joy ride as the trains were certainly not even third class as we know it. But I got there.

Maybe in the summer it is nice, but then, it was BLOODY FREEZING!!!!!! We were billeted in the old Berlin Olympic Stadium and to get to the mess hall we had to cross the Participants entry passageway. A distance of about 20 Mtrs. The first morning, not thinking, most of us just put on a shirt and trousers and ran across.

That was STOOPIID!! As even in that short distance we just about froze to death, especially as the wind was cutting through as well. The regular staff thought it was funny, but after breakfast we had a lecture from an officer warning us of the dangers of that cold which could kill a man who tried running a hundred yards in it. His lungs would freeze It was dismal hole. Nothing much had been done to clear up bomb damage even at that date and one had to be careful where one went as the Russians surrounded the British zone. These did not take kindly to anyone crossing the border into East Berlin or even coming too close. In the 50s they built the "Berlin Wall so that the allies were virtually trapped inside. And they tried to starve them out. Only a massive airlift for months saved the day. The Russians wanted war

One thing that struck me as pitiful was the lines of people queuing up outside the huge, ex air raid shelters. They must have been frozen standing there but the queues were moving in slowly. Apparently these places had been supplied with heat and also food was being given there. The people were just glad of a few moments of heat. It was terrible too to see young children searching through dustbins for something to eat.

There was nothing much to do there and I was glad to get back to Gevelsberg. But at least I could say, "Bin there, done that".

Occasionally there would be dances put on by the army in the Town Hall when British Army girls would be invited from units some distance away. Little was I to know until many years later how close I had come to meeting a certain young lady. But that's another Story.

There were always a lot of Yugoslavs hanging around the area and I always wondered why. Then one day the whole Btn was taken to the next Town (cannot remember the name). When we debussed we found that there were a couple of other Btns there also along with dozens of German and British Police.

We were ordered to surround the Town and let no one in or out. Anyone attempting to do either was to be arrested.

In the meantime the Police had entered the Town and were ordering the whole population out in the big square. Here they set up tables and started interviewing everyone. Most of them being Yugoslavs who had apparently taken over the Town.

During the war there had been two factions in Yugoslavia. One commanded by Tito and the other by Mikilovitch. The Allies had apparently armed and backed Tito's mob but this mob were from the other side. How the heck they ever got into Germany, unless it was as the German Army collapsed, I never found out.

But they had been causing hell around the place. Many of them were wanted for Murder and other serious offences and whilst the Police tried to find these people, we were to try and collect all the weapons they had.

Many of them refused to come out of the houses so we slowly closed the noose and moved into the Town and were ordered to enter every house and flush out anyone hiding there. Regardless of Nationality.

On entering the houses we were horrified at what we found. All German houses have cellars, and in many of these we found Women of just about all nationalities chained up in absolute squalor like animals for the use of anyone feeling that way inclined. It was pitiful to hear them crying and asking us to release them. Every cellar had a Still going. It was apparent that they had been making grog out of anything that they found, from potatoes to boot polish and methylated Spirits. We had been warned not to touch any of this drink, as it would kill the average man. . Numerous men were found hiding and were thrown out on the streets. The swine sickened us. We also found enough arms and ammunition to equip an Army. This was all confiscated.

By late afternoon, the Authorities were satisfied that we had done what we had been sent to do and we were ordered back to the trucks to go back to Gevelsberg.

Whilst we drawn up on parade waiting for the trucks, hundreds of these Yugoslavs were milling around yelling and throwing stones at us.

WE stood this for a while, until Capt Judd was struck on the head by a stone. We were then ordered to form up in fours, and commenced to march towards the rabble. It was quite frightening, as they seem to realize that we would not open fire on them and they became very bold. Pulling at the men in the outer ranks and showering us with stones. But as we marched back into the Town, the Sgts were coming back through the ranks saying "When Judd gives the signal, fix bayonets and clear these bastards off the Streets. There must be no shooting unless you are fired on. Use your common sense, and don't use the bayonets too literally. Pack everyone into the house regardless of whom or what they are"

By the time the order came we were all in a right mood for them, and breaking ranks we charged the mob. And being the cowards they were, they ran for their lives. We packed as many as perhaps 50 people into one house. Many got a little hole in his arse as he attempted to scabble through a window believe me. Some Germans complained, but they shouldn't have been in the street and obviously thought that our being attacked was funny. These were bundled in with the rest.

They were all hanging out of windows and doors yelling and screaming abuse at us, until Judd ordered a burst of machine gun fire down the street.

This shut them up for a while. Then hundreds of German Police turned up and took over. They made everyone stay in whichever house they were in for the night. Which must have been chaotic.

We were in a state of very high alert for several days after that in case they tried to attack us in Gevelsberg, which of course scared the shit out of the population. But nothing happened and I believe only a few days after, Yugoslav Authorities moved in and took all these people back to Yugoslavia.

Shortly after this episode I was called into the office and advised that I had been posted to the Royal Military Police. Along with several other men. Why me?.

I was ordered to report to the RMP Training Depot at Sennelager, Near Paderborn.

It was with great sorrow that I was forced to leave Gevelsberg as I thought I would be there until being demobbed. And I thought that I would never see the "Family" again

Arriving at Sennelager, I found it to be an ex German Barracks stuck out in nowhere. There was absolutely nothing around the place except moors, marshes, and wild country. And I thought that only the British army put Barracks up in places like this.

I thought that the first place I had been to in Ireland was full of "Bull" but that was nothing compared to this place. Fortunately for me, that early experience and training still stood me in good stead and I didn't find it too hard. But here the training was useful as we were taught to ride motor cycles and to drive vehicles. Along with Police work and self defence. The physical training side was hard too and not being one for such exercise, I found that the hardest part.

Towards the end of the course we were expected to run five miles, have a boxing match, or swim several dozen laps. None of this appealed to me but I eventually plumped for the five miles and actually won a prize for being amongst the first dozen.

I had never ridden a Motor cycle in my life before but found, once the initial shock was over that it was good fun. Although most days when we went out it was freezing cold.

The area that we practiced in was a large field in the centre of which was a large lake. We would motor around and around this lake. Which became hard work, as the ground was wet and became muddy and slippery with all the activity. The Lake was frozen over.

Quite a few of the more intrepid riders would cut across the corner of this Lake, but I was a slow, careful (bloody nervous) rider and one morning got behind all the others. The Instructor started yelling and screaming at me to catch up, and being the good soldier that I was (scared shit of him) I decided to be like the others and cut across the end of the Lake. Yeah, go on guess what happened!!

I got halfway across when the bloody ice broke, and the bike and me went in. It wasn't very deep fortunately but BLOODY COLD. By the time I got back to the barracks I thought I would be paralyzed from the waist down forever and my Family Jewels had dropped off.

How I never got pneumonia, I will never know. Although some time after this incident I was admitted to hospital with what they diagnosed as German measles. This had happened more than once when I collapsed, my face the colour of beetroot and feeling really ill. At a later date a Doctor discovered that this was in fact severe acidosis. Several times after I was married I suffered the same "sickness" probably brought on by trying "burn the candle at both ends"

After a couple of weeks here, I think everyone became proud of themselves. I have always tended to be round shouldered but one day I looked down at myself and was amazed to see that I couldn't see past my chest.

One morning prior to the Parade, I was Orderly NCO and as such had to check all the billets to see that they were tidy and ready for inspection and that all men were out. On entering one room I saw a cupboard door open and went to shut it. As I did I was amazed to see a photo of one of my girl friends stuck on the back of the door. It was one that had been stolen from my locker back in Düsseldorf. I also found all the stuff that had been stolen.

I cannot remember what happened to the owner of the locker but I believe he was charged and got a hefty sentence in the "Glasshouse" and naturally thrown out of the Police. And I got all my gear back.

There wasn't a lot to do around the place as I said before, unless one walked into Paderborn and even there, there were only a couple of cafes. The people were not all that friendly either. I suppose this was because this had always been a German Army garrison Town. Plus the place had never seen any war.

I did however (as usual) find my self a girl friend. Rese Tenge. She was just a "nice" girl friend and we would go for walks in the evening. But it was too cold to stay out long. The only other entertainment was at a Café about 5-6 miles away from the Barracks. This was usually frequented only by British Soldiers. But there was always a small band there and a few girls would come in so that we could dance. I don't know whether it was my 21st Birthday or just another. But that evening I went along to the Café and we had a whale of a time. But getting home was a different matter as the snow was several feet deep on each side of the road and the surface was like glass. How none of us broke our necks that night has always been a mystery. And this was in April.

As I said before, we were expected to learn boxing amongst other things. This certainly was NOT one of mine or many other's pet sports. However we HAD to have a go occasionally. One day I was paired up against a bloke, twice my size for a couple of rounds. We both agreed that we would pull our punches and not hit the face. Unfortunately I accidentally caught my opponent a hearty one on the nose. He thought that I had reneged on our promise and flattened me. I was quick enough to feign a knockout after only a couple of whacks, but there was not no way would they get me in there again. I wasn't that Stupid.

Eventually we all passed out as fully fledged Military Policemen (Redcaps)

I was posted to a Town called Bielefeld. To 101 Company. This was a large Town in which there were three large "holding" units where troops in transit or awaiting posting would be billeted.

The Section I was with consisted of an Officer a Sgt and about 10 men. And there were thousands of troops in the Town. We were Flat out but I really enjoyed the work.

The Officer didn't worry us as long as we did the work and the Sgt a huge, fat Man had somehow got two young English ladies to keep him happy and out of the way.

As we were the Law apart from the German Police in the Town, all the business's looked after us well. Even entry to the night clubs was free there were the inevitable deserters in all of the Holding Units. Probably hundreds of them. Many of them turning to crime to get money etc and many were operating the Black Market. Of course, in our distinctive caps and armbands we could get nowhere near any of them

One night in the mess, I was expounding my ideas on how we could get stuck into these buggers. Someone must have said something to the Boss as the following morning I was called into his office and had to relate my idea to him.

He mulled it over for a couple of days then gave me and five others, permission to wear any uniform that we could procure, or even wear "civvies" Provided that we didn't go stupid, we could do just about anything against deserters and the Black Market.

We soon put this to good use. There were a couple of very large canteens in the Town which were always full of troops. Normally when the Police made a check, the deserters would be gone before they were through the door. So we (after advising the Managers) used to sit quietly having a beer dressed in another Regiments Uniform. In the meantime a cordon of police was thrown around the canteen.

When we would make ourselves known as Police there would be a major upheaval as dozens of deserters etc tried to get out of the windows, only to run into the cordon.

Other times we would stroll around in Civvies. Not bothering about what soldiers were doing In the back streets there were always groups of men and women buying and selling on the Black Market, very often stolen goods. Nine out of ten of the sellers would be deserters.

We would saunter up, fooling the lookouts, and then when it was obvious that there were soldiers involved we would pounce. The Civilians scattering like chaff.

In one week we caught ten men like this. Very often these “marketers” would grab a nearby car and take off. Then the chase would be on.

One evening the German police called to say that they had a soldier trapped in a house where he had been causing mayhem.

On racing to the house we looked through a window and saw two German Policemen belting hell out of a soldier. When we intervened they started to turn on us as they thought by his cap badge that he was a Polish soldier. Some of these had been playing hell in the Town.

But he wasn't, his cap badge was in the shape of an eagle which was a British Regiment. We eventually extradited him and took him to the hospital. Was that man violent???

He was huge, and it took several of us to handle him. His face had been badly cut and he was obviously fighting drunk or on drugs.

The doctor at the hospital said that he would put him out with a needle so as we held him down; the Doctor gave him a fairly large dose of knockout stuff. He went down like a light and as he now looked peaceful all of the others left, leaving me and one other MP to cope. Within about three minutes. This bloke was back on his feet and wanting to kill someone. And we were the nearest.

It was useless trying to fight him as he was too big for two of us so using all my wonderful charm and charisma (whilst shitting myself)I started to talk him out of committing Murder.

Fortunately he was still a bit groggy from the needle and I managed to calm him down. But I cannot remember what happened to him afterwards.

For some time a large Army warehouse had been subject to repeated break ins and no one could find just where they were getting in. So one day Sherlock Hayes and Dr Watson were sent to investigate.

We had been there several hours looking for clues when I spotted purely by chance some powdery substance on top of some of the boxes. This turned out be something like cardboard. But where was it from?

Being the clever dick that I was I deduced that it must have come from somewhere above the boxes (clever stuff) But there was no obvious reason for it although the factory roof consisted of mainly glass “Lights” (fixed windows for those who don't know).there appeared to be nothing wrong with any of these but on going up on the roof, we found one that had been obviously tampered with, albeit most carefully. Someone had removed the glass from the frame and using a rope had entered the warehouse. Replacing the glass afterwards. The dust that we had found was from where the rope had been cutting into some packing around the windows.

That night we staked the place out and eventually caught a couple of Yugoslav men breaking in.

One man got away from us but the other was arrested and eventually brought to trial. He was quite funny treating the whole thing as a bit of a joke.

In Court whilst giving my evidence I was asked whether I spoke Yugoslav or German when questioning the prisoner. I replied neither, as he appeared to have a good command of the English language and in most cases had signified yes, or No by the internationally accepted gesture of nodding or shaking his head. The defending Officer then alleged that this man came from a part of Yugoslavia where these gestures were the other way round ie a nod for no and a shake for yes.

It transpired that this was correct but he was convicted on much more evidence. I went to see him in the cells before he was taken off to prison. Whilst I was there he gave me a bunch of keys and asked me to "look after" his girl friend whilst he was away. I did go around to see her but only to hand over his keys. I was sorely tempted as she was a very pretty girl, but being the good policeman that I was it was against my ethics. (Liar)

Another evening I was called out to a scene where a British soldier had been caught having intercourse with a young boy.

This was a funny case to handle as although we had been given instruction on how to proceed when a girl was involved there had been nothing about this scenario. However I decided to act as though it was a girl that had been raped and this apparently was the right thing to do. That soldier was sent to the glasshouse for long period as in those days sodomy was held to be disgusting

One day, two of us were detailed to act as security guards at an Officer's Dinner Party some distance from Town at a Country House.

Sometime during that late afternoon an Officer wearing all sorts of red and Gold Braid and tabs came out to us and asked us to take his Lady Wife down to the hospital as she was "rather unwell"

We pointed out to him that we only had a jeep to travel in and that one of the staff cars would be much better. To which he replied that all the cars might be needed as the Officers were going on to some other party.

When the Lady came out she was obviously very pregnant, which rather embarrassed us two young policemen. But she was very nice, and we made her as comfortable as possible in the back seat.

If the reader has ever travelled in a jeep, they would know that they are not the most comfortable of conveyances and every bump is felt.

We had done perhaps 10 miles when the Lady started to scream that she thought she was in labour.

What the hell were we to do At first, she said that we should try and go on but to drive slowly and maybe find a house. But like everything else, when you really want something, there is never one to be found.

Eventually we had to stop and as she was so distressed and as embarrassed as we were we got her out of the jeep. We took the back seat out and laid it against a tree for her to rest on whilst we tossed up what to do. Eventually my "mate" said he would drive like hell into Town and get help and an Ambulance, leaving me to cope.

He had only been gone a few minutes when she really went into labour. I was petrified. We had been taught this sort of thing during First Aid courses. But doing it was a different bloody matter. Fortunately it wasn't her first child and she could tell me what I should do.

Which wasn't much, except help at the last minute? It was all over in no time, I was amazed having heard how some ladies were in labour for hours. We had been taught never to try and cut the cord so in accordance with the book; I put the baby girl under the lady's coat and fastened it around her. I didn't even have anything to clean her up with and in any case would have been too scared. Her being a Top Brass's wife.

At that moment a car came by with another lady in and she stopped to help. And shortly after that the ambulance arrived.

We naturally had to report the matter back to the Officer but he didn't appear to care very much. Just asked if we had coped and that was that.

However several days later a letter arrived for both of us with several pounds in it. I believe it was for ten pounds each, and a thank you from his wife.

After some months in Bielefeld I was posted to Bad Oenhausen. There the duties were more of a ceremonial kind although we did have a lot of security work, as the Jews who at that time were fighting to try and get Palestine for themselves had threatened to carry out terrorist attacks on several British establishments. One of these being the headquarters of the British Army of the Rhine HQ in Bad Oenhausen.. I enjoyed this work and often volunteered to do extra duties or exchange them with other men.

The Company Sergeant Major in this place was the biggest bastard that I or anyone else in the Company had ever met. Everyone hated the man. And more than one had a secret go at him. But he was always too smart. He also had a massive Alsatian dog, which never left his side except on a parade of which everyone was dead scared. And I was to soon fall out with this man.

Somewhere along the track and I don't know how, I palled up with a chap called Harry, and we had met a couple of English Army girls. Must have been at a dance I think. Harry's girl was Margaret and mine was Brenda, a rather tall slender girl.

They were both good fun and we often went to dances and the cinema.

One weekend the girls invited us to accompany them to a place called Bad Hartzberg in the Hertz Mountains. It was a long ride in the back of a truck and normally MPs were not allowed into the Town. It being a rest centre. But we could go provided we were invited, and didn't wear our peaked hats.

On arrival there we were all flabbergasted, it was a fairy tale Town. Formally a high class Tourist resort.

We were billeted in the most beautiful hotels (separate) and the place that we had our meals in was absolutely Fabulous. And all of this for only 5 Marks (about 2shilling and sixpence) less than a days pay.

On the Saturday Morning we went up the mountains in the cable car (can't spell the German name for it). The actual car was only about 8ft across and had a hole in the middle of the floor for viewing the Forrest below. It would have been a wonderful ride but for the idiots that chose to try and set the car swinging on the cable. Because of this it became a nightmare ride. Even although I was a Policeman I could nothing about here

The views from the top were absolutely stunning and we spent hours up there exploring. On one side there was a level piece of land jutting out, on which previously there had obviously been a set of safety railings and a telescope. The railings were all rusted away as was the telescope mount. But we got as

near to the edge as possible to take photos of the breathtaking views. There was no one else anywhere near us when we took the photos. Yet when they were developed, the railings were there with a small boy sitting astride them. Most weird, and we never solved the mystery.

The girls refused to go back down in the Cable car so we started to climb down. It wasn't so very steep, but was a long way to the bottom. It was autumn time and the ground was thick in leaves which made the footing pretty treacherous. Suddenly Brenda slipped and was unable to stop herself sliding down the Mountainside. I don't know how far she slipped, but when she stood up, she had ripped the whole back off of her skirt. It was most embarrassing for all of us trying to hide her as we walked back through Town to the Hotels.

There was Brenda trying to take small strides but even then flashing her knickers at every step. Believe me there were quite a few wolf whistles.

But there was something wrong with that weekend, as none of us had seemed to be hitting it off too well.

It was during the following week that I found the answer. We had arranged to meet the girls in the Park one evening, but just before we were due to go Harry said, I don't want to go out with Margaret any more, and asked me to go out to the park and tell her.

When I got to the Park there was only Margaret waiting there. She advised me that Brenda had sent a similar message regarding me. So there we were a couple of rejects in a foreign land. The only thing to do was for us to pair up and go to the cinema together. I have feeling that Harry and Brenda teamed up later.

However there was me with a brand new girlfriend. But we seemed to hit it off and started going out together.

One afternoon we decided to go outside the Town to visit a German cinema that was showing an English film called "Margie", which was about a girl that was forever losing her knickers.

After the show we decided to go for a stroll in the local park. Sometime during this walk I wanted to go to the toilet but there wasn't one anywhere to be seen. So being the Gentleman that I was I dropped down into a ditch, to do the necessary, Leaving Margaret to stroll on alone.

On coming out of the ditch I found that Margaret had been "arrested" by two German police apparently for soliciting. She couldn't speak any German and they obviously couldn't speak English. It was at that time a practice to "arrest" young women that were apparently German, who they considered to be Soliciting or out walking with Allied soldiers and whip them off to hospital for a VD check. It was a disgusting and degrading exercise by the Police but as VD was so rampant after the war I suppose they were trying to counteract it

When I saw what had happened I let out a mighty roar and stopped the Police dead in their tracks. On reaching them I blasted off calling them all the stupid bastards I could manage in German. Had I been an ordinary soldier they might have retaliated but as I was an NCO in the British Military Police I was their superior.

They jumped rigidly to attention and tried to explain. I pointed out to them that the lady was a British Army person albeit that she was in Civvies. With profound apologies they scampered off. But it was partly Margaret's fault as when the girls were wearing Civvies they were supposed to wear a small Union Flag badge and she had taken hers off for some reason. But she has never lived it down.

It was shortly after this that I fell out with the Sgt Major (the pig).

I had been doing a lot of extra duties so that I could have a few days off. Most of these being guarding the HQ Buildings.

One evening the Major in charge of security there said to me that his men would take over early from us and that we could dismiss.

I sent a message to the Sgt Major advising him of this, but I got a very short but rude answer back that we were to stay where we were until HE said what could happen. And for our cheek we could stay on for an extra hour.

I had obtained tickets for Margaret and me to go to a particularly good show that was on in Town for only one night and as this had cost me a lot of money I was ropeable to say the least. When I advised the Major what had happened he saw red and told us to dismiss then and there, and he would sort the Sgt Major out.

On returning to my billet I was furious, but being in the army should have shut up, but being me, I didn't.

I stormed into the office and firstly had a go at the Capt (who was a Gentleman) he replied that it was nothing to do with him see the Sgt Major. Which I did.

Fortunately for that bastard I had taken off my revolver otherwise things may have turned out more serious than they did.

After I had finished my spiel, he started in on me, calling me all the bastards he could think of, alleging that I had been dodging duties and God knows what else. But he "cooked his goose" when he said that I only wanted to get off early so that I could go #@!@# that ATS Prostitute I had been going with.

At that, I picked up the wooden nameplate on his desk and smashed it across his head.

Naturally, being the Army I was arrested immediately and was ordered to the Military Police Prison.

By this time I was thinking about pooping my trousers as this was a Court Martial Offence.

On arriving at the Prison (where I knew all the Staff) I was advised that there was no supper supplied for me, and as it was my Right to have that, I should be taken back to the Billet to get it.

Supper was always served on long trestle tables with folding legs. This night it was soup which was in a large tureen on the end of the table.

I was halfway through the meal when who should walk in but "the Bastard" all dressed up in his Mess uniform and accompanied by his dog.

On seeing me his face went livid and he started bawling and shouting, at the same time whacking the table with his stick. Suddenly the end of the table collapsed and the soup and everything else fell off, all over his trousers.

How the man never had a heart attack I will never know, but I was glad to get out of there smart, and back to the Prison and safety.

I was feeling sorry for myself by now but not for long as although it was the prison and I was allocated a cell none of the doors were closed, and later that night we had a party at which even ladies had been invited. If only the bigwigs had known what was going on.

Next day I was taken to Bad Salzuflen, which was our Company HQ and brought up before the Major.

Both he and the Regimental Sgt Major were both really nice men.

On being marched in and the evidence given, I was asked for my version, which I gave. The Sgt major denied all of what I said that he had said, but fortunately for me, two Sgts who had been working in the office at the time vouched for what had transpired.

Whilst the Sgt Major didn't like it, he and all the others were ordered to leave the office.

When we were alone. The Major looked at me in silence for at least five minutes. Then said "Repeat after me Hayes, I am a stupid bastard," When I didn't say anything he again yelled at me to say it and then repeat it several times

I wondered what the hell he was going to do next. He then told me again that I was a stupid bastard, as I had had in my hands the opportunity that just about everyone in the Company would have loved to have had,(This being, that everyone in the company wanted rid of the Sgt Major as he was such a swine).

I had stuffed it up by taking matters into my own hands if I had gone the right way about it I could, because of his provocative attitude and what he had said, have had him pulled over the coals and posted to another unit. As it was it was me that had to be punished. Although the Sgt Major would get a reprimand.

He then asked me if I would accept his judgment or did I wish a Court Martial.

Guess what I said?

His punishment was, that I would be stripped of my rank for 14 days and do some extra duties. Boy was I relieved????

He also said that it would be better if I was away from the Sgt Major and he would therefore have me posted to Bad Salzuflen until it was time for my demob.

Bad Salzuflen was a dream of a place. Prior to the war it had been a Spa Town where all the rich Tourists flocked to. It had been untouched by the war. There were dozens of bathhouses where one could for only a couple of marks indulge in a luxurious bath in all sorts of healing waters. Or have a massage.

In the centre of the Town was a large square that was surrounded on three sides with a tall wall made of interwoven twigs and branches. At first we couldn't make out what the heck this wall was for. But once the weather warmed up we soon found out.

In summer, it got very hot and quite a wind would spring up. Once this happened, water was trickled through the interwoven twigs and as the wind blew through it it cooled the air down. (The forerunner of evaporative air conditioning.) It was beautiful to sit around in the square and feel that lovely cool breeze. During the hot afternoons there would be probably a hundred or so people sitting around enjoying it.

Much of our work in this Town was traffic Control and just patrolling, like any other police as this was the Headquarters of the Control Commission and several Embassies.

I was on traffic control one day and signalled a vehicle to stop, but it nearly ran me over. So pulling my revolver I put a bullet in its tyre. When it stopped I found that it was some high ranking Russian Officers from their Embassy. I thought I would be in the shit for this, but we were empowered to do such a thing if a vehicle didn't stop in case they were terrorists.

There was probably some diplomatic shit thrown around but I heard no more about it

Talking about traffic Control. The company had as a pet a small cross bred dachshund come terrier dog. She would lie in front of the office for hours but if a vehicle came down the main st at what she considered too fast she would be off like a shot and run along in front of it barking. Everyone knew that it was our dog so no one was silly enough to try and run her over, so they slowed down.

One evening I had a note delivered to me written on a piece of toilet paper. It was from Hannelore. She had apparently joined a troop of accordionists and was travelling around Germany putting on shows for the troops. And they were playing in Town that night.

The show was also part of an Opera. I had never been to an Opera in my life before but I enjoyed this one. I think it was part of Swan Lake and it was lovely to see Hannelore again and catch up on Family news.

It was whilst I was here that I volunteered for a course at Gottingen University This course being a concentrated Plumbing Course to augment my apprenticeship. I also enrolled in a German class.

Margaret had also enrolled for a course in the same place and we thought we would be able to see more of each other however at the last minute her course was moved to Bad Oenhausen.

Gottingen was an old, very Gothic style University Town where many of Europe's leading lights had been sent for their education. I was billeted in a barracks a couple of miles from Town The work was hard, as we had to attend the college for 8 hours every day then do a couple of hours homework at night. As I said. It was a concentrated course, trying to do in several weeks what it would take a couple of years to accomplish in Civvy street.

At weekends we were free to do and go where we liked, so I had arranged with Margaret for the truck she would be traveling in to Bad Hertzberg would wait for me in Munster. For a couple of weekends this worked fine, although trying to cadge lifts to get to Munster or Bad Hertzberg was extremely difficulty. There being so many soldiers trying to get one.

One weekend I thought that I would try and get to Hertzberg on my own and as there was a signpost just outside the Barracks pointing to what I read as Hertzberg,(albeit pointing in the opposite direction to that I usually went) I thought I would be smart and go the opposite way to that being taken by everyone else. And get an easy lift.

I walked a couple of miles before I managed to grab a lift in a Log carrying truck. When I got out of the truck, I managed to get a lift in a Police Car. Everyone telling me that I was on the right road for Hertzberg But I wondered where the heck I was going, as I was getting further and further into the countryside with no signs of any troops or British occupation.

I stopped for a while in a small town and had a cup of coffee then trudged on. Finally getting a lift with a Commercial traveler who told me that he was going to Herzberg.

A couple of hours later we rolled into a Town which he told me was Hertzberg, but it looked entirely different to the one I knew and there were no British troops wandering around. I asked a couple of people if this was Hertzberg and was told, yes it was. But there was something wrong.

Eventually I approached a German Policeman who again told me that it WAS Hertzberg. As I couldn't understand why I didn't recognize the place, he took me to the Police Station and there an Inspector heard my story. Then he suddenly laughed and asked me how I spelt he place I wanted," Hertzberg" I replied. Whereupon the whole station erupted as the place I was in was HARZBURG. Which was a couple of hundred miles away from where I wanted to get to? It was now about 5.30 and I had supposed to have been meeting Margaret's truck in Munster at 6.

The Police found out that there was a train leaving shortly for a station only a couple of miles from Bad HERTZBERG and got me onto it. It was a mail train and during the trip I helped the sorters with the mail. Often wondered whether some of it ever got to the right address.

Eventually arriving at the appropriate station I alighted and got out onto the road. Where there were dozens of men trying to get lifts. It was now about 8.30 and quite dark.

I and another fellow walked on ahead of all the others but no trucks would stop for us.

As one passed without stopping I yelled some obscenity at it and for some reason or other it stopped about 50 yds down the road. We ran to it and several hands dragged us on board Eventually arriving in Bad Hartzberg.

On getting out of the truck I was amazed when Margaret stepped out of the passenger's side seat. She had not seen it was me on the road so why the truck stopped goodness knows.. But what a coincidence. We had both travelled on diverging lines. Me going a couple of Hundred miles completely in the wrong direction and yet we had met on this road Margaret's driver had waited for me in Munster until well past the appointed time too

Those weekends in Hertzberg were fabulous and I would dearly love to go back there some day, but that is impossible now and will have to be stored in my Memory Bank for my old age.

I used to sometimes get over to Oenhausen to see Margaret during the week and it was during one of these visits that whilst saying goodnight to her (actually it was in a Rose Garden at the front of her billets) that I realized that I would like this lady to spend her life with me and therefore proposed to her. She immediately said yes. So there was I, officially engaged.

When I wrote and told my Parents, my mother was livid, as she thought Margaret was a German girl and she had a fanatical hatred of anything German. I realize that they had been through the war, but we had lost no one and they had not been really affected by the bombing. We who had been up the sharp end did not have any hatred and whilst there must have been Some Germans who didn't like us I never found any.

On my return to Bad Salzuflen I found that my demob was only weeks away and that Margaret would be going home a week or so before me. So we arranged that she would wait in London for me before we travelled down to Wales to meet my Parents first.

But I wasn't finished with trouble with the Army yet.

Knowing my demob was coming up and that the Army would do anything to be awkward and hold things up I did all the right things. Saluted anything remotely looking like an Officer and always on time for any duty (that wasn't like me at all)

My last duty came up, a simple guard on the Vehicle compound. But still a bit of bull.

The parade for this was at 7.0pm so I got ready about 5 all spit and polish for my last parade,

So, as I had plenty of time to spare I sat down near the radiator and wrote a letter to Margaret who had already gone home. At 7.15 there was a hammering on the door and an irate Sgt wanted to know if I would deign to come on parade, being already 15 mins late. SHIT.

Next morning, which was the day of my demob, I was up in front of the RSM who gave me a real old bollocking and he asked me what time my truck was leaving. I told him it was going at 10 am and it was now 20 mins to ten.

He said," You think you are going home Hayes don't you, but you have had it. Go to the Billets and lay out all your kit for inspection."

I started to argue but the look on his face was enough? So laying out my kit which had all been packed up to go I kept looking at the clock.

At 9.50 he came to the Billets, took one look at the kit and at my face. Then said." If you're going to catch that truck, you had better hurry up and pack hadn't you."

Then he held out his hand and wished me good Luck, and Goodbye.

Never in all the History of the British Army has a Soldier packed his gear so fast.
Little was I to know that he had told the driver to wait for me anyway.

So ended my full time Army career.

I had had some hard times, and some sad ones but on the whole it had been a wonderful experience. One that I am glad I hadn't missed. Otherwise I wouldn't have had all these wonderful memories or have met so many Lovely people. Some of them I am still in touch with nearly 60 Years later.

I was fortunate that I was never injured during the small amount of fighting that I saw and in general I know that the discipline and hardships have stood me in good faith throughout the years. And taught me to appreciate life. Also how stupid all these wars are. All for the sake of the politicians on both sides. It is the little man who has no quarrel with his neighbour that always suffers.

(I have said all this before haven't I)

I could I think ,write a story about every paragraph, but what I have written should suffice to show the reader something of my life's experiences

Chapter 7

The Start of a New Life

Back in the same camp as I had started from in York, I was put through the demobilization quite quickly. And issued with what had become to be known as my demob suit.

We were issued with a full kit of underclothes, socks shoes and just about everything one would need to be decently clothed in the start of civvy St.

The suits that were issued were quite smart but all the same cut. Sorry there were two cuts, single and double breasted. The choice of colours was also limited to Brown, Grey, or Blue. I chose a smart pin striped brown. After a final medical examination we were all put on the train to London.

Margaret had been staying with a Family friend in London, awaiting my arrival. She too had been demobbed..

On arrival in London I contacted Margaret and we proceeded down to Wales where my Parents were now living and I proposed making my home too.

I cannot say that my home=coming was a joyful occasion as no emotions were ever expressed by my Parents. My mother, God Rest her Soul was a very narrow minded sort of person and she had been set on me marrying one of the girls from the village. It was not until many years later that I found out that my Mother had been quite catty towards Margaret.

We stayed there for about a week then I went up to Scotland to meet Margaret's parents and Family. They were lovely people but I couldn't understand what the hell they were talking about as all of them had a distinct Scottish accent. Which, I think they put on a bit for my benefit.

We had made no plans about when we would get married. We both had to find our new feet first and we had no money apart from the pitiful gratuity that the Army had paid us. 6 pence per day for every

day of service.(If one had been in the Army for the six years of war it would only have amounted to about 54 pounds)so I went back to Wales leaving Margaret in Scotland.

Because of my pre service apprenticeship and the course that I had undertaken whilst in Germany I decided that I would try my hand in the plumbing trade. As soon as I had found a job I applied to the Government for a grant to buy tools. This was granted, and I was able to purchase a complete set of Plumbing tools. My first job was a Plumbers Improver

(One step down from a fully fledged plumber and I still had to prove myself to the Union).

The job was helping to build a new multi million pound factory that would manufacture Nylon. This was the up and coming clothing fibre in those days. The place was huge.

Never having worked on my own I was a bit slow at first but soon managed to fit in and do a pretty good job.

On my first morning there, the boss who was a short fat Scotchman who literally dashed everywhere, asked me whether I could do lead burning. Naturally I said yes. But not really knowing what he was talking about.

Come on then he said, bring your tools. At the same time introducing me to a man who was to be my labourer.

The boss led us into the building. Up two or three flights of stairs, then out through a hole in the wall onto some scaffolding eventually finishing up on a concrete ledge some 15ft wide and about 50 ft in length. This ledge being part of the front”décor “of the building. But what really hit me was that we about 150 ft off of the ground. With nothing between us and space, but a flimsy scaffolding. To make matters worse the wind was blowing like hell.

He showed us what was wanted ie to put lead covers over all the nails that were holding the lead covering of the roof to the concrete. There were hundreds of them.

Then he left us to get on with it. Both of us were just about pooping ourselves every time that we looked over the edge. But we had to get on with it.

In those days there were no such things a gas blowtorches and we had to use Paraffin

(Kero) lamps. These had to be heated first then when they got hot enough they would burn with a fierce blue flame. Roaring away like monsters.

They were ok in a protected environment but up here in the wind they would not stay alight.

To try and protect them and us from the wind we erected a corrugated sheet windbreak. This was fine until the wind decided it didn't like them there and decided to whip them away over the mountaintop. How we finished the job I will never know, but we did. But over the years I have often had nightmares reliving that first job.

One Friday, just before I was due to go up to Scotland for the weekend I was working for the firm at another venue. We had to take delivery of a load of galvanized piping which was delivered on a low truck.

To get it off, two of us had to grab either end of the bundle and lift it over something else that was on the truck. The bloke at the other end stupidly dropped his end, and the bundle whipped. My end catching me under the jaw, I was out for about an hour.

Next day my face was black and blue as one can easily imagine. But I wasn't going to be put off of seeing my girl. (Shows how stupid love is)

Did I get pampered that weekend?

I worked at this job for, I think about nine months, but the Factory was now coming into production and hundreds of staff were required.

I thought it would be a nicer, cleaner environment to work in than on the building, and more money and security. So eventually I applied for and got a job, making Nylon.

This was shift work that I had never done before. But the work was "different" and I soon knuckled down.

We had to work 7 shifts each week. Seven nights, seven days and seven afternoons with a couple of days off between

I hated the Night shifts as I have always been a tired bugger and could never get enough sleep during the day.

The plant was terribly noisy too. In the early days discipline etc in the plant was pretty lax and many men made mistakes, which must have cost the Company a lot of money.

During winter months there would often be two or three power cuts, especially during the night. Whenever these occurred all the machines had to be cleared of yarn and Bobbins stripped back to get rid of yarn that was not of the required denier because of the slowing down of the machines. This often meant that extra staff was required and we would often work back two and occasionally three shifts. With only ½ an hours break between for a free meal. But it meant more money

This new factory was a model one. Spotlessly clean and with every facility for the men and women. I believe that when it was in full production there were something like 3000 people employed there.

The gardens were superb and were opened twice a year to the Public.

The Clubhouse was beautiful and the dance floor was the finest in Britain. We were absolutely spoilt.

The place where the factory was built was rather remote so most of the workers came in by bus. Supplied by the company. There would be something like 40 buses for every shift. Plus the day workers and staff.

It was only about 2 miles from where I was living so it was rare for me to catch the bus as I had bought a cycle.

In winter, when the roads were bad, provided a worker managed to get in no matter how late he received his full wages.

Needless to say in later years the workers began to stuff the place up. Going on strike for nothing.

But that is another story.

Socially I was enjoying myself as my cousins and the girls who I had known almost since birth took me under their wings and we would go out to dances etc almost every weekend. There was never any thing between us as two were my Cousins and the others were just friends. But we enjoyed life. I was also coming to grips with my new life out of the Army.

My Father had since coming down to Wales to live been working as an electrician at the Factory and also building up his own spare time business.

There were very few tradesmen in this little village of Penpellenni so anyone with a bit of “go” could make a few bob on the side. And this I started to do, there was no piped water supply to the village or surrounding areas but many houses had their own supplies. I was also helping Dad with decorating. The village was between two Towns, Abergavenny and Pontypool and we found plenty of work in both of these. Dad hit onto a most lucrative idea when we started installing electricity into farm houses. With the generator being run off of the milking machines. The Farmers thought this was the best thing since the wheel was invented.

At the same time I was desperately searching for somewhere to live so that we could get married. But there was nothing to be had. One kind old lady who owned a big house in the area offered me, if I would do it up, the use of the chapel, which was in the grounds.

Then I heard that the ex Prisoner of War Camp at Llanover was going to be turned into a temporary housing estate. The huts had been remodeled beautifully. So I applied for one, thinking that I had a good chance, being a newly returned soldier etc etc and also my Parents knew the Agent very well. I waited several weeks but there was no news. Eventually I went into the office to make enquiries. To find that the last available house had been given to a German Prisoner of War who wanted to stay in England.. The reader can only guess what colour the air turned.

I suppose Army was in my blood as no sooner was I out of uniform than I joined the Territorials, this being the reserve Army. One reason was because I could earn some more money and this was tax free. It meant parades every Tues evening and a fortnight's camp every year, with some weekend exercises thrown in. Having only been just discharged from the Army I was on what was called the class Z reserve anyway and liable to recall at any time. I later joined the band and also the shooting Club so my life was full enough.

I was getting desperate as I was traveling up to Scotland perhaps every third or fourth weekend and this was costing money I could ill afford. Although in those days travel was relatively cheap as opposed to today. But it was also a strain on our relationship.

But as has always been the case where I have been concerned, when I have been really desperate *Something* will turn up. And at last it did.

I had an Aunt and Uncle (Bill and Elsie. Cedric and Gerald's Parents) living in the village at the time. She wasn't one that I really got on with as she was a real sticky beak and knew everything that was going on. In this case that was to be to my benefit as one day she came to our house and said that she had heard that one of the little cottages in the middle of the village might be coming vacant and she had spoken to the owners on my behalf.

This little cottage was one that had been built onto one of the old and original habitats in the village somewhere about 1830 allegedly by a man called Billy Watts who had a tribe of kids.(later on I was to find that these cottages had at one time belonged to the Marquis of Abergavenny)
Billy it was alleged had built it from stones that he had purloined from the many left over when the canal, some two miles away had been built in the late 1700s

It had only one fairly large room down stairs (obviously it had been two small ones) and two bedrooms upstairs. Plus a small lean to kitchen

It had no sewerage (the same as any one else in the village) only a bucket toilet outside the back door. No electricity or water laid on. But it had roses all over the front of it and was called "Rose Cottage" Above all, it was fully furnished.. The rent was 1 pound per week. A bit steep when one's wages at that time were only about 4 pounds ten shillings.

The owners were lovely people who had been left the cottages by a relative. Their only stipulation was that we would permit a picture of her Uncle to remain hanging on the wall.
Who cared about Uncle when one wanted a roof over one's head?

Margaret came down one weekend to see the place and we decided that it was just what we were looking for. So the date was set.

Neither of us had any money to start married life off on but who cared then. we were in Love.
I had a fairly good job and a furnished house plus a sideline job.

So we decided to go ahead for the 13th July 1949

I didn't have any money at all and had to borrow 30 pounds off of my Father (had to pay it back too)

On the 11th July I traveled up to Scotland along with my Mother and Sister who was to be a bridesmaid. Dad wouldn't come for some reason or other. (Probably meant he would lose money)I haven't a clue where Mum and Gwyneth stayed but I stayed at Margaret's place.
We were married at the Troon Old Church at 2.0PM. In Scotland in those days you had to be married BEFORE 3.0 PM. don't ask me why.

It was blowing a Gale and as Troon is right on the coast that means one got the brunt of it.
Over the years I do not think I ever visited Troon when it didn't rain or was freezing cold.
Even when we went back after almost 52 years for a visit. Guess what? It pissed down

The reception was held in the Coop hall. My Best Man was a Frankie Black who lived next door to Margaret, as I knew no one else I could ask in Scotland. (Never heard another thing from him until 2001 when I found him on the internet)
Margaret looked lovely as all brides do. She was dressed in white for purity (genuine) and I think the Brides maids Gwyneth and Enid (Margaret's sister) were in blue.
Me, I couldn't afford a new suit so wore my "demob"suit which was a brown pin stripe (if any one is interested.

After the reception we traveled to Glasgow for the night. Margaret was wearing a lovely two piece blue costume of the latest fashion.

We had decided to stay in Glasgow for the night as it would have been too late to travel down to Wales that day. Consequently we booked into a hotel. I don't think it was the Honeymoon Suite. But it was our first time together as man and Wife.
Here I must digress for a bit as it is relevant.

All my life I had been one who would not wear anything to bed. When my Mother knew that we were going to get married, she came to me one day with a package and said that as I was now going to get married and would be sleeping with someone I should wear pyjamas. And she had bought some for me. Yeah well!!!!.

They were a gorgeous pair of blue silk ones.

Anyway back to the story.

Whilst both of us were, we thought, persons of the world we were at that time rather embarrassed and decided that we would wait to consummate our marriage until we got into our own home. So being the good boy that I was I followed Mum's instructions and slipped on my new Blue Jammies and we settled down to sleep.

But oh no, Scotland didn't want that!!!

In Glasgow in those days, the trams were running almost nose to tail down the Main St and whilst the reader will probably not have seen the old trams I can assure them that they are the noisiest rattliest monstrosities ever invented. Plus they were constantly ringing their bells to warn people of their approach. And in Glasgow there were thousands of them.

Well this night they had put on the noisiest they could find and it didn't stop until about 11 PM. We had just settled down (still behaving) when some nut case in the Hotel or somewhere started to play the Bagpipes. SHIT but worse was to come

After about 30 mins he shut up, or was shut up, and reasonable quietness fell, and we thought that we were now in for a quiet night or what was left of it.

BUT

At about 1.0AM a bloody printing Press started up in the building opposite. It was one that must have been dug up with the Ark because the row, thumping and banging it made would have woken the dead. So we said bugger it, if it's meant to be, it's meant to be. And I have never seen those pyjamas since that day. We were married.

On our arrival back in Wales we settled into our cottage. We had no money for a Honeymoon but who wanted one. We had Roses around the door and a foot deep feather mattress.

The cottage was a bit of a cultural shock as both of us had been used to all modern amenities and now we had none.

Dad had put the electricity in as a wedding present. But our only means of cooking was a two burner kero stove, which if you didn't watch it would start smoking and cover the kitchen with sooty cobwebs.

To have a Bath we used a 6ft long tin bath in front of the fire.

In the corner of the kitchen was an old brick built boiler for the clothes. And outside the back door was a two hundred gallon water tank. But for drinking water we had to carry a pail about 150 yds and dip it in a well.

The bucket toilet was a huge galvanized effort which when full I had a job to lift.

There was no night soil collection so it had to be buried in the garden. Problem was to remember where one had buried the last lot. Mind you, the garden grew tremendous veggies.

Rather than have to go down stairs and out the back for the toilet at night we, as was the case with most people in those days had a pot under the bed. In our case it was kept out on the landing as we were still embarrassed about some things.

I can remember one night that rather than make a noise whilst doing it and disturb Margaret, I opened the tiny window on top of the stairs and started to do "it" out of the window onto the roof of the kitchen. But clever dick hadn't thought to check what the wind was doing had he. Yeah you guessed, I got my own back.

The garden was very tiny, but big enough for me, not being a gardener.

There was a cooking range in the living room and this served to heat the house too. But these were dirty old things being coal burners, and which had to be polished almost every day to keep them looking nice, with a black polish. This got into one's hands and clothes. Good Old Days????
Coal was expensive too.

There were only two small shops in the Village, but these sold just about everything. But of course they were more expensive than those in Town. So once a week we would hop on the bus and do the shopping.

Only a fortnight after we were married I was called away for a fortnight with the Territorials to the summer camp. I don't think Margaret was very amused but there was nothing that I could do about it.

In those initial days we ran into probably the same troubles as most newly weds do, especially with money. We didn't have a lot, and neither of us had any experience with budgeting so when Margaret got into strife with booking things up at the shop we had to get our act into gear Rationing was still in force which made things a lot harder too.

But since then we have never got into strife again. Thank goodness.

One of the first things we bought after I returned from camp with a couple of extra shillings in my pocket was our first little dog. He was a Brown "cocker type" spaniel with long floppy ears. He became "my" dog and would go everywhere with me. My Parents at that time had an old, scruffy, moth eaten terrier that was a marvelous ratter and Rabbit finder and he soon taught our pup the ropes. He would only have to see me lift the gun off the hook and he would be away to fetch my parent's dog. Although, we nearly lost him when he was only a tiny pup a few weeks old.

We had decided to go into Town for the day and possibly go to the pictures. As he wasn't properly house trained we had shut him in the kitchen where we thought he would be safe.

After lunch in Town we had been going to the pictures but having only been married a few weeks and still full of the joys of Spring we decided to go home and," you know what".

It was a good job that we did, as the poor little pup had somehow got behind the carpet sweeper, and tried to get through the piece that fastens the handle to the machine. He had pushed the handle, which had fallen, trapping him by the neck. Poor little thing was nearly dead by the time we got home.

To try and augment our income, and partly out of pity. We decided to take in a lodger.

There were a number of ex German Prisoners of war still in the village who had been working on farms and at the Agricultural College nearby. We knew several of these and had become friends. One of them, a Heinz Hune, was desperate for somewhere to live. He didn't want to go home as it was in Eastern Germany. Now under Russian Rule.

But if he couldn't find somewhere he would be deported.

So we took him in.

My Mother was as usual disgusted.

He was a model lodger, spotlessly clean and didn't intrude.

As he was trained in Gardening etc he took over ours and laid it out tidy. I have never, ever, had such fine vegetables as he produced.

I could speak reasonable German then, so we would have long soldier to soldier talks.

Like most people during that time we had no car or motor cycle (couldn't afford one)

So we bought a couple of secondhand bikes to get around on. This was great as we could get out to the seaside with other couples.(seaside was about 30 miles away).

Although we had been careful, what happened to everyone else, happened to us, and Margaret found that she was having a baby. It was a bit too soon for us, but those things cannot be undone.

Heinz decided that he would be too much of a burden for Margaret and when the baby came there would be no room so he started looking for other lodgings.

Eventually I asked my Parents to take him in. My Mother was horrified. A GERMAN IN HER HOUSE. NO WAY!!

I appealed to her so-called Christianity but for ages she wouldn't budge. Then Dad stepped in and said ok but only until such times as he could find somewhere else.

18 months later Heinz was married from their house. And for the rest of my Mothers life they were friends and he and his wife came to see them regularly, and after he opened a hairdressing salon in Town he would do my Mother's hair for her every month free.

I was on night shift when in the early hours of the morning; the Foreman came to me and told me that I was the proud Father of a baby girl. WOW

After several years working in the "main plant" of British Nylon Spinners" I was asked if I would like to go to the experimental plant to work.

This I jumped at as those working there were considered (perhaps by them selves) to be the elite.

Wages were higher, and the work far more interesting. Plus there were only two or three men working in an area. It was similar work to that of the Main plant but we had to know how to operate every machine and under different conditions as we would be working under the directions of technicians trying to find new things to do with Nylon. It was fascinating work

I had also built up my "outside" work and when not on shift would be almost fully employed doing something or other. I didn't care whether it was chimney sweeping, window cleaning, plumbing, decorating, or sticking my hands down someone's drain as long as there was a quid (dollar) in it. I still didn't have a vehicle but had made a small trailer, which I could affix to my cycle.

In the Territorials I had graduated to the rank of Corporal, and became an Instructor of Radar.

This was taking up much of my spare time as I was training with the band on Tues nights. Parade on Wed and in the shooting Club on Fridays plus being away most weekends or just for the Sunday.

At that time as the "cold war" was at it's height we were also training in Civil Defence and Rescue.

There was a small field at the back of our house which no one seemed to own, although it was mentioned in the Deeds of our house. And I got interested in raising chickens. Bringing many of them up from day olds. Very often because of the cold some of these babies were kept under lamps to keep them warm. Sometimes one would wander off too far and almost die with the cold. It was then that I would give them a drop of brandy and carry them around in my pocket for hours until they revived or @#@@@.

We had a magnificent Cockerel, but he was that protective of the hens that sometimes he would go for anyone that came near them. One day on hearing a racket in the yard I found that this cockerel had a rat cornered, which he eventually killed.

Many were the times he was flattened with the back of the spade or a piece of wood. Eventually, after he had attacked Margaret once too often he went into the pot.

One night when we came home from somewhere or other. Margaret went out to the toilet. It was dark but that didn't matter, as she knew the way.

However she had only been gone a few moments when I heard a terrific scream. On rushing out to see what the matter was. Margaret said that there was "something" in the toilet.

On investigating I found about 10 chooks huddled up around the seat where they were perching for the night. We had forgotten to lock them up in their shed for the night and they just wanted shelter.

Once again I cannot remember the sequences that all these incident occurred, but it doesn't really matter. They did, and are part of the story.

Just over two years after Janet was born we had a son, David. And another couple of years later Brian popped into the world

Up until this time we had had only cycles to get around on. Dad had made me a small sidecar to put on the side of mine, and I used to cart Janet around with me in that.

I would think nothing of cycling 20-30 miles each evening.

I even made a small trailer to hitch onto the back to carry my tools etc in

I think it was around this time that we first thought of immigrating to Australia. We made application and one day I was asked to go to London for something or other in relation to this.

As I had no money for the fare etc. I decided to travel to London on my cycle. It was a beautiful machine and I had just that day finished paying for it. And London was only 150 miles away and that was nothing.

However, on the way, like many other stupid cyclists I got in behind a large truck carrying logs and stayed with him for miles. Very often hanging on to his tail when we came to hills. Mind you, he wasn't traveling very fast.

At one hill, about halfway to London, I had got behind a bit and decided to catch him up and hang on.

I was only a few yards from him when the driver attempted to change gears and missed them. The truck started to roll back down the hill towards me and I had nowhere to go. To my left was a steep bank and to the right, heavy traffic.

I thought my days were over, believe me. However, I managed to scramble part way up the bank, hanging in to grass with one hand and trying to drag my cycle clear with the other. I managed to get myself clear but the truck ran over the front part of the cycle, wrecking it..

The truck was unable to stop running backwards for some distance then he rammed into the bank.

Whilst the near accident was really my fault in so much that I had been trying to catch the truck up, and hang on. I didn't tell the driver that and blamed him for the wreck of my new cycle.

He then gave me a lift into London, but it was a hair raising trip as the truck didn't have any brakes so unless the driver could change gears quick enough to at least slow down. We stopped for nothing, even traffic lights.

He promised to take my cycle back to his depot which was quite near where I lived and I could pick it up there.

I didn't know what I was going to do in London as I had very little money with me. I had been going to just have a couple of hours sleep probably at the side of the road and then cycle home. Now I was stuck.

Then I had a bright idea. The Government had only that year introduced the Social Welfare Act whereby they would help anyone in need. So I thought!!

So I found one of their offices and made a claim. Telling them the entire story.

But did I get much help. Not on your Nellie! They pried and poked as though I was a criminal, not someone just wanting a little help.

But I kept on until they eventually agreed to loan me the price of a train fare back to Wales. They wouldn't give the money but said I should meet their officer at Paddington Station in the morning.

I haven't a clue where I stayed the night. Might have been at my Uncles, I don't know. Somehow I think it was in a homeless person's hostel.

Anyway! Next morning (I had given up the idea of the Australia bit what ever it was)I duly presented myself to Paddington Station and met the Social Security bloke, who gave me a one way ticket to Wales(fortunately in those days one could get a train to almost anywhere and finish up within walking distance of ones home). Before he would give me the ticket however, I had to sign a form that I would repay the money within fourteen days. (This was fair enough)

BUT. The journey to Wales only took about 2 ½ hours or so, but before I had reached home some TWIT from the department had been out to the house and demanded the money from Margaret. She of course was flabbergasted not knowing what had been happening and told him to get lost. So much for Social Security.

On contacting the firm who owned the truck which had wrecked my cycle they tried hard to say that it wasn't their responsibility. However at the Time I was in the CTC (Cyclists Touring Club) something like the RAC for motorists.

And they would take up legal matters for Members. Anyway, I found out that trucks belonging to this firm had been involved in many accidents, two of them fatal. All because of unroadworthy vehicles.

After representation from the CTC and with this knowledge, they accepted responsibility and gave me the Money for new cycle which was far more than the original had been worth, even though it was almost new. With that money I bought a beautiful cycle. One of the best that money could buy in those days, which was the envy of all my fellow cyclists.

David was about six months old when I had to attend the Territorials Annual Camp. (By this time I was a Sgt Instructor in Radar and Civil Defence)

Margaret decided that she would travel up to Scotland for a holiday with her parents taking both children with her.

I was going to join them after the camp finished.

We still didn't have any spare money so I decided that I would cycle up to Scotland from Towyn in North Wales, a distance I suppose of about 250 miles or so.'

I set out one Sat morning at about 8 A.M. thinking that the journey would probably take me perhaps three days. I had a small tent with me and intended camping out, or staying at Youth Hostels as I was at that time a Member of the YHA and the CTC (Cyclists Touring Club) However, once I turned north towards Scotland I found that the wind was blowing almost at gale force. Fortunately from behind. So I donned my rain cape and holding my elbows out it acted like a sail. In some areas I didn't have to peddle for miles. When I came to a big hill there was always a truck or something to hang onto. (Yeah I know, it was a stupid thing to do. But then, it was the done thing)

I only stopped for a few moments now and again for a snack, and one time for a short sleep. It was quite hilarious though, as I think that this year was the first time that the Round Britain Cycling Race was run and many of the Towns that I passed through were on the Route of the race. Main streets were decorated with flags and bunting and I think that the racers had passed through only shortly before I got there as everyone appeared to think that I was "tail end Charlie" and often gave me a cheer. Shap Fell was going to be my big obstacle as the road rises hundreds of feet over the "mountain" which lies on the border between Scotland and England. And I thought I would have to walk all the way up it. It being far too steep for anyone to cycle up. However, I had stopped at small café some miles outside of Carlisle, for something to eat.

It was getting dark by now and I thought that I would have to stop for the night as I was getting awful tired even although the wind had saved me 90% of the work. Plus I was more than ahead of anything I had expected. But on telling a truck driver what I was doing, he offered to give me a lift to the top. Which I gratefully accepted.

At the top of Shap Fell there used to be an old bus that had been turned into a roadside "café". One ordered the meal, or whatever, and just stood around, whatever the weather to eat or drink. Those with trucks or cars were ok of course.

On the top, the wind was tremendous and it was a wonder that the old bus was never overturned by it. The driver dropped me just over the brow and after finding somewhere sheltered for an hour I just had to have a snooze. I awoke just as the sky was lightening (remember this was high summer in the UK).so it must have been fairly early in the morning. Setting off down the hill, with this gale behind me I literally flew.

At the bottom of the hill there was hardly any wind so now I had to start working. I had no need to keep going as no one expected me for a couple of days, but I had got the bit between my teeth. Several times I latched onto the back of trucks (remember they didn't do the speeds that they do today) It is I think about 45 miles from Shap Fell and Gretna Green to Troon. So it was about 10 AM when I rolled into Town. Margaret who had just been down the shops to fetch her Father's Sunday Paper was shocked when I rolled up behind her. No one would believe me that I had only left Towyn at 8 AM the previous day.

But I was completely and utterly exhausted and I just fell into bed when I got to Margaret's parents house and slept for hours. But I was fit in those days, and young, so soon recovered.

However, I still had to cycle back to Goytre. And after spending the week in Troon I set off thinking I would break the record going back. Ha HAHA!!!!

That bloody wind was still blowing, this time into my face, although not quite so hard. The first day I only got back as far as Dunfries (about 30 mile) where I spent the night in my little tent by the side of the road.

The following day I did much better as the wind dropped and I got as far as????? where I spent the night in a Youth Hostel.

On the evening of the third day I literally crawled from Abergavenny to Goytre.(the last 6 miles). My knee was so swollen I was unable to bend it and had to peddle with one leg. It was BLOODY hard work. Even my bum had blisters on it. I was Knackered!!!. But I had done it. And could talk about it for the rest of my life. Not MUCH of an achievement as achievements goes perhaps. But how many people had done it.

It took me days to recover properly and I swore never again. If I couldn't afford the fare I would stay home.

Several of our journeys up to Scotland over the years were quite epic.

I think perhaps it was the year after this episode that we had bought a Motorbike and sidecar. Still didn't have any money so we had cashed in an Insurance Policy for 25 pounds to buy this 1935 BSA Sloper. With the gear lever on the side of the tank. Once the elite of motor bikes, but this was now about 1953. But it served our purpose and we had moved up in the world. We would often go off for the weekend with the two kids in the sidecar and Margaret on the back. For camping we would attach my little nylon, two man tent, onto the sidecar. Janet would sleep in the sidecar and we three would snuggle down in the tent.

The old m/c was fairly robust but the engine was failing a bit so that sometimes it would be a bit of a struggle to get up steep hill. Sometimes we would even stuff the dog in the sidecar with the kids and he loved it.(not that we used the dog to help us up hills)

Anyway. This year we decided that we would take a trip up to Scotland. So loading the kids and all our junk on we set off. It raised a bit of a laugh in the village, as having no money to spare for proper clothes or even gloves, I wore a suit and Margaret wore a shiny rayon "New Look" dress.

Having taken the wrong road somewhere in the Midlands we found ourselves near Blackpool. This in those days was a Mecca for holiday makers and about which we had heard so much? So we decided to detour a bit more and have a look. Quite frankly we were disgusted with the place, so decided to buy some fish and chips and find somewhere to camp for the night. Remember in those days there were no Motor Ways, which enabled one to do the trip in a few hours. Then, it was an adventure.

Some miles outside of Blackpool we turned down a small country lane and sought out a suitable camping spot.

It was just getting dark when we found what we thought was the perfect spot, so setting up camp we scoffed the f and f and settled down to sleep. Janet in the sidecar, and we three in the tiny tent.

We hadn't been settled more than an hour so when the most terrible roaring sound awakened us and the ground trembled. Janet screamed, and we all clung together absolutely petrified. It sounded just as though whatever it was was coming right down on top of us.

I HAD to find out what it was, and it wasn't until I poked my head out of the tent that I found we had camped right beside a damned railway line. I think the train must have been one of the first diesels, as we had not heard any of the familiar choof choof of a steam train.

We didn't get much sleep that night because every hour or so there would be another train. Then early in the morning it started to bloody well rain. David was sitting up chasing the runnels of rain that were

coming into the tent with his fingers, making it worse. Fortunately come daylight it dried up and we set off again.

On the day that we decided to return home it was “pissing” with rain. (Nothing unusual in Britain during Summer) Neither of us had any wet weather gear so it was going to be a miserable trip. Margaret’s Father, who worked at the shipyard managed to find a seafaring tarred coat for me, and I managed to buy a pair of industrial asbestos gloves.

Margaret had to squeeze in the sidecar with the kids.

All the way to Shap Fell, it lashed with rain so we decided, during a lull, to camp for the night in an old quarry. That was ok but just at the entrance to the quarry, on the road, there must have been a loose manhole cover or something, for whenever a truck went by there was this bang, bang.

At daylight, I managed to find enough dry kindling to get a fire going so that we could dry ourselves out.

That day was quite nice so I dispensed with the old coat that we had “borrowed” which was leaving tar all over everything.

Margaret resumed her place on the pillion.

We had travelled several miles without any mishap, when on turning corners, the bike seemed to become unstable. At first I blamed Margaret for not “leaning” properly but she was. We eventually found out that the main bolt holding the sidecar to the bike had broken inside the housing, and every time we went around a corner, this bolt would come right out of the hole. Fortunately there were two other brackets holding everything together.

We couldn’t find a Garage open anywhere, but eventually found a blacksmiths shop. In those days, many blacksmiths were mechanics.

He had a hell of a job, eventually burning the broken bolt out and fixing the problem.

It was funny that it should be a blacksmith that saved the day then as it was another blacksmith that helped me when one day, the engine just refused to go any further.

On investigation we found that both the valves had burnt out.

Obviously there was nowhere out in the countryside where I was where I could obtain spares. So this blacksmith found some old tractor valves and turned them down to size. Can you imagine anyone doing that today?

Eventually I traded that old bike in and there was a succession of m/cs, all of which should have been “put down” years before.

One on particular is worth recording. It was an ex army Enfield 350cc.

One day when I was travelling to Cornwall, to an Army camp. I was crossing a particularly lonely stretch of moors when I felt a peculiar feeling and there was a scraping sound. On stopping, I found that the frame had broken just under the handlebars. This, allowing the sub frame which was holding the engine, to bend. It was this that I had heard scraping on the ground. But the engine was still going.

I was miles from anywhere, not even a house in sight so thought that I was going to have a bloody long walk.

However I had only pushed the bike about a mile when I found a small garage. But just as I got there, the owner was just locking up and said that he was off on holidays for a fortnight. “Nice”

But eventually I think he took pity on me being a soldier (I was in uniform) and pushed the bits back together securing it with a couple of bolts. Even then there were a few Nice people around.

Some months later we set off for Bristol to go to the Zoo.(I had bought a second hand sidecar).

On the way, the wheel of the sidecar started to squeak and pulling into a garage we found that for some reason or other, the bearing on the sidecar wheel was coming apart. Anyway the mechanic fixed it, warning that it could go again. But after obtaining several spare ball bearings we set off. We got as far as the Chepstow Ferry before there was further trouble which I fixed at the side of the road.

Anyone with any sense would have turned around and headed home, but not us!

Returning home after the visit to the zoo, we got back as far as Usk where I had to pull in for petrol. The wheel hadn't made a sound for miles so I thought all was well.

The forecourt of the garage was on quite a slope and just as I was telling the attendant about the wheel. It collapsed completely.

We still had about 6-7 miles to get home so unhooking the sidecar, I left Margaret and David in the bus depot and sitting Janet in front of me, I buttoned her under my overcoat and took her home. Leaving her with my Mother I went back to fetch the others. But Margaret had got fed up waiting and had caught the bus.

Then one day, I had taken my Uncle Bill, (Cedric and Gerald's Dad) to Cardiff where he was undergoing Cancer treatment.

Whilst he was in the hospital I wandered around the many car yards and eventually decided to trade the bike in. (I think that by now Margaret was expecting Brian) and bought a lovely car for 120 pounds (so I thought) (hire purchase)

I had never driven a car before so asked the salesman to take me around to where Bill was so that he could take us home.

I waited outside the hospital for ages, and then found that Bill had gone home by train.

Phew!!!! What was I to do.

Welllllllll. Being the intrepid sort of guy that I am I decided there was no use just sitting there I would have to try and drive the thing (I had had a go at driving various army vehicles, mainly tanks and things.). The traffic in Cardiff was very heavy which didn't make it any easier, but waiting until there was a break, I kangaroo'd out into the stream and started off. Once I got going it was ok. However on reaching Newport, for some reason or other I stalled the bloody thing and could not start it again as the battery was flat.

As I was just outside the bus depot I asked the mechanic there if he would bring out the big battery they used for the busses. That got me started.

I had to go around in a circle to get back onto the road I wanted and bugger me. I got back to the same spot again when it conked out again.

I had just started to look under the bonnet, when a policeman came along and asked if I wanted a hand. I did. But not from him as I had no license and the car wasn't insured either.

But just as he came to the front of the car it started to rain and as he had no coat, he had to move on. Thank goodness!!

I don't remember HOW I started it again but I did, and arrived proudly home.

It was a beautiful car with sliding glass panels between the front and rear compartments.

When Dad saw it he was immediately suspicious and asked if I had the log book. (Which is mandatory in the U.K?)I said that the seller was going to send it to me.

When it didn't arrive after a few days. Dad drove me back to the yard and had a go at the salesman. Eventually we discovered that it was stolen car. Thank you very much!.

I then swapped it for a 1939 Austin I think it was.

But once again, like many other innocents I had been "done".

I had had it only a few months when all sorts of troubles eventuated.

Despite its faults we decided to go once again up to Scotland (I think we had Brian by now)

There was an awful rattle under the bonnet (not all the time) and black smoke belched from the exhaust whenever I had to put my foot down.

But who worried about minor details like that.

As I still didn't have a license and the car wasn't insured, we decided to go up at night, so that we would be inconspicuous. HA HA

I think we passed every cop in England, but when I saw one I would just keep my foot off the throttle.

Early in the morning we were just running down a hill into a Town when I saw in the dim light, a policeman standing at the kerb with his hand raised.

I thought "That's IT. We're done.

It wasn't until we were within a few yards of him that we saw he was only a cut out model, with a sign at his feet saying, "You are entering the Town of? Please take you're foot of the throttle"

Later that day we were crossing the moors when a police car rang his bell, and on overtaking signalled me to stop.

I thought, "This MUST be it" I got out quickly and to prevent the cops coming to close to the car to see there was no disc in the window went to their car. And innocently asked what I had done?

"Nothing" replied the cop." But we saw you had kids in the car and we found this on the road back there" With which, he handed me a large teddy bear.

If he had only known the heart attack that he had given me.

On arrival in Scotland I was advised by my Father in Law that the rattling under the bonnet was in fact the big end going. BIG ENDS what the hell were they?

He told me that I could replace the shells (Artillery, Sea??) how was I to know.

Anyway, on advice from a garage, I obtained the shells and knowledge about changing them. This I did at the side of the road in front of the "In Laws" place. Lifting the car by running one wheel up on the car. Hadn't got a jack.

Going back, for about 150 miles everything went ok then the bloody rattle started again.

It was only about 250-300 mile each way but I believe we used about 15 gallons of oil and only about 10 gallons of petrol.

Then one day there was an almighty bang under the bonnet. Steam and smoke everywhere.

On removing the head we found that all the pistons had disintegrated leaving just four holes.

I eventually sold that car to a "sucker" who said that although there wasn't much compression, it would probably start with a tow, Ha.

I never heard anything from him, but what more did he want for 10 pounds?

After this I bought a beautiful Vauxhall. This gave us little problem except for one night when we had gone to a friends house somewhere up in one of the mining towns.

It was freezing cold and whilst we were there it started to snow. By the time we decided to go home, the snow was about 6 inches deep.

We had only gone about a mile or so when the engine died.

In those days all cars had a starting handle with which one could start the car by swing this handle around several times.

This I tried doing several times but no luck. Bending over like this had given me the stomach ache and I just had to go. But where? The only hedge was around someone's front garden. So one just had to take what was offered. Fortunately, as I said the snow was about 6 inches deep so it was easy to cover my tracks. Which was ok until the snow melted. But by then I would have forgotten all about it.

It appeared that the engine was starved of petrol, so tickling the fuel pump I injected petrol, swung the handle and bingo .we were off. But for only about half a mile when it stopped again. And that's how we went all the way home. Stopping every half mile or so to tickle, swing the handle, then drive like hell to the next stop. It took us about two hours to do a half hour trip.

Next day Cedric and Gerald took the pump off for me and took it apart. When they dug the muck out, it was like a birds nest. The pile was bigger than the pump.

In about 1958 or 9 we started to look around for another house. We had now a third child Brian, and there were only two bedrooms in the cottage. There wasn't much going in the village at that time although a new estate was being built quite close by. These houses we could not afford, as they were going for about three thousand five hundred pounds.

I had the offer of one house, which was quite nice but we hadn't got any money for the deposit.

I wouldn't ask my Father for a loan, but eventually plucked up courage to ask my Uncle Bert. He loaned me 220 Pounds but by the time I got it, the house had gone.

However, just at that time, the owners of the cottage asked us if we would like to buy ours and the one next door.

We jumped at the offer, as the folks next door who were (to us) quite elderly agreed to let us knock through the wall and occupy two small bedrooms on their side. They would move into a bedroom across the hall.

I must tell you a little of our neighbours though.

As I said, they appeared quite elderly to us, but they couldn't have been more than about 60 as he had still been working until a year or so before.

They were the scruffiest, dirtiest pair of people that I have ever known. But they were wonderful neighbours with hearts of gold, and they worshipped the kids.

I had never been any further than in the family room, so had no idea what the rest of the house was like. But this I soon found out and had quite a cultural shock when I did.

It would have been quite a feat to have broken through the wall except that only about six months previously. David, who was a glutton for work, and a smart arse too, had suggested that we turn the stairs around the other way as this would give us more room in the living room. And this we had done.

I only had to mention the word work to David and he was there with the tools at the ready.

Anyway, one Saturday afternoon we started to smash our way through. Remember the walls of these old places were something like 4 ft thick, and made of large boulders and stones.

The stones came out much easier than I thought they would and within about an hour my bar broke through into next door bedroom. As it did a draught started to blow through and we were nearly sick with the stench that came with it.

After a couple of hours, the stink appeared to diminish, so we continued. As we did, we came across the remains of a window. The timber of which was in perfect condition.

On breaking completely through we were appalled at the mess that was in the two small bedrooms. Cobwebs hung down almost to the floor, and there was dirty clothing scattered everywhere. In one bedroom, there was the uniform of their son who had come out of the army in 1946. He had left home years before.

I flew into them and made them clean it up. After all I was now the Landlord.

It didn't take long to pull down the wall between the two bedrooms, making one fair sized room.

We cleaned and polished it all then painted. It did look nice. So we moved our bed in.

The first night in our new bedroom we lay in bed looking around and admiring it. When Margaret said, "What's that on the ceiling?"

Getting out of bed I went to investigate and we were horrified, to say the least to, find that the room was literally crawling with BUGS. Thousands of the filthy things.

Neither of us had ever seen these before so you can imagine what we felt like.

Our furniture, and we, were out of that room faster than a speeding bullet.

Grabbing an insecticide spray I smothered the walls of the opening to stop any coming through.

Next morning, I tore strips of the old couple and threatened to throw them out unless they cleaned their side up immediately.

But you would never believe it when I was turned on by several of the other villagers for threatening them with eviction.

I didn't give stuff for anyone in those days and promptly told them where to go.

We bought dozens of cans of spray and fumigated right through. I even went over the walls and cracks with a blowtorch. For days we were sweeping these things up by the bucket load. Eventually we cleared the place and with some trepidation moved back in. Thank goodness the bugs never got through into our place.

The old couple had moved into a bedroom across the other side of the stairs. So we blocked the bedroom door off and made sure that a barrier of insecticide was always kept around it.

There was always a funny smell in next door. Probably from the bugs, and dirt.

A few days after we had moved back into this bedroom, we were fast asleep (and NOT playing up) when the damn bed collapsed.

Some time after this, one night whilst I was on night shift. The old chap came round to our front door and said to Margaret that he couldn't wake "Margaret" (his wife) to give her pills. Apparently she had been very ill and someone had given them a bed so that she could sleep downstairs in the warm. Anyway, Margaret duly got dressed and went in to see what she could do to help. She found that the old girl was dead. Which didn't amuse her at all? (My Margaret that is)

Probably two days afterwards I called in to see the old man and give my condolences. There was nowhere else to sit other than on the side of the bed, which was made up.

Old Frank said, "Did you see Margaret". I replied "No, I would rather remember her as she was when I last saw her". Thinking that she was laid out in a funeral home or down at the church. But no she wasn't. For Frank leaned over me and pulled the bedclothes aside, exposing the body of his wife. All nicely dressed etc, but I mean to say. Talk about a shock to the system. Apparently he had been sleeping in with her, as it was the most comfortable bed they had ever had. And as he said, "She never hurt me when she was alive, she's not going to start now".

As soon as reasonable decent we asked the old chap if he would move into the downstairs rooms so that we could move over into his old bedroom and make our bedroom into a sitting room, with a reduction in rent of course.

This he agreed to do. So into the breach we again thundered. On entering the room we were appalled at the dirt and squalor.

We had given them an old spring bed sometime previously and this is what they were using. But there was no mattress on it other than a couple of coats. We wondered what all the little white "bits" were that were squashed into the springs and found that they were hundreds of cigarette ends.

The place reeked and old chest of draws was full of dirty underclothing.

I asked the old man whether he wanted anything from that room to which he replied in the negative.

Margaret refused to let me take any of the stuff through our side of the house, so the only way was to smash out a small window which overlooked the yard and chuck everything out through there. The kids had a marvellous bonfire next day.

It was funny though, that the moment the old girl died, the stink went too and the old man cleaned and polished his place until it shone. He was an ex Sgt in the Army.

Up until this time, no one in the village had piped water on and it seemed years away. However, one day when I was walking down the road, the light must have been just right as I could see a line in the road where there had obviously been work done, albeit years before. On making enquiry's I discovered that a water main had been laid at the beginning of the war to take water to an ammunition dump just outside the village.

That started a war between the Council and me when I asked why I couldn't tap into that.

I have never heard so many excuses. Remember we had to walk about 150 yards to a well for our drinking water.

Eventually the Council gave in and promised to install the water to our property. Then another round of procrastination's started.

I had laid all the pipes to my place and installed Bath etc. All we wanted was the water.

Then one day I went to the County Council in Cardiff and did my block over it.

After about half an hour I was taken into see one of the chiefs who asked me all about it.

He was flabbergasted over the goings on of the Local Council and Particularly the Health Inspector. Picking up the phone, he spoke to the Health Inspector and said. "This is all a load of nonsense, all we require is three days Notice that the road is to be opened, and three days to do the job. Shall we consider this the third day of notification?. And the job will be done within three days"

Next day the workmen turned up. It was freezing cold and raining so to keep them sweet we kept the tea etc coming all day. By the afternoon they were ready to connect to the pipes that I had already laid.

But the bloody Health Inspector got the last dig in. He refused to pass the pipework saying that it was not the right grade. (This was used everywhere else).

Rather than argue (for once) I ripped the pipes out and replaced them with the best stuff.

Oh it was lovely to just turn the taps on. And not have to march across the fields every day. And we were the only ones in the whole district who had running water.

One thing we have never regretted leaving was the English Winters. We didn't have central heating in those days. Just a small coal fire in the Living room and kero heaters for the bedrooms. These things were less than useless and many a morning we could scrape the ice and frost off the insides of the windows.

As the cottages were in rather an exposed position we copped all the weather including snow. Which used to pile up over our downstairs windows. Fortunately the back door opened inwards otherwise we would have never got out to the toilet in the mornings. Even so we often had to dig our way out.

When we moved in first, we wondered why there was quite step up from the road, and a stone wall around the front garden.

We soon found out the first winter, when the small drain outside the house blocked up and water came over the step, and into the house. Many a night I had to get out in the middle of the night to unblock this drain so that we didn't get flooded. I eventually altered the heights and the water would flow down the side of the house. Although one day there was such a flood came down that it swept into the back door and started to flood the kitchen. Which I was at the time, in the process of renovating and I didn't want all my work spoilt so the only thing I could do was to smash a hole in the outside wall to let the water run straight through.. This problem too was rectified by building a small step into the yard.

Although one year, this proved to be a hazard in itself as. Standing to one side of the yard was a 500 gallon water tank which was full. One night it was freezing cold, and the tank froze over. It couldn't have been properly upright as the weight of ice caused it to topple over, dousing the yard with all this water. As the step I had built now made the yard into a sort of bund, the water couldn't get out.

When we came out in the morning we found that this "slosh" of water had gone into the toilet, (remember we still had a bucket).(This was before the water was laid on) It had tipped the bucket over and all over the yard there was a sheet of ice with little brown "icebergs" sticking up everywhere.

We laugh now, but then it was a heartbreaking job to clean it all up.

The only good thing about the cold weather was that just about everyone's water pipes froze and as I was a plumber I was flat out repairing bursts and thawing pipes out. As the old saying goes," make hay whilst the sun shines" and I did.

One year, there was so much snow that the kids couldn't go to school between Xmas and Easter. It was up over the hedges, and the roads, in the main roads were blocked solid.

I was fortunate that I didn't have far to go to work, and if necessary could walk there.

Some winter mornings one would go out thinking that all was well, until one stepped onto the road or pavement. Then one would find themselves flat on their backs because the surfaces were covered in black ice. It was impossible to see this, but it was that slippery. The only way to get around was to perhaps wear a pair of socks over one's shoes, or hang onto something. But this too was dangerous, because if it was metal, one's hands would stick to it and burn.

The first snow was always beautiful and a bit of an adventure. At least to the younger people. But within hours, roads would be blocked and everything at a standstill and it would become a bloody nuisance.

And even more so once it started to thaw. As the snow melted, it would reveal all the rubbish that had been hidden beneath it. Sometimes it would start to thaw. Then refreeze, making life and travel unbearable. Brrrrrrrrrrrr!!.

Most of my weekends were taken up with the Territorials. By now I was a Staff Sgt. Instructor of Radar, Driving and Civil Defence so there was plenty for me to do. Plus it gave us more than a little extra cash.

My radar set was a massive 16.0 ton 12 ft high monstrosity pulled by a 16-ton truck so one can imagine we took up more than our fair share of the road.

One Sunday afternoon we were returning from some exercises in the Cardiff area when, on negotiating a fairly steep hill on a busy main road the engine failed which caused us to lose power to the brakes and the whole lot started to run back down the hill, before the emergency braking cut in it had jackknifed.

We were unable to move and there was traffic piled up everywhere. To make matters worse it started to pelt down with rain.

I could see the chimney's of some cottages some distance away across the fields so, grabbing the blackout curtain as a rain coat. I headed across to them hoping there would be a telephone and we might be able to obtain a cup of tea or something.

I couldn't get any answer at two of the cottages, but at the third a voice called out "come in"

Naturally I was hesitant, and said that I was a stranger looking for a telephone. The voice then yelled at me. "I don't give stuff who you are, come on in out of that rain"

On entering the cottage I saw a man sitting beside the fire in an armchair.

He turned to me and said "Come on in Soldier, what's your problem"

As I started to explain, I noticed a lady sitting in a bath of water at the other side of the fireplace. (This was common place in Wales) But it was quite a shock, and in those days I was easily embarrassed, I didn't know where to look.

When I explained what had happened, the man waved across to the phone and told me to go ahead. At the same time telling his wife to "get out of the bath and make the lad a jug of tea"

It didn't seem to worry her either and she walked out into the kitchen in her birthday suit. Later coming back dressed, with a large billycan of tea and a couple of cups.

When I related the tale to the men on returning to the Radar, everyone wanted to take the cups back. But the show was over by then. I have often wondered whether folks like this ever remember these incidences.

Another weekend we were carrying out some winching drill in a field when a man approached us and asked whether we could winch or tow his home to a new position.

He took us across a couple of fields and proudly showed us his "home".

It was an old bus which had been converted.

He and his wife had been given the bus and it was the first home that they had ever had. Previously they had lived in shacks and in the hedges, they had nothing. But the woman had the little bus spotless.

They wanted it moved approx. 200 yards to a more sheltered spot. So, hitching up, we started to tow it. Someone had to steer the ruddy thing and that was me. That was ok, but only a matter of a couple of feet behind the steering wheel was a red hot stove.

After the exercise was over I felt I was a real hot arse believe me. But felt good to see these folk's happiness in their little home.

I could probably fill a book with anecdotes relating to experiences with the T.A and perhaps I will sometime. But if I don't get on with the General story, It will be finished before the book is.

Amongst my other social activities I was also a Member of the Village Hall Committee.

This was a "temporary structure erected by the Government immediately after the war. It was made of a steel frame and wire mesh which had been coated with concrete. The only timber in it being the floor and the stage.

At the rear, a timber, ex army hut had been erected and was being used as a temporary school room.

Below this room, of all things, was the boiler house for the central heating system.

I and another Committee Member had elected to carry out some renovations and decorations and one morning whilst we were working in the cloakrooms we smelt what we first thought was paint getting hot. This sometimes happened when the pipes of the heating system got hot. Therefore we took no notice. However it quickly became evident that it was more than this and on investigation we found that the wooden structure at the back of the hall was well and truly on fire. There were no extinguishers or hoses available so I eventually ran to the village and called the Fire Brigade. By the time they got there, the hall was well and truly ablaze. I never thought that concrete and steel would burn, but this did it was amazing. There was nothing that the Brigade could do but let it burn itself out.

No one else ever knew the truth of what happened but I found that our son Brian and one of his little mates had been playing in the boiler house, and had accidentally dropped some lighted paper onto a pile of wood, and away it went. Of course, the boiler house door should never have been left open. And again, the boiler house shouldn't have been allowed to have been built under the hut.

But that is all history, and one good thing came out of it and that was that the village got a lovely new brick building.

It was shortly after this that the Hall Committee decided to erect a fence around the grounds and to fill in the well that was there.

This well was the one that the occupants of our house had been using for many many years. Therefore we had the Rights to that water.

I took the matter to the Council which couldn't understand my attitude seeing as we now had piped water, but eventually admitted that I was right.

The Hall Committee was ordered to re dig the well and give me a key to the gate so that we could get water at any reasonable time.. We had however to sign an agreement that this Right only existed during the tenancy of the current occupiers of Rose and Ivy Cottages.

Perhaps I was a bit dogmatic over this but I have always been a believer in Principles and the Hall Committee had tried to take away a Right. Albeit a small one.

The same applied to Public Paths.

The UK is crisscrossed by Public Paths which sometimes meander through Private property, but the owners cannot deny access. My Father had one running down the side of his garden.

One of my pastimes was traversing as many of these paths as possible to keep them open as they were supposed to be used at least once every year. Very often farmers would allow blackberry bushes to

grow over stiles, so that walkers couldn't get through. I knew just about every path in the area and it was wonderful just where they went. Probably many of them are now defunct, as I doubt many people use them today.

However, back to the story.

It must have been in the very late 50s or early sixties that we suddenly had an influx of people into the village. Land nearby had been subdivided for housing and every weekend there would be people milling around looking at this land.

Many of them would knock at our door asking for a drink of water, or perhaps hot water so that they could make some tea.

Eventually we got a little fed up with this and I saw an opportunity to make something out of the situation.

Consequently I built a wall across the kitchen. Dividing it in two. One part being only about a metre wide. In the outside wall, which overlooked the yard, I installed a sliding window.

We had no money to set up shop so once again I cashed in an Insurance policy for 14 Pounds with which, we purchased a few packets of cigarettes, cooldrinks and sweets.

An Ice-cream company loaned us a refrigerator and stocked it with the first load of Ice cream.

Then we opened for business. We had to serve people through the window whilst they stood in the yard but it was amazing just how quickly custom grew. Even amongst the local Youths who had no where much to go in the evenings.

Somehow we managed to buy a couple of tables and chairs and a couple of umbrellas and people could, in the nice weather sit out in the garden.

We had been open some time when one evening a Local Man (one of the Newcomers) came in to buy something. He said "Why don't you build a shop on here?"

My reply was that I would have to be kicked up the pants to make me do something like that, and in any case we haven't the money.

A couple of weeks after this, this gentleman came back and said, "I hope you don't mind, but I have kicked you up the pants. I have arranged for someone to come and see you about a shop"

Naturally we were flabbergasted and a little perturbed. But eventually the person arrived.

He painted a glowing picture of what we could do, and the potential of the place.

I told him that we had had enough problems with the Council over our little shop as it was. There was no way that they would allow us to build and operate something like this.

But we were wrong.

Our house was situated some two hundred yards from the main road, on a slight downwards incline.

Very often people, who had been in the Pub or had just broken down, would run their cars or motorcycles down the slope to try and start them. Many were the times when we would be awakened by someone tinkering with their vehicle outside the house because it had failed to start even after running down the hill. Very often, being the kind hearted soul that I am, I would get up and go out to try and give them a hand. Sometimes with success. More than once we offered a bed (mattress on the floor) to stranded travellers.

We never thought to ask any of them if they were married or not. But if not, it was their lucky night.

Perhaps we were a bit daft doing this. But people seemed to trust each other better in those days and my Father had always preached to me that “You will reap what you sow” and this is right as many people have been good to me when I have been stuck.

Chapter 8

Our First Business Venture

It must have been in the very late 50s or early sixties that we suddenly had an influx of people into the village. Land nearby had been subdivided for housing and every weekend there would be people milling around looking at this land.

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Naturally we were flabbergasted and a little perturbed. But eventually the person arrived.

He painted a glowing picture of what we could do, and the potential of the place.

I told him that we had had enough problems with the Council over our little shop as it was. There was no way that they would allow us to build and operate something like his.

He replied, “let’s see what happens, shall we?”.

A few weeks later he turned up again with some plans, which we immediately liked and told him to go ahead with trying to get planning approval. I was sure that is would not be forthcoming as my relationship with the Council and in particular the Health Inspector was not the best..

However, low and behold they approved of the shop .The problem now was where to get the money to build it.

Whilst I was thinking about this, I had occasion to phone the architect for something or other and discovered that he was the County Council Architect and Town Planner. No wonder it got through.

Everything lay in abeyance for a while as I had never built anything in my life and had no idea how to even start. But I obtained several books and asked a lot of questions and eventually started digging the footings.

Then once again Luck played its part.

I was doing some work for the owner of the Local Pub at the time, and he asked me whether I would like the job of clearing away some old greenhouses on the property.

On inspecting the job I found that all that was left was a brick wall about 4 ft high. About 50ft long on both sides and about 20ft on the ends, the bricks had been laid using black mortar which came off easily. I later found that the brickwork went down into the ground another 6-8 courses. It took me a couple of weeks to remove all this and cart the bricks down to my place. This fortunately was only about 100 yards.

There were sufficient bricks in this lot to build all the walls.

Dad made all the windows for me and all I had to buy was the Glass and a door.

When it came to the roof, I was buggered as I had no idea how to build it. But I used my imagination and brains. It must have been right, as that roof is still good some 40 years later.

We had to borrow 100 Pounds from the Bank to complete the roof. All told, the shop probably cost us about 200 Pounds to Build.

It was designed, so that should the business ever fail or we give it away, the shop could be used as a Lounge room.

Dad also built the Counter and the Tables for us. All we had to buy was a few chairs. I think initially we could seat about 12 or sixteen persons. Most stuff was scrounged from army surplus stores and junk yards.

My Uncle Earnest who was an Artist, painted a lovely sign across the front in real Gold Leaf

I must record that David although he was only about 8 or 9 worked like a Trojan, helping me to build the shop. Every bit of concrete we mixed by hand. But he was a workaholic even in those days. At one time I decided to pull out two fireplaces. There appeared to be tons of rubble, but we had bought him a little wheel barrow and he shifted 90% of it. When Mother ordered him to bed he cried and made us promise to leave some for him for the morning. Brian wasn't so silly; he always found something, somewhere else to do.

I cannot remember how we managed to stock the shop but I think the wholesalers were pretty good and gave us a fair credit. But stock it we did.

Oh!, I have forgotten a bit ,but I am not going back to the last chapter to put it in.

As I said previously the first "shop" had only been about a mtr wide. But we found that the business grew so fast that we were obliged, especially with the onset of winter, to make it bigger so that people could stand inside, instead of out on the yard in all weathers.

Consequently I knocked the wall down to about three feet. Put a Counter on the top and used the other half of the Kitchen as the shop. God knows where we cooked etc.

I have an idea that I built a small kitchen and Bathroom of the side.

Once the shop opened it was an immediate success. We weren't making a fortune, but remember we lived in a small village, some short distance off of the Main Rd.

Workmen building the new houses soon found us and on the weekends, people coming out to see how their houses were coming on, flocked in.

Even Policemen and Council workers would come out from Pontypool (4 1/2 miles away) just for a cuppa.

Then a bus Company that was ferrying workers to the Nylon Factory found us and eventually something like 40 drivers came in every day.

Margaret I am afraid, bore the brunt of much of this as I was still working shifts, and doing all my sidelines as well.

Eventually though, I had to give up work at the Nylon as it was getting too much for us.

Just before I finished work we had an incident that incensed me and many people in the village, including the Policeman.

I came home one morning off night shift, to find that the whole of our shop had been painted pink. Windows and all.

I guessed immediately from where it had been instigated, and that was from another Café that had been started the other side of the Village.

Why, I never understood, as his place was a big one and very posh. But I suppose he was jealous of our success.

I flew into his place and started to just about take the place apart, I was that angry. Fortunately perhaps for me, my Father turned up before too much damage had been done, and stopped me, saying "Leave it Son, you will get the worst of the law, and he will reap what he has sown"

Which was some of the truest words, as his shop was eventually closed down by the Council.

Fortunately too, the night that the job had been done was extremely cold and there must have been a frost on the walls as the paint came off quite easily. But we had no more bother from the opposition.

It must have been somewhere in 1956 when I was again called to the Army because of a big blow up over the Suez Canal in Egypt. France and Britain had virtually declared war on Egypt over the Canal and all British Forces were mobilized,

Everyone thought that this was the real thing, and on the way to our mobilization Point which for me was again York, there were military bands playing on the stations and everything was set up as though we really meant it. On arrival at York were issued with extra kit etc.

In the mess hall all ranks other than Officers had to feed together and I was made Duty Sgt.

When I went to get my meal, I was served with what I could only describe as PIG SWILL.

At which, I did my block, tipping the so called meal onto the counter and demanding to see the cook, who was a beefy looking Sgt. He got really stuck into me but for once I pulled rank. When the Duty Officer arrived I showed him the so called meal and asked him to taste it. When he did, he ordered the cook to scrap everything and prepare a decent meal.

My name stunk in the cookhouse but I couldn't care less. There was no need for this sort of thing.

Later that night we were taken out to an airfield and boarded a massive plane which was to take us to Germany to replace troops that had been sent to Egypt.

I had never been on anything this size before and wasn't at all keen on flying in it so took the seat furthest away from the window. On the pretence that I could keep an eye on the lads better from there.

Eventually we taxied off. After a few moments I sneaked a look out of the window, into the darkness and said, jeez we are a long way up already, Then someone said "just wait 'til we take off Staff"

The bloody thing had only taxied and flown probably about 10 ft off the ground before coming back down on the furthest part of the field.

It was just another "ploy" to make out Britain was flexing its muscles to any observers.

We parked there for a couple of hours and were then shunted off in trucks to somewhere and eventually returned home as the Yanks had stepped on Britain and France and made them back down.

But it was a few pounds in my pocket.

When I got home I found that Margaret had bought some new carpets on the strength of this money.

On leaving the Nylon where I had been employed for something like 12 or 13 yrs, things were tight for a bit as the Café wasn't making a big profit and although I had plenty of work with Plumbing, decorating etc there wasn't a lot of money in it and very often I had to wait a while before the customers paid up.

I then started to branch out into anything that was going and would make a Pound.

In England just about every housewife has her windows cleaned at least once per fortnight, and there were a number of large houses in the District so I eventually built up a

large window cleaning round employing two lads. Chimney sweeping was also lucrative sideline too. The owner of a VERY large mansion near us called Goytre Hall; a Mrs. Reese took a shine to me and gave a lot of work.

One job in particular most lucrative. The house was on a water meter and it was discovered that they were losing hundreds of Gallons of water every day.

I searched for days to try and find the leak. Digging slowly along the 2 inch lead pipe line that ran from the dam to the house. This would have been about three hundred yards I suppose. But I found nothing. It was possible that the leak was somewhere under the stables or outhouses and that would have been impossible, so Mrs. Reese ordered me to

pull up all the old main and relay in copper tube. Cutting of the stables etc, and renewing as much of the pipe as possible. This I did.

At the end of the job, there was a massive pile of lead pipe lying beside the driveway. Mrs Reese didn't like any mess so told me one day to get "rid of that rubbish" which I promptly did. At that time lead was bringing in a fantastic price. It took me about three days to shift it all in my little van but she was pleased, and never asked me whether I had sold the lead.

Another funny job that she gave me was to try and find the Septic tank, she had never had it cleaned, and the drains appeared to be blocking. Remember this was a huge house with about 15 bedrooms so there would have been a lot of waste being disposed of.

No one had the slightest idea where the tank was and there would have been about 20 acres of landscaped gardens.

I eventually discovered an old man who had worked at the Hall many years before who reckoned that he knew where the drains were. But when I took him there he could only say, "they are somewhere under the front lawn. Several acres of it.

Dividing the lawn into sections I probed and dug for weeks. I even got a water diviner in, to no avail.

No one even knew where the effluent from the tank went to. So I thought I would be smart and if I could find out where that went and draw a line between there and the house I would at least have a line to try in. So one day I put gallons of blue dye down the drains.

Some two days later I discovered just where the effluent was being discharged to. Into an ornamental lake some three hundred yards from the house. The household used this lake for boating and SWIMMING in. For several years off and on, I probed and tried to discover where the tank was but had no success. And even today they probably haven't found it.

I had another amusing incident with a septic tank at another large house. The lady of this house would call me almost every other day to fix something or other for her. It was often embarrassing the little things that she wanted me to do, but she paid for everything.

Her husband was Barrister or something. A great bear of a man, but very nice. She would wait on him hand and foot. When he came home from work, she would be waiting for him in the garage with his WARMED slippers.

Anyway, this particular day she called me in as, as she put it "my drains are regurgitating rather badly". It was obvious that they were blocked near the septic tank which was under the glasshouse.

I eventually prised the lid off, and low and behold there was the trouble. The tank was full to the top, with a heavy crust over it.. She was standing near me with a spade in her hand having been gardening. She went to prod the crust, I warned her not to, but too late, she did it. Next minute we were just about engulfed in its contents as they poured out over the top. In seconds, the glasshouse floor was several inches deep in the stuff and it kept coming.

It transpired that there was only one septic tank, albeit a very large one to service about six large houses up the hill, and of course the muck had built back up all along the line.

Naturally she most apologetic, but I give her due, she put Wellingtons and rubber gloves on and helped me clear it up. It was a stinking job, but she gave me a very good bonus.

When her husband came home he thought that it was hilarious.

As I said earlier, I had built up a large window cleaning round with the two lads. This was quite profitable provided I could keep them working properly. They were nice lads, but like all youngsters prone to skiving if they could.

They had been with me for some time, when I had to go off to a summer camp with the Army. Leaving the elder in charge and with a list of what was to be done I went off, trusting them. However, on my return my Mother told me that most days; they had done little but swim in the river and play about on the river bank.

There were also numerous complaints about their work and jobs they had missed.

At that time there many men doing this job and the prices were cut throat. If someone didn't give satisfaction, the housewives would drop you like a hot cake. There was always someone else ready to take the job on. So I lost quite a few good customers. Naturally both of them got the immediate boot, but the damage had been done. Thereafter, I worked alone.

The Café was starting to boom and very often I was unable to get out to work so we had to have a lady in to help during the busy times. Mary Frewin

It was so busy that we were forced to extend, and there was only one way, into the house. So I made a doorway through into what had been out living room. Eventually we could seat about 40 I suppose.

The nearest Fish and Chip shop was in Pontypool, about 5 miles away. So one day we got the brilliant idea of opening up one.

I had to build another annex onto the shop for somewhere to put the fryer.

It was all rather primitive, although clean, but we would never have got away with it today.

That too boomed.

Against my better judgment we allowed a firm to install a one-arm bandit machine with a 50/50 cut. This was more than reasonable.

The customer had to buy discs to put in the machine and the disc could only be used in the shop. (probably illegal).

The owner left us 80 Pounds worth of discs saying that he would call in the following week to see how it was going. But two days later we had to call him for more discs. We were all flabbergasted. Remember the shop profit would have only been about 20 Pounds.

Later we installed a pin machine and a jukebox. Both of these making far more than the Café.

It was all bloody hard work as we started at five with newspapers which I took out on a 6 mile drive. And papers were not just chucked onto the front garden as they are in Australia, but each one had to be put through the letter box on the front door. This often meant quite a hike from the road. There were about 7 different Newspapers circulating at that time, each had it's own political leaning so woe betide anyone should the wrong paper be delivered to a particular house. Plus every Thursday numerous magazines came out and had to be delivered.

At 7.30 we opened for breakfasts. As soon as that was cleared away, the workmen would be piling back in for morning tea. There would be sometimes 30-40 drivers in for lunch. We would get about an hours break then the school turned out, just as men were coming in for afternoon tea. Then it was bedlam. It would usually go quiet between 4 and about 6 when fish and chip was on the go, and we would close most nights at about 10.30 after the last bus from town. We would just about crawl up the stairs and flop into bed exhausted.

The kids suffered too, as we had no time for them and they often had to get their own meals. Not that that really hurt them. But it wasn't right.

Janet would sometimes help in the shop, but she hated it. We could never get away for the day or for a holiday. But eventually we said that's it, we have to have a break. So some Sundays when we thought custom would be light because of the weather we would shut shop and go off somewhere. Then we started closing for a week so that we could perhaps go up to Scotland. We would lose a few customers for a while but they would eventually come back. But we just HAD to have that break.

Even though we were open for all those hours, there was always someone who would want something after hours. Sometimes at 11pm.

Fortunately we now lived upstairs in the other cottage, we just didn't hear them knocking.

One of the worst offenders was the man who had started us off on this project. He would bash on the door sometimes after we had been shut for ages, just to get a packet of cigarettes. But it was bloody hard work. We had no family life at all.

Just another anecdote about the Territorials.

Somewhere around this time, a massive review of all Territorial Units in England was ordered. Which the Queen would review.

There were thousands of men and women on parade. We were all issued with lovely new dress uniforms.

Guard Sgts who tried to throw their weight around oversaw the parade, but although we were technically under Army discipline, they hadn't a hope. We were lined up rank upon rank waiting for the Queen, who uncharacteristically, was very late arriving. We had stood there for perhaps an hour and everyone was getting fed up.

Many of the girls started to sit down on the grass and from amongst the ranks, great puffs of smoke were going up as many people started to light up cigarettes. The Guard Sgts were doing their nuts. Really it was disgusting. But the Queen should have been on time.

However, once she did arrive and slowly drove along the ranks, the discipline shone through as most of those on parade had been in the "real" Army during the war and National Service. And I was proud to be a part of it.

Just as the March Past was scheduled to commence the heavens opened and the rain bucketed down. Within minutes the roads were awash. However the march went on.

Approaching the saluting base, it was impossible to hear the band and everyone was getting out of step. But British Army humour came through. Despite the anger of the Guard Sgts and the Officers. Several thousand soldiers as they approached the dais started to whistle "Colonel Bogey" which drowned out the band, and the step picked up. It was marvelous; I often wonder what the Queen thought about it.

Diving into massive marquees for refreshments and a change of clothing, we were all amazed to find that despite the pouring rain. None of us were actually wet. The new uniforms had been so full of dressing that the only place that the rain had penetrated was in the crook of the arms.

One of the problems with us being in business was the fact we had no time for the kids, and Brian being one that was easily led, was starting to get into trouble. Nothing very serious, but when one evening another shop keeper came to us and said that he along with a couple of other kids had taken all his evening papers and scattered them all over the village we realized that we would have to do something about it.

My Cousins Gerald and Cedric had been regaling us in letters with stories about Australia, to where they had emigrated a couple of years before, so we decided that enough was enough and we would follow them. And made application.

Just after we made the application I had the chance to go out to Germany with the Territorials. This again was a massive show of strength and we were, apart from the technicalities, as though we were at war. I jumped at the chance, as it would probably be the last time I would ever get to see my friends over there.

We were going to my old Brigade HQ, and I told the 50 men that I was in charge of that they could expect "bullshit" and extreme discipline. But what a shock I in particular had. There was none of this at all.

Troops in Germany were on a constant war footing even at that late date. Even the walls of the camp had been weakened so that in the event of an attack, they would not be blocked in if someone destroyed or blocked the gates.

Everywhere that the Units went, German and Military Police who allegedly arrested dozens of people on spying charges shadowed them. Unless anyone was there, they could not envisage the tension that pervaded England and Europe .because of the so called "Cold War"

For a few days we were billeted on a Pig farm somewhere near Bremen. Although I could speak reasonable German I didn't let it be known as I knew I would be stuck as an interpreter.

So one day, having nothing much to do, I requested permission to visit the little village a mile or so down the road.

There were only a couple of houses and a Café. Here I went in and bought a few cards etc and decided to have a beer. Whilst I was having it, a couple of Germans came in and enquired of the Landlord about where I had come from. Then a couple more came in. Said goodbye and then because they probably thought that I couldn't understand them started to talk about what was going on regarding all the Military activity.

Then the conversation became more like the normal Pub talk and at one time I had to laugh at something that was said. This gave away the fact that I could speak German.

That was IT. Two of the Germans had been prisoners of war in England and a couple more were ex soldiers. WEEEELLLLL after more than a few beers with these old Comrades as they had become. I staggered back to the camp. My eyes (as they say) like pissholes in the snow, and in a very happy mood. The boss man was NOT amused.

A few nights later as it was so warm, I decided to sleep out under the camouflage netting over one of the guns so settling down nicely in my sleeping bag I went into the land of nod.

Early the next morning as I awoke I could feel something nice and warm and pleasant against my back. Remember I had been away from home for a week or so. So thinking in my half sleep state that a cuddle might be appropriate I rolled over, to find that my sleeping companion was a BLOODY PIG.

Here I go again with darn anecdotes. BACK to the story Hayes

We were supposed to be out for a fortnight, but at the end of the first week. The Colonel of the Regular Unit expressed his appreciation of the way that we had performed and our discipline. He then gave us the rest of the time off. Laying on transport to almost anywhere in Europe that anyone wanted to go. I headed straight for Dusseldorf where I spent a wonderful week with Hanelore and her family. That is, her husband and two sons.

Her mother was now confined to a hospital and Father had taken up with another Lady, although he regularly visited his wife.

We found that Düsseldorf was in a drunken stupor as it was what is called the Schutzen Fest. This is when all the shooting Clubs in Germany get together to elect their "President" for the following term. There were bands playing everywhere. No one went to work that week. It was one round of boozing and good times.

On the tram going to Hanelore's house w (I had taken a friend with me) asked for a certain stop which the conductor had never heard of , although we were on the correct tram. He shouted down the tram to ask whether anyone knew where this stop was.

At this a couple of men came to him and explained that it was a stop, which the British soldiers , after the war had called the " three corners" (Drei Ecke).Which was now known by it's proper name.

It transpired that these two men had worked for my regiment when I was stationed in Düsseldorf so many years before. We finished up going to a couple of parties with them too. And people wonder why I feel so much for that City

Now back to the UK

One Friday morning on November 1966 I was driving back from town when I heard on the radio that there had been a terrible catastrophe in one of the mining towns close by.

A coal tip, (that is where the debris from mining operations is piled up) had collapsed, burying a school and several houses.

As I, like all my comrades in the Territorials had been trained in rescue, First aid etc and getting into uniform I made my way to the Town Of Aberfan.

The situation was terrible as although every other school in the area was on holiday this one was open, just for the morning. It had been raining heavily for a couple of days and this had caused the tip to collapse.

The filthy slurry had poured down on the Town, completely burying the school and everyone in it. It had then passed on across the road and destroyed everything in its path.

Fortunately in some ways, Britain at that time was geared up for emergencies such as war, and bombings and within an hour emergency services were in full swing.
The Town, being a mining town was full of men, who were used to digging coal and most had their own tools etc.

What did concern everyone was that the tip could slide again, possibly burying all those who were working.

I reported the Fire chief who was organizing the operations and he directed me to work at the school as it was believed that there could be several children still alive under the rubble.
Along with hundreds of others I spent hours digging and scraping the filthy slurry which it was almost impossible to pick up on a shovel as it was too wet.
Eventually we were ordered off and new workers took over.

Where all the transport came from to take the slurry away I will never know, but there were literally hundreds of trucks lined up.
What did distress everyone was a nasty side event that took place early in the day.
Many of the miners were just coming off night shift when the incident occurred.
They had naturally, run to help. Many took their jackets off so that they could work hanging them on a fence. They had just been paid and their pay packets were in many instances still in their jacket pockets, and some barstard had gone along and robbed them all whilst they worked.

The following morning I received a call from my unit ordering me along with the other lads to report to the Drill hall.
On arrival there we were told to get on trucks to be transported to Aberfan as we were what was called “an aid to the Civil Powers Unit that year”
But what follows, you will never believe, but it is true.

On reaching the Town of Merthyr we were stopped by Police who told us that the Mayor of the Town had stated that he wanted no English troops in his area and we couldn’t go through.

Historically, the Welsh Mining Valleys had a hatred of English Troops due to an “alleged” incident in 1926, when Churchill was supposed to have ordered troops out to quell riots. This was a load of bullshit. That was 40 years before, and there were kids and Adults still buried.

We turned around and went back to Abergavenny. The Major decided that he would go somewhere, to try and get some orders. Leaving me in charge. His parting words to me were, as many of the men were extremely angry. Don’t get doing anything silly Staff Sgt. Just wait here until I get back.
As I said, all of us were extremely angry at the stupid situation. So after hearing nothing for about half an hour I ordered the men onto the truck and we drove back to Merthyr where we were again stopped by the police. They too were angry at the Mayor’s attitude, but they had their orders.

We yelled at them “Get out of the way, we are coming through” They held up their hands but didn’t really try to stop us

On arrival at Aberfan, I reported to the Chief who said,” Thank God, you’re here, we need some disciplined force here, and your Generators are a God send as all the power is off and we will have to work all night.we also need you blokes to help the police out in patrolling to stop looting”

Back at the school, many of us joined the hundreds who were still digging. It was awful as we found several dead children and teachers. Even today I can feel the tears starting, just thinking back on it. As night fell we started our Generators and strung lights up the tip where hundreds of men and women and children were trying to divert the slurry which was slipping down the hill.

The only way we could move it was to make chutes out of corrugated iron sheets and keep it flowing down to where the machines could pick it up and take it away.

It was like a fairy land as most of the men were miners and had their own little lights attached to their helmets.

Once again the big fear was that should there be any further rain, the tip would move and engulf everyone. One of our men, and I only wish I knew who he was, as he deserved a medal, volunteered to go to the top of the tip with a hand held siren, which he would sound should there be any movement. Had it gone, he would not have had any chance of survival.

It was a long night believe me as we were taken off the digging and asked to patrol the lower part of the town, warning residents about flooding as the water was pouring down of the hillside and to try and keep sightseers and looters out.

I don't particularly like Valley Welshmen but that night I was proud to have been associated with them. On the Sunday, we were asked to put a cordon around the town as sightseers were coming in droves. Some of them we had to get real nasty with, but we were in no mood to argue with anyone, and more than one stropky twit finished up going headlong down the hill.

The roads were absolutely chock full with trucks, and I had orders from my Major (who never said a word about my disobeying orders) that no one, or anything other than trucks was to be allowed along this certain road. So when a police car carrying the Minister for Welsh Affairs tried to get through I stopped and told him to "piss off" as he had no reason to go down that road and there were more than enough problems there already.

He didn't like it, threatening to report me. But if he ever did I never heard anything.

We were pulled out late Sunday night and on arrival home I just collapsed on the bed, filthy dirty as I was and slept for hours.

On the Monday or possibly the Tues we had to go for Medical Examinations in respect of our applications to immigrate to Australia. Instead of having to go to a local Doctor we obliged to go to a Doctor in one of the Mining Towns which meant that we had to pass Aberfan again.

After I was examined, the Doctor asked me whether I had had a shock or anything. I told him what I had been doing over the weekend and he told me that I was in a state of severe shock and should home and rest. He gave me a couple of Tablets which I took on reaching home and I never heard a thing for 48 hrs.

I am not a great believer in Horoscopes etc, but prior to us making the decision to emigrate we had been looking at, I think it was Old Moore's Almanac.

This stated, for Aries and Taurus persons. Margaret and me. (Although I don't know which I am, being born on the 20th April. Time unknown,) that:

- a) We would be giving up the careers that we were now pursuing
- (b) We would be having a holiday and a change, possibly flying over the Far East
- (c) That Taurus born parents could lose a child)
- (d) That by August of 1967 I could be in a position of Authority with a Local Government body

(e) That Margaret would be left some money by someone she had forgotten.

It also virtually told us the dates we would be giving up the business, when we would move and when we might be going overseas. It was most uncanny, as it unfolded just as the book stated, as the reader will find out in the later.

Once we had notification from Australia House that we had been accepted we put the business on the Market although we had been warned that it could be some time before we went.

Eventually we found a buyer who was prepared to pay our price. Funnily enough he was an Australian. But apparently he was a Communist who would buy up small business in an area then set up a Communist Cell.

I couldn't care less; his money was as good as the next.

In early February 1967 we moved out of the shop and onto a small stud farm where we had rented a cottage.

The bloke who had bought the business must have been stupid because on the day that we moved out, we were sitting in the car outside the shop saying goodbye to several customers who had come along for just that, when about twenty of our bus drivers turned up. Said goodbye, and went into the shop to sample the new owner. Within minutes they were all coming back out saying that he must be crazy. We had always charged our Regulars 4 pence for a cup of tea and often didn't charge for a second cup if they had a meal but he wanted to charge them 6 Pence, which was 1 penny above any other Café in the area. Needless to say he lost about 40 customers within minutes of opening. We didn't care, we were off.

Almost as soon as we moved into the new house we started to try and sell our furniture. As people knew that we were going overseas they would make the silliest of offers, so we decided to take some of it with us. The New Automatic washing machine was stuffed with bedding.

Just an anecdote about this machine. When it was delivered there was a notice attached to the side "remove shipping boards before use" I couldn't see any boards so thought that they must have already been removed. This machine was one of the first washing machines that did not have to be fixed to the floor.

That night, we packed the machine with clothes etc and went to bed. Within minutes, there were some very queer noises coming from downstairs. Coming down to investigate, I found the machine dancing around all over the place and almost trying to get through the back door.

Next day, I called Dad, who came up to have a look. "Did you take the boards off he enquired?"

"I couldn't find any boards" I explained. He then told me to take the back off the machine, and there, lo and behold were two rigid boards bolted to the sides of the bowl to stop it moving about in transit. Stoopid Boy.

Back to the story again

The dining room suite was taken to pieces and boxed. Carpets etc were also packed. This was all taken down to the docks for forward shipping. God knows when we would see it again.

Much of our "junk" we had disposed of before moving. The dustmen had taken a lot and I had got the kids to dig a big hole in the back garden into which went everything we didn't want or couldn't sell. I often wondered whether anyone ever dug it up and wondered what the hell they had found.

Other stuff that we couldn't sell like the TV and the Lounge suite was later sent for auction, for which I got the princely some of 14 Pounds. Someone had some bargains.

This had all been done, working on the dates in the Almanac. We managed to slip up to Scotland for a few days to say Goodbye to Margaret's Parents and Siblings. Took the kids across the Severn River on

the last Ferry etc etc.(In 2001 I picked up a website on the internet where this Ferry had been found sunk off of Ireland ,and was in the process of being restored)
Then came the big day when our tickets arrived.

Lots of little things happened that might have been of interest to the reader, but I must move on as there is another 30 plus years to fill in and they are filled with so much.

We decided to spend a couple of days in London, to let the kids have a look at some of the things they might never see again and stayed at the Union Jack Club. This is a hotel for Service and ex service men and women that was a lot cheaper than anywhere else.

We had said Goodbye to my Family in Wales. Although I had expected them to come to London to see us off, they never came. I think they were too upset.

It was bitterly cold in London and we have photos of us all rugged up in great coats etc.

On March 6th 1967 I think it was, we arrived at London Airport, full of anticipation and a little trepidation but we were all together. Each of us had a case with out personal belongings, a sleeping bag and airbed, knife fork and spoon and a cup and plates. (I had been in the army too long to get caught out without any of these) Let's face it we were going into the unknown and had no idea what would happen, or where we would finish up. Our conception of Australia was to say the least, nil.

Apart from our immediate Families there was no one in England that we would miss. We had no real friends except perhaps for Mary Frewin. Many people said that we were being stupid and selfish taking the children away like this. But it was OUR lives. The kids had all theirs in front of them and if things didn't work out they could always come back and live with their Grandmother. We had slogged our guts out for years and it was time for a change. It was just a BIG new adventure into the unknown. And I knew that we wouldn't fail.

The fare for all of us was only 10 Pounds, and we were traveling under what was known as the "Nest Egg" scheme. Whereby one had to have certain amount of money available. And there was no need to have a Sponsor. It also meant that we would not be able to move into a Government Hostel accommodation and would have to stand on our own feet.

As our 747 takes off over London it is time to move on to the next Chapter

Chapter 9

Our New Land. Australia

Neither Margaret nor the children had ever flown before, therefore the take off was quite frightening for them, but once in the air we all settled down to enjoy the trip. Not knowing just how long it would be taking us.

We hadn't been in the air long when the plane started to descend and we landed in Zurich possibly for fuel, as we were not allowed off the plane.

After this we seemed to be up and down every couple of hours and every time we took off again there was another meal, so that really we got tired of eating. Janet was having problems with her ears. Some of the hostesses were very sympathetic and gave her sweets to suck but one Indian girl just said to her "it is all in the Mind"

I think we landed in Rome, Delhi, Kuala Lumpa and Singapore.

We alighted for an hour or so in Delhi where a magnificent new reception area was being built, where we bought several keepsakes. One being a carved statuette of an Indian Lady.(Incidentally the new reception area was never finished, even after about twenty years when it was burnt to the ground).It was very hot and humid and the whole place stank. As we flew over India we were advised that photographing was illegal. They were scared stiff of spies.

At Kuala Lumpa, we were advised not to get out of the plane because of the heat. I went to the open door at the rear of the plane and was blasted by the sticky humid heat it was awful.

As we landed in Singapore we saw a contingent of troops lined up at the side of the plane, with flags flying and a band playing. Naturally we thought this was a wonderful greeting for us new migrants to Australia, only for our thoughts to be dashed when we were told that they were holding a rehearsal for some dignitary who was coming the next day.

We spent a few hours in Singapore where we again bought several souvenirs. Amongst them a Yashica Camera (which I still have)

By this time we were exhausted, the journey seemed to be endless. I think in total, it took about 36-40 hrs.

Finally at 1.0 AM on the 8th March 1967 we touched down in Perth.

I think Cedric and his then wife, Pat, and Gerald and Bonnie met us, as did an official from the immigration Dept.

He advised us to change all our English Money there and then. Which we did and what a shock.

At that time the exchange rate was 2 ½ Aust Dollars to the Pound As we had several Thousand Pounds with us you can imagine how many dollars we received. Especially when the highest denomination they had available at that time in the morning was 20s and 50s. We had money stashed everywhere.

After the formalities were complied with, we were taken to a taxi (compliments of the Commonwealth, and the only thing we ever got) and transported to a Hotel on Adelaide Terrace in the Centre of Perth. It wasn't what one might call a first class place, but it was clean and tidy and in any case I found out later that we had to pay the bill ourselves.

Later that morning when we awoke, we lifted the blinds and looked out on the Terrace. There were no kangaroos to be seen. But the sun was shining.

Later again, Bonnie and Gerald called for us and took us to their place for the day.

Returning to the Hotel at about 1.am we were accosted (if that is the right word) by a gentleman in evening dress who asked if he could have a talk to us.

I was a bit annoyed at that time of the morning but he seemed a nice enough bloke.

He then told us that he was from an organization that looked after new Migrants, helping them to find jobs etc and getting them settled in. He told me that he had a job as a plumber already lined up for me. He was told that I had no intentions of taking up the trade again, even though I had brought all my tools. We wanted a couple of week's holiday before I even thought about work.

He organized for someone to call in the morning to take us to have our compulsory x-rays and to show us the Town.

(8 am sharp) some dame turned up in a flashy car and took us to all the right places, including a car yard where she said we would get the best deals. Guaranteed!

This was to be our first experience of the rotten sharks that fastened onto Migrants at that time, as the car turned out to be a rust bucket.

We stayed at this Hotel for a few days and the man would contact me almost every day saying that he possibly had the job I wanted.

We couldn't afford to throw our money away staying in such a place, so finding an Estate Agent on Forrest Place (now Myers Store) we hunted for accommodation. As we had the money for a Bond we found a house fairly easily and moved into what was supposed to have been a furnished house in Joondanna (Near Dog Swamp Shopping Centre).

Furnished Ha ha. There were a couple of Lounge chairs and a sofa that were lousy with fleas.

No beds, no fridge .In fact very little. But we had our airbeds and sleeping bags so we made do.

I think we bought a fridge and dining room setting.

The second day that we were in there a little pup wandered in and the kids took to it. It stayed a few days then buggered off again so I promised the kids that as soon as we were settled we would get a dog.

A few days after we had moved in, I thought I had better contact the gentleman who had been trying to find me a job and let him know that we had moved into a house of our own, so as I had his address, somewhere in St George's Tce I thought I would call in on him.

On finding the address I found it to be a massive block of offices. He was all over me, telling me that he was sure he had the job I wanted etc etc. I told him why I had come into see him and almost immediately he excused himself saying he had to see someone, but would be back in a moment. After about half an hour, I went looking for him, only to be told that he had gone out. And that as I found accommodation, he was no longer interested in me.

Even then I never twigged what was going on. But as I came out of the Office I saw a massive blackboard on one wall on which, were dozens of names and very personal details, even how much money you were estimated to have. The penny then dropped. This was a firm of House Builders called Landalls who latched onto migrants. Wiping their backsides until the time was ripe to broach the subject of buying a house.

Next moment I was at the board with a wet cloth and wiped off as many names as I could before I was grabbed and virtually shown the door. These bastards sucked in thousands of migrants over the years and they were getting their information obviously from Australia House in London. The system of spotting and rorting was rampant everywhere as we later found out.

My Mother had been very upset about us coming out to Australia, and I think I really put the kybosh on it when I sent a photo home to her.

We had been out for the day with Cedric and Pat and Bonnie a Gerald to the beach.

It was a very hot day so we had decided to try and erect some sort of shelter, out of whatever we could find on the beach.

This shelter looked like some Heath Robinson affair, but I put on the photo that it was all we could find to live in. The poor old dear took it literally and nearly went to pieces. She wouldn't even speak about us out here for several years. So much for my facetiousness

I wasn't really looking for work, but one evening four people turned up at the house

(How they got the address I don't know'. Spotting again I suppose) all offering me a job. Not that any of them were very much, but it would have been a start so I took one that seemed interesting and for which I would be trained and that was with HPC, a pest control company.

Just after getting his job we decided that we didn't like the house we were in and the rent was too high for what it was, so we went looking for something to buy. We had sufficient for a deposit so stood a good chance.

Then we spotted a house in West Midland for sale. We took one look, and said “yes please.”

It ponged a little of garlic as there had been Italians living in the house. But to us it was HUGE. There were four massive bedrooms, dining and lounge rooms plus a massive kitchen that ran right across the back of the house. All around the front and one side were lovely verandahs. To us, the garden was like a park, over half an acre.

The house needed some tender loving care but decorating was nothing to me.

(I used 52 gallons of paint all told.)The passageway through the house must have been about 35-40 ft long. The ceilings of this place must have been about 12 ft high. At the time we had no ladder so I stood a packing crate on a table and a chair on top of that to paint them. (the ceilings that is , stoopid)

We still didn't have much furniture and this huge place just echoed, and the kids thought it real fun to stand in the various rooms and shout out “where are youuuuu”

It cost us \$8000. Obviously on a mortgage.

To decorate the kid's rooms I put slides into my photographic enlarger and painted the images on the wall. Most effective.

The area wasn't what one could call the “best”. Being part of the old area of Midland, but it was only a short street, being cut off by the railway and there was little traffic. All the neighbours were pretty good, although the only ones that we palled up with were the Cunninghams from next door. They had six kids, but they were no trouble. And many years later, although the Husband died, we were still on a friendly basis with Lynn.

Seeing the huge garden, the boys and I decided we would dig a swimming pool out. And this we started to do. We got down about 18 inches and struck the hard stuff, so I am afraid that was the end of our swimming pool effort. But we did make use of the hole to bury lots of bits of old car bodies that were lying around in the garden.

Just about the second day that we were there, Cedric who had been helping us move, ran over the water meter. There was water going everywhere as one can imagine. As it was Sunday, I thought there would be no one that I could call on for help, so having the necessary tools and knowledge proceeded to repair the damage. Bugger me , that if I was only half way through the job when the water board van arrived. Someone had dobbed me in. Or so it appeared. They were most irate at first and were going to take me to court or something as no one was allowed to touch the water other than a qualified Plumber.

Stiff bikkies, I was, although I didn't hold a WA License. I think they took a look at all the tools that I had and I obviously knew what I was doing, so they let it go and just came back on Monday to check it out.

The kids were still very unhappy at having left all their friends, and after living all their lives in a Country District they hated the city. So did Margaret and I..

For weeks we had no furniture but lived out of packing crates turned up on end with a piece of cloth over the front to make a cupboard.

Eventually our stuff from England turned up and we were a little better equipped.

All of our crates must have been tampered with, as there was so much missing. Nearly all little things, those really were not worth shouting about but annoying to us. We knew they were gone, as we had

made inventories of every crate. One crate containing carpets had broken open but the contents of that were intact.

Janet refused to go back to school and found herself a job in Coles in Midland where she palled up with a young lady of the same age called Joy Olding. (after 35 years we are still friendly with her parents, Keith and Rona)

The boys for some reason seemed to hate everything including each other. It was bicker, bicker, and fight, fight. Until we were sick of it. We had been pretty lenient with them, as we knew that they were upset at the upheaval. But one Sunday we had had enough.

They were warned that any more of it and I would wade in.

They were ok for about an hour then it started again. And Boy did they cop it? I waded in with fists, boots and broom handle. Bumped their heads together, and chucked them both out into the garden with something in common to cry about. With the instructions not to come back in until they had shaken hands, and agreed to behave.

We had no more trouble after that and they have been the best of friends ever since.

After that incident, we told them they we would give it twelve months, when, if they were still unhappy, they could go back home and stay with Grandma.

The final saga with regards to us moving house was when I went to the original firm that we had rented the house in Joondana from.

I went to their offices in Forrest Place to hand the keys in and request my Bond money back. This they refused saying that the house had been left in a filthy condition and they had had to have a firm of cleaners in. Also that several hundred dollars of stuff was missing from the back room where the owner had been keeping her stuffed locked up.

At this I completely did my block as Bonnie and Pat had brought their vacuum cleaners over and had given us a hand to make sure the place was clean. In fact it was cleaner than when we moved in and I had deloused the furniture and paid out for a roll of wire to mend the fence, after the little dog had wandered in and we didn't want him out on the road

My temper has always been on a very short fuse and I was sick and tired of these Aussie "gits" trying to pull one over us. The desk went for a "Burton", papers etc going everywhere. They were going to call the police and I invited them to, as they were on a bloody racket that probably worked on tenants who hadn't the guts to stand up for themselves.

They hadn't even sent anyone out to inspect the place when we were there. Eventually I demanded to speak to the person who had made the report. This turned out to be a little 16 yr old girl who was just about pooping herself.

She admitted that the only dirty thing she had found was a sour bottle of milk which was in the sink. This we had taken out of the fridge when moving it, and forgotten.

Fortunately too, I had become friendly with a man who live opposite who was a policeman who had told me that he had seen the owner several times go into the house when weren't there and take stuff out to her car. When I told the Agents this, they backed down. They were told that unless the money was in my hands by the Friday, I would be taking legal action against them for fraud. They asked about the damaged to the desk and were told get stuffed. Any more from them and I would make sure the Public knew about their racket and put them out of business.

As there was a queue of people outside the door already witnessing all this I think they saw that discretion was better than Valour because the following day we received a cheque for our Bond money, less 1 Dollar. But I wonder how many other poor devils they tricked.

Soon after we had moved into the new house we met up with several migrants like ourselves and we got into the habit of going out every Saturday evening to one or the other's houses. During one of these evenings we met a young couple called Halsey who were from London. It transpired that Bob had been a pupil at Stag Lane School too. And most probably knew my Sister Gwyneth.

Margaret was also convinced that she was pregnant.

We had only been in the house a short while when we decided to have a housewarming party. Not knowing the procedure with parties out here, we did the same as we had in England and supplied everything, Food, drink etc. The party was scheduled to start at about 7 pm but by 8, not a soul had turned up. We were fuming.

Then about 8.30 everyone arrived together. All of them carrying plates of food and bottles of drink. This was our first introduction into the Aussie way of life with regards to parties. Turn up late, and bring something to eat.

Back to the Job bit

At first this job was very interesting as we were trained to recognize vary pests which would affect houses and how to treat them. I wasn't particularly keen on climbing down tiny little holes cut in the floors of houses and crawling about underneath, spraying with chemicals but I managed it ok. Although at one house where the floor was very low, I found that I couldn't get back out of the hole as my overalls kept catching on something or other. The lady of the house attempted to help me out but it was no use. So backing down I wriggled and jiggled and managed to get my overalls off. Problem was that I had nothing on underneath, as it was too damn hot.

Poking my head back out through the hole I was horrified to see that she was still there waiting to help me out.

I explained the situation to her so off she went and came back with a large towel. As I managed to slide out of the hole she covered me with the towel. But thought it a huge joke.

I later found out that more than one operator had been stuck under low floors and had had to be rescued, sometimes after several hours.

After that, if I thought the floor was too low, there was no way that I would go under, but just squirted the poison as far as it would go.

One place I went to in Wundowie had a store shed next to the shop. This shed was completely overrun with rats. It was obvious that poisoning would be useless here as there were far too many so using my ingenuity. I stood at the door, and as a rat ran across a beam or exposed itself I squirted it with the chemical. As the pressure from the gun was something like 200 lbs per sq inch. It knocked them for a six, whilst the chemicals probably semi blinded them. As they fell, the owner belted them with a shovel. By the end of a couple of hours, we must have killed a couple of hundred of the filthy things.

We then laid baits for the remainder.

The owner was so pleased that he gave me quite a sizable tip.

Obviously I didn't tell the Boss about this one.

At first we were given a bunch of cards with address on, where the owners had already signed up for ongoing treatments but after a few weeks we were expected to start touting for new business as well as doing the work. If we didn't bring in so much new business each week we were required to attend extra training courses on Saturday mornings.

We were also expected as per the law, to have periodic tests to see whether the various chemicals were poisoning us but at OUR expense. What happened if it was found that we had been poisoned I don't know. Probably the sack.

We were allowed to take our vehicles home at night, leaving our own vehicles in the Firm's yard, which was of course a big savings in Petrol.

However one Friday night I was a little late getting back to the yard from a country run (We had to leave the vans in the yard over the weekend when they were serviced etc) I jumped in my old Holden FJ and sped off home.

At that time, there was a boom gate across the railway at Rivervale on the Albany H/way which as I approached, started to drop down. I applied my brakes but nothing happened. Fortunately, I was only travelling fairly slowly, because I just couldn't stop, and ploughed into the boom gate. Those old Holdens were fairly solid machines so I did little damage, although I did take a chunk out of the gate. Good job there were no coppers around.

It was obvious that the brake system was leaking and I had no oil in it.

There were no garages open after six PM, other than the odd one on roster, so it was no use looking for help.

At first I thought bugger it, I am stuck here until morning, as it was too far to try and walk home. Then I had a brilliant flashback to my army days and the words of one of the driving instructors who told us that if you ever ran out of hydraulic oil for your brakes or jack. "Piss in it, it won't rust, and water is incompressible too".

So crawling along until I found an isolated street I found a tin can or bottle, and proceeded to "you know what". And isn't it marvelous, when you really need it, like at the Doctors, you can't go.

However I eventually managed one and filled the brake system. Arriving home very late, much to Margaret's consternation.

I stuck this job for a few months and then decided to try for something else. This just wasn't me.

At the time, there were dozens of job vacancies in the paper every day and some of these jobs were for Traffic Inspectors.

I didn't have the faintest idea what this job was but it sounded interesting so I started applying for them.

One day I received a reply from a Council down South called Lake Grace. So on the Sunday, we packed some lunch and set off to have a look at this Town before replying to the Letter.

We of course thought it would be a fairly short journey such as we would have made any Sunday in the UK. But did we come unstuck?. We had, like so many other people not realized just how vast W.A. was. I don't remember which route we took to get there but it took hours, that I do know.

As we travelled South the kids got quite excited as the fields (paddocks) were still quite green. Unlike Perth where everything was bone dry. And they wanted to come down there and live.

Eventually we arrived at the Town and what a dump it turned out to be. Plus there were dozens of Aboriginal wandering around in small gangs.

We too one look and said NO THANKS.

As we were in the area of Lake Dunbleyung where the world's water speed records had been set up many years before, we decided to have a look at it. Once again, what a suck in. There was hardly any water in it and the road that ran along side was only gravel. Which went on mile after dusty mile.

By now we were getting low on petrol. I hadn't thought to bring any with me as I thought that I would be able to get petrol anywhere, like any civilized place.

We were just about desperate when we came across a stretch of road that was bitumised, and we thought, "Back in civilization again" But we were soon disillusioned when the road turned in a sharp U bend around a hotel and then went back to gravel.

Outside the Hotel were a couple of Petrol Pumps, so I thought we had been saved.

But when I enquired, I was told that the Garage was shut and it was against the Law to sell petrol unless the garage was on roster. Which this one was not.

After several minutes of cajoling and pleading, and drawing the attention of the Landlord to the fact that we had three kids in the car, he eventually brought out a five gallon can of his own and put it in the tank. Refusing any payment, as selling petrol even his own, at that time, on a Sunday was illegal. How BLOODY stupid.

Eventually after a very long and tiring trip back through York we staggered back into Perth. Our first experience of Travel in Australia, which didn't leave us very impressed.

Then one evening a few days later, I was a little late coming home from work. As I rolled into the drive Margaret came running out and told me that a man had been there today in respect of one of these jobs. That he was going to the Maylands Bowling Club and if I was interested in the job to be there by 6.0pm. As it was then about 5.45 you can imagine how fast I travelled across the width of Perth.

On arrival at the Club I was introduced to a tubby little Scotsman (who was already well lubricated) named "Jock" Preston

He talked about just about everything else other than the job for about half an hour, but we found that we had much in common, as he had been in the army too, and our sense of humour was about the same.

After about the half-hour I asked him about the job. He replied, "Och mon, ye'll do me. The job's yours; The Council will hold a house for you and pay the rent until you are ready to move in. There's only one stipulation and that is that you attend and pass a course at the W.A Police Academy".

I was still completely in the dark as to what the job was, and just WHERE it was. And wondered what the heck I was to go to the Police School for. Then he explained that out in the country districts and indeed in the suburbs of Perth too. The Local Councils were responsible for all traffic matters including patrols and Licensing of vehicles. The Police had nothing to do with it except where there was a death. And the job was in a small town called Toodyay. Which was about 50 miles outside Perth.

This sounded real good to me so I accepted there and then.

I didn't know at that time just when the Police Course started so carried on working for the Pest Control firm. But I knew I couldn't stick it much longer as although we had *some* training in the use of chemicals, it was obvious that the firm couldn't care less how one used them. I shudder to think in later years just how many people were poisoned by chemicals that were sprayed on their carpets for

moths and silver fish. This same chemical was used for spraying for termites, and was a deadly poison. Later being completely banned.

One day I found a way to get out of the firm without the mandatory two weeks notice when one of the bosses, who was checking my work out, allegedly found evidence of moth larvae in the Carpet, and started shouting at me that I should have told the owner and persuaded them to have a moth proofing treatment. Which even then was very expensive.

I told the boss that I had worked with Nylon for many years and Moths wouldn't touch it, and that I wouldn't be party to tricking people into having unnecessary treatments. At this he literally blew up and told me that if I didn't do as I was told I was fired. Guess what?

I collected my money that night. If I remember correctly, my weekly wage then was about 52 dollars. After tax about 45.

I cannot recall how long I had to wait for the course to start, but it wasn't long and I cannot recall whether the Shire Council paid me during it. I suppose they must have done, as I didn't have much money left after putting a deposit on the house.

Being optimistic about passing the course, we decided to put our house on the market.

Eventually I was instructed to report to the Police Academy in Maylands.

This course was probably one of the most interesting and informative courses I have ever been on. I really enjoyed it.

I cannot now remember how long the course was but it was concerned with traffic Law, prosecuting, accident procedures, first aid ,Vehicle Inspections and any thing else that appertained to Traffic .Most of this was easy for me as I had done most of this in the Military Police Academy, albeit many years before.

I thought that I could drive when I went on the course as I had been properly trained and had been a instructor, but when we went out on our first appraisal drive in a Police car I picked up about 24 faults in a matter of a few miles. Although the Instructor said, that despite this I would have passed an ordinary test with flying colours.

He told me then, that if I wanted to drive a high-speed pursuit car and chase other cars and live, I would have to get rid of all those faults.

I tried the motor cycles too, but when I saw the obstacle courses that we were expected to go over. I backed off and said you can take them off of my License.

One Sunday whilst on the course we took a trip up to Toodyay to have a look at the house which the Council was holding for me.

It was a dinky little State house. Two bedrooms, a sleepout as it was called, a fair size lounge and kitchen and Bathroom etc.

The street was only about 150 yards long, ending against the riverbank. Our house was the last house in the road and only about 30 mtrs from the river.

Most of the river in October was dry, but opposite our house there was a large pool.

But that day it was so BLOODY HOT,I think somewhere in the vicinity of 110 F.

I decided to have a wander down through the Town, but Margaret and the kids, collapsed under the open windows of the house fanning themselves. Margaret vowing that there was "not no way", that she could live here, in this heat.

There was only one real Main St, that being about 30 mtrs wide. Half a dozen shops, three Hotels, a Club a Bowling Green and a church.

Off the main road three small streets ran down to the river.

The Town had been cut in half by the railway, but there were only a few dozen houses on the other side, also the Shire Offices etc.

On the whole, a “quaint, olde worlde “sort of place. But there was hardly a thing moving, as it was just too hot.

None of us were exactly enamoured with the place, except that the boys were excited by the proximity of the river when I told them I would get them a boat of some sort.

Some weeks later, the course finished and we had to sit Examinations. I had never been one to have much success in Exams, usually passing but with a low grade. So After these were over, I held my breath for several days as on the results, depended my new job.

On the day that the results were given out, my name wasn't even mentioned and my heart sank. However in the afternoon I was called into the Superintendent's office where I was left standing for several minutes wondering just what I had done for this honour.

Eventually he said to me, ' Hayes, you have been a good student, and I know you have just come from the UK, but you must get stop flying the Union Jack.'

“I am most disappointed in your results,

At this my heart really did sink through the floor.

Then he passed a pink slip of paper across the desk saying, “I really thought that you would do better than this”.

On picking up the paper, I read from it,” Mr. Hayes has been a most conscientious and enquiring student who has passed the Examinations, with a very credible 92%. Pass.

He then stood up and shook my hand, saying “Congratulations, this is the highest marks ever recorded at the Police School, and the driving Instructors advise that you passed the driving test 100%”

I was dumfounded, and I can assure the reader, highly delighted.

On advising Jock Preston of the results he told me that I could come to Toodyay whenever I was ready and start the new job.

We already had a buyer for our house so there was no impediment to us setting forth once again into the unknown. Although we were lucky to get our money back as apparently there had been a fiddle of some sort over our mortgage

I don't think that the kids were over excited as this meant another upheaval. Janet would have to leave her job and the new friends that she had made.

But too bad. It was OUR life and they would have to go along with it. Then make their OWN lives later on.

The Story of My Life

Chapter 10

Toodyay

I think it must have been about August/Sept1967 when we moved to Toodyay.

I know it was stinking hot and although we didn't have much furniture to lug around, by the time we were finished, we were all exhausted. Gerald, Bonnie and Cedric had helped us by piling stuff into their cars, as we couldn't afford to hire a van or removalists.

That first night, Janet went to have a shower or a bath, using the aforementioned chip heater to heat the water. We had shown her how to light it and to keep it stoked up with small chips of wood and bits of paper.

Within minutes, she came running out into the living room, starkers. Screaming that she would never use that “bloody” thing again as it had nearly scalded her to death.

When we went to investigate we found hot water squirting up to the ceiling, and the bathroom flooded with hot water.

The water was streaming out of the overflow pipe at the top of the heater. No one had told us that you had to leave the cold water running through it all the time otherwise it just got too hot and it would shoot hot water and steam everywhere. They were a wonderful invention. But I wonder just how many people they injured over the years.

(Whilst on the subject of these heaters, at another house we later lived in we found that the heater overflow pipe had been sealed with a lead plug, making the heater a veritable bomb. On reporting this to the housing Commission who owned the house it was found that some idiot of a plumber had treated all the houses in that area the same way.)

The next morning, on going out into the front garden I found a beautiful, brand new pursuit car standing in the drive.

Whilst we were standing there admiring the new car, I saw a vehicle coming slowly down the road as though the driver was looking for an address or something. But as it got closer I saw that there was no driver in the car, our road was quite steep so the vehicle was starting to gather speed, but the road only finished up in the river. So something had to be done. I tried opening the door to get in to apply the brakes but it was locked. The only way that we could stop it was to try and put something under the wheels which we eventually did, stopping the car just before it ran out of road. Apparently the driver had stopped on the main road and had forgotten to put the handbrake on. That is an offence of course, but as I hadn't even started work as the TI I let him off with an earful.

After this, feeling really flash in my new uniform, I rolled up to the Shire Office to commence work.

Here I was given a sort of welcome, and lecture on what my duties were and how I should go about them. I was told that no one was sacri cant. If they deserved to be apprehended then they should be. Even, if it was the Shire President himself.

Jock Preston, the Shire Clerk who had interviewed me originally was full of advice, particularly about getting friendly with, or upsetting a particular family in the Town. who were notorious for “getting” anyone in authority that “bucked “them?

God!! How I wish I had listened then.

Whilst I was more than conversant with the Traffic Laws etc, I had no real idea what the job really entailed. But I had a quick mind and would soon learn.

I was given an Order book, on the Shire, with which I was told, I could buy anything, but would have to repay any debts on the payday following the Order. This was also to obtain petrol wherever I required as I had an enormous area to cover. The Shire Clerk didn't want me to draw petrol from the Shire Pump as he was sure there was a racket going on.

With an hour of starting work I was called to an accident on the corner of the Toodyay and Northam Rds.

The wife of the Headmaster of the local school had failed to give way to another vehicle. It wasn't a terribly serious accident but she had obviously broken the law and would have to be charged. What a way to start a new job.

The other Shire that I was working for in conjunction with Toodyay , was Chittering Shire. This was much nearer the coast and was bisected by the Grt Northern H/way, which was to be probably my busiest place, due to the higher speeds and accidents.

I didn't like this Shire, right from the start. The office staff was not the least bit friendly and the Council itself was made up of self righteous bums who thought that their Shire was something special and the people in it beyond any jurisdiction. But more of this later.

In the evening of my first day, I thought I would go down to the Pub for a drink and try to be sociable. Not that I drank a lot, but I did like the occasional "shandy"

The Pub was packed, as there was apparently a darts, "round robin" on and I was asked if I wanted to play.

I hadn't the faintest clue about playing darts at this level, but thought, "What the hell, I can only lose a dollar"

During the evening I duly stepped up to the dartboard when called, threw the darts, and retired to my corner to chat with the locals who were very friendly, considering my job in the Town.

Imagine my surprise when about 9.30 I was advised that I had won first prize of about 30 dollars (that was about half a weeks wages then)

To this day I don't know whether I genuinely won the match or whether they were trying to be nice to me, hoping I would smile on them when working.

As it was coming up to Xmas we were surprised to received so many invitations to Socials and Dances that we had to cry a halt as I was working sometimes 16 hrs a day.

Almost every weekend we would have visitors coming from Perth, as it was only about 50 miles, and a beautiful drive. That house became an extremely happy one for all of us.

I had made a boat for the boys, as promised, and within days they had learned to swim.

Janet had met some very nice young people who whisked her off to dances and socials and whatever it is people of that age do. She had also obtained a transfer from her job in Midland, so she was happy. Brian was a little unhappy as he still had a very pronounced Welsh accent and everyone was calling him taffy but David just took everything in his stride.

Within days of us being in Town, several women had approached Margaret and asked her to join the Country Women's Association.

So all in all, that first Xmas was a very happy one for all of us.

Although, after Margaret had cooked the Xmas dinner on the wood stove in about 35-degree heat, she gave the Shire and me an ultimatum. "That thing goes, or I do"

So shortly after, a brand new electric stove was delivered.

There was no air conditioning in the house and I doubt whether any one in Town had it then. Nighttime seemed to be the worst, when it got stifling. Many were the nights that we slept out on the verandah. But this appeared to be the norm in those days.

Later we managed to purchase an air cooler, which trickled water over a pad in the back, blowing the “cooled” air out into the room. This was fine when the weather was hot and dry, but when it was hot and humid, the thing was useless.

February was probably the worst month as the temperature shot up into the 40s, and we were not used to that.

The river just about dried up, except for the pool near our house (which was always icy cold) and everything was tinder dry and dusty. I had no air conditioner in the car (they were unheard of then). The only way to try and cool off was to open all the windows and drive. But often the wind was that hot, it was better to shut them and try and find some shade.

I had only been at work a couple of months when I had to attend my first “death”.

The son of a local dignitary had been to a party, got stoned drunk, and whilst returning home had smashed head on into his best friends car. Killing the friend.

Eventually he was taken to court by the Police, as there had been a death, but he had hired one of the smartest Solicitors in the State, a Terry Walsh (This man eventually became a judge).

I thought that I was pretty clued up regarding prosecution, but this Solicitor ran absolute rings around both the Police and myself and the evidence of the forensic team that had also attended the scene of the accident.

He threw so much doubt on the evidence in technical terms that the charges were dismissed.

I was furious; as this Solicitor had even lied, or caused his client to lie or at least, only tell half truths. But the law is the law, and I learned more from that one case than I ever learned from anything else and was never again beaten on technicalities even when coming up against this same Solicitor.

Sometime in early 1968, I came home from work and found Margaret lying on the bed almost unconscious. I immediately called the local doctor, a Paddy O'Reilly.

I had only met the man once before and even then was not in the least impressed as he seemed drunk, and dirty. With a perpetual cigarette hanging from his mouth.

He didn't really examine Margaret but gave me a script to fetch some tablets from the chemist.

I didn't know until afterwards that they were Contraceptive pills. (No wonder the chemist looked at me rather funnily when I asked him to open up specially for me to get the prescription) He advised her to rest and take a number of these pills.

On coming home a couple of days later, I found her on the floor with a pool of blood.

This time I rang the Northam hospital which advised me to bring her in immediately.

It was about 14 Kms to Northam, but when you are the local traffic cop, speed, in an emergency didn't matter.

On her arrival she was rushed immediately into surgery and the Doctors found that she had in fact had a miscarriage.

The Northam Doctors were furious with Dr Paddy, saying that the man was a danger to the community and should be struck off.

I was asked to sign a complaint form to initiate this, but we both felt that anyone can make a mistake, and gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Later years, and experiences with this same, so called Doctor, made us wonder whether we had in fact done the Community a disservice.

Remember the prophecies in the earlier Chapter, Number Three.

Number four came later that same year when Margaret received a letter from England telling her that an Aunt she hardly knew, had died and left a small sum of money.

Margaret was so upset about losing this baby that the doctors advised her to try again even although she was now almost 40 years of age. But it wasn't quite as easy as that. And it took her some time to recover.

One morning not long after we had come to live in Toodyay I was just getting ready for work we heard a very loud bang and the whole house started to shake and shudder. It was quite terrifying as it went on for what appeared to be several minutes. We soon realised that we were in the middle of an earthquake, something that we had never experienced before. I can't remember whether we hid under the table or rushed outside but I believe it was the latter as I was scared that the house would rock off of its stumps.

Once the tremors stopped I looked under the house and saw that all the stumps must have moved considerable as there were gaps in the earth around each one. Fortunately the house was a timber framed one and the only damage was a few cracks in the plaster.

We later found that the epicentre of the 'quake was Meckering some 60-70 miles away. This small town was just about destroyed.

When I came to Australia I certainly was not a Racist and believed that all races were equal but I am afraid that my ideals came unstuck early in my new job.

I had not had any experience with Aboriginals and couldn't understand the attitude of many of the towns' people towards them until one day when I was having a haircut, I saw through the doorway, two vehicles tearing down the main street. I immediately jumped from the chair, ran to my car, which was standing (like the proverbial cowboys horse) just outside the door, and gave chase.

Just out of town the two cars were standing at the side of the road. One of the cars was an unmarked police car.

The two police men were attempting to arrest the driver of the other vehicle and his male passenger. (Can't remember what for)

I was asked if I could bring the two Aboriginal women into Town. Which I agreed to do, not realising what I let myself in for.

I was subjected the vilest abuse and language and the one accused me of only wanting to @##\$! her. I tried my hardest to still try and treat them as I would any woman and thought that I had won when they both agreed to get into my car.

Little was I to know what was in store for me at the Police Station and both the Policemen knew it, but thought it would be an experience, or initiation for me.

There were a number of people standing outside the station, including the two Policemen, neither of whom made any effort to help me get the two women out of the car.

When I finally succeeded in getting them onto the sidewalk, everyone was again subjected to the vilest abuse. Then suddenly, the youngest one pulled up her skirts and squatted down in front of everyone and urinated on the sidewalk. She then stuck two fingers up at the crowd, which had gathered, and walked into the police station.

The two Policemen were in stitches with laughter. They had seen it all before, but I was so embarrassed. It was from that day, that my estimation of the Aboriginal people, took a massive tumble.

Whilst this sort only represented a minor section of the Aboriginal Community they cast a slur on the whole race.

Whilst talking about the Police in this Town, I must say that I was not over impressed. The senior, Charlie, wasn't too bad, but the Sgt was a fat, drunken slob. How he got away with it I will never know. Many were the times when Charlie or I covered for him.

But we had to work together, the police at that time did no traffic work at all, but if they did have to apprehend anyone regarding traffic matters they handed the details over to me.

As the Sgt was usually drunk or missing, Charlie and I would go out on patrol together, especially late at night as the Police did not have a fast car fitted with spotlights and two way radios etc as I did.

One humorous episode I recall with Charlie was after several ladies had reported a man "flashing" himself at the side of the Northam Rd. was when we borrowed a couple of wigs from someone, and cruised up and down the Northam Rd in a variety of vehicles hoping to entice the "flasher" to do his stuff. But he never did.

It suddenly dawned on me one morning that we had been in Australia 12 months, so over breakfast I asked the kids, Okay, we have been here over the year. Who wants to go back home and live with Grandma?"

I was told, "Not to be so silly". So obviously the kids had settled in.

Socially, I had joined the RSL.,(this being an ex-servicemen's club), quickly becoming the Secretary/Treasurer.

Margaret also joined the Auxiliary and we organised many wonderful Social "dos" Which was something that had never been done before in Town.

At this time too, I experienced the first attempt at what could have been described as bribery.

I had instigated a system whereby all vehicles over a certain age would have to be inspected before they would be registered, as there were so many old "bombs" on the road, many of them in dangerous conditions. The first two that I put off the road was the Councils Refuse collection vehicle and one of the trucks. So no one could say that I discriminated.

Eventually it got around to the turn of the family that "Jock" had warned me about to present their old truck for examination. But the day before it was due to come in, I found a side of meat on my doorstep, "with the compliments of the Lloyd family".

It was so obviously an attempt at bribery that I immediately showed the Shire Clerk, and then took the meat back to the "donors". Saying nicely that I couldn't accept anything from anyone, but thank you very much.

Their truck failed the test completely and I think this is when they started to think about "getting me" as Jock had warned.

It was about this time that we heard of a couple of new migrants who had moved onto a farm a couple of Kilometres away. These turned out to be a Scottish couple, Jock and Eva McCaskill. And we became quite good friends with them for several years.

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For several months we had planned a night out at a Night Club in Perth with Jock and Eva and our ex neighbours in Perth Tom and Lyn Cunningham.

None of us had ever been to a Night Club before so had no idea what to expect, Eventually the evening arrived and we duly rolled up to this venue.

We had taken our own drinks with us, as the Club's were too expensive.

I knew that Margaret liked BabyCham and Perry, so I had brought along ample supplies.

Before we ordered the meal we had all had a couple of drinks, but before it could be served, Margaret keeled over dead drunk. So Jock and I took her back to their house in Perth and shoved her into bed. (I am getting a bit mixed up here and out of sequence, but I aint gonner rewrite everything for the reader's sake.) Jock and Eva had moved to Perth by this time. Some time after this they became very religious and didn't want to know us heathens

We had only just started dinner, when Eva keeled over too, so we had to take her home.

As I didn't drink, and had the patrol car, I told Tom and Jock that if they wanted to have a splurge it was ok by me.

So they did. Leaving Lyn and me the only sober ones. We had a marvellous evening.

When we got back to Jock's place both Margaret and Eva were still snoring their heads off. Drunken Bums. What a waste of good drink.

Whilst we were having a cuppa at Jocks place he wandered off somewhere and we eventually found him fast asleep in the toilet which was at the end of the garden.

It quickly became obvious that people in the town had come to see me as the one who had all the answers. Possibly because I worked for the Council and was always available. I started to feel a bit like "deputy dawg" just about running the town.

One Saturday afternoon I received a phone call from a very upset person, who said,

"My Dad has just died, what do I do with him?" I passed him over to the Police.

Another night there was a hammering on the door and an Aboriginal was standing there. "Come quick, he said. Our house is on fire"

Now, to get to our house he had had to run about quarter of a mile, climb over two high fences along the railway, then run a hundred yards down to our house. I rang the fire Brigade and then proceeded to the house, which I found well and truly on fire.

Someone said that there were still people inside so the Policeman and I dived inside o have a look. How many there had been sleeping there I never knew, but there were beds everywhere, fortunately there was no one in there. But the stupid buggers had lit a fire in the grate, and then stuck a great long log on it. As it wouldn't burn, they had thrown kero or petrol onto it. This of course had exploded and run back down the log and onto the carpet.

Another Saturday I received a phone call from some undertakers in Perth who stated that they needed a grave dug early Monday morning and they had been unable to contact the Council Supervisor to arrange this. They then stated that they had a Six foot square coffin and the grave would have to be dug accordingly.

I couldn't find the Supervisor until late on the Sunday and when I gave him the message he was flabbergasted. "A six-foot square coffin. That's impossible" he said, "We would have to move up a couple of graves to get it in"

Believe me, there was some consternation. Everyone thought that perhaps it was a double coffin or something. Or else someone had made a mistake.

Early on the Monday we managed to phone one of the undertakers at his home and he verified that it was indeed a six-foot square coffin.

No one knew what to do about it.

Then we received a call from the Senior Undertaker who realised that the message might seem strange (we all agreed). The Supervisor started to tell him that we couldn't get such a large coffin in the space available when he (the undertaker) roared with laughter and said that that was why he had called, he realised that people wouldn't know what he was talking about. In fact it was a six foot *square* coffin, meaning that it was six foot long, but it was shaped square on the sides instead of the usual shape. Which meant that the grave had to be dug square all the way down and not tapered at the bottom.

The first winter that we lived in Toodyay we shall never forget. It rained and rained and rained, several inches every day. Within a few days, the dried up river running beside the house became raging torrent. We couldn't sleep at night for the noise, and each day the water crept further up the banks towards the house. Remember we were only about 50 ft from the actual watercourse.

I had previously asked the old man that lived opposite, why he had his outside toilet was chained to a tree, and he had told me that he had lost it several times when the river had flooded. I later realised that this outbuilding was several feet further from the riverbanks than we were, so believe me we started to panic a bit and began to think about evacuating.

The Council however assured us that the water wouldn't come up to the house as the river had been cleaned out only a year or so before and there were no obstructions to make the river flood too far.

It didn't reach the house but it came to within about 10ft.

The people that lived opposite us were a lovely old couple. Neither of them had ever been to Perth in their lives.

I knew that the folks next door to my Mum and Dad in Wales were helping them so I thought I would reciprocate by helping the old couple. Chopping wood etc for them. He was an independent old cuss and didn't want us to help, so we did it on the sly when they had gone out.

He had an old bomb of a car, which he used to "warm up" for about ten minutes before taking off in great clouds of smoke. He would chug off down the main St at about 10 MPH but would only go as far as the Club or the Shire Office. The Police wanted to get him off the road but he wasn't causing any harm.

After the rains and at the beginning of Spring, the whole countryside burst into bloom with wild flowers everywhere. It was absolutely beautiful.

Naturally, it wasn't all honey and roses and my job took me into some very nasty situations especially regarding accidents. One never gets used to picking up dead bodies, especially when it was youngsters involved although one does develop a kind of "armour". The only ones that I never felt sorry for was when the vehicle reeked with alcohol, as far as I was concerned that was self-inflicted wounds.

What did hurt though, although it wasn't my business really, was when I accompanied the Policeman to the home of relatives to give them the news that someone wasn't coming home. That is BLOODY AWFUL.

I mentioned earlier that the one Council that I worked for "Chittering" were a shower of #@!. Well. After I had been there for about 18 months I attended what I thought was a fire. As it was in the non

burning time, I drove around until I found the fire burning on a property. Speaking to the owner's wife I enquired about the fire and was told that her husband was the Fire Control Officer for the area and was attending to it.

Which satisfied me and I drove off.

Apparently the bitch complained to the Council saying that it was none of my business, that I had been rude to her and then tore madly down her drive.

As I had spoken not more than a dozen words with her and hadn't even started the engine of the car as I backed slowly down her drive, which was very steep, I was flabbergasted.

Chittering Shire demanded a meeting with the Toodyay Shire about this and I was asked for my version.

I received an apology from the meeting, a commendation for the work I was doing, and granted 16 hrs a fortnight overtime at time and a half whether I worked it or not.

They couldn't give me a rise in salary as that was fixed by the Local Gov Dept but I said thank you very much, as wages then were not very high, I think about 62 dollars a week. Our rent for the house was I believe, 8 Dollars.

Almost every weekend we would have visitors from Perth. It was only about 40 mins drive and a very pleasant one at that.

We had found a number of ex Goytre people and it was nice when they came so that we could reminisce. Nearly all of those folks soon returned to the U.K though.

I am not sure whether it was our second or third Xmas there but we had quite a crowd up for Xmas Eve and staying over for Dinner.

We were in the middle of a party when the phone rang and I was advised that there had been a bad accident on the outskirts of town.

On my arrival, I found the Fire Brigade the Ambulance and just about everyone in Town,

A Car had smashed into a pole at the side of the road, bringing down the High tension wires, these had fallen across the domestic electric lines and there was chaos. Several houses were on fire, as was the paddock at the side of the road.

There was no sign of the driver of the car.

The Fire Brigade couldn't do anything until the electric was cut off. But when they tried to pull out the pole fuse, which would have isolated the town, it wouldn't budge, being rusted in.

Every now and again, there would be the sound of an explosion as electricity poles back along the railway and to Northam began to burn. This put all the signals on the railway out which halted all train services.

Eventually the S.E.C men arrived and cut off the electricity. But this was not before severe damage; costing thousands of dollars had been done.

We never caught up with the driver. I believe he scarpered overseas or something.

There was no electricity anywhere in town for several days afterwards so Xmas breakfast and dinner was cooked on the barbecue. But we still had a wonderful time.

I think it was that Xmas Day too that whilst I was trying Brian's new cycle out up near the main road, that a car came hurtling along well and truly over the speed limit.

I saw it skid to a stop outside one of the shops or the pub so I hared away down the street on the cycle. I wasn't in uniform but like a policeman was on duty 24 hrs, and always carried my identity card. It was only a couple of hundred meters to where the vehicle had stopped so it didn't take me a couple of shakes to get there.

The driver wasn't amused at being chased by a traffic cop on a cycle. But he admitted speeding) it was either that or go for reckless driving) so he got a ticket for a Xmas present.

That was the problem of working and living in the town as people would come to me at all hours. Either looking for permits or wanting vehicles inspected which other Inspectors had put off the road, I could have said that I had strict office hours, but that wasn't me and I enjoyed the work.

One evening we had, along with Rex and Janet been to the Fire Brigade Ball. (David was by now a member of the Brigade).

On coming out into the Main Street at about 1.0A.M I saw a car swerving about all over the road. Its exhaust was hanging down and scraping on the road, causing sparks.

On stopping the car, I identified myself and told the driver, that as I was out enjoying myself, he had better get out of town quick and I would do nothing more about it.

About half an hour later, we were all sitting out on our verandah having a drink when this same car, came hurtling across the vacant block next to ours.

The second time, I had had enough, and jumped into the patrol car along with Rex and David and took off after it.

Eventually running it down the other side of Town. The driver started to get nasty at first but when Rex poked his nose in and asked if I was having any trouble, the driver subsided.

I took his particulars and advised him he would be in Court the following week or so. And let him go. When I got back home, David told me that the driver had lost his licence only two days previously and shouldn't have been driving at all. Immediately, I phoned the Northam police who eventually apprehended him. He was later sentenced to three months in gaol for driving under suspension.

But the day after he got out he was back in town cutting up. I again apprehended him and he was back in gaol. Some twits never learn.

Having been deeply involved in Civil Defence in England and having trained as an Instructor in just about every facet of this work, I started a Civil Defence, (or as it is called in Australia, the State Emergency Service), section.

This proved very popular

I was later sent to Mt Macedon, in NSW to attend a course, covering Rescue and various admin jobs.

One resident of Macedon was not very amused with my being sent there.

Several months before, he had been taken to court by me on a serious traffic charge and fined several hundred dollars however he had disappeared and failed to pay the fine. (In those days, all fines regarding traffic were handed to the Shire Council).

I found out that he was living in Macedon so I obtained a warrant for his arrest, or recovery of the fine. These were valid anywhere in Australia.

At the end of the first week of the course, I went to the local Police Station in Macedon and requested the cooperation of the Police in serving the warrant.

The look on the man's face when I arrived on his doorstep with a Policeman was quite funny. But he paid up rather than go to jail. He thought that I had come all the way from W.A just for that purpose. But he called me all sorts of nasty names.

I don't know whether it was the very skimpy nightie that I had brought back for Margaret, or the rest. But shortly after I returned from Macedon, Margaret found that she was again pregnant. She was over the moon at this although she was just on 40 years of age.

The job itself was for me very exciting and demanding as every day there was something happening. And I had hundred of square miles to roam in. Also, I have always been a "loner" preferring to work on my own and make my own decisions to which end, this job gave me full rein.

Another incident occurred with the Chittering Shire Council one Xmas time. I was asked in to have a drink with the Council. I didn't touch alcohol in any shape or form so had only a glass of coke. During the "session" I had caused to go to the toilet, leaving my drink on the table. Standing at the urinal I could see through the crack of the door into the Council Chambers and I was horrified to see one of the Councillors pouring vodka into my glass. On returning to the Chambers I picked the glass up and threw the contents straight into his face, then went for him.

The President who had not seen what had happened thought that I had gone nuts and demanded an explanation. I told him in no uncertain terms that as I didn't drink alcohol I could have been badly affected and then unwittingly gone out and driven the patrol car at speeds of anything up to 120 miles per hour, possibly having an accident.

Two other Councillors confirmed what I told him (they should have stopped it in the first place, but now became scared that they would be involved.) Eventually that Councillor was dismissed from the Council and I received an apology from them. But it showed what a dirty lot of bastards they were.

Another time at a Council meeting, one of the Councillors accused me of being drunk whilst on duty. At this I was incensed but for once didn't lose my temper. There were reporters from the local paper at the meeting and this would make wonderful headlines for them.

For possibly a couple of years I had not touched alcohol in any shape or form either on duty or off as I had one night pulled a motorist over and charged him with drunk driving. During this he had said to me that he had seen me drinking at the pub. This was true, but I never had more than one small shandy any evening. But I thought, "Practice what you preach, Hayes" so I gave it up completely.

Anyway, at the Council meeting I advised the President that I would be taking legal action against the Councillor and the paper if they printed the allegations and stormed out to get on the phone to a Solicitor.

In the afternoon when I came back to the office I was asked by the President to PLEASE attend the meeting.

Once there, he made the Councillor give me a public apology, this to be put in the paper. I refused to accept the apology and told them I would have to think about it. And kept them in suspense for several days. Eventually I accepted it. But they were a shower of Bastards in that Shire Council

Apparently he and others had checked with the Publican at the hotel where the alleged incident had taken place and found that I had only had two glasses of lemonade with my lunch.

Just prior to being in the Pub, I and a policeman had attended the Coroners court regarding a road death. It was quite a nasty one and the Coroner had invited us afterwards to have lunch with him at the Pub.

I am starting to wander a bit and must get on, even if it means leaving out a lot of anecdotes, as time is getting on. It is now JUNE 2002 and I am 76 .Old age is creeping up on me fast (all of a sudden) and I am getting very tired. So I feel that I had better get this written BEFORE the story itself ends. Everything is becoming too much of an effort, although I do still play badminton twice a week for a bit of exercise. If I manage to catch up I can always put in a bit more. Or write them as a separate entity.

Sob Sob.

Where the heck was I ?

Oh yeah.

Towards the end of Margaret's pregnancy I had made arrangements with several persons in Town, including the ambulance driver, the Police and a couple of others to be available to get her to hospital should I be out of town when she went into labour.

However, the best laid schemes always-go wrong.

I was miles out of town one day at a serious accident, along with the ambulance and the Police when I received a message from Margaret on the radio that she thought I had better come home.

On my arrival I found that she was already in labour and the water had broken.

On phoning Northam Hospital. I was advised to get her in "as quick as possible".

Northam was about 14 miles away but we arrived there in about 7 Or 8 minutes

If I couldn't speed in an emergency, who could?

I didn't wait to see what was happening, as the other kids were coming out of school in Toodyay and sped back. As I walked in the door, and before I could say to the kids that Mum had gone to hospital the phone rang, and it was Margaret to tell me that we had another son. And that all was well.

We thought that the other kids would be either jealous, or resentful about the new baby, but they were wonderful.

The two boys would even fight over who would push the pram down town. And Janet was all over him. He was spoilt rotten. But he was such a happy little thing.

It was amazing the attitude in a small town like this as within hours, several small gifts were left at the house for Margaret and the baby and a couple of men invited me down to the pub for a drink and a cigar.

Janet had by this time become engaged to Rex Hayes from Northam.

A couple of months after he was born we had a day out at Gin Gin where Cedric and Pat were now living. Just to make the journey, we decided to come back the long way through the Jullimar Forest.

As we travelled down one of the gravel tracks we saw another vehicle in front of us.

As we passed it, David said "Hey Dad, that man has got a gun"

As I was also the Shire Ranger, and shooting was forbidden in the forest I rather (looking back at it,) stupidly stopped this car and told the driver and the man with the

Gun that shooting was illegal. He assured me that the gun had not been fired and gave me it to inspect. After further warning I returned to my car, where I found Margaret and the kids in a great state. They then showed me the front page of the Sunday paper that we had, which carried a photo of three men who were wanted for escaping from prison and who were considered extremely dangerous. It was the three men in the car that I had just stopped.

I was no hero, and NOT a Policeman, but quickly became a racetrack driver as we sped away as fast as possible. Not even stopping to change our pants

When I reported the incident to the Police they wouldn't at first believe me, saying that the men were not armed as far as they knew.

They were apprehended about two miles from town a couple of days later.

As I knew the area so well, I had taken the Police out into the forest to search. We soon found where they had camped for the night and which direction they had gone.

We followed their tracks for several miles until appeared that they might be in a farm house.

The Policeman, I think it was Charlie O'Neil had brought along his revolver and a rifle.

When we thought they must be in this farm house he said, (either bravely or stupidly)" I am going to rush them Stan, will you come with me?"

Yeah well!!! I wasn't a policeman or stoopid, so I told him that if he wanted to have a go that was up to him, but I would cover him with the rifle from behind the nearest tree.

But said that we should be more sensible, and get back on the radio for help.

This we did, and eventually the CIB blokes turned up. However, the wanted men were not in the house but had left their car behind so couldn't have gone far.

We searched for a couple of hours and eventually found a newly used campsite; we advised the CIB about this and left it to them.

The men were recaptured a couple of hours later.

Margaret too was involved in all of these things as my base radio was in our kitchen.

In fact the first words Andrew ever spoke was when he pulled his pram along to where the radio was and yelled over the mike' "Troll one, troll one" (Patrol one) which was my call sign.

If I was out late on patrol she would man the radio until I came back in.

Sometimes however I would be out of range and even at midnight, after repeated calls had got no answer, the Inspector's wife from Three Springs, some hundreds of miles North of Toodyay, would answer and relay my calls.

Fire was always a great fear in the Countryside. During summer, everything just dried up and it only took a spark to set a major incident. One such incident occurred in the heat of one summer. It was believed that it started in the army training grounds at Bindoon, other reports were that it was started by a truck dragging a burning branch around. Whatever, it soon developed into a massive front.

Just about everyone in the Shire became involved.

Every farm in the Bush is required to maintain fire fighting apparatus, usually a truck with a tank on it and a pump. Every one of these was called in as was the W.A Fire Brigade and the Army.

This fire burned for almost a fortnight, sometimes jumping several miles, just when we thought that we had it under control. The Toodyay area is dissected by the Swan River and there are only two or three places that it can be crossed easily even in the dry of summer. The area is also very hilly and once the fire got into the Julimar forest there was no stopping it.

The only good thing about a catastrophe like this is that everyone pitches in and helps. Old enmities are forgotten and a new spirit seems to be alive at least for a while.

One morning after the fire had been going for about a week I received a phone call from an Army Colonel in Perth, who “told” me to get in touch with the Officer directing the army personnel fighting the fire and tell him that he, the Colonel, wanted that fire out immediately as he wanted the men back in Perth for something or other.

Every unit at the fire had two way radios as I did, and I had set up a command post.

I had never heard such drivel in my life and promptly told the Colonel so, much to his annoyance.

Towards the end of two weeks the fire was approaching the Town and there was no way that we could stop it as the terrain was too hilly for the trucks and everyone was absolutely whacked. All we could do, was stand and watch it as it roared up the hill, we had no fight left.

It came up the hill and over the top towards us and WENT OUT, just like that.

It seemed like a miracle.

But we all too stuffed to even raise a cheer.

We had several incidents like this almost every year, but nothing like this.

It is often said when something happens that “Your name couldn’t have been on it” if you have escaped unharmed.

And this is what must have been the case one day whilst I was on patrol on the Grt Northern H/way .Here; I had many chases at speeds of 120 mph although if I couldn’t stop the offending car I would back off after a few miles. It wasn’t worth risking my life for.

Anyway one particular day I was parked at the side of the road, near a café where there was a lovely shade from a massive tree which overhung the spot where I often parked, as it was a sneaky spot to watch oncoming traffic with the radar partly hidden.

This particular day, I saw a car speeding and took after it, eventually stopping it some miles down the road.

When I returned to my spot, I first went into the café to get a drink, there the owner said to me” did you catch that bloke?” when I replied in the affirmative, she said” I think you should let him off as he probably saved your life.”

On my asking “why?” she said “just go and have a look where you were parked just before you chased him”

Hell, when I went out I saw that a massive branch had fallen from the tree, right across where I usually parked. Had I been there when it came down, it would most probably have been curtains for “yours truly”

I cannot remember whether I did in fact let him off, but I have a feeling I did.

I had never been one to join Clubs etc, preferring my own company, but I was pleased and felt honoured when I was asked if I would like to join the Freemasons Lodge. Especially as both my Father, and Uncle Ernie had been Freemasons.

Dad sent me his old “Apron” which required some modification for the Australian Lodge and I wore it with Pride at my initiation.

However it didn’t take me long to find out what a load of bloody hypocrites they all were. Expressing Brotherly love whilst in the Temple, but outside ready to stick a knife in anyone. Their creed was all symbolic and quite frankly a load of rubbish

I suppose some Lodges did do some good work around the Towns but I saw no evidence of it in Toodyay. I reached the rank of Senior Warden I think it was. But had no aspirations to sit in the exalted chair. I have never had a Halo around my head but I have never been a hypocrite.

The socials were not bad and very often we would travel up to a hundred miles to attend another Lodge for a Ceremony and a supper afterwards. But many of these developed into just a massive drink session. I didn't drink alcohol at all and would always drive myself. The Shire Clerk would often be my passenger. He would get more than Merry but was never any problem.

One evening when Margaret was pregnant and getting close to time, we went down to Perth to a meeting. After the meeting we were invited to go to another Members house for a party. I had told Margaret that if anything happened, to phone the Central Police Station in Perth and they would find me. as they would know where the Lodge was, I decided to go into the Police Station and advise them.

Whilst I was talking to the Sgt, Jock literally **rolled** in and VERY slurry said, "ish ok sarge, I'm in charge". God knows what they thought, but the Sgt came outside to see who *was* driving.

Andrew was only a few months old when Janet decided to get married. We were not too happy about it at first, as her Fiancé was a Catholic. (Not that we have ever been deeply religious) However he was a very nice lad named Rex Hayes. Any problems that might arise over the different religions would have to be sorted out between them.

We had very little money to spend on a big wedding for her. But once again fates smiled on us. The Shire offered us the use of the Hall for free; we used my patrol car (with the light taken off) and also one from a neighbouring Shire's Traffic Department. (We were at that time very friendly with the Inspector) and just before the wedding I had met up with the son of my old Bandmaster from Abergavenny who at that time was a commercial traveller. He also was the leader of a Band in Perth. He offered to bring his band up to Toodyay, if we paid for the transport.

Then the CWA (which is an organisation of countrywomen throughout Australia) offered to do the catering for \$3.50 per head. This even then was very cheap. Booze was also fairly cheap, as one could buy a barrel of beer for only a few dollars and wine was about 2 dollars flagon. So all in all we got away with it rather cheap. I think too, that Janet had been saving towards it.

Just before she decided to get married we had decided to buy a swimming pool for the kids as the river dried up in the heat of summer. Sometimes just to get cool, we would go off to Lake Leschenaultia, about 15 miles away, just for a swim and a cool. Trouble was that by the time one got back home, it was forgotten.

There were no pools at all in the Town at that time, not even a Public one so when ours was erected (it was an above ground one) many mothers said to Margaret, "Our kid's will be ok now" But they had another think coming.

We allowed only one other friend in with our kids at any one time. Otherwise there would have been trouble. And someone hurt. Or the pool broken. A few people thought that we were mean, but I didn't care. Who was going to watch their kids?.

Andrew, even at six months, loved it. Especially when the boys would throw him across the pool to each other.

Shortly after this, I was reading the "Government Gazette" one morning and noticed a block of land that was coming up for tender. It was 1 ½ acres in size. Conditions were that one had to build within two years.

I had a look at the block, which was on the edge of Town. It was rather hilly but who cared. I fell in love with it and decided to put in a tender for two hundred dollars.

Knowing that very few people in Town would ever see the Gazette I thought I might get a chance. And beggar me; we got it for the \$200.

The only problem was. I didn't have any money to pay for it.

Fortunately the Authority wouldn't let one pay for it in one go. It had to be paid in 4 quarters so I stood a chance.

One evening as I was going through the papers of the RSL I came across a Notice relating to Mortgages for allied ex service men. I wasn't sure what it was all about, but the following day, I hared off to Perth to find the Solicitor that was handling the funds.

He told me that I was a bit late, as all these mortgages were started just after the war and although they were what were termed Terminating Mortgages, any left had only a few years to run. However he did find two or three that had a few dollars left and a few years to run. And he lumped these all together. He even included the \$200 for the land. So in fact I had a !00% loan.

The quickest and cheapest way to get a house built in the country areas is to have one built in Perth and transported to wherever you wanted it. And this is what we did.

I think the house cost us about \$8500.

It was beautiful. With three large bedrooms and all the necessary bits. Plus a massive Lounge room with a beautiful polished wooden floor. Although this was spoilt by the painters. The builders wouldn't come all the way back out there to have the floor repolished, but told us to carpet it at their expense.

The house was transported in two halves on the back of trucks.

Prior to it's delivery I had had the firm have a look at the block to see whether there was any problems that they could see in getting it onto the block. I had previously had about ¼ acre cleared and levelled some 300 ft up the hill. The track in, was just a dusty track, which had been the Towns Fire Break. In the middle of summer it was a foot deep in just powdered dust.

The firm advised that there would be no problems.

However, when the house arrived they found that the turn was far to sharp for them to turn into the drive, and at one time almost lost the house off the truck. It was STINKING hot that day and everyone was exhausted. No one could see a way out of the dilemma, until a neighbour, whose property was in direct line with our drive on the other side of the road and who had been watching the dram unfold offered for the vehicles to go through his property, if they could bulldoze out a couple of trees and fill the ditch in at the side of the road.

So we borrowed a Bulldozer from the Council and cut a "road" though the neighbours land.

This made access reasonably easy but once they hit the track and its dust they were again buggered as the trucks couldn't pull up the hill.

Using the bulldozer they made another effort, but by now all the vehicles were getting hot. And so were their exhausts, and at that time of the year it only took a tiny spark to set the grass etc alight. And this is what happened. Before we knew it the block was well and truly ablaze.

Fortunately the Fire Station was only a short distance away and the fire was contained before it had done too much damage or escaped the block.

I couldn't do much to help other than to keep the supply of ice-cold beer coming.
What should have been a few hours job turned into a two-day affair.

(Some ten years later when I was on another job at a building site, one of the builders was relating the tale of "my house" to several others. Saying that it was the biggest bastard of a job they had ever had)

Eventually the house was got to the top, but then we found that the person, who had levelled the block, must have been blind or short sighted as it was about 3 ft out of level. We either had to leave the job and have it rectified or build the front of the house up. Fortunately it was on steel poles so it was reasonably easy. But it gave the house the appearance of being "up in the air".

We had already put the septic tanks and drainage in ready just to connect up.

Due to the steep fall of the land we had been able to build the leach drains almost at ground level and then dropped sand and soil over. This meant a massive stone retaining wall, which David built almost unaided.

With his aid too I went out each weekend to get a couple of trailer loads of gravel, which we laid, on the "drive". This we rolled in with a home made roller.

I had never tried laying bitumen so I contacted a local builder to gravel and bitumise the area in front of the house. Just to show it was done.

Now being "full bottles" on this we started on the drive. Doing a small section at a time.

One weekend we were unable to obtain a proper pump to pump the bitumen out of the drums, so being good improvisers, we utilised an oil pump. The trouble was that this pump wouldn't screw into the top of the drum properly and Margaret was recruited to hold it in with one hand and pump with the other. This worked fine for a while then suddenly, probably because the pressure had built up too much, she couldn't hold it and the bitumen squirted out all over her. Instant Aboriginal. It even went through her jumper and left her with dozens of tiny spots all over her body. She was not amused. But in those days we thought everything funny and soon had a laugh about it.

For several years the Labour Party that was in Government had been advocating that all traffic control should be taken over by the Police. Naturally all Shire Councils were fighting this and I can still see a Liberal MP a Mr O'Connor thumping the table with his fist at a meeting and saying "Under no circumstances would the Liberal Party condone or allow this to happen"

When the subject was brought before Parliament the Liberals and Nationals Defeated the Bill thereby winning the approval of thousands of people. Little did we guess at that time that this was only a ploy to help win the next election.

The West Australian Newspaper at that time carried out one of the most vitriolic attacks I have ever seen on a body that was doing its best. Every day there were letters from Correspondence alleging that they had been victimised by Traffic Inspectors because they were speeding or had had a few drinks etc.

As no one in their right mind would ever trust a Politician, Many of the Traffic Inspectors had been studying for other jobs. Just in case. And I was no different. I had been studying for my Health Surveyors Certificate for two or three years and had finally passed the final exams. There were very few Health Surveyors in the Country

Areas at that time. If the need arose, usually someone would come up from Perth. But many of the Shires were now starting to develop and more men were needed.

I applied to the Health Dept to take on the role of Health Surveyor as well as being Traffic Inspector, and this had been approved.

I was at the top of the wave. We had this beautiful new house and block. A good job and wonderful prospects.

Little did I know that just around the corner because of lying conniving bastards there was a massive crunch coming, which for a while completely devastated me and brought our whole world crashing down.

I have so many anecdotes regarding this job that I can write another book on it. So hang around you may get one.

CHAPTER 11

Caught in a Web

It took me a long time to make up my mind whether this chapter *should* be written and it was suggested that I didn't. But it *is* a chapter in my life, and I have tried to record the highs and the lows so that the reader will not tend to think that my life has been a bed of roses. Far from it. I have had many Highs when life has been wonderful and then like the ocean wave, I have slid down into a trough. Being pretty resilient though, I have always climbed up out of the trough, and managed to reach even higher wave tops. Being in a low, probably having taught me that one should not expect to be on top all the time. And one had to fight for what one wanted.

Loneliness has always been my constant companion. I have never been able to make friends easily, always seeming to be able to push people away.

That was why in my earlier years I would always wander off on my own. Even in the army I would pal up for a couple of weeks with someone, and then it would be over. And I can count the number of proper friends I have had on my fingers, and these I have cherished all my life.

This is not intended to be a sob chapter but I feel that it may help the reader to understand some of what happened at this period in my life.

As one will understand, the job of the sole Traffic cop in a small country town even if one was not a b@\$%\$## was not one that endeared one to people as it was often necessary, if one was conscientious, to have to sometimes take legal action against some of ones neighbours.

During this period too I was suffering an extreme bout of depression which I was often prone to, and loneliness, as even at home no one seemed to want to know me. All attention was focused on the newcomer in the house. Janet had left home being married. To counter this, I made the mistake of throwing myself into my work, working sometimes 16 hrs day and night instead of talking to someone about it. This of course was not the answer, as it just increased the hours that I was alone.

I had over the years found favourite vantage points around the Shire from where I could keep an easy eye on the traffic. One of these points was in Town near the Convent, where there was piece of ground where I could park the car and easily observe what was going on in the area The Radar could cover the whole of the main St and I could also watch traffic coming into town.

I had been using this area for years and no one had come near me. However, suddenly and for no known reason people from the house next door to this spot started to come out and talk to me. Either, the Father or the daughter. Sometimes they would even bring me out a cup of tea or a cool drink and stand talking to me for ages.

Because of my “attitude” at this time I welcomed this show of friendliness although I make it quite clear right now that there was not even a thought about the daughter as being attractive, because she was not. And wherever I went in the Shire I was always the “soul of discretion”

BUT I had like an idiot, forgotten the warning of the Shire Clerk when I started the job, to stay away from the Lloyds, they were poison. Especially if anyone had crossed them at any time. Which I had done more than once.

After a while, they started inviting me in to the house for a “cuppa” or a drink and I still didn’t see the spider weaving its web.

Then one evening when I came home from work, Margaret angrily advised me that she had had a phone call from the daughter alleging that I had propositioned her.

I was furious, as nothing was further from the truth, as God may be my witness.

Whilst on the boil I went to their house, kicked the door in and had a proper set to with them all. This was probably the worst thing that I could have done, as two days later I was advised by the Police that the Lloyds had made a complaint against me of offensive behaviour, alleging that I had done certain things whilst in their house.

It was a sheer and utter lie as I had never ever been alone in the house with either the Father or the Daughter, and at no time had I done anything that I wouldn’t expect anyone to do in my house. But I had no leg to stand on it was their word against mine. Yes I could have pleaded not guilty but that would, I was advised by the Policeman make a lot of publicity and if I did they would make more allegations, just to get me.

Even the JP who heard the case said in Court that he just did not believe it as he knew my character, and asked me whether I wanted to change my plea. I couldn’t tell him outright what had been said to me by the Policeman, but I told him that I had no choice. I think he understood what the situation was, as he recorded no conviction, and just bound me over to keep the peace for three months.

The Policeman was furious and told me straight that they would “get me” one way or the other. (This was not the local Police, who were in sympathy with me).

I later found out that this Family had over the years been responsible for discrediting several people in Town who had upset them over something or other, including an Anglican Vicar, who had been forced to leave Town, and a young man they alleged had raped the older daughter. This man was later found to be not guilty and released with substantial compensation. So what chance had I had? Fortunately they had not been able to allege anything serious. But I was scared of what they might do next.

The following morning I advised the Council what had happened and tendered my resignation. They suggested that I take a month or so of my accrued leave by which time it would have blown over. But I just couldn’t take the thought of what these B@3344s might do which would affect my whole Family. So I decided to go. Heartbroken though I was.

The Council was very good as they allowed me to use the Council car until such time as mine was ready for the road and also made application to the Local Government Dept to be allowed to give me a considerable "handshake". So what with this, and about three months accrued leave etc we were financially ok.

The night after I resigned, the lads of the Town went mad. I thought that they were just cutting up because there was no traffic cop around. But I was told later that they had been demonstrating outside the Lloyds house. The road and pavement outside their house was black with skid marks, and someone threw a brick through their front window.

They had called the local Police for help, but they were conveniently out of town.

The Family was hated throughout the Town by just about everyone and there was no way that any of them would venture out of their front gate at night.

But that didn't do me any good other than give me a warm feeling

Several ladies went to the Council and asked them to try and get me to come back, as they felt safe when they knew I was on the road at night. And one shop keeper started a petition. (So I couldn't have been such a bad traffic cop after all) But I was adamant.

I had burned my bridges and it was time to look forward to a new start.

Within a couple of days several business men in Town and Farmers came to the house and offered me a job. But I wanted out of Town and out of reach.

Being so far from anywhere made it very hard to go looking for a job, but eventually I started work for the Health Dept working with retarded persons in Perth.

This wasn't really my cup of tea but it was interesting and different.

I did my initial training in the main "hospital" style home and then moved to relieving staff going out to "Hostels".

This was a real cushy, though boring job as there was nothing to do all day. The "boys" all went out to work and there were two cooks, a gardener and a cleaner on the staff too.

The only time that one had much to do with the "boys" was in the evenings and at weekends. When one was supposed to try and teach them the social graces.

Most days, the boss would tell me to go fishing in the river or give me an errand to run into town. Provided he knew where I was.

On night shift, the staff, once the "boys" were settled down, went to bed too, and only had to ensure that they were up and ready for work next morning.

At weekends we would often take the lads to the Wanneroo race track, or the cinema.

Once a month they were taken to the Perth Town Hall for a dance where we left them and went off to do our own thing until it was time to take them home again.

This was all very nice but it "wasn't me" so I started sending out job applications all over the place.

I had several interviews for other jobs, but nothing came of any of them which made me feel somewhat despondent. Especially as I was travelling something like 100 miles per day, although some times, if the shifts worked out awkward I would sleep over at the Hostel. It was also costing a fortune in petrol.

Brian had left school and had gone to work for Janet and Rex in Beacon David having finished his apprenticeship in Northam, had found a job up North with one of the exploration companies so we only had Andrew at home

Then after about 6 months I had a message from Albany Shire requesting that I present myself for an interview as they had a position for one Traffic Inspector.

As I started on the journey to Albany, some 250 miles or so, my Volkswagen car finally broke down and I had to purchase another one. This time, a Mitsubishi colt.

I duly arrived in Albany only to find about a dozen other men all vying for the position. Several of these went in to the interview but came out and headed back home.

I went in and said all the necessary things etc and was asked to wait outside whilst three others were interviewed.

As each of these came out they said that they had been selected for the job, so as there had only been one position advertised I prepared to disappear from the scene,

However before I could leave, the Shire Clerk came out and asked me to return to the room. Thinking this was my rejection notice I was quite despondent, but this soon turned to elation as the President told me that two Shires had decided to amalgamate their traffic Departments ,and they wanted me to take on the position of Senior Inspector with the other three men as Juniors.

And that I could start as soon as I liked, and could find accommodation.

I was fortunate that very day to find a house to rent in the Town of Albany. I believe the rent was about \$22 per week. That doesn't sound much today, but remember the wages were only about \$60 and we were still paying the mortgage for the new house in Toodyay. I also had to buy a new car as my Volkswagen had given up the ghost.

It was a pang to move from our lovely new house but we felt it was for the best and David having returned from up North, asked if he could stay on there and look after it.

So in about Aug 1974 we started another new venture.

One incident that did touch me though, was when we were having a farewell party, several vehicles started coming up our drive. Thinking it was a load of gatecrashers. David, Rex, and I and a couple of our male friends went down to stop them.

But it was only a bunch of the local lads who were coming to also say goodbye. They even thanked me for the way that I had treated them whilst I was working there,

Which had probably saved their lives? They also asked whether they could call in and see us if ever they were in Albany. They reckoned that I hadn't been a bad old bastard after all. And many of them did.

Now I was climbing out of the trough and the weather forecast appeared to be fine.

Before I close this chapter I would record the saga regarding my volkswagon.

I hadn't used it very much, having full use of the Shire vehicle but one day whilst in Northam at a Garage, the owner told me that the engine sounded a "bit rough" and said that he could fix it within ten days for about 90 dollars. As I was aware that the car wasn't in the best condition I agreed to this and took the vehicle in to him.

Ten weeks after, I was still waiting for my car.

Eventually I was told it was finished and I took it home, however on the way it conked out several times and was worse than when it went in for servicing.

Irately I called the garage which sent out a mechanic to take it back in. I was told next day that the mechanic had been killed in a road accident shortly after taking my car in.

So there was another long wait. I eventually got the car back, in no better condition than it had been when taken in first of all with a bill of something like 250 dollars, which I refused to pay.

Later when I was in Albany I as served with a Notice to pay or go to court, however I was advised by the local Magistrate that they didn't have a leg to stand on and gave me some advice what to do. I heard no more from them regarding the matter.

CHAPTER 12

Beginning Again

The new house that we moved into was very modern with a beautiful AGA cooker in the kitchen and oil stoves in the Lounge and living rooms. All very posh, but we found out within a few days that the leach drain from the septic tanks continually overflowed making the lawn a soggy mess. This was soon rectified as on the boundary of the block was a ditch so I diverted the drain into this, highly illegal, but who cares, it did the trick and no one complained.

The house was right opposite the Orana Drive in Cinema, so we were able to watch the films whilst sitting out on the verandah or in the lounge window. The only problem being that if there was a "juicy" bit on the screen, we would often have to rush into the bedroom to see that side of the screen properly as there was a tree growing right in the line of sight. We also found a couple of the Drive in Speakers in the house, but never found out whether someone had run a wire across from the drive in so that we could use them.

On the first morning, when I went to go out the front door, I found a big fat Labrador dog lying across the threshold, inside the door.

He was very friendly, and as sloppy as they come. But no one had seen him come in and of course we had no idea where he came from. So I shoved him, with great difficulty, out of the door, and closed it behind me.

I hadn't been at work more than a couple of hours, when Margaret rang the office to tell me that the dog was back again. And she couldn't shift him.

When I came home at lunch time, the stupid thing was there again so I went home. Shoved him out and we made sure that all doors etc were closed.

This went on for a couple of days and whilst he was friendly, we had own dog "Dandy" who wasn't very fond of trespassers.

We thought that perhaps he had belonged to the previous occupants and had found his way back. But how the heck was he getting in?

Eventually I went to the neighbouring house and asked the lady if she knew anything about him.

She laughed and said it was her dog, but she had no idea that he was still getting into our house.

Apparently the previous occupants of our house had treated him like their pet and he had found that one of our lower windows, if bumped hard enough, would open far enough for him to be able to open it properly and climb in.

Naturally that avenue was quickly fixed.

Albany being several hundred miles South of Perth was much colder, and the first few weeks that we were there, albeit that it was August/Sept, it was to us, freezing. I was going to work with a thick coat on and gloves.

The first morning, I was taken on a tour of Albany and one of the most impressive things I saw was on the coast where massive waves were smashing into the “Gap” hurling water hundreds of yards over the car park. No one would stand a chance if they were standing too close. There are notices everywhere warning of the danger of King Waves and about going to near the gap or natural bridge but idiots ignore them every day. One of the major tourist attractions in Albany at that time was the Whaling Station. So we decided to pay this a visit one day shortly after moving in, and OH BOY!!! what a stink. It was absolutely foul. How anyone could work in that was beyond comprehension. And the sight of these great mammals being hauled onto the dock and cut up was enough to turn anyone’s stomach.

The country side around Albany is very beautiful, ranging from beaches to mountains, which very often; in winter have snow on them.

I loved the fishing best of all. Not that I caught much. The only thing I didn’t like was the weather as it could change from beautiful sunshine to rain and cold in matter of an hour.

Running the Traffic Dept for two Shires was a big job as I had to do all the prosecuting and vehicle licensing as well as overseeing the other Inspectors. But enjoyed the challenge.

The Inspector that was working with me in Albany was the laziest bugger in Australia. Although the two operating in Denmark were good men.

Whilst I brought in thousands of Dollars in Fines. He had only two or three “pinches” in all the time I worked there and two of those I had to withdraw as he hadn’t complied with the law when making them.

One time when we were coming back from a weekend in Toodyay, we drove past the Airfield and he was parked there. Fast asleep. At the time, I was chasing a motorist and wanted the Inspector to take over the chase. I sounded my horn as we passed but he never moved and I had to follow the motorist all the way into Albany myself.

Did he get a rocketing next morning?

Another time, coming back from lunch I saw that he had licenced a vehicle and I asked him whether he had inspected it to which he replied in the affirmative. However knowing what he was like , I decided to re-examine the vehicle and found that on turning the steering wheel, it was impossible move it back to centre. The owner had apparently tried to rectify a slack steering by tightening the steering nut. How he had ever driven it across Albany I will never know. But he didn’t drive it back.

Albany has a wonderful coast line, with many beaches and rocky headlands. Ideal for fishing. (Although I could never catch a bloody thing).

I really enjoyed the place, but Margaret hated it. The weather was too temperamental for her. It would start off beautiful in the morning, but by the time she had walked into town it would be freezing cold or raining.

Plus we had very little money to spare which made things tight. The stupid part about the wage structure was that a three year Inspector, would get more than a first year Senior so I was getting less than the lazy bugger that I was working with. I soon put this to Council and they soon altered the situation. This helped a bit. But what with the rent, mortgage on the Toodyay house and buying the car etc we were feeling the pinch.

The new/second hand car that I had bought in Perth before coming to Albany was also playing up. Every thirty to forty miles we would have to top up the radiator. We knew every watering venue from Albany to Toodyay. From dams and streams to taps on Council and Office lawns. Plus we always had to carry water with us. It was a pain.

Obviously the head had warped and it was blowing water, but the garage couldn't fix it.

About 1.0 A.M one morning we were awakened by someone knocking on the door. It was the Police, to tell us that Brian had had a major accident on a motor cycle over East where he was stationed with the Army. This was a shock believe me. They told us that he was seriously injured but his life was not in danger.

There was no way that we could afford to go over to see him, but fortunately the daughter of a friend of ours in England, who also knew Brian, was living near the hospital where he was and they visited him regularly for us.

Whilst he was in there too, The Toodyay Fire Brigade, of which David was now a Member were in Victoria attending a Fire Brigade Competition. So he often had quite a crowd in the ward

Shortly after this, the daughter of our friend committed suicide by drowning. No one ever found out why.

Eventually the Army sent Brian home on sick leave.

We went up to Perth to meet him and it was a pathetic sight that met our eyes. He was on crutches and looked so white and drawn. It looked worse perhaps, because they had sent a great strapping Corporal home with him as an escort which emphasised Brian's condition.

For several days he could do nothing, but eventually, I managed to take him to the beach where he could walk, or hobble, in the sand and get into the surf. And it was amazing what this did for him.

He wanted to drive my car, but was told that he could not until I was satisfied that he could stop it in an emergency.

By this time we had had to move to another house as the one we were living in had been sold. Housing was at a premium in the Town, but due to my position we were able to get a State house. It wasn't much, but at least we had somewhere to live.

(The funny part about this new house and it's phone was that it had previously been the home of the local "bottlo" (bloke who collected beer bottles and junk)so for ages we were getting phone calls asking me to come around and pick up all sorts of things.)

To get himself fit to drive the car, Brian drove around and around the house, wearing out all the grass. But within a week or so he seemed fit to drive it out on the road.

And within a couple of months he was deemed fit to return to duty.

One day whilst we were out for a ride, I stopped at a roundabout to allow traffic to pass, when we felt a blow at the back of the car and found that a Land Rover had ploughed into us, smashing all the back in, although the car was still driveable.

About a week later I was driving up to Perth for an interview about another job when on reaching about halfway there was an almighty bang under the bonnet and the car came to a shuddering halt. The engine had decided it had had enough.

I managed to get a lift into Perth, but this was a waste of time as I didn't get the job.

Coming back, I contacted several other Traffic Inspectors on the route and managed to get towed back to Albany.

I had made a claim on my insurance for the damage done by the Land Rover, but couldn't very well claim for the engine as it hadn't been an accident. However, one evening on coming back from work, I found an insurance assessor looking at my car.

He said, "I just cannot understand how a bang in the back like that could possibly affect the engine"

Naturally, being quick on the uptake I didn't tell him that the engine had blown up several hundred kilometres away from Albany.

He suggested that he would go into Town and have a chat with their repairer mechanic before he would make a decision.

As soon as he left, I rang the mechanic (who incidentally was the one we sent all the Council's work to), explaining the situation to him. When the assessor came back, he said that he still couldn't understand it but the mechanic had assured him that it was possible that a sudden violent blow could have caused something to break in the engine. So he not only allowed the claim for the rear end damage, but for a new (second hand) engine to be fitted. (Not, *what* you know?).

Whilst this job was for me mostly office, and administration stuff and nowhere as exciting as Toodyay I still managed to have my fill of "incidents"

We were always getting reports of cattle on the roads, which of course were a traffic hazard and we would have to go out and either find the owner, or drive the cattle off the road.

One night I received a call that there was a "bloody big black bull" out on the Frenchman's Bay road.

On my arrival at the scene I found that he was indeed a "BBBB" he was massive.

He was also very irate. He had stopped several cars on the road then was attempting to get through a fence after some other Bulls in a paddock. In his temper he had torn up about 20-30 square metres of bush. Flattening it like a bulldozer.

The owners wife was on the scene but she refused to go anywhere near him.

By this time of course, there was huge crowd of onlookers who were expecting "The Council" to do something about it.

The "Council" being of course, me. And there was not any way that I was going to interfere with that animal's intentions.

I thought that the best possible person to advise us what to do would be the owner of the Bulls in the paddock so consequently I went and knocked him up.

When I told him what was happening, he and his young son quickly went to the scene where, by this time, the Bull had broken through the fence and was attacking another Bull in the paddock.

It was fascinating, yet frightening, to see these two bulls charging at each other. Coming together, with a crash that one could feel.

The whole scene being lit, by dozens of torches and car headlights.

The farmer told us to get out of the paddock, which incidentally we did before he had finished speaking.

Obviously, to someone used to handling cattle the situation wasn't frightening, but we had to admire the way that man and his young son handled it.

They virtually stood, between the animals when they had drawn apart.

The son went to their bull, and started waving his arms at it and yelling at it to back off, and get lost, whilst the farmer just stood there, and as the other Bull charged again, belted it fair on the nose. It stopped dead in its track, shaking its head so he went to it, and belted it again. Then slipped a rope through the nose ring and led it quite peacefully back across the road to its own pen. (Easy when you know how) And have some guts.

Another night, when I was supposed to be off duty. I received a call from the town Police to say that there had been an accident, once again out on the Bay Road.

They couldn't find the Inspector that was supposed to be on duty and requested that I attend.

On arrival I found a car wrapped around a pole and an altercation going on between the driver and another Inspector. The driver was obviously drunk, and very violent.

As I got out of my car, the driver kicked the Inspector between the legs, and even today I can still see him sitting on the side of the road crying out "Oh my Balls, Oh my Balls"

The driver then turned his attention to me, and knocking my cap off yelled that he would kill me.

I have never been one for fighting but I had been trained in the Military Police in unarmed combat etc (albeit many years before) I also had an extremely nasty temper when riled so when the driver made the silly mistake of grabbing hold of me he found himself on the floor wrapped in a hold that it was impossible to break and was quite liable to break a couple of ribs if applied properly.

Trouble was, that on going to bed earlier, I had taken a sleeping tablet and finding myself wrapped around a warm body and lying on the warm road I could feel myself becoming decidedly drowsy. Yet I knew that if I released the hold, I would be flattened, as the driver was a big man who worked at the whaling station. I appealed to bystanders for help but they were all too scared and the other Inspector was useless.

Eventually however two Policemen arrived and helped me arrest the man for drunk driving and resisting arrest.

In Court the driver accused me of using "unnecessary force"

But the Magistrate took one look at him, and one at me, and said, "That, I can't imagine".

One Easter time, we had just taken delivery of a new vehicle which I was driving when a vehicle was observed cutting in and out the traffic at a very high speed.

Despite the car being brand new, I decided to give chase. We had reached speeds of about 90 mph when there was a bump underneath the car. I knew that I hadn't hit anything and the engine was still going so I continued the chase.

Just outside Albany I caught up with the car and caused it to pull over.

The other Inspector jumped out and went to the vehicle but instead of using his loaf a bit and arresting the driver immediately; he came back to me and told me that the driver was driving whilst his Licence was suspended. Whilst he was telling me this the other car sped off around the back streets.

To get away from us the vehicle was driven off the road and through the front gardens of several houses (obviously there were no fences) finally bumping off a tree straight into the path of my vehicle. The driver had broken his arm when his vehicle had hit the tree and he was obviously concussed (and drunk) so an ambulance was called.

However, when I went to start my vehicle I found that I couldn't, and on investigating found that both the alternator and starter motors had fallen off. So much, for a new car.

But it was a useless thing anyway, the maximum speed I could get out of it downhill with a tail wind was about 90 mph which was useless for a patrol car. In my report to the council I told them that it was

useless, and, being funny, that we might as well be mounted on a push bike. Not realising that the press were in the gallery.

Next day, the Albany Examiner bore the headlines. "Senior Traffic Inspector says that they might as well be using pushbikes as the new Ford"

Within minutes we were in receipt of very irate calls from the Ford Company that supplied the cars.

However, after taking them for a test drive, they admitted that there "might" be something wrong and they would supply another one.

One morning whilst attending an accident between a truck and a car, I could hear the sound of a buzzer coming from the truck. On investigating I found that it was the brake low pressure warning buzzer. The driver told me that it was always sounding so obviously there was something wrong with the brakes. But his firm wouldn't do anything about it. So a couple of days later I set up a road block in conjunction with the heavy Haulage police.

There were several firms in Albany at that time operating large road trains which weighed many tons.

We set up the block on a stretch of road where visibility was perfect and flagged down trucks as they appeared. They had a good view of us for several hundred yards but many of them were unable to stop until well past us. On inspecting these vehicles we found that almost every one of them has serious defects especially brakes. Of the 15 vehicles that we stopped, mainly from one firm, eight of them received Red Stickers

(Immediately off the road), and four, Yellow Stickers (major repairs and reinspection.)

It was disgusting. Of course the firm played holy hell as it cost them thousands in repairs and fines but there was nothing they could do about it.

Another evening, whilst driving past the airfield with another Inspector as passenger we felt something hit the car at the rear. On looking in the mirror, I observed another vehicle so close behind us that it was almost touching, and then felt another bump.

On stopping the car, the other drivers face was a picture as he saw that we were Traffic Inspectors. When I asked him what the hell he thought he was playing at, he replied that he thought it was a couple of old fella's out for a ride and thought he would "jolly" us up a bit. But he wasn't so jolly himself when he got an invitation to meet the Magistrate.

One day, we were advised by the Police that the Duke of Edinburgh was to visit Albany to hear the "Noisy Scrub Bird" which is only found in that District.

He was due to arrive about 6 pm, it was a lousy evening, pitch dark and with rain pouring down.

As his plane came in to land, all traffic had to be stopped on the highway (God only knows why, but that was the orders) and naturally all my cars had their flashing lights on for safety. When we had an Order supposedly from the Duke in his plane, to "Turn those blasted flashing lights off"

Whether the return message was ever relayed back to him I never knew. But my reply was to tell him to get stuffed. It was a real dark night, with rain bucketing down and my men's safety was as important as his. And they stayed on.

Next day he was taken on a trip across the scrub, but if he did hear the bird it was only a recording.

And he actually waved to me as he passed on the way back to the airfield, whoopee dooo.

It was quite funny on the cliffs where he was supposed to be looking for the birds. The Council had bulldozed a temporary car park and road to the site and there were many cars parked in there. As they came out of the parking area, the road was very narrow and ran alongside a fairly deep ditch. Most of the drivers came out quite confidently especially as we were guiding them. However one driver appeared to be very nervous and stopped. I approached him and found that he was a clergyman so I said to him, "Come on Sir, it's quite ok, just come through on a wing and a prayer" To which he

replied, getting out of the car,” “I’m not a bird Inspector, and at this moment even I don’t have much faith in a prayer, so would you take it through for me?

Once again I could fill up this story with anecdotes about this job, but if I do, it will never be finished so I will move on.

As I wrote before. The Labour Party had been angling for years for the Police to take over all traffic, but their Bill had been defeated by the Liberals in opposition, and they had said that under no circumstances would they allow traffic to go over to the Police if they were returned to power. Which they eventually were, with the help of Local Government, due to their traffic policy.

However I received a letter one day from someone who always seemed to know what was going on in Government circles, and he advised me that the new Minister for Police, a Des O’Conner, was planning to hand over traffic to a branch of the Police.

At this, I wrote to the Minister accusing him of being a reneging bastard.

He replied that he had not reneged and that he had several options. But whichever one he took, we would not be any worse off, or lose our jobs.

Around this time I started to receive offers of jobs from all over the place.

One from Dongara, several hundred miles North of Perth, to take on a Senior Inspectors Job. One from Harvey, another seaside town for the same, also one from the Northern Territories Health Dept about a job as Health Surveyor at Gove (Some thousands of miles North of Perth. And then one from the Shire Council of Quairading regarding the Health Surveyors position.(This was all within one week)

I had no wish to become a policeman, and I could see that the writing was on the wall regarding any future as a Traffic Inspector, and Margaret hated Albany, so I plumped to try for the job in Quairading, not even knowing where the place was.

Going for the interview I found that it was a fairly large Shire situated some 150 miles East of Perth. Out in the so called wheat be

The Job entailed servicing four Shire s(Quairading, Kellerberrin, Beverly and Bruce Rock) in all matters relating to Health and Building, totalling an area of some 8-10,000 square miles. Although, there were only 4 main towns in all this area. And several smaller ones.

And none of these were much more than big villages.

There was a house supplied, also a vehicle for personal use etc and the wages were considerably higher than I was currently in receipt of.

So I accepted the position, much to the disgust of the Albany Shire Council as they had that week decided to increase their traffic staff and vehicles etc. And give me a promotion.

But I couldn’t study their feelings; it was our future that we had to look after.

So in late 1975 we upped traps again and set out on another adventure.

The Job as Traffic Inspector had probably been the most interesting and satisfying job that I had ever had, or ever would again But I could see the end coming, not from any fault of mine but from Political conniving and convenience, so it was with a light heart that we said goodbye to Albany and my lovely blue/grey uniform to set out on an entirely new career. Which, although I had a piece of paper to show that I was fully qualified to do, in reality I didn’t have a bloody clue as to what I was really expected to do. The same as when I took on the Traffic Inspectors Job first.

However I have always had a quick brain, and had no qualms that given a bit of a go, I would soon know the job as good as anyone else.

Fortunately too, I had my Plumbing and building experience to fall back on. And I was soon to find that this was to hold me in good stead. As the Local Plumbers did not have a clue.

But more of this in the next chapter.

About three months after I had moved to Quairading I received a phone call from the Municipal Officers Association (union) regarding the other Inspector in Albany. Apparently the Council had sacked him and he was taking them to court for unfair dismissal and payment of redundancy money, or something. And would I come to Court to testify on his behalf.

I replied that I had been going to sack him before I left as he was the laziest no hoper I had ever met and that if I told the truth in court, the resultant publicity would harm him more than the sack.

I never heard any more from them so I guess he got what he deserved.

Chapter 13

Quairading

There was only one problem, and that was how to get our stuff up to Quairading. We had very little money to spare and all the removal people wanted far too much, as they had to cover for the return journey as well. Eventually we were put onto a firm that sold cool drinks that had a van returning empty to Perth. The driver was willing to deviate across to Quairading for only 100 dollars.

It was only a very small van and we could see no way that the driver could possibly pack all our furniture in. But he did. The only thing that there was no room for was the big bird cage. This he hung on the back.

Quairading was about a three and a half hours trip from Albany and as the van wasn't traveling very fast we went on ahead. And a good job we did too.

I had advised the Shire that we were coming on that day and they had assured us that the house would be ready. But on our arrival we found that it was still occupied and being Saturday, there was no one in the council office that we could ask "what is going on"

We had no idea what to do, so went back to the outskirts of the town to await the truck. I was not in the best of temper by this time believe me, and had decided that we would take the furniture to our house in Toodyay and bugger the job.

The truck driver was not amused either as he wanted to get home to Perth as it was now getting late. Whilst talking matters over, we went into a roadhouse to get something to eat and whilst there, a gentleman who was the Vice President of the Shire arrived. He profusely apologized for the problem and said that he and his wife were going away for a week or so and that we could stay in their house, if we would only look after the chickens etc. We could store all our stuff in one of his sheds and the Council would move it once the house became empty.

So back along the road we trundled.

His place was a large farmhouse but with all mod cons. And we duly settled in albeit still "fizzing".

As I said before, I had no idea what the job really entailed so upon starting work on the Monday I was completely in the dark.

However, there had been no Heath Surveyor on the Council for some time and work had piled up, so I was thrown in at the deep end.

At the end of about two weeks we again picked up our furniture and moved into town. Into 1 Avon St. Shortly after, Brian was invalided out of the Army and came back to live with us.

One of my first jobs was quite funny.

I had only been working a week or so when the Principle of the school asked me whether I would look at the children's hair as he thought that many of them were lousy.

There was no school or District nurse, and there was a new Doctor and Matron at the hospital.

Legally one is not allowed to touch the children especially with the current "political climate". It could be termed assault.

But something had to be done, so I sent a note home with every child stating that the school was lousy and that I had been asked by the Principle to investigate and inspect the children. And that if anyone had any objection, to please notify the school.

No one did, and the following evening we had several mothers call at the house asking what they could do. Whilst we were talking about the subject. Dandy, our dog, started to scratch. And within seconds we were all at it.

This was an on going problem as the Aborigines in particular just couldn't care less. And although they were issued with free treatments they very seldom used it.

This was quite a problem in all the schools throughout the area so I started a regular inspection, earning the nickname from the kids, as the nit man).

Very often, I would find that the teachers were lousy too. This went on for several years until one parent in Bruce rock complained that I stood the small children close to my knees whilst sitting in a chair to look at their hair. The Teacher was always present but I thought then, BUGGER you, get on with it.

After a couple of months, several parents approached me and asked me to start inspection again, but I refused as it was around the time that everything was getting "politically" correct.

For the first few weeks, I had to really scratch the old noggin as the saying goes, (nothing to do with the previous paragraph) but I knew Health Surveyors from neighboring Shires and they, knowing that I was a "new Boy" were only too happy to help me out with any sticky questions. But it didn't take me long to get into my stride, especially as the local plumbers did not have a clue, either about drainage or anything other than simple stuff and I had to step on them before I had been there very long.

Then I overheard a couple of them talking one day about that Pommie bastard who is throwing his weight around.

Whereupon, I asked all of them to meet me in the office. so that we could sort things out.

They were told in no uncertain terms that I was not a Pom, but a person of English descent. My Parents had been married when I was born and as we were in Australia and there was a set of Australian Rules relating Plumbing and drainage we would be

Adhering to them in future, instead of the half cocked ideas they had been using. If anyone didn't like it they were welcome to take the matter up with the Health Dept or the Magistrate. However I hoped it wouldn't ever come to that. That I was a Qualified Plumber and Drainer, and would only be too happy to advise and help.

After I had occasion to pull up some of their drains because they didn't work, and suggested other ways to do them, which did. Most of them started to seek my advice and assistance which was as it should be.

Most of the country towns and Shires Western Australia seemed to think that they had seceded from the rest of the country and just went their own sweet way. This is fine (within limits), but there had been little, if any control, which in a regulated society like ours is a necessity.

It took me probably a couple of years, going gently, gently, to get the shops to comply with the Regulations and get some sort of order in the place.

I would remind the reader that it wasn't only Quairading that I was looking after.

I also had the Shires of Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock and Beverley. All of these towns were between 50 and 60 miles from Quairading. And in opposite directions.

These were the main Towns, but there were numerous small settlements in between which too had their problems. So much of my day was spent traveling.

After a few years, once I had everything under control, there was very little to do except just keep an eye on things. And as the old saying goes, "One doesn't poop in one's own nest" Not that I let things slide far from it, but I didn't throw my weight around as do Health Surveyors in the City. (Although several years after I had retired I was asked to go back and do some relieving work for the Surveyor who was on long service leave. I really got my own back on some of the snooty ones and issued quite a few Orders and sorted the Town out. Sweet revenge)

I soon learned all the nice quiet shady spots out in the bush, where I could just sit and study nature, (or snooze).

Once I left the office, no one had any idea where I was and I spent many hours drinking tea in various houses.

In country areas like this one remains a "newcomer" for years, unless one is a heavy drinker or a sportsman or woman and I was neither. I did join the local "Club" but there was no peace there, as people would always be coming over and want to talk "shop" and as the average "local" couldn't talk about anything other than sheep's bums and barbeques it wasn't particularly exhilarating. So I gave that away.

I did however join the Volunteer Fire Brigade, where I became an Officer. Later receiving a long Service Medal

We didn't get many house fires but were often requested to help out at bush fires.

Margaret appeared to be enjoying herself as she had learned to play Badminton, and as I had bought her a spinning wheel for one Christmas she joined a group of ladies that got together once a week and learned how to spin wool. She had always been an avid knitter.

Andrew of course was now in school and she met many of the mothers. Very often there would be string of cars in our drive.

It is a job to try and keep all this in sequence as so much was happening in so few years. So if things appear to be a little out, or something not tying in with another, don't worry about it, it will probably turn up further on.

And here is a case in point.

Most weekends we would go over to Toodyay and stay in our house and very often folks would turn up from Perth and we would have a party.

One weekend when we all over in Toodyay, Brian I had the fright of our lives.

In the early hours of one morning I had gone through the house to the kitchen to get a drink of water. As I didn't want to disturb everyone else I had not switched on any lights.

Having had my drink, I proceeding back to bed, holding my arm across my body in case I should inadvertently walk into something in the dark. As I reached the door to the passageway leading to the bedrooms, I suddenly bumped into a naked body coming the opposite way. It was Brian, who was also looking for a drink. I don't know which of us had the biggest shock, but we both yelled out something and woke up everyone in the house.

Those were quite fun weekends as very often, the other kids would turn up and usually everyone finished getting soaked as the boys in particular, liked throwing water around. Sometimes if one or the other of them was silly enough to sleep in on the Sunday morning, it was a safe bet that he would be awakened with a glass of water being dribbled onto his face. You would never credit the fun we had just playing "Ludo" They were such happy days.

Several times I had put the house on the Market, especially as David had bought a block of his own, which he sold within months at a handsome profit which allowed him to buy his own house. But there had been no takers. Even although I was only asking \$25000 for it.(I paid \$10000).

Then one weekend whilst we were over there, the next door neighbour came in and asked whether we wanted to sell the house, as she knew someone who was interested.

This person turned out to be the Vice President of the Shire, a Mr. Doug Woods, who owned a vineyard someway out of town.

When he came to see me, we talked for about ½ an hour about everything else under the sun (which is the country way of doing business) eventually he asked me how much I wanted for the place. With tongue in cheek, I told him \$33500.

He provisionally agreed to this figure but said that he would let me know by the following Tuesday. I waited all day Monday and Tues by the phone but there was no call from him and on the Wednesday I was just about to phone an Estate Agent to put it on the market, when he phoned and said that he would have the place.

So within a few weeks that place had gone and we were for a while quite rich.

It seemed that we would be settling down in Quairading, as at that time, the place appeared to be thriving. Many new houses were being built also a Caravan Park, a new Church etc etc.

So we decided to try and buy a block of land and put a house on it. Perhaps we should have kept the money in the bank and continued to live in Avon St as I believe that house was rent free. But we didn't.

We found a large ½ acre block in one of the quiet streets for \$600. It was a bit of a mess, but a few weeks of hard work soon cleared it up.

Then we had the search for a new house to put on it.

Once again, we decided to have what is known as a “transportable”. These being built in Perth and transported to wherever they were required in two halves.

The one we eventually decided on was a three bedroom place with a huge lounge and a separate kitchen and dining room. Cost, approx \$22000.

To keep costs down, I built the septic system and installed all the drains.

We had been hoping to have been settled in by the Xmas of that year but it didn't look as though we would as two days before, we were still laying the carpets and there was no electricity or water connected. However, with a bit of cajoling, and reminders to various Depts. about the cooperation that they had received from me over the years, both services were installed late on Xmas Eve and we moved into 12 McDonald St

Most of the furniture had already been moved in so we were able to celebrate our new house on Xmas Day.

I had had the house set back about fifty feet from the front boundary, as I had always wanted a semi circular drive, also there was a huge gum tree on the road side which was about 40 ft high and I thought that if ever it came down in a storm, it SHOULD miss the house.

The dining room windows which were at the front of the house overlooked several acres of bush and a large dam.

We installed the swimming pool in the back garden surrounded by a 6ft high fence.

The garden was huge, approx ½ acres and being no gardener I didn't know what to do with it.

However the old “luck “Bit came into play again.

I was at the time, the official “ caretaker” for the Native reserve on the outskirts of town. This only entailed making sure that all the facilities were working etc. And I was being paid for this.

Eventually however as the Health Surveyor I condemned the place and wanted it removed.

When the Authority said that they couldn't find anyone willing to do the work I volunteered with the proviso that I could have the materials.

There were two or three huts (houses) still on the block, plus an ablution block and various bits and pieces.

The huts made two lovely carports, one for Toodyay and one for Quairading and I sold a lot of the other materials.

In the toilet block there was a stainless steel urinal, some 6ft long and in perfect condition. This was too good to throw away so I took it home and stored it “ for a rainy day”

Your wondering what the hell this has to do with my garden, aren't you?

WELLLLLL, About a year later, the Bruce Rock Shire Council Shire Clerk asked me, rather facetiously, whether I knew anyone that had a stainless steel urinal to sell, as they were erecting some new toilets in the Town.

When I appraised him of the fact that I had one he thought I was kidding, but eventually believed me and asked how much I wanted for it.

The Council at that time was in the process of pulling up all the paving slabs in the Town and replacing them with concrete, so I said that I would swap the urinal for as many slabs as I required to slab my garden, Wow we finally got there!!!

Gawd knows how many trailer loads I brought home.

There were only two other houses in the street, and a large vacant block next door, so it was almost like living out in the country.

Even the road at that time was only gravel.

Previous to coming to Australia, I had never had any inclination to study as I had left school at 14 yrs of age and had always managed to find a good job with the fairly limited education that I had had. But having got my teeth into learning, firstly at the Police Academy and then for my Health Surveyors Certificate, I felt there was a lot more I could learn and I started studying for a Building Surveyors Certificate.

The Shires had appointed me Building Surveyor as well as Health and although I was fairly conversant with most aspects of building. I knew nothing about roofing or soils.

It took me three years to obtain this certificate. Travelling every week some 150 miles to Perth to attend the Tech school, also with Correspondence Courses. But it paid off, as builders soon found out that I wasn't a "dumb cluck" and they didn't argue when I pointed out mistakes that they had been getting away with for years.

After this it seemed that I was continuously studying something or other.

In the country areas there were very few persons with any qualifications, and technology was catching up fast. So by now, being a willing student, the Council sent me on various courses to Curtin University. So in a few years I was the Health Surveyor/ Building Surveyor Noise Officer, Audiometrist, Town Planner, Meat Inspector etc etc.

The last one being one that I hadn't looked forward to.

During my studies for Health Surveyor, I had deliberately steered clear of this course, as I thought that (a) Many Health positions were for meat inspectors and I did not want to get stuck in that filthy job and (b) I hated the thoughts of watching anything being killed and cut open.

At first I felt quite sick and faint, but got used to it.

The only reason that I elected to do the course was because I had three abattoirs in my area. One of which was going onto full time slaughter, mainly for export, and all meat had to be inspected and the Health Surveyor must be in charge of the Inspectors.

As I did not have the required certificate, the Health Dept had authorized an Inspector from a neighboring Shire to take on this role. And I wasn't very keen on someone else poking their nose into my realm.

After having completed the course, I am glad that I did do it. It gave me a wonderful insight into just how the body works. And I can now look at those lovely gory operations on the TV and know what they are talking about.

By this time, it was obvious that the boom days for those country towns were just about over and they were virtually dying. In the 16 or so years that we were in Quairading, many of the small settlements and villages between the main towns had just disappeared.

In some of them, only the hotel was left standing. Many of these later accidentally burned down.

I became so bored that I elected to take on another Shire, hoping it would give me something to do.

But that was short lived as after a few weeks I had got that in order and we were back to square one.

Thank goodness I had a large comfortable car, because God knows how many unnecessary miles I did, especially in the summer months, just to keep cool.

About a year after we went to Quairading it became obvious to us that the local social life just wasn't us. Neither of us were drinkers, or played sport, other than Badminton. Oh yes, I forgot to mention that Margaret had cajoled me into trying to play, although

the only things that I had ever played before, was the fool and the gramophone. But I wasn't as stupid as I thought, and took to the game with gusto. Eventually becoming the Club President for years. And twenty seven years later, at the age of 78 I am still playing twice a week.

We just didn't fit into the pattern of things. People of our age group didn't want a small child at the functions, and we wouldn't leave Andrew at home. And the younger set with small children that were friendly with Margaret during school hours, didn't want people of our age. At least, that's what we felt. So at weekends we were rather at a loss. We didn't have the house at Toodyay to go to, and didn't like the beach.

Eventually however we discovered a camping club. The Members of which couldn't care less how old or young one was or whether you were rich or poor.

So we bought ourselves a small tent and all the necessary gear and off we trundled.

The Club had some 8 or 9 acres of bush land in the hills about 12 miles out of Perth

And at weekends it was alive with trailers and tents. Members had built a swimming pool and toilets and one could play a number of sports or just loll around in the sun and do nothing. It was wonderful and we made dozens of new friends in a very short while. We had never done any camping, and at first Margaret wasn't too keen, but eventually she too began to enjoy the outdoor life.

I don't think that there was a suburb in Perth in which we did not have a friend to call on whenever we came to the City.

We thought that we would give it a "go" for a couple of years, just to see if it was "us"

And 29 years later we are still "trying it. Having graduated to a caravan, then back to a large tent then a camper van, and eventually back to our old caravan. Having served on all the Committees, been Vice President for years and finally President.

Our greatest pleasure and honour was when we were made Life Members. In the early days Margaret too had done more than her share. It was only bad health and subsequent failing eyesight in later life that stopped her.

I think that we enjoyed the times when we had a tent much better than when we graduated to a caravan as in those days we were all camping on the lawn and would muck in together to have meals etc. If one family had a cuppa, then everyone was invited for one too.

One weekend we all went to Rottenest Island. It was a wonderful day.

Another wonderful weekend was one that we spent in the company of Ray and Beryl Gallin and Willy and Brian Park with whom we had been friends with for many years.

We decided to farm all the kids out for the weekend and hired a boat on the Murray Estuary, at Mandurah. Ray was the only one with any boating experience so he was elected the Captain.

It was a good job that we were all pretty compatible as the boat was very small. It had four bunks and one double bed. Everything was provided except food and drink and bedding.

The first night we had been advised to anchor on a long rope, near the new Mandurah Bridge as the tide rose and fell considerably.

Next morning I awoke to see Brian staggering down the boat towards me with a stricken look on his face. I wondered why the hell he was leaning over at such an angle." We are sinking "he yelled.

Naturally everyone shot out of bed regardless of whether they had any clothes on or not and discovered that the boat was lying over at a crazy angle.

Scrambling out onto the deck, we discovered that the boat had drifted round on it's mooring into shallower water and as the tide had receded it had settled down into the mud and was almost lying on its side.

There was nothing that we could do about it, other than to sit nonchalantly on the high side, waving to passersby on the bridge, and wait for the tide to come back in.

When eventually it did, the boat wouldn't budge. It was stuck fast in the mud.

We tried poling it off but no go.

As the water was creeping up to the gunwales we had to do something, or else our feet, and everything, else would be getting wet.

Then we hit on the bright idea of putting the motor on hard astern, hoping that the propeller wouldn't get jammed. As the boat was still moored to an anchor which was at the front of the boat it couldn't move backwards and our idea was to try and blast the mud from under the keel. For several minutes, nothing happened and we thought that idea too had failed. Then suddenly the boat popped up like a cork and the river was black with filthy mud for 50 metres around us.

There was quite a cheer went up from the crowd of people that were watching from the bridge.

The rest of the weekend went well, without a hitch. It was nothing exciting as we could only chug up and down the river, with the occasional landing to see what there was to see. But it was a weekend that we shall all remember for the rest of our lives.

I am trying not to include too many anecdotes, but these years were wonderful, we had so many good times with friends from the Club.

Quite often a number of them would come up to Quairading to stay with us and we would go off exploring the countryside, finishing up with a party.

Another weekend, we went to stay with Ray and Beryl in Fremantle. Several of us had arranged to have a day fishing. But at the designated time, it was pouring with rain and they all cried off.

Andrew and I were determined that having come all that way, we were going fishing, so Ray took us down the South Mole and we would throw in our lines then sit back in the side of his van. The clouds were almost on top of our heads, but who cared, the fish were biting.

Normally in a thunderstorm, one sees the flash of lightning and then several seconds later hears the bang. However on this occasion we didn't see the lightening because of the clouds and the first we knew of the storm was an almighty CRASH which seemed to be about two feet above our heads. Ray was just baiting his hook, and jammed the hook straight into his hand. I am sure that everyone on the Mole that day dirtied his or her pants. Next moment the heavens opened and the wind howled. It was no place to be, believe me, so we took off. It would have only taken us a few minutes to reach the road, but by then the roads in the town were almost impassable with water.

Another evening all of us went to another favourite fishing spot in Fremantle.

It was dark; the only illumination there was from distant street lights.

There were dozens of people fishing and watching, but we found a spot at the end of the jetty and started fishing. Almost immediately, Andrew dropped his reel into the water. (He always was an awkward bugger) To try and retrieve it, I started to pulling the line, and laid it carefully on the decking. Of course, there was about 200 foot of it.

The reel was just coming in, when a small dog walked through the laid out line, and got tangled in it. He panicked and took off trailing the line with him, tangling it around everyone's feet. At this, we decided to make out that it wasn't OUR line and was nothing to do with us, and gave up the idea of any further fishing.

However, a little way from us, there was a crowd of people around another angler who appeared to have caught something large. He was getting all sorts of advice as how to pull it in, but every time that he slackened off a bit, the fish, which everyone thought must be a Sting Ray or a shark, would pull away out.

He was struggling for quite while with out success, when out of the darkness, across the water, came a voice, yelling "Who the bloody hell is trying to pull us in".

Apparently his line had got hooked onto a small dinghy. At the mighty laugh that went up, he just cut his lines and stormed off. (That's MY fishing story)

I never was one for taking holidays, as like something to do instead of aimlessly wandering or lounging, but one year, the Council virtually ordered me to take some of my holiday entitlement as I was accruing too much.

So we hitched the caravan up and went on a ten day tour of the South West as it is called.

I cannot remember the route that we took but in one place we decided to head for a place called Nannup. Travelling along the main road, we suddenly saw a signpost indicating the way to Nannup so we turned off and proceed along this scenic route.

About a Kilometer along it, we came across a sign which read, 40 Kms of winding road proceed with extreme caution. And they were not kidding, believe me. The road became narrower and narrower and steeper and steeper. There was no way that we could turn around so we just had to carry on. It was a beautiful ride, for sure but certainly wasn't intended for twits like us with a large caravan trundling along behind.

How the heck we made it I just do not know, but we did, and eventually arrived in Nannup. Which is only a part of a place anyway?

When we told people in the caravan park which way we had come, they told us that we were mad. NOONE ever came that way anymore, even in a car.

But if we had stuck to the main road I would have had nothing to write about would I.

Eventually we got down as far as Augusta, which a lot of people raved about. But what a suck in. It is nothing but a dump. There is NOTHING there other than the beach, a few houses and shops etc.

We didn't stay there, but headed back up the coast, calling in at all the prescribed "beauty spots". Sure they were nice, but when we had seen one beach, we had seen the lot. Margaret River was quite nice and we stayed there for a couple of days, and then moved on to Busselton.

I think by this time, I had had enough and as it was getting fairly hot we decided to call it quits and head for home.

One incident happened at our camping club in about 1981 when I had an altercation with another Member who had been doing some work on some drains which was illegal. At the time, I was Vice President and in charge of building etc.

This Member was told that he must stop this work and that it would be pulled up. whereupon he struck me a violent blow on the shoulder. As we were at the time standing at the top of a flight of stairs, I fell backwards down them. I was lucky that I didn't strike my head, but broke my right leg.

I didn't realize at the time that it was broken although it was very painful so it wasn't until the following day that we went home and of course I had to drive.

Arriving in Quairading, I found that I couldn't walk, so called in at the hospital and borrowed some crutches. The following day visiting the Doctor who still didn't diagnose a broken leg and it wasn't until three days later that he sent me to Kellerberrin Hospital (70kms away) for an x ray. And I had to drive myself over there.

On finding that my leg was broken, I had to drive all the way back to Quairading as the Doctor at Kellerberrin after looking at the X Rays and telling me that it was a bad break just left me to it.

On my arrival back at Quairading there was quite a panic as there was a bad break in my right Femur. The Doctor decided that it would take too long by road to get me to Perth so I was lifted by the Royal Flying Doctor and operated on immediately at the Sir Charlie Gairdner Hospital. The surgeon afterwards told me that I had been extremely lucky, as a break like that could have led to serious complications, especially being left for so long.

I hadn't been going to take any further action against the person who had pushed me but I thought "Bugger it, why should he get away with it" so I laid a complaint against him with the Police.

A few days later he was arrested and charged with assault causing bodily harm.

In Court several weeks later he was found guilty.

I then applied for Criminal Damages against him and was awarded \$8000.

This more than made up for any trauma and pain that I had had.

For years, I had had very little to do, work wise that is. But suddenly I was thrown in at the deep end.

One afternoon I received a message from the Health Dept that a little girl had died from amoebic meningitis, quite possibly caught whilst swimming at the Beverley Swimming Pool.

Knowing nothing about his disease I immediately closed the pool and ordered the Manager to Super chlorinate the water.

On my arrival at the pool, I went to inspect the Managers records of chlorination but he said, "Don't bother Stan, I hadn't checked the pool for several days, I was just too busy."

Fortunately for him, whilst the little girl who spent most of a days in the pool MAY have contracted the disease there, there was no proof. And she had been swimming in other places too.

For some time, despite dozens of water tests we could find no evidence of the amoeba in the pool water but eventually on checking the water supply at the girl's home we isolated it in the Mains water. It was rotten with it. But the Water Authority wouldn't believe me or the Laboratory. Saying it was impossible.

However I stuck to my guns and started taking samples in all my Shires, and was horrified when we found the amoeba everywhere in the mains water.

It was also being found in swimming pools all over the state. All pools in my area were closed whilst investigations were carried out.

The Water Authority and the Health Department were completely useless and didn't have a clue as to what they should do.

I made the problem my "thing" and in fact became known as Mr. Amoeba by the Health Department.

Despite extremely high dosages of chlorine we were still finding the amoeba in public swimming pools. We tried emptying the pools, scrubbing the walls and in one instance even borrowing a flame thrower from a local army unit to burn off all the paint.. But once we refilled the pools. The damned things were back.

I had noticed that whilst the pools were empty, there was in fact water trickling in through cracks in the scum gutters which ran around the perimeter of the pool.

At first I thought that perhaps there were leaks in the pool and that water had built up in the ground around it. This would have been a wonderful area for the amoeba to proliferate. However, on digging out the ground, I found that was not so. So where was the water coming from?

Further investigation revealed that the scum gutters were made of hollow tiles and that much of the grout between the tiles had deteriorated. The gutter was full of filthy water which was full of many types of bacteria including the amoeba which caused meningitis.

There were several other faults such as this which were a contributory habitat for the amoeba and I demanded that an engineer from the Health Dept inspect the pools with me.

Eventually one turned up from the Water Authority, a Mr. Stanley, who made some of the most stupid comments that I have ever heard from a man of his supposed accreditation. He virtually accused me of actually putting the amoeba in the sample bottles. (Perhaps he thought that I was cultivating the damned things at home)

Other comments were that they were blowing into the bottles as I took samples. That what could we expect for 4 cents per litre? And that I didn't know how to take samples properly.

I was incensed by his attitude and advised the Health Dept accordingly.

But this bastard, after I had pointed out all the defects to him submitted his report as though he had found all of them and took all the accolades.

I could get no help whatsoever from either of the Departments and in fact at one time, the Health Department advised me to stop taking samples as the Water Authority would have my head if I didn't.

I was told that only Water Authority workers and the Fire Brigade had the authority to open the water hydrants and that if I did it again, my head would roll.

So I promptly told the Commissioner of Health that on that Sunday I would be opening several hydrants. He replied that if I did, the water Authority would have every right to take action against me. To which I replied that, being an officer in the W.A. Fire Brigade, which would be testing hydrants on Sunday I had every right. Once the water was flowing, there as nothing to stop me changing my hat and becoming a Health Surveyor to take samples .So they could go to hell.

I met nothing but opposition to everything I tried to do with respect to this problem and we began to wonder whether we were on the same side for Public Health.

Swimming pools throughout the State had been closed several times after the amoeba was found in the water but no one had thought about collating all the evidence to see whether there was any common denominator.

I collated all the evidence from my pools and found an interesting fact, and that was that they were all using a high concentration (recommended by the Health Department) of Cyranuric acid which stops the chlorine "flashing" off in the sunshine. It also slows down the effect of the chlorine.

After exhaustive tests, I found that the concentration of the acid being used, in fact locked the chlorine, so that it was virtually useless as a sterilizer. To reinforce my findings, I went to every swimming pool in the Metro area that had been closed and checked their records. And I found that every one of them had been using in excess of 100 ppm of the acid.

Also, I found that the testing kits were faulty, most of the contents being well out of date.

However, when I submitted this report to the Dept, I was virtually laughed at.

When we cut down the amount of acid in our pools to less than 40ppm, the chlorine became effective and no amoeba were found.

One of the problems with the Public pools was that they are constantly being topped up with mains water which was full of the amoeba, and other nasties. And unless it was caught at this point, it slipped through into the pool. Another problem was that should any slip through and enter the hostile environment of the pool water , they changed into cysts, which are virtually impossible to eliminate.

Even after all this time, I can still feel the frustration that I had at the time due to the attitude of idiots in Perth.

After about two years I eventually made the Depts. admit that the mains water was rotten and they started to carry out extra chlorination but even then, what they were doing was useless. The small amounts that they were putting through did nothing to clean the water.

One of the reasons that the water was so rotten was the fact that it was being carried from Perth via cement lined steel pipes which carried water all the way to Kalgoorlie.

A wonderful undertaking in itself, but the water was in the pipes for weeks and in the hotter months would be almost boiling by the time it reached the smaller towns en route through a network of small pipes. And that particular amoeba thrives in hot dirty water.

I became so incensed over the attitude of the various departments that I just about drove myself into the ground, trying to obtain the evidence that would make them sit up. No one will ever know the bitter rows that I had with the Health Department over all this. Good job they couldn't sack me.

Then suddenly it all changed. I had received a phone call one evening from a reporter with the Evening Newspaper who asked me many questions. One should never give interviews over the phone, but in this instance, I did.

Early in the morning, some two days later, I had a phone call from the Department of Health praising me for what I had done, and asking me to assist them in combating the problem. I was flabbergasted and asked what had happened.

I was told that the Evening News had printed my interview and one item was that I had said that The Minister of Health hasn't the faintest clue what is going on and doesn't know what he is doing.

In fact, I had said, "That the Minister, must be an intelligent man to be where he is. But knows nothing about this and is being advised by others who are giving him a bum steer".

The Minister had apparently read the article and had started to ask questions and had in fact got stuck into the Departments concerned.

It was amazing, for within a couple of hours I received several phone calls from high ups in both the Health and Water Authorities, all offering cooperation and offering to become "friends".

After this the Water Dept, and the Health Dept really went to town and declared war on all the "things" that were in the water.

The only thanks that I got for all this was from my Councils, but I didn't want thanks, just recognition that I wasn't a twit and was doing my job protecting Public Health.

My fight with the Water Authority had been going on for years before this. They would totally ignore any requests that I made regarding the testing of water because of its poor quality and sometimes taste.

I got so fed up with it at one time, after having received dozens of complaints from Bruce Rock about foul water and could get no action from the Water Authority that I took a sample of water into a sample bottle. Then pushed my finger into my own anus and washed it in the bottle.

Next day I received a urgent message from the Health Dept that no one was to drink water in Bruce Rock without boiling it as it was severely contaminated Ha ha.

However, within hours the new engineer from Meriden came over to inspect the supply and found that the header tank (an open dam on the golf course) hadn't been cleaned out for years. Consequently, whenever water was drawn off from it, filthy sludge was deposited into the town reticulation. What a way to have to get things done. But it worked

It wasn't very often that we went out to social events in the town but one evening an Old War- time Music Hall had been arranged and we decided to go along with the other Members of the Fire Brigade. During the morning of the appointed day, our neighbour, June Van Elden came in to see what we would be taking to eat. Naturally we had a couple of drinks and the Stereo was blaring out all the wartime songs for us to practice on. Then her Husband Hank turned up, so there were a few more drinks so by the time it we rolled up at the show we were already half tanked and in a merry mood.

The Hall lent itself to making the theme authentic as the Council was in the throes of renovating it, and there were tarpaulin and scaffolding everywhere, just as though it had been bombed.

It was indeed one of the merriest events that I had ever been to, as it was “our era”.

During one of the turns, the singer was singing songs about an army camp over east. At the end of each phrase he would stop singing, and as it was obvious what the words should be, all the audience was filling in,

At the very end of the song he stopped singing, as before, and as the words were again obvious, I was roaring out “ you can stick it up your arse” At that precise moment the hall went quiet, probably because all the other people were decent and didn’t like to say what was obvious. And my voice rang out.

The Postmasters “lady friend” who was sitting behind me said something to me, to which I am alleged to have said, “why don’t you keep quiet madam, try enjoying yourself for a change’

Now, straight, conservative and quiet Mr. Hayes, the Towns Health Surveyor just didn’t say or do things like that, did he?

It wasn’t me; it was the devil that had come out of the bottle but I didn’t live it down for weeks.

After the show, we all retired to our house and finished off a few more bottles. We had to literally kick the last ones out at 2 in the morning. But it was a wonderful night which we shall remember for ever. Ray and Beryl were with us that night too, and when ever we meet and start reminiscing, that evening is sure to crop up.

There are dozens of anecdotes I would love to record but the reader would probably get fed up with them.

So I will move on. Perhaps later, I may sit down and record a few more, as they are our memories which we would like to share with the future.

Anyway, to move on

As I entered my 60s I began to want a change. We had had enough of the country life; Andrew had left school but was unable to find a job. But no one wanted an aging Health Surveyor despite all my qualifications, I was too old.

We put the house on the Market several times but had been unable to sell it so it looked as though we stuck and would be would be retiring there.

Then suddenly everything changed.

Andrew had sat an examination for the RAAF but had been knocked back. However I phoned the recruiting Officer in Perth and had a long talk to him. He agreed to see

Andrew again and eventually he was offered a position in the RAAF. Where he stayed for 12 years.

When we took him to Perth to actually join up and left him at the office. Margaret broke her heart for a while. Her “Baby” had left home. But we were proud of him.

We had saved up enough money to go over to Adelaide to see his Graduation but just before this was due he had a nasty accident and broke his jaw.

On arrival at Adelaide we were met by an RAAF Officer who looked after us. Taking us out to see Andrew, and the Graduation of the other men of his intake.

It was quite funny upon going into the barracks as not only I but several of the other Fathers who had been in the forces previously felt our backs straighten and our arms start swinging.

We spent several days in Adelaide, making it a Honeymoon that we had never had, touring the Barossa Valley and the Hills. It was lovely.

The worst part of the holiday was the trip over and back in a bus.

I suppose it was comfortable as busses go, but after sitting in one for about 30 or so hours the Bum goes numb, and after all these years I am sure it is still square.

At Ceduna, I think which is way out in nowhere is; there is a check point where no fruit is allowed past. On the way over, we were stopped and the bus searched for illicit fruit but on the way back when it was about 1.00 AM the bus just drew into the check bay, but no one came out to check it. Some quarantine.

Our bus driver was also fined for speeding whilst were way out on the Nullabor Plain.

We searched Adelaide for some sort of souvenir and eventually chose porcelain camel of all things. Funny thing is that many years before when my Father had been in Ireland he too had brought back a brass camel (which we still have.)

Shortly after we came back we had an offer for the house from the Wheat belt Aboriginal Housing Authority which was buying up houses everywhere for the Aborigines. I couldn't care less who had the house; their money was as good as anybody else's. I think we sold it for about \$35000.

We had moved in on Xmas Day and it was fitting that we should have to vacate on Xmas Day too.

We had to have somewhere to live so I applied to the Council for a house, which under the terms of my contract they were obliged to provide if required. Unfortunately the only house that was not being used by a Council employee was occupied by someone else, so they had to give him notice to quite. I don't think he was very amused but stiff bikkies.

Eventually we moved into 12 Avon St. In the mean time we had bought a nice little house in Armadale for about \$42000 and moved a lot of our furniture down there. I took some of my accrued Long Service Leave, and for once refused to shave for

several weeks. Cultivating what passed as a beard. The comments that I received from the office girls when I went back to work was not very encouraging. So the beard duly came off again.

We had only been in the Council house a few weeks when I discovered that I could have retired on a pension at 60, being an ex soldier. But I wasn't really ready to retire and become a cabbage. Then suddenly I received a call from the Shire Clerk of Serpentine Shire who offered me a part time job. Two days per week, and filling in for anyone off sick, or on holidays. I accepted immediately and almost as quickly advised the Council that I was retiring.

They were not very amused either as they had had so much trouble getting me a house but by now I was chaffing at the bit to be gone.

For about three weeks Margaret stayed in the house in Perth and I remained in Quairading winding things up.

Eventually the day dawned and I left, with no regrets, or backwards look.

We had been there for about 16 years.

One can tell how often we went to the hotel in Quairading, as a few days before we left we decided to go in there for an evening meal, and they brought the visitors book out for us to sign

The Badminton Club had given Margaret a lovely tray, and me a locally made wall clock

The Fire Brigade presented me with a beautiful Silver tray, inscribed "With thanks to Stan, for a job well done,

The Councils must have thought that I was going to spend my retirement doing nothing but fishing as I was presented with a beautiful rod and reel and other equipment.

We were wondering how we were to move all our furniture to Perth as there were no removalists anywhere in the area, but as every other person leaving the Council had done, I requested the use of a large truck. There wasn't a terrific lot to shift as we had been taking stuff down each weekend on the trailer.

And Margaret had been staying there for a few weeks. A door had closed but another one had opened.

I finished work on the Friday and was destined to start again in the new job on the Monday.

As I have said throughout this story, there are literally hundreds of anecdotes that I could write about, but the story will never get finished and anyway, the reader would probably not be interested in too much.

I have tried to keep it simple and uncluttered just to give the reader some insight into the wonderful life we have had. We have had many Downs, but each time we went down in the trough, we managed to get back on the crest of the wave and be better than we were before.

So now onto Armadale.

Bits I forgot Insert into "Quairading"

By about 1979 I, who had travelled many, many miles and had left home at 14 suddenly became so homesick for England that I was almost ill.

I only had to hear a song about Wales for me to be almost in tears.

We didn't have the money at that time for me to go but Margaret said "For God's sake' go down to the bank and take out a personal loan" which I eventually did. Unfortunately I couldn't borrow enough for us both to go so I went on my own.

Arriving in England was like a drink of water to a drowning man in the desert, believe me.

I never thought that I of all people would be so affected by being back on my native soil. Everything just wrapped itself around me. I was HOME.

On my arrival at Newport station, Mum and Dad were waiting for me and it was wonderful. Although Dad had had a number of strokes and wasn't really his old self.

It was my Birthday when I arrived and that pleased the old folks very much.

I managed to borrow a car and was able to take them out on trips. Which they greatly enjoyed.

I believe too that it during on this visit that I again contacted my Cousin Peggy for the first time since we were children. And we became firm friends again. I also made a point of visiting my Cousins Pam and Jean in Bristol with who I had always been close to when we were younger. But they were so full of snobbishness as Jeans husband played cricket for Somerset.

I hadn't seen either of them for many years and I thought that they might offer me to stay at least overnight. But when I said that I should look for somewhere to stay. Jean said that "There was a lady over the other side of the common that did bed and breakfast. I thought," THAT'S IT you bitch, I am going to stay here one way or the other. So I hung on and hung on until Jean eventually said." Perhaps I can make a bed up for you on the sofa", which she did

I hope they never come my way looking for accommodation

But I couldn't be like that.

After this I went to stay with my Sister for a week or so.

But it was a wonderful holiday for me.

I also met up again with my Cousin Madge (Marjorie) after many years. She was a good bit older than me, but we had a marvelous time together as she was staying with my parents. Gwyneth also came down for a few days, so we were all together as a family (Unknowingly, for the last time) as both Madge and Dad passed away only a couple of years later.

Whilst Gwyneth and I were there, Dad got us to paint his little greenhouse and the front of the house.

They only had a postage stamp garden but what they grew in it was wonderful.

There were three little cottages next door to each other which were attached to and had once been part of what had been a Hotel called the Lamb and Flag (now a block of flats).

Each year the occupants of these cottages would fill their little gardens with vegetables etc and shared everything they grew.

Leaving Mum and Dad's place in Usk on the bus en route for Gwyneth's I just let the tears flow, as I knew that despite my promises not to leave it so long next time, it was probably the last time that I would see them.

Other passengers on the bus must have thought that I was a bit crazy, but who cared?

A few years after this Dad passed away, but for some reason I didn't really miss him. There again, he and I had never been very close. We were too much alike.

Perhaps the only time that we did get close was just before the war when he had a job that kept him home all the time.

He took up the hobby of making model aero planes and I got the bug too, so the house was always littered with boards upon which were pinned various stages of aero planes under construction. Then at weekends we would go off to the Club to fly these creations. Some of them were wonderful. Of course there were no little engines to make them go only strands and strands of elastic.

In the 80s Mum passed away too and this hit me hard although I had not seen her for years, there was a bond between us.

In the 2000s, reading back over some of her letters she must have been very lonely with none of us around her and I have often felt guilty. But there is nothing one can do about reversing history (in 2005 whilst rewriting this chapter, I know only too well what she must have been feeling)

When I heard that she was ill, I tried to get a seat on a plane to go home but of course there were all the formalities, such as obtaining a visa to get back into Australia as I still had my British passport.

I was told that there was at least a seven day waiting period. I trundled off to Perth and had a go at the particular office. Despite my please and reasons for the hurry, they were adamant that I would have to wait.

However, whilst I was arguing with the clerk a manager came out of his office to see what all the fuss was about and hearing the problem. He picked up the visa stamp and stamped my passport. Just shows the sort of nonsense that goes on.

The following day, I was advised that there was a seat available on a plane. In the meantime, Mum had passed away.

She had, when Dad died, sold the house in Usk and moved to Lincolnshire to be nearer Gwyneth.

She must have had a good clear out too, as there was hardly anything of her former home in the new one and there were no photos whatsoever of her family or even Dad. The only photos she had were of Gwyneth and I and our Families. I somehow think that perhaps theirs was not a very happy marriage. Dad was a good man. Father and Provider, but he was a workaholic, and I believe that that is why he always seemed too be working away from home. This didn't do much for Family life.

He was also a very jealous man. If Mum went anywhere and was a few minutes late he would go off looking for her and get quite cross.

Don't I digress?

Now back to the story Hayes (where I arrived in England)

The undertakers had kindly postponed closing the casket so that I could say my goodbyes to Mum (more tears, even now)

We didn't think that Mum knew many people but there were masses of flowers.

What did upset both Gwyneth and I was that Mum had expressed her wish to be buried with her Mother at Saron Chapel in Wales. We made enquiries with the Minister of the chapel about this but he gave us quite a run around. I even suggested that we could bury her ashes by the Yew tree that my Grandmother had planted there many years before. But oh no. the Welsh "prick" said we would have to buy a complete grave site. At which, I am afraid, I told him just where to stick his ruddy churchyard.

Just after this, we received a phone call from my Cousin Joan who stated that we couldn't bury "her" in Nanny's grave as she (Joan) had paid for the grave stone.

We hadn't spoken to her for years (her choice) but if I never see her again this side of heaven, or the other place, it will be too soon.

Mum had always wanted a memorial service at the chapel in Usk which she had attended for many years; this was arranged and was beautiful

We told those present at the service that we were going to take Mum for a ride before going to Saron, so we tucked the tiny casket on the back seat and took her around to where she had been born, and other places (probably just hanging out the inevitable).

Eventually arriving at the chapel we found Nanny's, Granddad's and other relative's graves and gave them all a good tidy up.

Nanny's grave had a beautiful Marble headstone and surrounds which was covered in white marble chips.

We hesitated for a while, then Gwyneth suddenly pulled the bung out of the flask and scattered the ashes onto Nanny's grave, mixing them in.

Of course we then had a bloody good cry, but on leaving the churchyard and sitting on a stone wall nearby we changed that to laughter when we thought of how we had fooled all the bastards, and Mum was where she wanted to be.

I have since found out that the grave stones in that graveyard have all been moved to another position so Mum would have been scattered again. But at least she had been where she wanted to be, at least for a while.

It was heart breaking having to dispose of all Mum's things but we managed it without any dissention between us.

For some reason or other, I had had for some time had a real fancy for an English pork pie and a bottle of Mann's beer so when we went into town to see the Solicitors regarding Mum's Will I bought some in the local supermarket .My Sister said" Don't you start eating that in the street with me" (Remember, we had been brought up proper, and didn't eat things in the street. However, when she disappeared into the office I sat on the steps and got stuck into my prizes.

When Gwyneth came out she was horrified and I thought that she was going to disown me there and then.

At the Solicitors we were both astounded as to how much Mum had left us (She was always pleading poverty). The house was left to Gwyneth who wanted to sell it and share the proceeds with me, but there was no way. She had been the one who had looked after Mum in her later days and it was what Mum wanted. Any monies were to be shared between us.

I inherited the Antique wall clock that had one time been Nanny's also the vases that I hated. I would have liked to have more from the home but there was no way that I could have got it home to Australia. Although we did pack a lot of stuff into what had been Nanny's Glory Box.

I also found in the box, an old mantelpiece clock from a friend of Mum's who I had taken out for several driving lessons and she had passed her driving test after about 10 goes. She said that she had no family to leave it to and wanted me to have it.

The Solicitor had sufficient cash in hand for me to be able to go out to Germany for a few days to see Rolf and Hannelore also the Family in Gevelsberg. That was the last time that I saw Hanna as she died on Xmas day a few years later.

On opening the box on its eventual arrival in Australia we found that it must have been dropped and the clock was in pieces, although the ruddy vases had survived.

Fortunately, the contents had been insured and I found a clock repairer who was able to restore it to its former glory. Although it took him 12 months to find a spring for it. It was also discovered that the clock had been made in America sometime around 1833. And it still keeps perfect time.

The Rose coloured spectacles regarding England had dimmed a bit, perhaps it was because Mum was no longer there and I was glad to get back home.

Incidentally, after something like 40 years we found that the vases DID in fact hold water. They were faded but still in good condition and as Margaret liked them so much, I repainted them and they STILL have pride of place on the mantelpiece.

I keep on thinking of "bits" to put in but if you ever want to read this I will have to get on with it. Much of it is trivia but it may help the reader to have an insight into what happened so many years ago.

To me, they are treasured memories which I hope I have managed to pass on to you with out boring you and that you may pass them on to your children.

Or chuck it in the bin as the ramblings of an old recycled teenager.

I may think of some more later on so don't go away.

I don't know whether I really believe in the "hereafter" and all that sort of thing.

But after my Mother's passing, several most peculiar "Things" happened which made me think twice. The first time that "something" happened was just after her funeral when Gwyneth and I were in a Chemist shop a display cabinet holding little bottles of pills etc fell down, scattering the pills everywhere. Naturally the chemist was not amused and probably thought that it was us mucking about. However, some days later whilst out shopping with Gwyneth in her home town, the same sort of thing happened in almost every shop that we went into, It was most weird. We thinking it were just coincidence, and a bit of a giggle.

I cannot remember the time frame in which the following incidences happened. It could have been over a few months or even a couple of years but they did and, there are witnesses to ever one of them.

One Tues whilst I was playing badminton at the Byford Hall, I was partnering a lady who kept going to the side to speak to someone instead of concentrating on the game.

After several time of this I walked off after her and said "Come on Jan, let's get on with the game". As I did, the whole of the ceiling above the courts where we had been playing fell down

You can imagine the scarper there was to get out of that hall.

I am not sure whether it was the following Thurs or some time after, but I had gone to Bruce rock to do some relieving work and whilst I was having a cuppa' with the Council there was a crashing, grinding roar, and on investigating we found part of the roof on the pavement. Fortunately there was no one around at that time.

From then on, and for probably a couple of years, it seemed that every time that I spoke of this phenomenon to anyone, something would fall down. Even shelves securely fastened to a wall. It was most uncanny and becoming frightening.

One day, Margaret and I went to a neighbour's house for a Cuppa" when I suddenly remembered that I had an appointment and dashed off, leaving Margaret and the neighbour chatting.

When I came back a couple of hours later I was flabbergasted to see that the roof of the neighbours patio was missing.

On asking Margaret what had happened she told me that I had no sooner left the house when there was a bang, and the roof had just flown off and disintegrated. There was no wind or anything.

It now had got to the stage where I was getting really worried and wondered whether it was in fact Mum who was trying to tell me something. But WHY, she wasn't like this in life.

Fortunately no one was ever hurt during these "happenings"

As I have said previously, there had always been a bond between me and Mum so I couldn't understand, and didn't want to think that it WAS Mum

Then one night when I was very ill, probably with the flu or summat. Although I thought I was dying, Mum came to me and gave me a dose of medicine from a wooden spoon as she had always done when I was little. Next morning I was completely well. Dreaming, Hallucinating, you tell me.

For a while after this everything went quiet and there were no more banging's or things collapsing so I thought that whatever it was had gone.

Then one evening whilst attending an alternative medicine class reunion thingy where there was a lady from Melbourne giving a lecture, she started to go around the room reading peoples auras. (something I have never had much belief in) When she got to me, she said "Stan, you have a terrible aura of bitterness around you, you must get rid of it"

(I admit I was carrying some bitterness towards someone who some years before had done me dirty.

Then, after a while, she came back to me and said "Is your Mother a heavy built lady, who has terrible trouble with her chest and breathing, and a problem with her right arm?"

Before I could answer, she went on to describe Mum as though she could see her. It was uncanny.

I eventually said "that's all true, but my Mother has been dead for some years and you couldn't possibly have known her.

She replied, "True Stan, but she is standing right behind you". A shudder went right through me and quite honestly, I was scared.

Then the Lady said "Don't be afraid Stan, she hasn't come for you, she is just watching over you, she will probably go now"

Which she must have done, because there have been no further "incidents" since that night.

Was it Mum? If so why? And what was the message, if any. You work it out, as I haven't a clue.

I have had many wonderful weekends in my life but one I feel I should record is one I had whilst we lived in Quairading.

David, Brian and I one day, got the notion in our heads to go gold prospecting. So we obtained the required Miners Rights License and maps of all the registered sites in the Kalgoorlie area, loaded David's utility to the gunwales with spare water, petrol, metal detectors and everything else we thought we might need, as this was a trip for us into the unknown, and we had heard of many people getting lost in that area.

We did the all the right things, like advising the girls who were all staying at home with Mum just where we were going, just in case anything went wrong.

The day that we decided to go dawned wet, miserable and cold, with rain lashing down. Everyone thought we were mad to go but we said that if it was still like that once we got as far as Southern Cross, we would turn back.

However, we seemed to outrun the storm and by the time we got to SC it was a fine evening so we carried on.

At Coolgardie we turned off onto the Esperance Rd and eventually found the place which we had marked on the map. (Both David and I were experienced navigators).

Pulling off the road into the bush we found the perfect place to camp. (Obviously others had been there before)

We set up our tent which was quite large with two rooms And as I was an experience camper I insisted that we double peg the sides, and leave everything ready , should we need a hasty departure (one never knows in that desolate place what to expect). Then we settled down for the night.

It must have been about 1.0a.m when we were awakened by the storm which must have been following us, hitting the camp.

If it hadn't been for our three beds in the back half, the whole tent would have taken off. As it was, the front half came loose and was thrashing about in the wind. During a lull in the wind, we crawled out, and found that the front half of the tent was inundated with red mud and water.

Fortunately my insistence of having everything ready for emergencies paid off, as we knew just where everything was on the 'Ute and were able to re stake the tent securely. Then we crawled back into bed and hung on for dear life as the storm returned.

Next morning when we crawled out we found that the ground around us was just a thick glutinous red mud. We felt that we just had to get out of there," just in case" so the boys, leaving me at the camp took off to find somewhere better.

It was an awesome feeling being completely on one's own in that wilderness believe me, especially as one had heard of "things" happening, way out in the bush. Admittedly I had Brian's rifle with me, which gave some measure of confidence.

By the time that the boys came back, the sun had come out and the earth was drying up so we decided to have a "fossick" around before leaving that spot.

So out came the metal detectors and we started searching. Eventually we had a positive sound and started to dig. We couldn't see anything in the hole, but the detectors continued to "sound".

The weather by now was becoming threatening so we filled a couple of sacks with earth from the hole and decided it would be wiser to move on.

After about an hour, we found another likely looking spot, and as the sun had decided to come out again, made camp.

We did all the right things, like quartering off the ground with string and searching diligently hour after hour.

We thought that we must have been the first people to have been to that desolate spot but HA bloody HA. There must have been millions before us. We found everything from old boots, tobacco tins, and large nails to pieces of railway track. But there were not none of that there gold stuff.

But we persevered all weekend and had great fun.

Arriving back home late Sunday night, the girls just about kicked us out. They reckoned that we stunk. Well what ever else did they expect, no washes or showers and living off baked beans Although how we managed to breathe in the fetid atmosphere in the ute cabin for all those miles beats me.

A few weeks after this, David contacted me and said that we had forgotten the sack of earth hat we had dug out from the first campsite which had shown some positive results. And suggested we go back up there to fetch it. Something like 4-500 kilometers.

As I had been thinking along the same lines I agreed, so David and I packed our gear and set off again.

We found the sacks where we had left and threw them in the back of the Ute.

At that time, I knew the Shire Clerk of Coolgardie and he gave us a few tips on likely spots to prospect,

One cannot start to imagine the vast uninhabited area of bush that is in that area. You could so easily get lost and wander for days. The tracks just seem to all mingle into one.

Fortunately we both had our heads screwed on and could navigate although in one instance we could have become disorientated.

We had spent some time searching an area but all we found was other peoples discarded bit and pieces. We must have taken the wrong track out, because after we had traveled a couple of Kms I noticed that there were no tyre marks in the dust, whereas there should have been if we had previously

used that track. The bush for hundreds of kms is about 4-5 foot high(1200-1700mm) and impossible to see over. So where the hell were we?

Clambering onto the roof of the Ute I had a look around and fortunately, as we were coming in I had noted two or three landmarks in the distance.

One of these was a windmill. Checking this against the compass, we realized that we were heading completely in the wrong direction and had to retrace our steps. This time looking out for tyre marks in the dust.

If we hadn't spotted the mistake, we could have landed up in woopwoop or some such place, or have become another statistic, or unfound bodies. Nevertheless this weekend too was a great time.

I later had the soil in the sacks analyzed but it certainly wasn't worth all the effort as there was only one very tiny piece of gold in it. **The gold was in the memory.**

One summer's day whilst working in Kellerberrin it appeared to become very dark and in the distance I could see a great cloud of "something" Also the wind was starting to howl, so I decided that I had better get back to Quairding just in case the weather worsened.

Within an hour of me getting home, we couldn't see more than a few metres because of the dust. It got into everything, and just kept coming in great rolling clouds the sun was completely obliterated. Apparently it was a cyclone, fortunately we were only on the fringes of it, but that was bad enough. And it went on for about 24 hrs

I had only the previous week finished painting the outside of the house (white) and what a mess it made of that. Everything had to be scrubbed down and redone.

The cyclone was named Alby, and ironically only one person was killed by it and his name was Alby North.

Chapter 14

The house we had bought in Armadale seemed to suit us fine. Its name was Am Grunen Tal (In a green Valley) it had but two bedrooms, but we thought that was more than enough for us. There was only a small garden which was full of fruit trees.

Just outside the fence there was a lovely stream, where Sam, our Old English sheepdog/ Kelpie could swim. Shops and transport were within easy reach. Out the front was a lovely wisteria covered verandah where we would sit of an evening and watch the world go by.

Shading the back of the house was a patio, covered in grape vines, and loveliest of all (food wise) there was a huge blackberry bush at the end of the garden. We couldn't fault the place, until we moved in, except for the BLOODY NOISE. The house was just across the road from the railway and there were approx 120 diesels a day rumbling past.(with the new electric trains there is no noise)

At each end of the road there were boom gates across the railway which went ding ding bloody ding every time a train was expected.

Several times a day a loud bell would sound from one of the super markets about two hundred yards away and to crown it all there was the Fire Station at the end of the road. And most times when the engines went out, they came past our house with sirens blazing. To cap it all the man on the property behind us had an extremely noisy pump on his water bore which drove us barmy when it started up. So the reader can imagine that we were not very happy little chappies.

It appeared too, that all the family wanted to come to Perth and stay with us. That was wonderful but where did one put them with only two bedrooms?

So one day, when we were both in a bit of a huff over things we went to see an estate agent regarding the possibility of selling the place. The agent told us that she could easily get \$59000 for it. This we couldn't believe, as we had had the place for only about 3 months. And we had only paid \$42000

Anyway, a couple of weeks later because we could make up our mind just what to do about the place I stormed up to the Agent and told her to try and sell.

About three hours later whilst we were having dinner, she rang and said that she had sold the house for the price that she said she would, the only stipulation being that we move within two weeks. So once again we were looking for a house.

There was nothing much on the market at that time as prices had soared. But the agent showed us two that we could afford without taking on a mortgage. One, in the snobby area of Armadale, I wouldn't have given \$20000 for and the only other one was a four bed roomed, two bathroom place. The décor of which was shocking. Although that didn't worry us too much. We were not fussy about the area as it was on the side of a dual carriageway but there was nothing else so we decided to purchase it. Fortunately it had come onto the market before the soaring prices and we paid only \$72000 for it. Which wasn't bad, in fact it cost us only about \$22000. When we think that our first cottage cost us 220 Pounds, and we had to borrow that and apart for one small one for the Midland and Toodyay houses we had paid no mortgages throughout our lives.

I didn't like the house, but after about 12 years we have managed to modify and update the house until it is something like what we want. But I will never be satisfied and would move tomorrow if I had my way. But I doubt that will ever happen now, we have spent too much on making the place comfortable. The new job was with the Serpentine – Jarrahdale Council, as part time Health/Building Surveyor. It was ok, as it gave me time to wind down and I started to build up a couple of "sidelines".

For several years both Margaret and I volunteered to work in the "Signal Box" tourist centre in Armadale. This was extremely interesting as we met many people and got to know the District inside out it also gave us a couple of days a week apart and Margaret an interest outside the house.

We watched the centre grow from a tiny relocated railway signal box to a large modern building housing not only the tourist information, but also a machinery museum.

For two years I went back to school to relearn German as I was hoping to be able to revisit there one day.

When I was about ten years of age, Uncle Ernie had shown me how to engrave on glass. I hadn't thought about this for years, except to often look at and admire some lovely pieces that he had done for my parents many years before. (I look at them now and think "I can do better than that") So I thought I would try again. It didn't take me long to become quite expert and once I began to sell, and make a couple of dollars I was away. Going to shows and local markets most weekends Margaret was doing well too, selling the lovely jumpers etc that she had knitted.

I had often been interested in massage and alternative medicines but there had never been anywhere that I could train. So when the chance came up, I decided to go to the W.A School of massage and train as a Masseur, finally obtaining Diplomas in Therapeutic and Shiatsu massage, reflexology and Reiki.

It was surprising how busy I became at this, and with the glassware.

Work wise, everything was ok and I enjoyed the job but I couldn't get on with the Boss Health Surveyor. Probably because for so long I had been my own boss and without appearing to blow the

proverbial trumpet probably knew far more about the job than he ever had. I was however disgusted at what builders in Perth were getting away with. They tried every trick in the book to get away with using the wrong materials and wrong techniques in order to make a few dollars extra off the clients and I fell out with many of them because I was a stickler for the “book”

The Regular Surveyor didn't appear to worry much at all so it is no wonder that so many of the houses in Perth are cracking and require expensive renovations. And I found this happened all over Perth. The Surveyors worried about little things like sheds not being in the correct place etc but none of them seemed to have any knowledge of the proper way to do the job. I know they were a lot busier than I had been in my previous job, but that is no excuse. They are paid to see that buildings are constructed in accordance with the Standards.

Builders in my old “patch” must have breathed a collective sigh of relief when I retired as I “was on the ball” as they say, and made sure everything was done properly. I even got the Council to buy me a metal detector so that I could check whether the required steel was in place in floors and walls. As previously I had found some of them not putting it in when I wasn't around. I heard more than one say” Here he comes with his toy” but they made sure that everything was where it should be.

I stuck it for a couple of years but despite the council telling me that I could stay on for as long I was fit, I decided to call it quits at 65. Especially as we found that we could get a part English pension as well.

This time it was a little sad, as every other time that I had left a job there had always been another door open for me to step through. This time there was nothing, well I suppose there was, retirement.

For a few weeks after I finished completely I, like so many others, felt that I was now on the scrap heap just waiting for the end. But I soon got over it

My sidelines had taken off, and eventually I wondered how I had found the time to go to work at all.

For several months after I had finished I was often requested by the Health Department to go to various areas of W.A in a relieving capacity. Which I could well have done having reached the exalted rank of Full Member of the Australian Institute of Health Surveys and Building Surveyors and could place after my name the letters M.A.I.H.S and M.A.I.B.S.(big deal, but at the time I suppose I was proud of that). But I turned down all offers. I had had enough of the Public and Council politics.

Shortly after we moved into the last house Margaret was diagnosed with Osteoporosis. At the onset, she was laid up in bed for about 6 or seven weeks, unable to even get out of bed for the necessities of nature. This was quite a problem, but we found ways and means and even had many a laugh. After all, that's what a good relationship is all about.

If it hadn't been for our good neighbours, Ron and Sandy Scott I would have had to have given up my job sooner.

She has had several bouts like this, but nothing as severe as the first. However she is in almost constant pain poor girl and cannot get around anything like she did. This has for several years curtailed her pleasure of retirement. But not once did she complain.

In the past couple of years she has also lost a lot of her sight with Malacular Degeneration. Both of these ailments being caused partly through her silliness in continuing to smoke cigarettes, despite all the warning.

Since retirement 11 years ago (at time of writing) we have had a fairly good time I suppose.

In 1990 we flew over to Sydney to attend Andrew and Sharon's wedding.

We were lucky to have got on the flight, as the following day all the refuellers went on strike.

The rest of the family were stuck in Perth, but finding there was to be no flights, they motored back to Narrogin. Borrowed a Land rover from Rex's Brother and drove non stop for something like 36 hrs. Reaching Sydney only a couple of hours before the time of the wedding. One can imagine the rush there was for them to get ready.

But I think they will talk about it for the rest of their lives.

We were only staying for a couple of days so we had quite a whirlwind tour of all the "attractions".

The so called "famous" Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House were a complete let down. The Bridge just looked like a tatty piece of meccano, and the "house" appeared to just a load of cracked concrete. Probably had we seen them from the River where all the photos appear to be taken, we might have had a more romantic view.

Sydney, to me was just like London, far too busy and overcrowded.

However the Blue Mountains were well worth the effort and over all, Sharon's Mum and Dad made our trip and stay, a very pleasant one and we forged a life long friendship. Unfortunately Bill passed away in 2004

About 1996 we decided to have the one holiday of our lives. We had saved quite a bit of cash and decided to go back to England. This was before Margaret's eyes went.

Landing at London Airport we were met by my Cousins Peggy and Ray with whom we were to spend a few days before starting the Tour.

Hiring a car, and leaving them, we headed north to Salisbury where we stopped to have a look at the Stonehenge. That has been completely ruined as far as I am concerned. I remembered seeing it years before as a wonderful sight set out in the middle of the "plains" but now it is all fenced off and a "Tourist" rip off".

Then on to Bratton to see Gladys (Hayes) an old cousin of mine that I had not seen since I was a child. Headed then North to Bath to visit some old friends. Then for Wales, and what a wonderful sight that first glimpse of "Home" was to me.

But first, before going into Usk where Mum and Dad used to live, we found an old church where many of my Mothers family are buried. It was a wonderful, serene place way out in nowhere although it did have the beautiful name of, Llanviangle Tor-y- Mynnyd. I sat in every pew, thinking that perhaps one or more of my ancestors had sat in that very seat.

We had thought to stay in Goytre for a few days. Although there have been many developments in the area it is still the lovely place I will always love and call home.

My mistake there was that on the second day, we took some flowers to place on the grave of my Grandmother and where my Mother's ashes were scattered. It was too much for me, there were so many happy memories in that place that I broke down and cried my eyes out. (Even writing this, my eyes are full of water for some reason or other, perhaps there is an onion somewhere in the room.)Bugger it, the keys have gone all blurry so I think that will be enough for tonight. I will have to get rid of that onion.

We managed to visit a number of people that we knew in Goytre. Especially Mrs Dobbs who had been part of my life ever since I was born as she and my Mother had always been great friends. My Mother always had had great hopes that I would marry Joan Dobbs. But although we were great friends there was nothing ever between us.

Many of our other friends had passed away. Even the Goytre Arms wasn't the same having been converted into a modern style restaurant. The rest of the village was just as we remembered it. Although our old cottages had been wonderfully renovated and modernised. We stayed one night at the Nantyerry Guest house.

Leaving Penperllenni (Goytre) we headed towards Monmouth.

Travelling along the highways we were astonished to see millions of daffodils in bloom. Later we were to discover that most of the road verges had been planted with these beautiful flowers. It was a magnificent sight.

After a night there we headed North, not caring where we landed up and just stopping for the night at some Bed and breakfast place.

To try and describe all the wonderful places and things that we saw en route would fill a book on its own and would probably bore the reader to death, but they will always be in our memories. Outside the Cities and Towns, England is still the most beautiful country on this earth.

One place we stayed at, somewhere in the Midland we had our first glimpse of snow. Neither of us had seen it for 30 years or so, so it too, was a lovely sight.

The Lake District didn't do much for me although it too was beautiful but what did get to my heart strings was the Yorkshire Moors.

I thought that I had seen a lot of England before but these I had never seen, and the scenery was breathtaking. We could have spent days there but we had a schedule to keep to.

We stayed one night in a little Pub which had been built in the 1600s. None of the floors were level and the doors so warped and twisted that the locks wouldn't close and one had to keep a brick or chair against the door to hold it closed. It was here that I managed to help the barmaid with my massage. She had had a headache for weeks and obviously she had neck problems. So I worked on her in the bar. They all wanted me to stay in the Town as there was no one anywhere within 100 miles that did anything like it.

After stopping for a while at Gretna which is the first village in Scotland and to where, many years ago, underage couples would flee to, to get married as Scottish law permitted younger marriages than England. After this we headed into Scotland. Although, as we left Gretna and headed over the hills towards Troon, we ran into a full scale blizzard and the snow was something like 8 inches deep. Margaret wanted to stop for a while, but bugger that it was too cold and I didn't want to get snowed in.

Margaret hadn't seen her Family for about thirty years and whilst we were made welcome, and stayed with her Sister, there was something lacking in the warmth and we felt as though we were intruding, so after only three days we decided to head South again towards Durham. Margaret said that she "Never wanted to come back there again"

Before going there we spent a couple of glorious days in York which is a medieval town that has been preserved and much rebuilt to its original style.

Then on to Eschwinning, near Durham, where Margaret's Mother's Family came from.

She had not seen the Uncle Harry since she was a child but they made us so welcome. We were only going to stay a couple of days, but they made us stay for a week. Margaret also met several Cousins that she didn't even know existed. Whilst there, we toured the Castle and the Cathedral. Both of which are magnificent buildings, started over 1000 years before. And I got lost in a huge supermarket having wandered away from the party whilst filming various sights.

They had told us about a wonderful wartime museum near York which they felt we would be interested in, so on leaving Eschwinning we retraced our steps. Eventually we found the museum which was an ex prisoner of war camp. Every hut depicted different scenes from the war.

By this time Margaret's back was starting to play up, so we borrowed a wheel chair to cart her around in. We think that that too came from the Boar War. It was just about falling apart. Entering one hut we had to negotiate a step and to assist my pushing the chair up I put my knee into the back of it, forgetting that it was only canvas and shoved poor Margaret out onto the floor.

There were thousand of children also going through the Museum but they were excellent, helping me at times to get the chair through the crowds.

As we had lived through this era many memories were brought back, especially too as we were nearing the 50th celebration of VE Day.

I think we then headed back for another look at the "Moors" then on to Grantham to My Sister's place.

It was wonderful to see her and Brian again after all those years.

We had only been there a couple of days when the "Great Day" arrived. The whole Country had been geared up for this and even the youngsters in the Pubs were entering into the spirit. People living in her street had like so many others, organised a street party. We attended this but it was too cold for comfort so we soon scarpered back to the warmth of the house.

My Sister, being the great organiser that she is, arranged a dinner party for that evening.

The house was decorated in Red white and Blue. There were tin hats and gas masks hanging in the hallway. A picture of Churchill on the wall. The place cards were old identity cards and the menus old ration books. Where the heck she got it all from one will never know. As we were all ex Service Personnel we wore our medals and it was a wonderful night.

In the morning, we had watched the celebrations outside Buckingham Palace on the TV.

Everything just took our breaths away with memories. Then when Vera Lynn started to sing "We'll meet again" and the White Cliffs of Dover" I think each of us disappeared for a few moments to wipe our eyes, it was so poignant.

The next day, Margaret slipped on the stairs and twisted her ankle and was unable to walk properly.

Leaving there, we headed south towards London where I wanted to see my old friend Joe Carter. We had been friends since we were 9 or 10 but hadn't seen each other for many many years.

We spent a wonderful couple of days with Joe and Joan and for Joe and I it was though the years between had never passed. We were like a couple of kids again. The women got fed up with us reminiscing about all our old girl friends and things we had done, but so what!! It was OUR day.

Our time was running out so we headed back towards Peggy's as Margaret's ankle was very painful and she needed to rest it.

We had both intended to fly out to Germany for a few days but Margaret's back and ankle were really bad so I went alone to visit Rolf in Düsseldorf.

I hadn't seen them for many years either. His Wife Hannelore had died a couple of Christmases before so I wasn't sure what sort of welcome I would receive. But I should not have worried. It was like going home as I love Düsseldorf.

I would have liked to have stayed longer, but we only had two days left of our holiday.

On the last day at Peggy's, I was standing in her beautiful garden listening to the birds and drinking in the sights and smells etc of an English Spring whilst running a handful of my native soil through my fingers when I saw Peg coming down the Garden path towards me. I knew that if she came and put her arms around me I would burst into tears, so I had to wave her away. I think she knew that I just wanted that few moments to savour what was probably to be the last time I would stand in an English Garden. And little did we know but it would be the last time we would see Ray.

At the airport we had to get a lift on the baggage trolley for Margaret as she could hardly walk. Then at Kuala Lumpur I had to almost carry her out to the plane. Going up the stairs to the plane she was in extreme difficulty especially as all those wog bastards kept pushing and shoving just to try and get on. Eventually I lost my temper and gripping both sides of the stairway I held them all back and yelled at them to back off a minute. At this one of the Stewards came down the stairs and assisted us.

This was the end of our wonderful holiday which will never be repeated, as we are now getting too old to gallivant around like that again. But we relive it again and again by talking about it, and occasionally someone is silly enough to say they haven't seen out films.

1999 saw our Golden Wedding Anniversary

The family took us all out to dinner and we had a small gathering of friends afterwards at the house.

Gwyneth I understand has sent some money for them to buy something for us but instead it was put towards giving us a trip up the Swan River. Visiting Vineyards on the way. It really was a beautiful day out which we both enjoyed and appreciated very much

For the past couple of years, Margaret's health has deteriorated and she is in constant pain with her back. During 2000 and 2001 she was so ill that none of us thought she would ever make her 75th Birthday. But after a very severe bout which her Doctor appeared to just gloss over as something one can expect in older age we decided to try another Doctor. His immediate reaction was to say to her "What the hell are you on all this medication for, it is far too much." So she stopped taken most of them and has improved a lot although she is nowhere near well.

Fortunately my health has held out and I am able to cope with the extra demand that this is all causing. Although very often lately I feel that I just cannot take much more. It is so lonely, as she is in bed most nights by seven, so what do I do with myself. Thank God for my computer. I would have gone mad without it.

We still go to our Club for the weekend, but so often we have to come home because Margaret is unwell.

During the year we still go out with a craft group to many of Perth's Shopping Centres raising funds for Camp Quality, and hopefully a few Dollars for ourselves to help pay for the odds and sods.

Margaret used to enjoy these outings and come out with me every day, but she now only comes on the Monday when we set up and on the Sat to help me pack up.

I am in the throes of decorating the house throughout as it seems to have got so run down looking. And the junk that is getting thrown out is nobody's business. It is amazing just how much one accumulates over the years.

2002 hasn't been a very happy year for us as the Family appears to be breaking up.

Sharon has left Andrew. Their divorce should be finalised in the New Year. It is hard on the little ones. Melissa seems to understand but Breanna misses her Daddy something awful.

Also Helen has walked out on Brian after almost 23 years. No one knows the reason why. However their children are both grown up and it doesn't seem to be affecting them too much. There so much that I could write about the Family and their fortunes, but this is MY LIFE STORY, and I hope our children and perhaps Grandchildren will appreciate knowing what I have done with my life. (And all the hours of writing this)

So many families have no idea what any of the ancestors have done which is a shame. Because every person has a story.

I don't seem to have done any great works, but I have had a wonderful life so far (and hope to have a bit more) I have met some wonderful people (and some rotten ones) But that is all part of life. I have been on top of the wave and very often in the trough, but I have never been what some call broke.

I may not have had much money but I could always find some way of earning some to keep me going.

God gave me a wonderful woman to share my life with (many others would have chucked me out long ago) as being Aries born I have always been independent, wanted to be in charge or lead, and somewhat of a "lone bird" preferring my own company. Quick tempered, but passionate. I cannot tolerate fools, or those that will not help themselves.

A bit of a skinflint in my younger days. But there again we had nothing. And if I hadn't pulled the purse strings a bit we wouldn't have what we have today.

At 78 I am still playing badminton twice a week. The only weak spots seem to be my knees which creak a bit and take a bit of an effort to straighten when getting out of a chair. My feet are a lot further away than they used to be especially when trying to put socks on. And the rungs on my ladder seem to have suddenly become further apart. I don't need Viagra yet, although the chances of proving this seem to be getting more and more remote.

I hope the reader has enjoyed the journey through my life and I hope that perhaps I may be able to sometime, add a chapter or so. But I doubt whether anything exciting and worth recording is going to happen at this stage.

Written with thanks to God for everything that he has allowed me to do and have, and for all the enjoyment I have had out of life and for the Children the permitted us to have.

Also with grateful thanks to my Wonderful Wife Margaret for putting up with a cantankerous sometimes miserable old Sod over all these years. For the pleasures and the tears we have shared, and especially for our four wonderful children, which has led to us to having 9 lovely grandchildren.

Now shut up Hayes and get on with collating all this nonsense and getting the thing printed so that someone can read it.

Love to All

Stan Hayes

Nov 2002

Updated 2005

WHAT CAN I CALL THIS CHAPTER. THE EPILOGUE / ADDENDA? You choose

In the past few years or so Margaret and I became much closer again possibly because she was so dependent on me with her health failing, Passionate Love had gone (almost anyway) but we had something VERY special between us which was so much more endearing and Wonderful.

I was still playing badminton at 78 and busy with the glassware etc However 2004 was not to be a happy year for us. In fact it was the worst year of my life.

Firstly, I had begun to get problems with my back, and then in February of that year I fell whilst playing badminton and fractured my hip which necessitated a new one being fitted.

Fortunately, as I was reasonably fit for my age I soon recovered from that except that that leg would bend as much as it had done before. And it became a problem putting socks and undies on. Never mind that was a small price to pay, because many older persons like me don't often survive for long after breaking a hip. But I have had to give up my badminton BUMMER

With this problem and Margaret's health deteriorating further I had to give up going to the shopping centres with my glassware. And also gave up the massage

In May 2004 Margaret had problems with her gall bladder and spent some time in hospital, where they also discovered that she had a heart problem, so they were unable to operate on her. Instead, they stabilized the condition and the cardiologist put her onto heart tablets for the rest of her life.

She was ok for a while then it flared up again and she was again admitted to hospital where this time they discovered that she had a lung cancer as well.

She refused any treatment saying that it would probably kill her quicker than the cancer and she would die with dignity

Her Gp took her off of the heart tablets saying "Just stay on the half aspirin a day.

This he had no right to do, and it was reported to the A.M.A and the W.A. Medical Board.

She was ok for a while and we were going out almost every day but she was obviously (in hindsight) having heart attacks until one Sat in Aug she suddenly stood up, clutching her chest and collapsed on the floor. In so doing breaking her hip and damaging her arm and back.

Back in Fremantle Hospital we thought that we had lost her, but she rallied round from the operation on her leg, although couldn't walk anymore.

It would have been impossible for me to have looked after her anymore so she was placed into a nursing home (which was an awful place) although she was only in there about two weeks when she became ill and was transferred to Armadale hospital.

On the Friday October 22nd 2005, she insisted that I travel to Bunbury to attend Brian's wedding (his second). As she seemed to be quite cheerful and reasonably well, I agreed to go. (In hind sight I honestly think that she knew that she was going to die that weekend) But at about midnight I received a phone call from Sharon who had been called to Margaret's bedside because she was so distressed, and wanted someone with her.

Janet and Rex were also staying at the same hotel so we decided to make a dash for home, arriving at about 3.30 am. Margaret was asleep or sedated, but we sat with her until morning, when they transferred her to the palliative care ward, where she passed away quietly on the 25th November. With all her family around her.

Throughout all her sufferings there was not one word of complaint from her and right up to within 24 hrs of her passing, she was cheerful and "stropky" And knew what was going on around her and wanted to know all about Brian's wedding etc.

I knew that it was coming, but never realised what bitter anguish I was to go through in the weeks and months ahead. We had shared so much and known each other for almost 58 years. We had just "celebrated" our 55th Wedding Anniversary. (She was taken for a ride in an ambulance on that day). Whilst I had virtually been "on my own" for several months (although visiting her every day), the loneliness now she is gone is awful. I sometimes wish that I could drop dead myself. I just don't want to go on anymore. And feel that my life, as such is over.

Her funeral was lovely. (If one can use that word for such a terrible occasion,)

She had wanted only a simple, non religious ceremony

There were just two simple eulogies, and I had made a tape which had everyone crying, we had asked for no flowers but when the grandchildren and I placed roses on the coffin, so many others came forward and laid them too. It was like a garden. Everyone loved her so.

Now I have to try and pick myself up, but it is going to be hard. She has been gone now for about 6 months, but the tears still keep coming. Only those that have gone through this can possibly understand.

To compound my misery, in the past 6-7 months I have also lost 5 long time friends, also my cousin Bonnie (Gerald's wife) and lately Basil Morgan (Cousin twice removed)

Saw the specialist this week regarding my back and he is going to operate sometime in the New Year. This may alleviate some of the pain in my back and leg. And make me a bit more mobile.

Christmas 2004 is now only a couple of weeks away, but to me, it means nothing anymore without my Girl beside me. The first time in almost 58 yrs.

I have just brought her ashes home and until I can decide what to do with them she is tucked up with her teddy bears around her. It was suggested that perhaps I should take her home and scatter them on

the Ballast Bank in Troon, but she would have haunted me for life if I had done so. So they can stay where they are until I go too, then hopefully one of the kids will put us together again and take us both HOME to Goytre and scatter us along the lane towards the canal and over the canal bridge where we so often walked when were young.

At present, I am going through the hell of Guilt, Sorrow, and Anger etc thinking about the things we should have said and done which apparently all those bereaved go through. I feel like selling the house and getting rid of everything. But common sense must prevail. People keep telling me that "Time will heal the wound, and think of the wonderful memories of her that you have". They haven't got a BLOODY clue what they are talking about, because it is those memories that keep making the tears flow. And I don't have enough time left, for it to heal the wound

I went over to see my Cousin Gerald a couple of weeks ago. He is also devastated with the loss of Bonnie.

My neighbours have been very good to me. My Granddaughter Joanne has also been over several times and had a meal with me, and it's lovely to have some company for a while. Andrew MIGHT pop in now and again, but he is busy with a new Love and I cannot expect the family to keep running after me. I must fight my own battles.

Sharon seldom comes near these days, but *does* keep in touch by phone. And I know if I want anything they will only be too happy to help.

(Andrew's Love affair is off, but he now busy studying.

I am a member of a chat room on the internet (a nice one). I have met many of the people that live in W.A and they have been more supportive than anyone. Many of them have gone through this agony themselves and know what I am going through.

But over all, it is as though I have developed a case of Leprosy or something and all the so called friends have been like rats and a sinking ship.

Several times I have gone out to functions to try and snap out of the depression but I cannot stay there as seeing all those happy couples together with their kids hurts like a dagger being thrust in.

It was terrible at Xmas time in the shopping centre to see all those families so excited and Happy as we used to be.

Xmas time too, I went down to Janet's. The dinner was lovely, as was the company, but there were so many memories there. I could see Margaret everywhere and expected to hear her voice. I am afraid that I upset everyone by breaking down completely and I had to come home. I suppose that one unhappy Xmas is a fair trade off for 78 very happy ones.

There now, I am crying buckets again

I have started to go out again with my glassware, I can't say that it is a financial wow, but at least I get out of the house and have something to do.

My finances have now taken a bashing as without Margaret's pensions and other allowances income has more than halved. But I don't suppose that I will starve.

I had thought about going back to England to live, which Margaret and the kids have always thought I would, if anything happened, and it is something that has been in my heart for years as Australia will NEVER be my HOME. I have no complaints, as life has been good to us but I hanker for the past, (although I know that is stupid)

My Heart says "go" but my brain is saying "don't be bloody stupid"

It is so damn lonely now. Very few people ever call these days.

Although my Granddaughter Joanne has been so good and supportive. If I go out socially everyone else seems to be a couple and I am the Wallflower.

Some idiots have suggested that I might perhaps find someone else later on, but there is no lady born that could ever take her place in my heart. In any case who would want a 79 year broken down old fart like me?

Maybe before I get TOO old I may perhaps take a holiday and see the Land of my Birth for the last time.

I have never seen the house in which I was born and for many years have had a real hankering to do so. I wrote to the current owners who emailed me that he would take a photo for me, but as yet it hasn't arrived it's probably an ordinary, nondescript house, but so what, that's where this story began.

And this is where my story ends. **I can write no more.**

Stan Hayes

25th April 2005

Das Mädchen ist zu Ende

Ps A picture of the house HAS arrived after all, and as one can see by the photo at the beginning it was a beautiful place.



Mum and Dad



Me at 12 Months
(See, I WAS cute once)

Margaret was born on the 9th Day of May 1927 at Welbeck Crescent in Troon, Ayreshire, Scotland. For many years she was always of the understanding that she was one of twins, the other being a boy, and that her Mother had died during Childbirth, however whilst pursuing the Family Tree it was discovered that this was not the fact, as whilst her Mother Annie (nee Hodgson) had died in childbirth, it was not until 12 months after Margaret was born and whilst having a boy child.

Welbeck Crescent was what is termed a tenement, or block of flats owned by the Council as were most of the houses in Troon at that time.

The accommodation consisted of two rooms, one of which was the kitchen / Living room.

On each side of the fire place were deep alcoves or cupboards in which were there were beds where Margaret and her brother David who was a year or so older slept.

Toilet facilities were shared with another family living on the same floor.

After her Mother died, Margaret was sent to live with her Grandmother Mrs. Hodgson in a place called Eschwinning near Durham. It is not known whether her brother was sent there too.

She was unable to remember much of this time other than her Grandmother kept goats and insisted that the children drank goats' milk, the thoughts of which made Margaret shudder until the day she passed away.

Nothing is known of her Fathers movements during this time. It is known that at one time he went to America so it is possible that it was during this period.

Until she was in her 70s Margaret never knew that her Father had been married before he met her Mother and this was only discovered when a David Yoolow Stewart contacted the family seeking information about the Family. He was apparently a cousin from another branch of the Family. For Generations the eldest son of the Family had always been named David Yoolow in Margaret's Family and it was obvious that the other branch had been doing the same. This gentleman also sent her a photo of her great grandparents.

Margaret knew nothing about her family as for some reason or other nothing was ever spoken about Although she did meet two aunts and an Uncle.

It appears that at one time, the family were fairly well off as her father once owned a beautiful big house in Troon and one of her ancestors was quite a famous engineer who invented a system of casting large diameter pipes, in fact there is a statue to one of them in a Town in Scotland.(no not the pipes) What happened to all the money no one knows. The story is that a crooked solicitor made off with much of it and went to South Africa, but who know?

Sufficient is it to say that Margaret's Father certainly wasn't well off. He was employed at the Troon Ship Yards as an engineer but for many years during the depression years he was seldom in work and one year did only one day.

To augment his income he would go caddying at the golf course for a few shillings.(Troon has always been renowned for its golf courses, one could play on a different course every day of the week)

Margaret always recounted how tight things were in those days and how she would always have second hand and hand-me- down clothes and that they had cod's head soup for dinner on many days.

When she was about five years of age she went back to live with her Father in Welbeck Crescent as he had remarried. She could never remember when it was that her Sister Enid arrived on the scene and even then could not remember her as a baby but it must have been when Margaret was about nine.

Some time after this, because of the larger family, the Council allocated them a house at 25 Titchfield Rd.

This was a two bedroom house or flat with a large sitting room, a kitchen and bathroom.

As there were now two girls and a boy, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart slept in the sitting room on a fold away bed.

This house too was very innovated, for want of a better word. There was no actual cooking range in the kitchen but the oven was heated by the fire in the sitting room which also heated the water for the bathroom etc. In there, the washbasin was situated over the end of the bath.

There was only a very small back garden and no view at all, as at the end of the garden was a twenty foot high bank which formed what is known as the "Ballast Bank".

This bank many years before when sailing ships carried a lot of ballast to make them sail properly had been where all the ballast was dumped. It was probably about 4-5 hundred yards long and about 40 foot wide. In later years it had been turned into a public open space. It also acted as a buffer against the high seas in winter. Although there was a drop to the water on the other side of about 40-50 ft many was the times that waves came over the top and flooded the back garden.

That part of Troon is on a promontory which sticks out into the Clyde and is only about a quarter of a mile wide so it cops all the weather. Very often in winter the buses have to stop running along there as the winds are far too strong. On the opposite side of the promontory from the ballast bank are the ship yards and harbour. When we last saw them in 1996 the yards were just a pile of rusting metal. In fact the whole of Troon appeared to have deteriorated, so much so that Margaret said "Don't ever bring me back here again."

As a small child Margaret attended what is know as the Little School, then at 11 yrs of age she moved on to Maar College.

She spoke little of this period in her life other than to speak of her friend Sadie White and about some of the things they did. Such as playing hockey and the time her toe was broken by being struck by a hockey stick

At this time the only swimming baths in town were only a few hundred yards from her home. Whilst Troon has a lovely beach it always seemed to have a wind blowing and was cold. So the pool was preferred, also it was safer due to the rough waters.

The water in this pool was only changed when the tide came in and was never chlorinated or filtered so one can imagine what the water was like by the end of the day.

Margaret used to relate how she and many other kids would love to jump in this pool (for free) when the water was being drained out. Each would be armed with a hard brush and would be expected to scrub down the walls and bottom as the water receded. They considered this great fun.

That pool no longer exists.

When the war came along in 1939 all schools were closed for several months so Margaret like every other child had quite a long holiday but I suppose that living by the seaside would have been fun.

Troon before the war and during it was quite a popular holiday destination for thousands of people so in the summer months the place was alive. During the holiday season there was always one day in particular that Margaret always remembered and that was the day that just about every taxi in Glasgow had a day off and brought hundreds of disabled children to Troon for the day.

Many of the Towns residents used to augment their income by squeezing their families into perhaps one room and letting out the other rooms to visitors.

On leaving school at 14 or 15 yrs of age Margaret found herself a job in a News Agents for a while, then one at a Garage.

The war didn't really touch Troon other than the fact that there were thousands of troops billeted in and around the town and the Commandoes using the harbour for practice.

But Margaret often related how hundreds of people would gather on top of the ballast bank in the evening to watch the German bombers flying over to bomb Clydeside which was only a few miles away across the water.

Of course, like everywhere else in Britain, the ship yards and factories boomed and her Father being an engineer had more than enough work, so they became more affluent.

As soon as Margaret was of the right age she volunteered to join the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) which was the women's army.

After her initial training she was posted to Scottish Command Headquarters in Edinburgh Castle where she trained as a typist, rapidly rising to the rank of Lance Corporal.

Some time later, after the war was over she was posted to Isolohn in Germany and became secretary to General?

Little is known of this period other than that she was having a whale of a time. English ladies were very few in Germany and their company was always being sought for dances and parties.

One time we know, she tried skiing and nearly broke her neck and on another occasion visited the Mohne and other dams which had been damaged by British air raids (The dam Busters) She had a number of boy friends as she was a lovely girl and really enjoyed life.

It is not known how long she was in Isolohn but eventually she was posted to Bad Oenhausen. Here, apart from the daytime work in the office it was a round of fun, as this was now a garrison town full of soldiers, and a girl didn't have to look far for a date as there were dances and other entertainment provided just about every night and one could go away to various resorts for the weekend at minimal cost.

It was here that that she met up with a Military Policeman named Harry (or was it Eric) and her friend Brenda met up with another policeman Stan.

The four often went away for the weekends to a place called Bad Harzburg in the Harz Mountains (and no. It wasn't a dirty weekend; her mother had taught her to be a good girl).

Eventually however, the romance between Harry (Eric) and Margaret paled as did the one between Brenda and Stan and the romance between Margaret and Stan became a reality when he asked her to marry him

(This is all in Stan's Story) and from this time on Margaret's Story follows much of Stan's.

It seems as though they were both designed to eventually meet as in later years as their lives were discussed it was found that their lives had crossed so many times. They had both been stationed at the same places, been to the same dances, and even on the same boat when travelling back to England on leave.

Even their childhood appears to have run parallel in what they did. It is uncanny.

On being demobbed' from the army Margaret travelled to England stayed with an Aunt for several weeks awaiting Stan who was also being demobbed'.

After visiting Stan's parents in Wales, Margaret returned to Scotland and found a job in the Coop haberdashery where she remained until her wedding in 1949.

It was after this that she found her true vocation of being a wife, and Mother bearing three children. She loved knitting and would spend hours at it so that in later life it became an obsession, but she turned out some lovely work.

Margaret was only about 5ft nothing tall but unlike most small people she was a very placid lady, nothing seemed to faze her and everything seemed to be taken in her stride.

When the family eventually moved to Australia in 1967 she wanted to be a housewife and mother again and not go back into business, and soon became pregnant. However this child miscarried and she was most distressed.

At Toodyay she joined the Country Women's Association also the Returned Serviceman's League and became Secretary/ Treasurer to the Auxiliary helping Stan to organize social functions etc. She also developed a love of cricket and would spend hours at the oval when Brian was playing.

It was here at Toodyay that she realized her wish, and had her fourth child. Some 13-14 yrs after the last.

When the Family moved to Albany she was most unhappy, and hated the place, finding it too cold and wet and possibly too far away from the rest of the family. Money was also tight and things were a bit of a struggle.

At Quairading, she refused for some reason or other to join any thing other than the Badminton Club where she became Secretary Treasurer. This she enjoyed.

Although she did help Stan with his work with the Fire Brigade and the Social side.

In her 60s and 70s Margaret developed severe Osteoporosis, then Malacular degeneration (partial blindness) and in the last few years of her life had many other conditions heaped on her until she just wanted to go.

And after she fell, breaking her leg and vertebrae she did, on the 25th Oct 2004

She did no Great Works upon this Earth but she was our Mum
And that says it All

Truly a Wonderful Women who gave Love and Happiness to her Husband and Family
for over half a Century and sadly mourned by us all