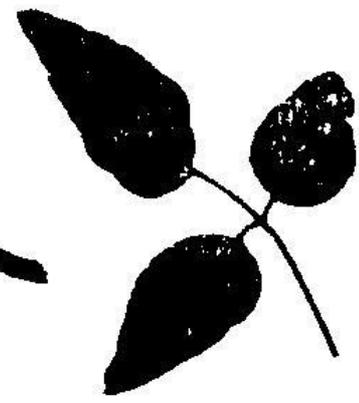
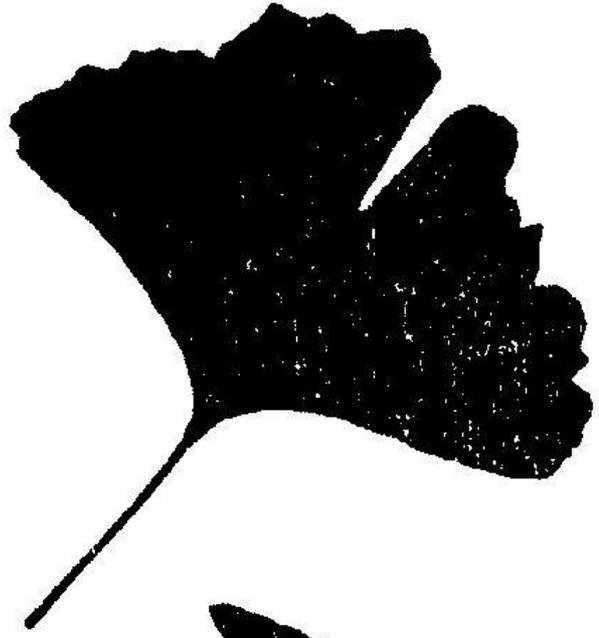
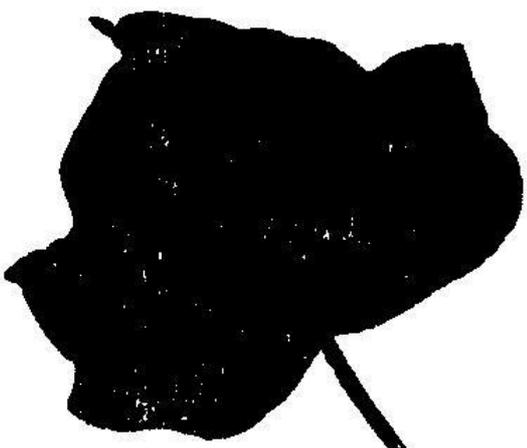


FAMILY
REMINISCENCES



Margaret Chisman

SITE AUTHOR'S NOTES

- ▶ [...] TEXT ADDED BY SITE AUTHOR TO CLARIFY ORIGINAL TEXT
- ▶ AS THE ORIGINAL TEXT HAS BEEN SCANNED, SOME WORDS MAY HAVE BEEN REPRODUCED WRONGLY BY THE OCR PROGRAMME

PEOPLE MENTIONED (DURHAM FAMILY IN BOLD)

NAME IN TEXT	FULL NAME	RELATIONSHIP WITH AUTHOR
ANNIE (WIFE OF CHARLIE DURHAM)	ANNIE DURHAM née WIGLEY 1872-1950	PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER
ANNIE COBLEY	ANNIE ETHEL COBLEY 1892-1961	MOTHER
ANNIE, AUNTIE	ANNIE	UNCLE ARTHUR'S WIFE
ARTHUR, UNCLE	ARTHUR DEAKIN	[(ALFRED) THOMAS DEAKIN'S BROTHER]
AVIS		DAUGHTER
BILL, UNCLE	BILL COBLEY	UNCLE
BOB TYERS	BOB TYERS	MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER'S SISTER'S husband
CHARLIE DURHAM	CHARLES WILLIAM DURHAM II 1866-1948	PATERNAL GRANDFATHER
COLIN	COLIN JOHN DURHAM	BROTHER
DAD	HENRY CHARLES LYGO DURHAM 1892-1962	FATHER
DEAKIN, OLD LADY	(ALFRED) THOMAS DEAKIN'S mother	UNCLE BY MARRIAGE'S mother
DENIS		STEPSON
DONAL		SON-IN-LAW
DORIS	DORIS ANNIE WALTER née DURHAM 1895-1986	AUNT
DURHAM, GRANDDAD	CHARLES WILLIAM DURHAM II 1866-1948	PATERNAL GRANDFATHER
DURHAM, GRANDMA		PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER
FANNY COBLEY junior	FANNY ELIZABETH COBLEY (1890-)	AUNT
FANNY COBLEY senior	FANNY COBLEY née (BAXTER-) BROWN (about 1869-)	MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER
GRANNY		MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER
GRANNY'S TWO BROTHERS (BAXTER-)BROWN	MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER'S brother
HARRY	HENRY CHARLES LYGO DURHAM 1892-1962	FATHER
HARRY, UNCLE	HENRY COBLEY	UNCLE
HEATHER	HEATHER JANE DURHAM 1963-85	NIECE
HUSBAND, FANNY COBLEY'S	HENRY COBLEY 1864-	MATERNAL GRANDFATHER
JOHN	JOHN STANLEY DURHAM 1894-1970	UNCLE
LESLIE	LESLIE DAVID DURHAM 1897-1940	UNCLE
LINDA		DAUGHTER

LORNA	LORNA JOAN GANDY née DURHAM 1924-90	SISTER
LYGO, AUNT / MISS	MARY ANN LYGO née MARTIN 1824-1917	PATERNAL GREAT-GRANDMOTHER's SISTER
MINNIE TYERS junior	MINNIE TYERS	MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER's SISTER's daughter
MINNIE TYERS senior	MINNIE TYERS née (BAXTER-) BROWN	MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER's SISTER
MOTHER, MUM	ANNIE ETHEL COBLEY 1892-1961	MOTHER
NEAR RELATIVE, SURNAME DURHAM	WILLIAM JACOB SMITH DURHAM 1843-94	PATERNAL GREAT-GRANDFATHER
OLIVE	HERBERT ROY DOOTSON's companion, Scotland	---
POP(PIE)/MINNIE, AUNT	MINNIE DEAKIN née COBLEY "POPPIE"	AUNT
ROY D., ROY DOOTSON	HERBERT ROY DOOTSON 1916-90	HUSBAND
ROY S.	ROY SILSON 19..-2011	COMPANION
ROY T.	ROY F(RANCIS?) TURNER 1912?-95?	HUSBAND
SID		BROTHER-IN-LAW
STAN	STANLEY HAROLD CHISMAN 1919-82	HUSBAND
STELLA		NIECE
TOM DEAKIN, BABY		COUSIN
TOM, UNCLE	(ALFRED) THOMAS DEAKIN	UNCLE BY MARRIAGE, MINNIE DEAKIN née COBLEY "POPPIE" HUSBAND
WIGLEY, GREAT-GRANDFATHER	DAVID WIGLEY I 1848-1945	GREAT-GRANDFATHER

For Colin
with copies to
Linda, Avis, Denis, Tom and Stella

A record of anything I can remember about the older generations of our family - the Wigleys, Durhams, Browns, Cobleys and Deakins - that might be of interest to all or some of you. In addition I have described what I can recall of interest and significance of our current family. I prepared, some 10 years ago, a family tree. This is in rather an amateurish fashion but they do it these days on the computer

Chapter I
Up to 1917

The Cobleys. The story goes that Fanny Cobley, our granny, built up a successful laundry in Fulham in the 1890s. Her husband turned out to be a drunkard and a thief. One night just before payday for the laundry workers he stole all the wages. Granny had to close the laundry and somehow pay off the workers. She decided on drastic action. She changed the locks and locked him out of the house. She always kept the doors bolted at the top so the children could not let anyone in.

She made plans to disappear to an unknown address but did mention Oxford. All the packing was ready for their departure were five children - the oldest Fanny (named after her mother) then Annie my mother, next came Bill, then Poppy (I am not sure of her given name - was it Minnie?) Youngest was Harry.

Drama occurred when the husband rattled on the letter box and shouted through it that he wanted to come in. Granny had forbidden all the children to let their father in but Bill - who was later to take after his father as regards getting drunk (but not stealing) - was very fond of his dad and opened the letter box and shouted 'We're going to Oxford'. Directly Granny heard him say this she immediately changed her plans without telling the children. They still thought they were moving to Oxford.

Instead Granny had remembered a journey on the river steamers from Chelsea to the famous Rosherville Gardens in Northfleet. They went on the steamer down to the pier at Gravesend. The children knew that the steamers went to Oxford and they thought they were still going there and did not notice that the boat was going in the opposite direction.

She somehow managed to find somewhere to live - with five young children between the ages of about 2 to nine years old. Their father never found them and no more was heard of him.

They moved to a terraced house in Cecil Road, Gravesend. I do not know how they survived - I suppose sideshow Granny took in washing. The house next door was occupied by a family called Durham.

The man, Charlie Durham, who much later worked in Harmsworth Printing Works in Northfleet, did small turns on the Music Hall stage with tap dancing. I remember this as when I was about seven or eight he took me to the Music Hall in Harmer Street, Gravesend and was obviously excited by the atmosphere of his youth and did several little impromptu steps whilst we were waiting in the queue. Later he took me on the train to Chatham and we went to the music hall there. I had never been on a train with a long tunnel as on that journey and was half frightened, half exhilarated.

In order to keep the family going his wife Annie set up a sweet shop in her front room. They had four children, Harry (about the same age as little Annie Cobley next door), John a year younger, then Doris and youngest Leslie. The shop was successful because it was right opposite Cecil Road school.

The design of the houses in which the Cobleys and Durhams lived was typical very cramped Victorian terraced. The front door opened immediately into the front room, then at right angles the stairs went up steeply between the front and back rooms. The kitchen led off the back room into the extension so familiar in this era. This design packed as many houses as possible into a small frontage of land. There was an outside lavatory, but no bathroom. In all large towns there were public personal baths and most people kept themselves clean this way.

Mother described how she slept in the little bedroom in the extension and Dad slept in the corresponding one right next door. There were wide strong windowsills and Dad used to climb out of his window, crawl along the sill and pop into Mum's room. This is not as naughty as it sounds

because it happened when they were both children. However they must have been fond of each other because later - much later - they married.

Dad was a regular soldier. He enlisted (before ever World War I was thought about) as he wanted something better than the only job he could get having left school at 13 – this was a butcher's boy. However he found he did not like the regiment he was in and deserted. He later joined up under another name, that of Watson. I believe he was eventually found out and was not convicted of desertion as he had joined up under different name.

I know he spent some time in Mesopotamia as it was then called. It may have been that he was recalled from there in order to be posted to Flanders where the fighting was becoming threatening and horrendous. Anyway he had a fortnight's leave at the beginning of August 1916. We have a photo of the wedding. It must be noted that only the Durham family are in this picture. There was Aunt Lygo, Granddad and Grandma Durham and Doris their daughter.

At this point I must give some history of how Granddad Durham and Grandma came to meet. Annie Wigley was born in Selling near Faversham into a poor rural family. Her father

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was a farm labourer and the whole family did hop picking in the summer. Her mother was a school teacher - some feat in Victorian times!

Annie Wigley, as she was then, got a job as a servant in the house of a Miss Lygo living in, I believe, Portland Rd. (quite near Clarence Place). Miss Lygo was of somewhat higher social standing than the servant Annie. Miss Lygo had a near relative, surname Durham, who wanted to emigrate to South Africa but did not want to take his young son Charlie with him so the child was brought up by his relative Miss Lygo. It may be that Charlie experienced difficulty in getting a girl friend as his height was just under 5ft. Anyway he married the servant Annie Wigley.

Site author's note: Aunt Lygo and Miss Lygo are actually the same person, Mary Ann Lygo née Martin, sister of Charles William Durham II's mother, his aunt, who brought him up. The "near relative, surname Durham", was William Jacob Smith Durham, Charles William Durham II's father, and Mary Ann Lygo née Martin's brother-in-law.

What developed then was that the person who used to be Annie Wigley - jumped up from being a servant from a poor rural family into a well-to-do and socially higher setting, became a fearful snob. She learned everything she could about the Royal Family and all its extensions and constantly spoke about them seeking to give the impression that she herself was a superior person. My mother, although the Cobleys were living somewhat in poverty (due to her father stealing all that money) had a somewhat better education and cultured background.

Grannie Copley and Grandma Durham disliked each other intensely and I feel sure that Grannie refused to be in the wedding photo with Grandma - she probably did not even attend the wedding. This took place at the beginning of August 1916.

Chapter II

1917 – 1933

So little Margaret was born on 1st June 1917. She was promptly called Madge. Mum and I lived with Grannie until I was about three and a half. Dad was away in the army - he was a regular soldier and eventually finished his service about 1922. I cannot remember him actually living with us at Grannie's.

I can remember quite a lot about our life there at 29 Sun Lane, Gravesend. The house was end of terrace, but had a sideways. Although just the conventional terraced house it was a better design than Grandma's. It was wider to start with and had a passage from the front door going through past the middle room to the kitchen. The stairs went up from the hall to a half landing with a room over the kitchen extension. Mother's sister Poppy had this room. Brother Bill was in the Navy and brother Harry was hardly ever there - I do not know where he was. The front room was the typical Victorian parlour - every piece of furniture strictly in its place, antimacassars on the chairbacks. A fancy cover on the open round table. A vase of artificial flowers in the fireplace and an aspidistra in the window. The room was rarely used.

The middle room was a professional laundry room with a special closed-in stove that had sloping sides so that laundry irons could rest against them and get hot. The electric iron for laundry had not been invented. There were large racks around the room for airing the clothes.

The kitchen was small and made even more so by a large coal-fired copper, and the usual large kitchener. It had the typical shallow, brown earthenware sink. There was a small table in the corner where Granny, Mum and I had our meals. It was in that room that I was plagued by Granny's dog, Nellie who was jealous of me. When Granny or Mum were present, Nellie would be all good behaviour but if I was alone she would growl and snap at me - I was very frightened, but they did not believe me.

A memory I have I can date about 1923. I was with Auntie Pop in her little back room. She had a gramophone and had managed to get a record (78) of the new jazz music. We were both jigging about hilariously when Grannie banged on the door and told us to stop that rubbish. (These days when I hear that ceaseless electronic beat that seems to be part of so much on TV and feel I can't stand another beat of it I remember this reaction of Grannie.)

Occasionally Mum, Auntie Pop and I would go for a picnic. We walked right up Sun Lane and then for a long way to the real country on a lovely high ridge (now a housing estate) with masses of wild roses in bloom. We would lay the cloth, put out the food and eat it in the almost total quiet of the country. It was never completely quiet as the song of the skylark was ever there. I can never think of picnics without this memory of wild roses and skylarks singing their song of praise. I never hear a skylark new - has our selfish civilisation made life too difficult for them?

Sometimes Granny's two brothers visited her - they still lived in Fulham. It was astonishing how she changed when they were there. She was almost young, smiling and laughing. Normally she was rather dour and stern. It was the same when her sister Minnie, married to Bob Tyers, came. They lived at Swindon as he worked on the railway there. Their daughter, also called Minnie (I think) accompanied them. There was much laughter, and light-hearted joking.

By the time I was about four [about 1921] we moved to rooms in what I remember was called Lacey Terrace. In order to get accommodation Mum had taken a job of nursing an old bedridden lady. Because she had to stay indoors during the day to be on call for the old lady she had to get me to do some of the shopping. Years later she described how she had worked as a nurse before she was married. It was at the Asylum near Dartford. She described how some of the poor old folk had forgotten how to eat and had to be helped to get food to their mouths or else starve.

Se used to send me with money tied up in the shopping list, with a big basket on my arm. Our nearest shops were at Echo Square, which was a walk down a narrow street, turn right and along the road that had two levels separated by a

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sloping garden. Mum had taught me to watch for cars or carts and I negotiated the roads carefully, but I remember one day skipping along the top part of these sloping gardens and dropping the basket full of shopping and everything rolled down. I managed to get them all back without any breakages. Later on we went to live in rooms over a shop in Windmill Street. These rooms had no sink. We had to use a tap on the landing, and share a lavatory on another floor. There was no electricity or gas. Mum cooked on a Beatrice oil stove with an oven. She had to wash up in a bowl and drain the dishes on a tray and pour the water into a slop pail.

Sometimes a friend carne round in the afternoon, or we went to her house and I noticed that both Mum and her friend had to wash their crockery in a bowl, as there was no sink in their room. They both dried the cups and saucers unobtrusively so as to avert attention from the undignity of not having a sink.

By this time I was five [1922] and started school in Wrotham Road. I loved it because of the sloping classroom with desks on different levels. I remember feeling very happy at that time - I loved Gravesend with its little alleyways and nice shops. One I remember vividly was the Penny Bazaar. This was unusual in that it was two shops joined together that did not have doors but simply removed the entire shop fronts each morning when they opened. Thus everything was displayed on counters. I loved it because they had many toys for one penny. It flourished and years later became known as Marks and Spencer.

I cannot remember the year exactly but sometime in the 20s Aunt Pop developed TB and had to go away to a Sanatorium, somewhere in East Kent, and was away for a long time. Mum and Grannie were very worried as many people were dying from it. However she recovered well and it did not recur.

One day Mum and Dad were very excited. Dad had been offered a new Council house in Tilbury on the other side of the river. He worked in the docks which were on that side too, so he would no longer have to get up early and catch the ferry.

The new house was on the edge of the estate and looked right out onto flat marshland as far as we could see, not a tree nor any buildings in sight. Every field was separated by ditches. It was a large house, with a big kitchen living room, another on the ground floor and three bedrooms, a bathroom and several large cupboards and a huge coal cellar. There was no gas nor electricity so we had to have coal and paraffin.

In summer time it was, for me, wonderful. I found myself some boys to play with. We explored many of the ditches that dried up in warm weather, and roamed the fields looking for adventure. In winter it was different. Here is the gist of an account I produced many years later for a gathering of friends on the general subject of light.

One of the most exciting events of my childhood was to go on a day outing to Southend - or rather Thorpe Bay as the sand was better there and it was less noisy and crowded. We took our own food, sandwiches, cake, apples and a flask of tea.

We were too poor to have a carpet in our living room and had the cheapest lino covering the floor to about a foot from the wall - the rest of the floor being painted by Dad - not with varnish as that was too dear - but with solignum much cheaper. There would be a small hearthrug by the fireplace. Mum was a very good manager on a small income.

Both Mum and Dad were very disciplined in household routine. Dad got up about half past six and lit the fire first. His breakfast consisted of two slices of (white) bread cut up in small squares on which he poured warm milk with a little sugar, and a cup of tea. He warmed the milk by placing a small saucepan on the hob directly the fire was lit. It was usual for open fires to have a clip-on iron extension on which could be placed a saucepan or kettle which absorbed the heat through its sides and through the hob itself which soon became hot. He would take Mum up a cup of tea in bed. He had to be at work by 8am and cycled there. I was intrigued with his lamp for the bike - carbide which had to be lit with a match.

During the day Mum would have only a minimum fire but at tea time would build it up a bit. What I liked best of all was the ritual after tea. However I must describe the ritual before a meal. Mum would check that Dad had washed his hands, that his hair was tidy and his clothes brushed. She would want us sitting properly in our own chair, with our table napkin tucked into our neck line. Dad would then go into his ritual: knife and fork clasped in his hands he would bang the ends on the table shouting 'Come on woman, where's the grub?' and we would all laugh.

We had a large round table near the fire. It had one thick leg in the middle with four curved feet coming out that curled up a bit at the ends. When our evening meal was finished Mother would take off the white table cloth and see that each table napkin was in its proper named wooden holder. Then she would put on the thick dark red plush table cover. In the middle she would place our large paraffin lamp, we would draw our chairs up and make ourselves comfortable for the evening. What I loved was to rest my own feet on one of the curved feet of the table, thus not having to keep them on the cold lino.

Dad would get out his football pools, Mum would place her mending basket in front of her - it was always full - and I would have one book or another in my hands - they were generally the Children's Encyclopaedia. Granddad who worked

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in Harmsworth Printing Works in Northfleet could get them half price and bless his soul, as each of the 10 was published he bought it and gave it to me as a gift. I loved them and read them through from cover to cover. Often I was entranced with some fact or other and would read out the question to Mum and Dad to see if they knew the answer.

There we three would sit, with the curtains closed and shutting out the two miles of bleak unfriendly marshes, warm properly for the first time that day, Mum occasionally chatting and myself happy with my books. What I remember most was the friendly light given out by that tall beautifully curved paraffin lamp with its lovely shade providing a radiance and feeling of comfort and safety that I have rarely felt fully since.

Dad was very keen on photography - the old black and white contact films of course. He had taught himself how to develop and print. He would put a negative in the printing frame with a piece of white printing paper in it, lay it out in the bright sunlight for a certain length of time and then open half the frame and examine whether the print was dark enough. He would then fix all the prints in some liquid. I was very interested in all this and in later life became keen as well.

When the weather got warmer we started to go on picnics just as we used to in Gravesend. Auntie Pop would come over on the ferry. Mum would have everything packed and we would walk up the hill to Chadwell and find a quiet field in the backwoods and lay out our picnic just as we used to. I loved the feeling of continuity and custom. This, incidentally, became stronger as I got older and it formed a basic part of my character. The wild roses were in bloom just the same as on our picnics over the other side of the river - and from the glorious blue sky came the sound of the skylarks - I felt there could be no greater happiness possible.

There were several exciting things that I can remember. One was the famous white elephant sent from India on a liner and disembarked at Tilbury Docks. It was being walked all the way to London and all along its route people gathered to cheer. It went past our house.

Another rather frightening event was when a large liner went on fire in the docks. It was beyond control and it burned for days. Dock staff were allowed to bring in relatives to view it - from a safe distance. To see an enormous liner white hot from bows to stern was overwhelming and I never forgot it.

Yet another event to do with the Docks was when the P&O Liners replaced some of their furniture and had a sale. We went to see all the items beforehand and Mum fell in love with two wicker armchairs and a small matching table. Dad bought these and they were our favourite furniture. Incidentally the chairs wore out but the table is still in existence and in my chalet. You can tell it was for sea-going as it has a shelf underneath with a small barrier round it to stop magazines sliding off when the ship rolled about!

The poverty we experienced during those early days in Tilbury was caused first by one reason and then later by another. When Dad was offered a job in Tilbury docks he was given a choice. He could either go on the permanent staff - at a low rate of pay, with a long salary scale with only small increases, or he could become a registered dock labourer at very high rates of pay. The latter had a drawback though. Each morning these labourers had to assemble at a certain place within the docks and each ship's master would pick out as many men as he wanted that day and in the evening when work was finished the men would be paid off. The drawback was that if there were more men than wanted those not chosen had to go home and receive no payment. There was no dole available for this kind of work so unless you had saved some money from a previous day's work you starved. Dad quite rightly chose the permanent low paid position.

The other cause of our poverty came several years later. One morning when Dad got to work the warehouse which was his sole responsibility was found to have its doors unlocked and some damage done. Dad was immediately accused of dereliction of duty and suspended. He knew nothing about it, but the shock of the false accusation brought on a disease that was in his genes; that of excema which his mother suffered from in a mild way. With Dad it took an extreme form that of 'weeping excema'. All over his body his skin broke out into a red rash that was wet all the time.

Shortly after this another member of staff confessed that he had stolen the key, had opened the warehouse in the night and had tried to steal some goods. Dad was exonerated - but too late - the excema had by then a terrible hold on him. He was off work for two years, after six months on half pay, and later onto quarter pay. There was no either money coming in: we could not pay our rent. Doctor's services in those days were only free to low paid industrial workers, so a large bill mounted up whilst Dad was ill.

Mother kept us from actually starving by taking in sewing. No one who came to her could afford new material - they all brought along the clothes of older children and asked mother to cut them down to fit a younger child. Most of them were difficult in paying as there was so much unemployment. She arranged with most of her customers to pay her a little each week and got Dad to go round and collect it - they did not refuse him as they wanted to get rid of him quickly and not have such a man standing on their doorstep with a such an unpleasant face.

This was because Dad's skin trouble looked dangerous - skin bright red and 'weeping' constantly. However it was not catching but no one believed this. He spent much time cultivating the garden - both vegetables and fruit. He was so good with flowers that I suggested to him that

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we make them up in bunches for 3d and 6d and I stand outside our gate with them on a little table and sell them to people on their way to the nearby cemetery. In this way we managed to raise a little much needed money.

Going back to Mum's dressmaking - there was one family she treated differently. Just a little way down our road there lived a family with two small daughters. The parents were obviously middle class, but had fallen on hard times. The wife was hopeless at sewing and beseeched Mother to do a lot of making over of the older child's clothes to fit the younger, as well as a lot of mending. The trouble was they had no spare money but had a lot of valuable possessions. They requested Mum to be allowed to pay in kind. Mum agreed.

These possessions started to arrive - beautiful fully clothed perfect dolls, boxes of games hardly opened, a doll's house fully furnished. One that tore at my heart when Mum had to sell it was a large musical box with many lovely tunes. I sat for hours watching that cylinder go round and all the little spikes making such gorgeous tunes. Another gift was a large wooden trunk completely filled with children's books. I pointed out to Mum it would be sensible to sell the trunk separately, let me read the books and then sell them all. She agreed - and there was no trouble from me for about the next three months.

I was in some ways a good daughter but in others less so. I was always hungry and had very little pocket money. I always had a sweet tooth but preferred fruit to cakes and puddings. Apples were very dear. Mum, who also loved fruit would, at 8pm each evening, bring out one apple, cut it in half and we each have a piece. If I remember rightly Dad did not really like much fruit - give him a big, steamed pudding, especially with syrup, and his face would light up!

I was a bit naughty though with the red currants - we had a large bed of them and I found I could crawl right into the bushes, lay on my back out of sight and pick some clusters and feel a sense almost of bliss as I slowly lowered the bunch into my mouth and pulled each berry off, and let the juice slide down my throat. I squared my conscience by reminding myself that I earned some money for the family by selling the cut flowers.

My memories of my young days always include our cat. It was very loving and happy with all the wild territory to explore - there were even rats in some of the ditches. It was just an ordinary tabby but I loved it. Many years passed before I had one of my own.

As far as I can remember at about this time I began to think about right and wrong. Neither Mum nor Dad went to church or ever talked about religion. Mother taught me, in a matter of fact kind of way, to say my prayers each night before I went to bed. She helped me to learn The Lord's Prayer and also taught me one I have never heard since - 'Oh Holy Ghost, Our souls inspire, And fill us with, Celestial Fire'. I had no idea what it meant. We never went to church, although Mum on Christmas Eve would say 'Oh I would like to go to the Christmas Service at a nice church' - but Tilbury was too poor a place to have 'a nice church'.

However they both taught me what was right and wrong I will try to remember what they said. First came 'You must not tell lies'. I agree with this but my nature was a bit analytical even at that early age and I would add to myself 'providing you don't get a friend into trouble'. Next was 'Do not steal'. I agree with that - but what about the redcurrants? 'Well' I excused myself 'I only took a few. It would be very wrong to eat them all'. 'Never say bad words'. Well, by that time I was friendly with the boys of the neighbourhood and knew lots of really bad words which we used to hurl at each other in fun when we were on our own. I knew never to say them when a grownup was near. 'Do not be cruel to man or beast'. That needed no saying -! could not knowingly hurt any living creature. If I saw a worm

struggling across a dry pavement I would pick it up and put it under some earth. 'Never sit down to a meal with dirty hands or face and untidy hair. Very sensible - I would hate to sit at a table with someone with muck on his hands for instance.

The only attempt at proper religion was that they decided to send me to Sunday School at 3pm. It was in a hall about ten minutes walk away. They would give me a penny for collection. Right opposite the hall was a sweet shop open all day Sundays To me it was a kind of Heaven. I remember they had Broken Rock - the seaside variety. This consisted of the bits that had broken off in the making and was very cheap. The first time I was sent to Sunday School I stood outside that shop and debated. I performed a nice piece of special pleading with myself. I knew it would be wrong to spend the whole penny on rock. But I also knew that if I put it in the collection plate I would be so distracted for the entire service thinking about the rock that I would not be able to pay attention and think about God at all. So I compromised and spent a halfpenny on rock and put halfpenny in the collection. I have never regretted that decision.

Dad was finally declared fit and returned to work. Then began the long haul of paying off the doctor's bill and the rent arrears. On this point it was well known that there was so much unemployment in Tilbury that hardly anyone was able to pay their rent (In those days there was no such thing as Housing Benefit or Social Security). In fact the whole town council went bankrupt and had to be taken over by the adjacent council

For several years I had been asking Mum for a little sister. One morning instead of Mum waking me up Dad came in and told me to come into their bedroom as they had a surprise for

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me. I wondered what it could be as Christmas was some weeks ago. Entering their room rather nervously I saw Mum sitting up in bed with a fluffy jacket and a big smile. 'Come and see your little sister'. I rushed over to her and she unwrapped the shawl and there was a lovely little baby. 'May I kiss her?' I asked shyly and Mum moved her over a bit and I gave my darling sister a little kiss and looked forward to her getting big enough to play with.

Mum and Dad did not know what to call her and asked me. I had just heard of Lorna Doone and thought it a lovely name so suggested it. They liked it and so she was named. However things were going wrong - she did not thrive. She had the symptoms of starvation. She lost weight but finally they found out what was wrong.

She was on powdered baby food as Mum was not strong enough to feed her. The particular food (Glaxo) was found to be the wrong formula for her and the doctor ordered Virol and cows' milk.

This suited her and soon she was thriving. I think, however, some irreversible damage may have occurred. When I was older I read of research in the Third World that if newly born babies suffer starvation or poor nutrition a small part of the brain never develops quite properly however well they are in later life.

When Lorna was a toddler Dad decided to take us to see old Great-Grandfather Wigley together with Grandma. We caught a train from Gravesend to Selling. He lived about a mile from the station. We walked there with Lorna in a pushchair.

He was born in 1848 and would be just getting on for 80. His wife had been dead some years but he was a healthy old man still doing a bit of farm work. I was his oldest great grandchild and he gave me a hug. What I found remarkable was the design of the house. It was utterly old fashioned. Made entirely of wood its stairs went up steeply from the living room and were enclosed without any windows and must have been perilous. What struck fear into me was the outside - well -I cannot call it a toilet, it was a privy. They had no main drainage or even cesspools when the house was built They dug a deep hole and covered it with a shed with a wide wooden seat over the pit. This seat had a hole in it for the person to sit. It could be dangerous for young children as they could fall through it and have a horrible death in the semi-liquid below. I would not sit on it but found a tall bush in the garden and went behind that.

We lived in Tilbury for seven years 1923 - 1930. I remember the Great Strike of 1926 because of one exciting thing. We had a huge coal cellar and during the strike no coal was available. I was rooting about one day in this large cellar and found a huge lump of coal right at the back that had been

overlooked. I emerged from the cellar covered in coal dust. Mum was delighted with the lump as we could have a bit of warmth for a few hours. By that time we had electric light laid on but not heat, and also gas for cooking but no gas fires.

Lorna was a lovely baby and toddler. Mum thought she was wonderful and went a bit crazy and managed somehow to provide her with a white fur coat and hat. She looked very sweet in it - I have a photo of her I think. One thing I cannot remember how our dressing up game started. Maybe Mum was left with many pieces of various items in her dressmaking activities and thought of running up interesting clothes for us to dress up in. They were all kept in the large airing cupboard at the top of the stairs. Lorna and I would catch each other's eye and go unobtrusively out of the room, go upstairs and sort over all these costumes and dress ourselves up as some fairy tale characters and then go down and burst into the living room asking Mum and Dad to admire and guess who we were. It was all lovely fun and thanks to Mum for providing all the costumes and lots of oddments for us to use creatively.

I was glad that Lorna and I found some game to play together. We were nearly seven years apart and that is too large a gap for most games. As I loved her so much I played the dressing up game quite often. It is interesting that many years later I found that my own little daughter Avis and Lorna's little daughter Stella both gravitated to a large collection of fancy petticoats I had somehow gathered from Jumble Sales and kept in a cupboard at our house in Highbury ready for the Christmas fancy dress party at Conway Hall.

From that small collection I developed, (after I retired and wanted some project to interest me) a very large collection of costumes and accessories for or grown up plays. I organised the Humanist Summer Week School and took all this paraphernalia along in the car and made it a focal point of the whole week. It was much enjoyed by all the ladies but the men had to be dragged in - except those who found doctors' costumes or kings' or princes'!

Then came an exciting event. Auntie Pop and Uncle Tom decided to get married. They wanted to avoid the fuss this would involve if they did so at the church in which Tom was a member of the choir. They therefore decided to get married at our nearest church at Chadwell St. Mary - a lovely old stone building not actually in Tilbury but in the nearest village some mile and a half miles away. It was to the north of Tilbury and up a slight hill. Mum had made a pretty frock each for Lorna and myself and little muslin hats gathered with elastic - we felt important as bridesmaids, Granny came with them and it was all very exciting.

About 1929 Mum had a bad miscarriage - later I heard that the baby had died inside her and had she not been rushed to hospital she would have died within 24 hours. She was ill for some weeks. Dad could not look after two young children. I was about 12 and Lorna 5 so we stayed with Aunt Poppie. I did not want to be

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absent from my school in Grays, so I decided to cycle down to the town pier from Auntie's house in Perry Street, catch the ferry and then cycle into Grays to my school - an adventure for a 12 year old.

I have a clear memory of Lorna there. Auntie had a large back garden mostly rough lawn - later she developed a beautiful flower garden there - and gave Lorna to play with some pieces of wood of various sizes. Lorna played for hours arranging the wood into a kind of house plan with a living room, kitchen and bedroom. She would amass various articles and invite me to tea and I would pretend to drink tea from the tiny cups and ask for a sandwich.

My memory also retains the layout of the house in which Aunt Pop and Uncle Tom lived. Originally a double fronted dwelling house on the corner of Perry Street and a little lane serving the back of Victoria Road, its entrance was in the middle, its right hand room was turned into a post office and a bread shop. Uncle Tom's brother - we called him Uncle Arthur - lived in the rooms to the left of the entrance hall, both on the ground floor and the first. The front ground floor was a drawing room and the back a kitchen and living room. The first floor was a bit complicated, Old lady Deakin was bed bound and had the big bedroom on the right of the first floor. The only rooms available for Uncle Tom and Auntie Pop were the middle bedroom and a room over the bakehouse. There was no sink in that room, and Auntie had to use the shallow old brown sink in the outhouse beyond the bakehouse. I think she cooked on an oil stove in her living room. I used to help her take all the dirty dishes down

the back stairs, through the bakehouse, out into the garden and to the outhouse. It was quite a trek but Auntie managed it all very well without fuss.

Between the front bedroom and the middle bedroom there was a queer little space called the slip room. There was a bed in it with its head to the big front room. It had three doors in it - up four stairs to the big bedroom, another to the bedroom of Uncle and Auntie and a third to the top of the stairs down to the bakehouse. It had along narrow space, entirely useless, over the diagonal of the bakehouse, too narrow for a bed and not used at all. I slept in that room and was told firmly I must not make any noise as I would wake the old lady and I must never go up the small stairs to her room. I cannot remember where Lorna slept.

It was all a difficult arrangement for Auntie, but she made a very good job of it. Years in the future it was all changed but more about that later.

There was a large shed with windows on the left side of the garden. It belonged to Uncle Arthur and Auntie Annie. Every afternoon they would adjourn and have a nap on the bed there. It sounded very nice and cosy. Aunt Annie always had a very pleasant smile. I often hoped she would invite me to have afternoon tea with her as I wanted to get to know her better, but maybe she was too shy or I too young.

Many years later I managed to get a chalet/summer house with a divan and on hot summer afternoons I lie there and doze, full of memories.

Another thing that intrigued me was Uncle Tom's lunch. It was the same each day as I could see. He had a chop done in the oven, potatoes, greens and carrots. For the sweet course he had prunes and rice pudding.

I had taken the scholarship almost two years ago when we had to stay with Auntie Poppie, and sometimes in bed before I went to sleep, I went over all that happened. I could remember a few of the questions in the exam. Some were general knowledge - name three birds that lived on fish, three that lived on meat and three that lived on fruit. With my reading of the Children's Encyclopedia this was a walkover for me and I did them all. There was great excitement when we heard that I had passed - coming second - and would go to the local Grammar School. This was called Palmer's College. From our school only two passed - a boy and myself. It was well known that the first three boys and three girls to pass would get a clothing allowance of £30pa for three years.

Mum was overjoyed as it would solve our money problem. Alas there was a bitter disappointment in store. To qualify for this award the child had to be born in Essex - my birthplace was Kent.

Mum valiantly tackled the task of making my outfit as nearly alike as the original. She obtained identical blue serge and white cotton and made the gym slip and blouse. The blue blazer she had to buy but got it cheaper without the badge on the pocket - buying this separately and stitching it on. The felt hat with a brim she bought just the plain hat quite cheaply and the ribbon and badge separately and stitched them on. What a wonderful Mum she was! I began to think of myself as grownup with all these memories.

Eventually Mum recovered and Lorna and I went back to Tilbury and our regular routine returned.

Some time later we had news that Auntie Pop and Uncle Tom had a baby - a boy. I cannot remember if we went to the Christening but I do remember seeing baby Tom in long white ceremonial robes, lying in his Mum's arms and looking a perfect little darling.

A big event occurred next. Dad and Mum decided to buy a new bungalow (opposite the cemetery in Grays). It was the time of the depression and these bungalows were available for only £5 deposit and then a weekly payment of not much more than our rent in Tilbury. This was the beginning of the climb of our family out of a poor background.

The bungalow was well planned and pleasant to live in. I found it very interesting that Mum began to perk up now we had left the poor

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working class atmosphere of Tilbury in which she had never felt at home or been happy. She found a congenial group in Grays - I think it was The Townswomens' Guild - and I remember she once went to their Summer School which she really enjoyed.

It was about this time - I was 15 - that I began to grow up and think about what was meant by society and how others behaved. On one occasion I wanted to make a splash myself and decided to make myself a pair of beach pyjamas in some lurid material I had managed to buy very cheaply at a penny and a half a yard. I persuaded a friend from school to put on a rather daring frock and I donned my pyjamas and we walked down to the shops. We were a focus for many astonished stares. That's the only time I bothered with fashion as such.

My school had moved and was now only 10 minutes walk away. For three years (1930 - 1933) I had a lovely life - a home with all modern conveniences, our future seemed settled. I even found a boy friend who I wanted to marry. Lorna was at a school only 15 minutes walk away and was very happy there. We had nice neighbours. Soon I was studying for Matric. Then fate ... intervened. Since that time I have often thought about how fate can alter our lives completely. My life would have been totally different, my daughters would never have been born. Lorna would not have had Stella. As for Colin one cannot begin to guess ... Ugh it makes you shiver! This is how it came about.

Uncle Harry, whose contract with the Sudan government finished, returned to England but could not find any employment - it was the time of the depression. He used his gratuity in a bid to help himself - found a partner who had experience in running a Pease Pudding and Faggot shop, but no capital. They set one up at the town end of the little street just off the town end of Parrock Street.

Harry, as I said had no experience of this kind of working class trade, but worse still he had no experience of baddies - his partner scarpered with all the money leaving Harry all the debts. In addition Harry's girl friend gave him the push. In desperation he got a gun somehow, bought a ticket to Seaton in Devon (we never knew why there) and shot himself. [Q2 1933, Axminster, Devon Registration District]

Harry was Granny's most loved child. I loved him too - he was not like an uncle but an older brother - just 17 years between us. Granny was overwhelmed with grief. She had a stroke and became unable to look after herself. Aunt Pop thought of a way out. The Deakins had an empty house in Victoria Road, Northfleet and she suggested that we should move into it and have Granny there and look after her and live rent free.

Thus began the most distressful year of our family - 1933. It could not have come at a worse time. Mum, now over 40, was pregnant. Her two previous pregnancies had resulted in miscarriages, one of them nearly fatal. We also had to move from a spanking new bungalow to an old house, badly designed for a small family and with few amenities.

Double fronted large rooms, with a back living room on the left down a few steps and four large rooms on the first floor. A large draughty outhouse of poor construction at some time in the past had been added. It contained a shallow old fashioned sink and cold tap and also a bath with a geyser and a door to the garden - thus there was no privacy for bathing and it was always cold and draughty. Not only did Mum have to adapt to this old house, leave her friends in Grays, and take on the care of Granny - who really did need looking after - but was suffering a difficult pregnancy.

In a different way I, too, had to adjust - but not nearly so difficult as Mum. We moved in March and in June I would sit for Matriculation. I thought about it and decided that to change schools at that time would be such an upheaval that I would most probably fail the exam, so I made the decision to continue to attend Palmer's College in Grays until I had taken the exam. Some years previously I had the experience of going by bike from Aunt Pop's house, over the ferry and cycling the long ride to my school. I slipped back into this routine again and tried to make the most of it.

When I knew I had passed I gave more thought to my future. Palmer's had given no vocational guidance at all. I felt I did not want to leave school - I would have loved to continue my education and to try for University.

Mum was getting very poorly. I just do not know she managed to look after us all. I seem to remember the weather was very hot. We had moved up to the first floor where there was a sink and cooker in the back left room, and we lived in the left front. My room was still the ground floor back. One evening Mum started to make a meat pie, made the pastry and put the pie in a medium oven. Normally she made pies in the morning. I asked her why she was doing this. She looked a bit strangely at me but said nothing. The next morning I knew why. She had felt the baby coming and wanted us to have something already for our dinner! What a loving, thoughtful Mum! [AUG 1933]

The doctor – and all of us – was totally astonished. The baby was a record breaker, nearly twice as heavy as a normal child, at 13lbs. This for a woman of nearly 41 was just too much. Mum was ill and had to stay in bed for months. I was already 16 with a lot of household experience, so I had the job of largely looking after our new baby. At first this was easy as it was the school holidays. However, when thinking about my future I had decided (without consulting my parents as I thought they should be presented with the fait accompli) to get a transfer to Gravesend County School for Girls. Thus I would have to start there in September.

The experience of changing schools at 16 and

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going straight into the sixth form was rather traumatic. In addition, at home we found that it was essential for me to be there in the morning to do all the chores and look after Colin. So my father arranged that I be let off school until after lunch. Fortunately the school was only a few minutes away.

I had been put in the Commercial Sixth as I was not expecting to go to a University. I hated the idea of being someone's shorthand typist and vowed I would never do it. So I was bad at shorthand. Typing I learned quickly - I thought I would save up for a machine of my own later. Bookkeeping I took to well. The greatest trial of my new school life, however, was that they played lacrosse. I was bad at games in any case but had never played it and was totally hopeless.

Lorna had settled down at Dover Road school which was just up Victoria Road and round the corner and was happy and doing well.

Thus a new routine was set up. I would get Mum and Lorna their breakfast, make Colin's bottle, do any shopping just down the road in Perry Street. Mum would, from her bed, suggest what food I make for lunch for us three, as Dad had some at work. I would prepare the main part of the evening meal when I came home. I had five years cookery classes at my grammar school so knew how to prepare most dishes, and enjoyed it.

I loved our new baby - it was like having another Lorna. Both Mum and Dad were thrilled at last to have a son. However, in later years looking back at Colin's early days they both made a bad psychological mistake - Dad more so than Mum. Dad had never been demonstrative with Lorna and myself. He never behaved as I noticed my school friends' fathers behaved - a warm hug and a loving manner, coupled with a jolly joke now and again. I put it down to the airs his mother - the jumped up servant girl - put on. She rarely smiled and was always talking about the royal family and had no sense of humour.

Dad hardly noticed his daughters now he had a son. It did not bother me much as I had a nice new boy friend, but it shattered Lorna. She was nine and a half and never got over his total lack of interest in her once Colin was born. Mum's different attitude towards Colin and her daughters was more subtle and did not really show till Colin became of school age. She sent him to a private school - the Board school was not good enough!!

Thus the year that changed all our lives came to an end. Mum was up and fairly well by Christmas and life went on.

Chapter III **1934-1945**

As a family we settled into a routine: Dad still had to cross the river to work and Mum was getting well again. Lorna was happy at Dover Road school, Colin was thriving. I had taken an exam for the Civil Service and started work in the Inland Revenue in London.

Soon after we had moved from our bungalow to live in Victoria Road, Uncle Tom, who was a member of the choir in Perry Street church, had suggested I join the choir as they were seeking to form an alto section of women - so few males can sing alto. I joined and enjoyed it and almost at once found a boy friend there - Arthur living a few minutes away in Salisbury Road. I was not madly in love with him as I had been with Jack who I met in Grays.

Arthur and I had a sort of boy and girl relationship - we went for long country walks and with my five years of Botany I showed him all the plants I recognised and named them and he was delighted - he did not go to a Grammar school and his education did not include botany. We sometimes climbed trees and sat in the fork and talked about all sorts of things. One of our favourite occupations was

sitting in the seat in the back garden - old and rustic with a tiny summerhouse built around it. Wisteria grew thickly over the whole structure and it was delightful to sit there with him and chat when it was in blossom, the long, swaying lavender coloured bunches of flowers would sway in the slightest breeze.

At this time I experienced a feeling that I had not had before and have not experienced since. Up to then my life had mostly been north of river a long and difficult journey away from my relations. Now we lived only two minutes walk from Uncle Tom, Aunt Pop and little Tom; eight minutes walk from Granddad and Grandma. Arthur lived five minutes away and his Grandma, old Mrs Easterly, just up the road from Granddad and Grandma. It was like living in a village, more so as Arthur's Grandma was a bit lonely (being a widow) and invited him and myself to tea every Sunday. Arthur and I would walk round there sedately, rather like an old married couple!!

Another little habit I found enjoyable in the early days at Victoria Road was shopping. At that time there were no supermarkets but many separate grocery chains each with their own premises with staff behind the counters serving customers. There was Greggs, Pearks, Home and Colonial, World Stores and a few others. Every evening they shut at 5.30 but on Fridays kept open till eight - everyone was paid in cash on Fridays. Dad would arrive home from the docks, give Mum her housekeeping money and she and I would walk into the town and hunt for the cheapest of each item on her list - which often involved visiting each different grocer. The big covered market was fully open too and a joy to visit. This market in such a large and warm structure spoiled me totally and ever after I did not like markets in the open air. We would catch the bus back and have a cup of tea. Oh, lovely Friday evenings!

Arthur, who had been unemployed for some time, at last found a job on the coasters and

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happily started a new life, living on board.

Looking for a new boy friend I joined the Youth Club of St. James's church and eventually met Roy T. who became my boy friend.

The lady in Seaton who had found Uncle Harry's body kept a boarding house. She wrote to us and suggested we might like to book a few days holiday. We all have little kinks in our nature and one of Mother's was that she did not like going on holiday if it meant staying overnight. Up to that point in our life we had never gone away on holiday. All we had done was to go out for the day to Southend or All Hallows. So Mum did not take up this offer - but I did, I suggested to Mum and Dad that I book up a double room and take Lorna - then about 10 - and pay for myself and they for Lorna. They agreed and us two girls went on our first 'family' holiday. We enjoyed it in a mild way. It had no amenities like the Kursaal on Southend but we enjoyed it as an entirely new experience.

At the Deakins' there were several outbuildings with space for a car. Dad asked about using it as a garage and this was agreed. He bought a second hand 'bull-nosed' Morris (I think it was called). It had a big round metal bonnet and a flat dickey. He took us all for the weekend to his brother Leslie's who was in the regular army at Aldershot.

Lorna and I sat in the open dickey and felt everyone was staring at us. They did indeed as the engine stalled in Piccadilly Circus. There was no self starter and several men gave the car a push and Dad managed to start it up again. Later he bought a Hillman Minx (I think that is what it was called) but I do not remember going in it.

Uncle Tom's bakery had a country round and the delivery van was driven by a Harry Sibun. He often took me along on his large country round. It was always an enjoyable day for me seeing all these new places, and country houses. Also he very kindly bought me a small bag of toffees - they were called 'Eaton' and I used to make the obvious joke with Harry each time.

Granny died [Q2 1935] but we continued to live at Victoria Road until 1935. We took a three year lease on a house in Malvina Avenue - quite near Sun Lane where Granny had lived and I was born. It was what is now called a 30's house: semi-detached, with a bay window, front door and a small hall, a back room and kitchen off the hall, and two large bedrooms and a small one, with a bathroom and lavatory. The kitchen was well equipped and hot water available. Mum was much happier. Lorna had passed the scholarship and was now attending the Grammar School that I had recently left.

We knew we were there for three years and settled in fairly well. It was a drag for me to walk to the station each day to catch the 7.57 train in all weathers - buses were not convenient and anyway I could not afford the fares.

I did not feel at home there - I do not like that design of house, but more so I hated the garden - just a long strip of ground with only chestnut palings separating us from neighbours. (Many years later I began to think about boundaries of all kinds - physical, psychological, territorial, symbolic etc. and I think those chestnut palings first made me conscious of this concept.)

One development surprised me. Mum found out there were Sunday excursions to various seaside's at very cheap rates if you booked up the tickets in advance at a London office. Seaton was on their list so she arranged with me to go round to their office in Red Lion Square and book for her and Dad to go down there and visit Uncle Harry's grave and to meet the lady who had found him.

Life began to feel a little settled. Lorna was doing well at school. She was very good at geography, history, essay writing and botany. I was amazed at her fluency with the Latin names of plants - I could not even remember a single plant name except in English.

She joined a tennis club and enjoyed it and made new friends there. I was set in my new grade after passing another exam. Dad had got into the routine again of going over daily on the ferry to work and Mum was now well and thriving. Colin was developing and growing - he was going to be a tall boy.

Our lease was up in early 1938. I went round with Mum and Dad looking at many different houses. We each had our own concept of 'home'. One I fell in love with I still remember. In Northfleet proper it was a large old building, a kind of early small holding, with a cobbled courtyard and large outbuildings that could house all sorts of activities. Dad liked it too. But Mum preferred 9 Clarence Place opposite Windmill Hill and that is what they chose.

We were soon settled in and expected our family life to continue just as it was, but Colin shortly became of school age and Mum thought he should not go to an ordinary school which was Wrotham Road - where I had attended 16 years previously. She decided to send him to a private seminary - the Convent in Echo Square. At the time I did not pay much attention to this but thinking about it years later I wondered why she made this decision. Why did she not want her son to go to an ordinary school? When I had this thought, however, I asked myself, for the first time, why did she, when the family was much poorer, pay for me to have private piano lessons at school? I concluded that, because her own family background was somewhat middle class, she wanted her children to have something more than a working class upbringing.

I then found myself asking what did she do

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special for Lorna and found the answer. Lorna was very pretty right from the start and Mum spent much more money on seeing she was dressed in attractive clothes. I remembered her buying real white fur, when Lama was just a toddler and making her a fur coat and hat - she looked wonderful in it.

One thing I particularly liked about our house in Clarence place was the garden. It was fairly large with a six foot high nice old brick wall. It gave a lovely feeling of established security with several mature trees. I hoped never to have to live where there were fences of chestnut palings!

Colin soon established, in the back garden, his own highway system, making little roads and garages all round the paths, and sending his windup cars on journeys or pushing them around.

So there we were - settled in own large and fairly convenient house expecting nothing much to change. Then the clouds of war began to appear. I worked in the Air Ministry and began to feel that war would come. I was a member of the Peace Pledge Union and I appealed to be released from a war department on conscientious grounds. After appearing before a rather august committee I obtained a release and was informed it was my choice which department I found to accept me. I read through the list of government departments with the goal of finding one that would have no direct connection with warfare. I considered the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Ministry of Health - neither had any vacancies. I then discovered the National Insurance Audit Department - that sounded interesting - they had a vacancy and I accepted it. It dealt with the management of the then National Health Scheme.

War did come the following September. Dad and Mum were then 47, I was 22, Lorna 15 and Colin 6. The first breakup of the family came with the evacuation of all children to Diss. They went, all of them, all the teachers as well, on the paddle steamers from the town pier. After that the town felt as if the Pied Piper of Hamelin had visited it. All the schools had gone too.

For a while there was no sign of war and we all began to think it would fizzle out. Mother decided to bring Lorna and Colin home. She was allowed to do this as a small private school had opened just two doors along from us, and Lorna would be 16 in the January and so could leave school then anyway. I have always thought that Lorna should have been encouraged to stay evacuated to be with her school also evacuated there and to take the School Certificate exam. I was pretty certain she would have passed as she was very good at her special subjects - geography, history, botany and essay writing.

When she tried for a job all she was offered was serving in Munn's Art shop in Windmill Street at two shillings and sixpence a week. Soon, however, the 'war machine caught up with her and she was posted to a job in the NAAFI in Cobham woods and lived in.

The bombing soon started and Dad, Mum, Colin and I slept in the basement, they in the small cellar under the front porch and myself under the stairway. I continued to work in London, travelling by train every day, the journey sometimes taking several hours instead of 45 minutes. Lorna became very ill with rheumatic fever caught in the damp conditions of the NAAFI camp. She was sent home for nursing and was ill for a long time. We arranged that she sleep right under the stairs at the back and I a little to the front, on mattresses

She was in a bad way not only physically but in her personality and we tried various ideas to help her and cheer her up. One way I managed to get her to smile was with a little night light lamp - the old fashioned kind with a globular brass oil container and a white translucent shade. We did not want the electric light on all night long so had this tiny lamp. I stuck a nose on the glass and painted eyes and a smiling mouth and we decided to call it a funny name. This turned out to be Chorley. Each evening we made Lorna smile when we asked her 'Shall we light up Chorley now?' We placed it safely on a high shelf.

Even when the infection was over she was very weak physically for months - I can remember her having to be carried from her bed into the living room at the back of the house. However, she did recover and found a good job in Bowaters as a Progress Chaser. The war, for girls of her age, was a disaster - all the young men of her age group had been called up - there was no pool of the opposite sex from which to find boy friends. The few dances there were had no local boys.

Dad's job in the Port of London Authority at Tilbury Docks was terminated for the duration and he found work in the local ARP and spent many hours in their Post near our house. I was evacuated in 1941 to Colwyn Bay. I was not at all happy there, always hungry and cold, sleeping in a room with two other girls - one of whom started snoring the moment her head touched the pillow and kept it up all night.

There seemed no end in sight to the war and I had a prospect of this bleak life going on for years. Eventually I decided I could not stand it and sought a way out. I could not just give my notice in and seek work elsewhere as the Civil Service was a Reserved Occupation (which meant you could not leave it) but I knew that there was still a Marriage bar, so why not get married? Roy T. had been hoping for years that I would, but I was not in love with him. I did not exactly dislike him but knew he was nowhere near my ideal man.

I decided to go through with it and I left the Civil Service and married him in October 1941. This was one of the bitterest lessons I have

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learned. Be careful of doing something - that seems good - for the wrong reason.

Roy T. and I lived at home, having the ground floor back as our room. Within a few months I was called up to register for work under new legislation conscripting married women without children. I went back into the Civil Service in London as a temporary clerk in London.

The bombing got so bad that my train journeys became a nightmare so I decided it would be a good idea to try to become pregnant - then I would not have to work at all. This eventually resulted in a bad

miscarriage from which I took many months to recover - another warning about doing things for the wrong reason.

However it did lead to me finding work locally in the Town Council and not having to travel by train any more. I really enjoyed the rest of the war!

One of the very good developments during the war were British Restaurants. Open Mondays to Fridays they gave a good two course lunch for one shilling. The menu was according to the Ministry of Food's suggested recipes based on good nutrition and what food was available and I often went there. It helped Mum with the rations. Another thing I remember was that Colin adored ice cream. Milk and sugar were in very short supply and Mum would scour the whole town, going to every shop that sold ice cream to see if they had any that day. If successful she would give Colin the major part and give a taste to Lorna and myself. She was a good Mum! She worked hard bottling fruit - grown of course in Britain - without sugar in a method, I believe, called Kilner, which fruit could be preserved in special jars.

When we were living in Malvina Avenue Grandma never visited us as it was a difficult bus journey. However the bus stop was right at the end of Clarence Place and a minute from our house. So she was a frequent visitor. Mum was always prepared for her to arrive without warning. For visitors she kept a cake tin with just a few of her home made cakes. The weekly ration of fat and sugar was very low so Mum made these cakes with a little dripping saved from meat and used saccharine instead of sugar. They were just about eatable and were offered to guests who turned up unexpectedly - even in wartime hospitality was not abandoned.

So there would be Grandma on the doorstep. Mum would invite her in and make a pot of weak tea (even tea was rationed) and bring out a plate of cakes.

Lorna and I were totally bored by Grandma — she was so banal. We had worked out a routine. One or other of us would unobtrusively sidle out of the room soon after we had greeted her. The one leaving would, in a few minutes put her head round the door and say urgently 'There's Scheherzada on the wireless' and the one in the room would say 'Excuse me I'll just go and listen, It's not often on', and disappear - and not return until they knew Grandma had gone. We varied the name of the music and enjoyed ourselves by hunting down high sounding names that would sound impressive.

Mum would offer the plate of cakes to Grandma who would take one, and when that eaten would take another, and another - she generally ate four. (She eventually weighed 18 stones.)

Wanting to start my own home I found premises over an empty shop, four rooms, one with a sink, tap and gas cooker, with an outdoor lavatory but no bath. Roy T and I moved in - it was about five minutes walk from my office. However, my marriage began to show signs of breakdown and by the time the war was over so was my marriage. He had turned out to be a possessive and dictatorial husband and I had to leave him in secret. I vanished in London having found myself board lodgings and a new job in the Civil Service. I found out that a firm called Monomarks provided a redirection service for mail and gave that address to my parents.

Chapter IV **1945-1977**

The first post war Christmas I did not go home as it was too soon after the breakup of my marriage. I eventually contacted Mum and Dad the following Spring when I was fairly sure that my husband would not bother me, and we re-established a good relationship and I continued living in London.

In July 1946 I went on a group trip to Paris to join in the first Bastille Day celebrations since the war ended and France liberated. On this trip I met David and Kitty and we became great friends. David had some of the genius of Groucho Marx and Kitty was so sweet and pretty. They did me a lot of good and raised my spirits which were getting low with poor accommodation and no boy friend.

We all went squatting together in the Duchess of Bedford Mansions just off Kensington High Street together with about a hundred others. It was a successful gesture as every family with children was rehoused. Some friends in Fulham gave me a furnished room and David and Kitty were given a small flat in Stoke Newington on the grounds that Kitty had lived in that borough with her mother.

That Christmas - 1946 - I spent at home - the previous one I had stayed away as I was uncertain that my husband was not still aiming to persecute me. I remember we went round to Auntie Pop's. Her

living room was quite different. It had been extended to include the little side room in which flour etc had been stored. Auntie was very pleased with it, but I thought it made the room too unc cosy as it was too large, but did

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not say so. I think that was the last time as I saw her as she began to be ill. I was living in London and did not often come to Gravesend.

Mum began to buy some large carved furniture and pictures of classic interest making the front room look very different. She also derived much pleasure in buying interesting ornaments. Two pictures I remember were 'The Laughing Cavalier' and 'When did you last see your father?' Sadly, years later, after both Mum and Dad died I was going through the stuff in the old shed at the bottom of the garden and found The Laughing Cavalier under some rubbish - it was spoiled by damp in places, but I rescued it and it is still in my possession should Colin be interested.

I spent much time together with my new friends David and Kitty. Eventually he suggested I write to a friend of his in Edinburgh. His name was Roy Dootson. We entered into a correspondence and eventually I suggested my going up to Edinburgh for a few days. This was at Easter 1948. I knew that his lady friend Olive had recently had their child who was then about 7 months old. I met Olive who seemed a nice lady and little Denis who was a 'sweet wee lad' - as they say in Scotland.

Roy D. and I found we liked each other. We decided to think more about whether we could have a future together. I went back to London and we had a postal kind of courtship. By midsummer we had decided that I would go to Edinburgh and have a fortnight's leave and Roy would return to London with me and we would accept Kitty's offer of a small room in their flat. Denis would stay with Olive until he was older and Roy would send some money each week to her. He could make this promise as that very week the new Welfare State came into existence and Roy's dole money was increased.

For a while it worked - the small room in Kitty's flat was 4ft wide, 7ft long and had only a small roof window. Eventually it became too difficult and Roy and I moved into a furnished room I found by reading ads. This was not successful as the landlady wanted occupants to be out all day which was not possible as Roy was unemployed. Just when things were becoming difficult a friend Liesl, a German girl, who I met when squatting - told me a flat in Chelsea partly vacant as the tenant was very ill and staying with relatives. I could have this flat temporarily and pay the rent.

We moved there, stacking the tenant's furniture so there was enough space for us to lay a mattress on the floor. There was a kitchen and an outside lavatory - shared by all four tenants. We thought we were in heaven.

Soon Liesl's friend died. I went to the landlords - Harrods - and explained that I had been staying there by invitation and that I was a permanent Civil Servant and if given the tenancy would pay the rent by standing order. I was given the tenancy. This set us on our feet - with a guaranteed place to live at twenty seven shillings and sixpence per week we could have a reasonable life.

We took over the furniture as there were no relatives, and managed to buy some bedding. In the Spring of 1949 Olive wrote to say she was finding it difficult with Denis in a furnished room and would Roy come up and take him. This was entirely unexpected - but Roy was overjoyed. It was true that I had a lot to do with bringing Colin up, but this would be like an adoption. I got some books from the Library on adoption and toddlers. I found, rather to my dismay, that the most difficult age for adoption was between 18 months and two years of age. Denis was then about 19 months old. It appears that they can recognize and remember a little and are very upset at the change of people caring for them and everything that is different.

Roy went to Scotland and brought Denis back. He was no longer a baby - he was walking well and was a real person. I thought he looked a nice little lad and gave him a cuddle. He looked puzzled. I had thought about what I could give him on arrival. Sweets? No bad habit to start - so managed to get him a banana and some apples. This seemed to please him and he smiled.

The advice and information from the books proved very helpful. Some of Denis's behaviour became understandable. For instance we had an allotment in Battersea Park as we were Chelsea residents - there were no allotments in Chelsea. It meant an expedition over Albert Bridge and we would stock

up with tools, sandwiches and fruit drinks, flannel and towels and stack all of it as well as Denis in the pushchair.

He enjoyed all this but directly we got to the allotment Denis would start to run off. From the book I knew he was searching for his mother and I cried inside me for he would never see her again. This running away whilst Roy and I were digging or weeding became so worrying that I discussed it with Roy who suggested we should arrange our digging so that we always had him in sight. This did not work well so the next time I brought along some of his toys. This worked for a while but he soon got restless and I suggested to Roy we should mark off a little plot of land and give it to Denis, with a toy spade and pail and tell Denis that it was his own. Dad [Roy D.] found some stout twigs and we marked out a square with them. I managed to get a spade and pail in a second hand shop. We told Denis to look in his little patch for stones and put them in his bucket, just like we were doing. That stopped him running off - he enjoyed finding lots of little stones and bringing them to us in his little bucket. I would take them out, put them on the pile we were making and give him a hug.

That brings me to another problem. Olive sent Denis to us nicely dressed in a little coat and trousers with a jumper and vest, but little else. He needed a lot more of everything and we just

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did not have enough spare cash. I had heard somewhere of a 'clothing exchange'. I tracked it down - the venue was easy to reach on my bike. I called in after work. It was situated in a large hall with rows and rows of trestles loaded with clothes. There was a desk near the entrance and I asked the helpers there how it all worked. They explained that the scheme was to help 'people with Limited means'. When their children outgrew their clothes their parent could bring these in and be given credit points. They could then choose from the clothes on the tables larger clothes. Every item had its debit points attached and these would be deducted from your own total credit.

'Oh dear' I cried 'I have just married a widower with a little boy who has hardly any hardly any clothes at all except what he stands up in. How can I start if I have no clothes to bring in?' She said to wait a minute and went and had a word with the supervisor. They made a superb offer - providing I lived in Chelsea or Westminster they would start me off with a credit of 20 points.

I showed them my identity card and they issued me straight away with my membership card showing 20 points. I then roamed round this enormous hall in great admiration at such a thrifty enterprising organisation. I chose two jerseys and pairs of shorts, as well as two night shirts for little Denis. The Clothing Exchange Depot kept him in clothes for some years. It eventually closed down when more clothing was available and when people started to have more money.

For Roy it was not an adoption, of course, and he thought that Denis would remember him, but he did not seem to recognise him. So, poor little lad, he had to get used to two new parents. One day, we were shopping in the King's Road and we missed him. Frantically searching we espied him near a hurdy gurdy dancing happily to the jolly tune - I was very relieved to see him so happy at last.

By this time I had discovered Jumble Sales and went often to find toys that he might like. We had little money to spare as Roy had only his sick pay. (I was still at work but my salary was not very high). The Jumble Sales helped and I found many a toy for a few pence that Denis really liked.

The flat we lived in had no bathroom and no running hot water. Our kitchen had a very high ceiling. Roy D. had the idea of putting two pulleys on the ceiling and buying a long zinc bath and hoisting it up on the pulley ropes tight against the ceiling quite out of the way. We wanted to redecorate the kitchen - Roy chose muted pink and soft brown. This was far from my choice but I thought that as he was at home all day in poor health he should have first choice and so I agreed. We had the idea of painting the bottom of the bath pink, like the ceiling. It was almost unnoticeable when hoisted up on the pulley rope.

The days passed - Dad [Roy D.] developed a collapsed lung and had to stay in bed for some months - Denis had to go to a child minder and I took him there on my way to work - I became pregnant and had a threatened miscarriage and myself had to stay in bed for a fortnight - fortunately Dad [Roy D.] was up and better by then and so could look after me - Linda was born in February 1952.

Although I had been like a little mother to Colin and to Denis after he was 21 months old, having a baby myself took a lot of getting used to - but it was worth it as I enjoyed having a little daughter. She

was a lovely baby and showed promise of some nice little talents - she loved papercutting - I provided her with non-pointed scissors and plenty of paper and she would sit for hours cutting out designs. She loved drawing and painting too. Both Denis and Linda loved me taking them to the Science Museum and down to the Children's gallery.

Bath night was a special night each week - always on Sundays. As we had no running hot water I would put our galvanised pail nearly full of water on the gas stove just after tea and then clear the room of chairs. The floor space was rather small so Dad [Roy D.] had arranged a table top suspended by a chain that he had fastened to the wall. We would fold up the table by hooking it straight onto the wall thus making the whole floor space available. Not only would we do this for bath night, but if Dad [Roy D.] had to mend a puncture - we both had bikes - this made space available (just about) for the bike to be turned upside down onto the floor and the leak mended.

When the water was hot, the big bath for Denis and the smaller for Linda all ready on the floor with bathmats in place, I would fill both baths carefully by taking out jugfuls of hot water until the pail was light enough for me to lift it. Then I would bring them both in from the living room, help them to undress and hand them each into their bath. They were very happy to sit there and play with soap, flannel, little brush and any floating toys. I had to tell them not to splash about too much as the water might drip down through to the room below. I would get Linda out first, dry her and put a clean nightdress on and take her [up] the stairs to our living room and leave her with her Dad [Roy D.]. Then I would let Denis have a little longer, then suggest he would like to get out and dry himself - to give him the idea he was a big grown up person. I would help him put his pyjamas on and he, too, would go up to his Dad [Roy D.] who would talk to them both. I would leave the baths just as they wore, go to the living room and cuddle them both somehow in a blanket and go into my storytelling mode

I mostly invented little tales on demand. There were three cats, who, in my imagination, lived a surprising life: one was rather like Denis, another like Linda but the third cat was full of naughtiness, fun and wit and often managed to get into real trouble and difficulties. I cannot remember, alas, their names. I used to ask Denis

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and Linda what they thought the cats would be this week - and from their suggestions weave a small tale - sometimes with a little almost unnoticeable message that would slide into subconscious and serve them in later life when problems arose. (I hope I succeeded in this even in as small way!)

When they were both settled in bed I would and clean up the kitchen and make everything ready for another hard week - full time at the office, bringing up two children and looking after their father.

Denis was attending a little private pre-school establishment nearby which we could afford as I had been promoted at the office. Linda had been accepted at the Day Nursery directly I had to go back to work (when she was three months old). Thus Roy had the day to himself to rest and try to recuperate. Later, Denis was old enough to attend the proper school, but this had its own problems. It was too far for him to come home alone along the busy King's Road. I took him on my way to work, but as school finished at 3.30 and I finished at 5.30 we had to arrange what was called 'an after school child-minder' and I went round there on my way home and collected him.

AlI this was a hard life, but I never thought to question it. Firstly our parents and our generation all had the memory all too clear still of five years war, with the bombing and food and fuel shortages. In addition I had Mother's description of her mother's struggle for survival bringing up five children on her own.

In 1954, when Denis was six and Linda two and a half, to give them a holiday, we collected together, as cheaply as we could, camping gear and went to a site near Ashford and all of us really enjoyed it. After a week, as my leave was up, I took Linda home with me. Roy and Denis stayed on and explored. They went to Hythe and Folkestone and liked the cliffs and the whole area.

The following year we camped at Satmar, actually on those same cliffs. The first day we went for a cycle ride - Denis on his little bike, and Linda on a seat on my carrier. We saw a house for sale, enquired how much and looked over it. We had been saving for years to get to the country so Roy could leave London and breathe clean air to help his asthma. We had just enough savings to buy it

outright at its low price (due to being a wooden house that no Building Society would provide a mortgage.)

This, in effect, altered all our lives. I decided eventually that I would like another baby now we had a proper home and a big garden. Avis was born in December 1957 and flourished in the country air. I managed to obtain a transfer to Folkestone. The astonishing thing was that Avis was, in effect, the fourth baby I had had experience with - Colin, Denis, Linda and now the last young one. When Avis was born, like Mum with Colin, I was over 40. I was very happy that I had managed to have another baby before it was too late, and I delighted in her.

What amazed me was how different each of them was; each was an individual in their own right. They were all little darlings and I loved them all. It was amazing how the differing personalities showed themselves so clearly at a very early age - one half expects young babies to be very similar. When Avis was born Colin was a fully grown man of 24, Denis a promising lad of 10 and Linda at five an interesting person already.

Once again I felt in a situation that was all set for a good future. However, like 1933 when our life changed drastically by Uncle Harry's suicide and 1939 when the war came, life again provided an unpleasant surprise.

This was that things did not go as well as I had expected. Roy D. and I found that we were beginning to be on different wavelengths. After a few years of feeling that 'grit was in the machinery' I decided to get a transfer back to London. In 1964 I accepted the offer of a spare room in the flat of a friend Richard and started work in the Hampstead office of the National Assistance Board.

I heard about Housing Associations and thought they offered a way of finding reasonable accommodation at a price we could afford as we would share it with congenial people. Richard and I set one up and bought a house on a mortgage. We then sought a few friends to live there in a shared basis. Linda eventually came to live with me, and Avis stayed with her father.

In 1968 I met Stan and we liked each other. He took a room in the community house and eventually when he was transferred to work at Ipswich I went with him, myself arranging a transfer too. This was 1972 and I retired in 1974. I was just under 57 when I made the decision to take early retirement and freeze my pension until I was 60 and live on my savings and Stan's income.

I detailed some of the above in my memoirs focussed on my working life 'A Worm's Eye View of Whitehall'. There are many memories, however, not recorded in that book.

For instance, one family happening occurred after the death of my Grandparents Durham. It was to do with their Will. As I described earlier they had an end house, but the sideways belonged to the small farmer that had a field at the back. He used this side path for access. Every day he would walk back to his home for lunch and then return to his fields for an afternoon's work, regular as clockwork. We could set our clocks by him - we would shout out 'There's Mr. Reader'. He eventually retired and put up his land for sale. Granddad purchased this sideways. It would have added considerable value to the house as it was wide enough for a garage.

When Granddad died it was found that he left the house jointly to Dad and Uncle John (Leslie

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was already dead with TB). Auntie Doris got nothing. In a fury the very next day she hired a van, went straight from Woolwich where she lived to 84 Cecil Road broke in and took every item of furniture and possessions. Dad and Uncle John decided not to take her to Court as they thought the costs would outweigh the value of the furniture. This is an example of the passions that can arise within families.

When I retired I was with Stan in Ipswich. I left work early because of illness - I contracted shingles and was very ill for many months, mainly never-ending pain and great discomfort when sitting - the infection was at the base of my back. By the time that I was fairly well recovered Stan suggested I should do some voluntary work. Somehow I became Hon. Sec. of the Ipswich Council for Voluntary Service. I took on this office just as the Council was about to move to entirely new premises. There were 16 organisations affiliated to the Council and they all had to have premises there. These were allotted on the basis of membership. My memory tells me that Age Concern, the Disabled Folks' Association and the Marriage Guidance Council were the largest. Most of the Secretaries of the various bodies were women - and determined middle class ladies at that. I soon saw that my role was

not so much office work as organising things so that these ladies were happy and not fighting each other or me. I also was in charge of the handyman who looked after everything of that nature. I found he was not very experienced and that I had a lot of practical knowledge he did not. So I advised on various aspects of his work.

The first real problem was to decide what colour the woodwork would be and I asked each Secretary to choose. As I expected - with my knowledge of psychology and politics - those with conservative views wanted blue and those with labour red. I hit on a way of handling this. I asked them all to vote, but as I knew it would be almost equal votes between these two colours, I issued a voting list of blue, red, orange and cream and asked them to vote for first and second choice. As I expected there was no agreement between the two main colours but most of them chose cream as their second. Conflict avoided!

I instituted a new function. On Tuesday lunch times I organised 'Tuesday Talk-Ins' and arranged for a different speaker each week to give a talk on a topical theme and offered light refreshments at a small fee. They were very popular. I remember an event that raised my standing with all the secretaries of the various local organisations. The Marriage Guidance Council (later to rename itself as 'Relate') booked up Dr. James Hemming - well known then as a weekly speaker on Radio 4 - to give a talk. I knew James very well having sat on a committee with him in the British Humanist Association. I was in the vestibule with some others when he arrived - he saw me, rushed over and embraced me warmly - much to the amazement of every one!

However I was not happy in that work and when the year was nearly up I told Stan I was not going to continue and found a successor as soon as I could. The organiser of the Womans' Royal Voluntary Service was so impressed with me she begged me, when my term of office came to an end to join her organisation. The thought of working all day with middle class ladies was very uninviting to me so I did not accept.

All the time I had been in Ipswich up to then I had been at work or at the CVS. Now I had all day to myself. The only equipment I had was a typewriter and an old fashioned jelly type duplicator, a sewing machine and various gardening tools. I soon found it was not enough for me to fill my days. I tried to set up a group of the Conservation Society (then in its early days), a group of Mensa - but there were too few members. Also I attempted to form a Humanist group - but all of them were on the Town Council and had no time available.

I soon began to feel ill - it was actually post-retirement blues but I did not know this. My tinnitus began to be more intrusive, I could find nothing that interested me and began to have crying fits. I went to the local library and read the list of organisations to see if there were any that attracted me. I was even worse after reading them - not a single group or club interested in current affairs or anything intellectual! They were all to do with nature and bird watching, with sport or religion.

In desperation I stood for election to the general committee of the British Humanist Association - and was successful. This meant an evening meeting monthly in Kensington. The train journey took me nearly three hours and the last train arrived at 1.15 am. We lived a long way from the station and there were no buses at that time of night so Stan always stayed up until! I phoned from the station and then collected me by car.

He worked very hard in his beloved job in research and was always extremely tired in the evening. One night arriving at the station at 1.15 am I dialled and got the engaged tone. I dialled again in a minute or so - still the engaged tone. I then thought he must have gone to sleep with the phone off the hook. I dialled the operator and explained it all and asked her to put the howler on - she did this and it woke him up!

Going monthly to this committee meeting in London made me realise that I was now very unhappy and unfulfilled in Ipswich. Stan still had another four years before he was 60 - and even then he hoped he would be asked to stay on. The thought of many more years in Ipswich made me face up to the fact that I could not stand it. I finally told Stan I wanted to go back to London, and suggested several different solutions - that we should sell our house, buy one in London, that he should find a nice board bodging in Ipswich and come to London for

weekends and holidays - or that I return to the communal house in Islington and he continue to live in Ipswich and do for himself for breakfast, lunch in office canteen and find a pleasant cafe in the evenings or have fish and chips.

At first he did not take it seriously but I convinced him I was in dead earnest. Finally he obtained a transfer to an Economics Division in London and we left Ipswich, in effect, in 1976. We could not move at once into the house we had chosen because we were in a long chain of buyers. Waiting for this to solve itself we first of all stayed for several months at Aberdeen Road, sleeping rather uncomfortably in the very small basement room and going back to Ipswich at weekends. Then when this accommodation was required by a couple living there we accepted Lorna's very kind invitation to stay in her upstairs back room. We finally moved into Penn Road, Islington, in spring 1977.

Chapter V **1977 onwards**

Stan set about a complete modernisation - putting in new electric circuits, installing central heating, having double doors cut between the ground floor front and back rooms and another between the back large and small rooms to provide easy access from the living room to the kitchen. A new damp course had to be installed per the mortgage deed. It all took several years.

Avis and Stella stayed for a while on the second floor with Stella attending school and Avis working and they seemed to be happy there. But soon they both went on to the next part of their lives and left.

Stan retired in 1979 - unhappy in that he had not been invited to stay on. He had twice refused to attend a Pre-Retirement Course and had done absolutely nothing to prepare himself for ceasing work. I tried to ease the situation by organising a social gathering at the house celebrating his retirement. I arranged with Stan that he would have on show any tool or artefact from his entire life that had given him pleasure and satisfaction. I also asked guests to bring along memories of their young days and any items they wished to show in all. It worked very well from a social point of view, but Stan was still like a lost soul.

He joined the Neighbourhood Association and they asked him to rewire the basement of the redundant church at the bottom of the road, to turn it into a youth club. He spent many hours working hard there, but a great disappointment soon happened. Islington Council decided to pull it down and build flats there!

He then offered his services to the National Federation of Housing Associations to computerise their system and they accepted. He would go off on his bike to their offices in Covent Garden every morning just as if he was still going to work.

Just to show how apparently small habits of organisation can assume different proportions after retirement I will give one example. He liked well cooked, even gourmet type food for the evening meal. When at work he had lunch in the canteen each day, and always had chips with something fried. He did not like boiled potatoes. When he retired he did not give any thought that the canteen was no longer available and assumed that I would prepare a canteen type lunch everyday for him. Before he retired I had often gone out somewhere during the day taking a few sandwiches and then prepared the evening meal when I got home.

After his retirement I found I was almost bound hand and foot to preparing two full meals a day. I took it up with him and was quite firm about it. I would prepare for him the sort of lunch he liked on only three days a week. For the rest he could forage - I would give him sufficient housekeeping money to get fish and chips and he could make himself a cup of tea - and I would go out all day if I felt like it.

He did not like this idea at all but I was firm. I said why should my retirement time be reduced by having to get lunch for him an extra five days a week. The fish shop was about ten minutes walk away.

Well this sounded reasonable but on many a day he would be busy doing something or other at lunch time and ask me to go round to the shop. This really annoyed me as I thought he was not playing fair. So I started saying I was too busy myself and he could make himself some bread and cheese.

Not a nice picture is it? But with my firmness and organisation he eventually accepted the new routine. However, his main problem remained, namely that he had no deep interests outside his office work. I was full of groups and committees and sometimes was out three or four nights a week - much to his criticism - he expected me to be in every night!

These are just two examples of problems of retirement that needed some facing up to before retirement hit one's emotions and daily routine. However, I gave Stan very good marks for giving up his beloved research job at Ipswich to get a transfer into entirely different work in London because I wanted to go back.

Ho became ill at the end of 1981 and died in March 1982. It took me all my will power to tackle the masses of problems of bereavement - not only psychological, but all the business of the estate in a time of grief.

I met Roy S. about a year after Stan's death and in the autumn of 1983 sold Penn Road, paid half the net proceeds to Stan's three children as arranged and moved to Tring.

Other sad dates of our family were Dad [Roy D.] dying in April 1990 and Lorna later the same year. Young Heather died a few years later. I will probably be the next and that is why I have tried to write up this family history before it is too

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late.

Most families have trouble at one time or another - due to differing personalities and expectations. Avis and Denis both loved Kelmscott but found they could not live happily together there. It is rare, in my experience, that an ideal solution can be found when people want different things in a situation limited by actual boundaries.

It was only after Stan died that I was able to solve her problem of where she would like to live. She tried being with Stan and me at our house in Islington and found a good job easily and seemed to be happy. But I felt her heart was not basically in London - although there were aspects of the London scene she liked.

Some time after Stan died I received - quite unexpectedly - a special sum from his pension fund as he died under 65. This was large enough to buy outright an old house in Folkestone. This did not work out well as the rooms were too small - something we had not foreseen. Eventually she managed to find another with which she fell in love with. After selling the smaller one I was able to buy it. She is still living there and very happy with it. The garden needs a lot of work as it is on a steep slope but that makes it all the more interesting for Avis.

I cannot see any chance of her leg ever being operated on to make her able to walk well. It is getting worse and often she can barely walk as the pain is so great. But she handles it well and is mostly full of optimism and plans for the future. She has many talents, some of which she is developing now, others wait in the wings for their time to come.

Linda, too, was handling her life with firmness. Her marriage with Donal was not doing well. They did not dislike each other but had different ways of organisation and thinking. Eventually they got on each other's nerves so much they parted. It may even have been a matter of national culture because Don found an Irish girl quite soon and asked for a divorce in order to marry her. (Afternote - they are very happy and have a young son.)

Linda eventually met Paddy - an old friend of Coin's - and they were attracted to each other. They decided to set up home together and eventually settled in Hastings with Linda finding suitable work. The Higher National Diploma in Business Studies she had obtained at Hendon College was a great help in getting this post. In order to obtain her HND she had to have at least one A level and this she obtained in Mathematics. She attended Hendon College as a day pupil. It was a rotten journey by public transport so we bought a moped and she travelled daily. It was a Sandwich Course and she had several periods actually working - for real money! This helped family finance.

Stella worked very hard and obtained her A Levels and went to University. Her stickability in the face of difficulties I admire tremendously. She is a hard worker with great discipline; in many ways she reminds me of the vigour and hard work of old Granny Cobley. She gained a degree and asked Linda and I to attend the ceremony. We both enjoyed this tremendously. She then embarked on a successful professional career.

A few thoughts that I have not included in this narrative so far - they are particularly to do with Lorna. She had great potential that was far from being fully realised. Life brought a lot of unexpected bad luck to her. The first was the starvation she suffered in the first few months of life. This arrested to

some extent the proper development of her brain - I often could feel that her potential was being held back somehow. The next was that Father was not demonstrative and never behaved like a proper father to both of us. It took me until I met Roy S. to find a man who made up for this lack in my life: I think that Lorna did not have this good luck. Then when Colin came along Dad went silly over having a son and pinned all sorts of hopes on him. An example is how he placed Colin in a bank - doing thereby much harm for many years by fixing him in a job totally unsuited to him.

Another way Lorna had bad luck was that I found out that Dad used to boast to his office colleagues incessantly about my prowess but never Lorna's. He may possibly have voiced this praise sometimes in Lorna's presence, thereby destroying Lorna's confidence in herself. She had the potential of a good scholar - she passed the scholarship and did well in all her term exams and I am sure would have obtained School Certificate had she been able to stay evacuated to finish her course.

The other piece of bad luck is of a different nature. As I have indicated all along Dad and Mum were badly matched - and maybe might not have married each other but for World War I. Dad worshipped Mum because she was so dainty, good looking and culturally refined. Mum often found Dad too working class with little culture. Lorna was strongly influenced by Mum and once told me she - Lorna - hoped to marry a doctor or teacher. In her early 20's she had a proposal of marriage by a man who was on the way to becoming a successful builder. She turned him down as she wanted 'a professional man'. She never did meet anyone suitable and had to wait another 10 years or so before she met Sid. She found she liked having children - and amazingly had Stella very easily and quickly with no pain at all. (I had to have chloroform with Linda!) and hoped for other children, but alas, her next pregnancy resulted in a miscarriage and she never had any more babies.

Thinking about Lorna's desire for a professional husband, and one not like her father I have often asked why she was so deeply affected by her Mother's outlook. Why did this not happen to Colin or myself? It may be that

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Lorna had a more sensitive nature than either Colin or me. I use the word sensitive in its meaning of responding more to one's total environment. Colin and I probably have tougher 'skins'. An example of this was that she followed the world situation closely via the wireless and became very upset at news of cruelty or disaster, whereas Colin and I were not affected as we were too interested - in our own personal life.

On what note can I conclude this collection of memories? Shall I suggest that each family grouping has its unique selection of triumphs and tragedies. Its modest and sometimes totally unexpected successes? That human life itself is, for most folk, a mixture of planning and chance? Should I, as 'elder statesman' try to distil some advice for all you younger members from my vantage point of age? Phew!!

Speaking from my own experience it would be that doing things for the wrong reason is to be avoided: not allowing yourself to be unduly influenced by other folk who are ploughing their own furrow and not yours: when making a decision try to look ahead and see how current actions could affect not only your own future but that of others of your family: in times of difficulty learn how to grit your teeth and make the best of it - but not to get so perversely proud of your clenched molars that you forget how to smile.

You will all be making your own list and if you would enjoy sharing it with me and the others this would not only be helpful but enjoyable.

Lastly if you find any mistakes in fact, grammar or typing please let me know.

Love to you all

Margaret Chisman

(formerly Durham, Turner, Dootson)

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