WEM’s memoirs
Chapter 1

Who wants to read the memoirs of Bill Miall? Nobody? Well then, nobody needs to read any further than this. But just in case there might be someone interested let me make it quite clear that this is only intended for family use. It may never get beyond chapter 1!

I was born on October 10th, 1917 in the home of William Littleboy, an elderly and very worthy Quaker who lived in Selly Oak, Birmingham. My mother had gone there to get away from the air-raids - Zeppelin raids actually - in London. The family home at the time was in Corringham Rd in Hampstead though I have no memories of it. I suppose I was named after William Littleboy. He had befriended Mother when she had been attending some sort of course at Woodbrooke, a college run by the Society of Friends. My middle name is Einar, after Mother's brother who had just been killed in the war; Einar is a fairly common Scandinavian name but I have no idea why that uncle was given a Scandinavian name.

My father, Rowland Miall, was the fifth and youngest child of Louis Compton Miall and was born in 1879 in Bradford. L.C.M. must have been quite a character. He was a naturalist with particular interests in geology, I think, but when the chair of biology was advertised at the Yorkshire College (as it was in those days) he applied for it and was appointed despite having no paper qualification for that kind of an academic post.

L. C. Miall finished up with an FRS and a great reputation as an educationalist. Between the time when he got the chair and the time when he actually started work he had to learn some zoology and he learnt his mammalian anatomy by dissecting an elephant which had been part of a visiting circus in Leeds. (This was confirmed years later when our son Chris was thinking about a job in the department of Zoology at Leeds University and went there for an interview. L.C.M. and the elephant story were well known! In fact they were better known to those in the department than they were at that time to Chris!).

I don't have any memory of my grandfather though I was 3½ at the time of his death. He had retired and he and his wife, Emily, who died two or three years earlier, had moved from Yorkshire to Letchworth. L.C.M. and his wife were keen linguists and I was told that after retirement they used to correspond with their friends in Latin. While living in Leeds they had a cottage in the village of Buckden in Wharfedale and my father's love of the Yorkshire dales, which he passed on to the next generation, stemmed from the weekends that he and his friends had at that cottage. It must have been at one of those weekends that he met my mother, Sara Grace Dixon, who was the sixth of eight children of George Dixon and Martha Ann, his wife (nee Newton). The Dixons were another Yorkshire family. Mother was born at White House, Great Ayton.

George Dixon and his family moved from Ayton to the Lake District when Mother was about eighteen. They went to another large house, Howe End, in Far Sawrey. We could never understand where George Dixon got his money from. He had a large and lively family many of whom (in later years at any rate) had pretty
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expensive tastes, he sent most of them to Quaker boarding schools, he had a
game leg (I believe due to polio), and earned his living as a land-agent and
surveyor. But he was able to afford to live in large and rather nice homes. (I learnt
this year that he had rented White House, not owned it, and maybe this was true
of Howe End, too).

My mother and father were married at the Friends Meeting House at Colthouse,
early days of Wendover, in
Buckinghamshire. Dad had joined a firm of scientific instrument makers, C.F.
Casella and Company in London, and used to commute daily from Wendover. My
maternal grandparents had moved in with us too, and they both died there: my
grandmother in 1922, and my grandfather the following year.

By 1923 we had moved from Wendover, via Caterham, where we stayed a few
weeks with relatives, to Welwyn Garden City, in Hertfordshire. This was in the very
early days of Welwyn and it was probably an exciting and interesting place.
Letchworth had been the first garden city, and Welwyn was the second. I suppose
it attracted some enterprising families. There were several families whose parents
were close friends of my mother and dad. Three families who we knew well in
those days were the Dawsons, the Reisses, and the Herons. Their kids were our
contemporaries, more or less.

Dick Dawson, the eldest child of the Dawsons was a very good-looking chap
and was engaged to, or a close friend of a budding film star, Dinah Sheridan. He
became a plastic surgeon in the early days of that specialty. His sister Ruth was a
close friend of Archie Cochrane: they had met just before the Second World War
and I believe Ruth was hoping the relationship would lead to marriage when
Archie returned after the war. Archie Cochrane looms large in later parts of this
story. The younger sister, Mollie, became a close friend of my aunt, Mollie Dixon.

The Reiss family were an interesting lot. Richard, the eldest, joined the Friends
Ambulance Unit during the war, (I can't remember what he did later). Stephen ran
the Aldeburgh festival. Delia married Patrick Heron, Rosalind read medicine but I
don't know what happened to her and Bernard, the youngest also read medicine
and was the tutor for general practice at Cambridge University.

The Herons were a very artistic family. Tom Heron, the dad, started and
directed a factory printing beautiful silks - Cresta Silks - many of the designs for
which were the work of his eldest son Patrick, who was then probably still a
teenager, Tom was also something of a poet. Eulalie, the mum, was also artistic.
Patrick Heron became one of the best known of modern artists. Mike also joined
the Friends Ambulance Unit (the FAU) and later became a monk. Joanna became
a good friend of ours when we moved up to Staveley, and Giles, who is now a
liberal councillor living near Whitby, I don't know.

The Herons and the Dawsons, and I think occasionally the Reisses had
holidays at Rose Castle. Rose Castle also looms large in the later part of this
story.
Welwyn attracted some of our relatives, too. My mother's sister Edith, better known to us as Tots, and Mother's brother Hugh, and their families, came to live there. About 1925 we moved house from a 3-bedroomed semi-det in Dellcott Close to a 5-bedroomed detached house in Parkway and then moved again from Welwyn Garden City to a village called Tewin in 1935.

The home at Tewin was a delight. Three households in the garden city, the Crowleys, the Kemps, and ourselves had decided to share a 1½ acre plot called Sewells Orchard, in open country outside the village. We were all friends, big F and little f. Ralph and Muriel Crowley were to have the middle part of the plot, and would share it with their architect daughter, Mary. Elfrida, another daughter who was married to another architect, Cecil Kemp, would have the lower part of the plot and we would have the upper part. The two architects collaborated together to produce three rather similar and very modern houses which attracted a good deal of architectural attention and comment. Groups of architectural students would sometimes turn up on Sunday mornings and hope to be shown around.

But this is getting out of order. While we were living in Dellcott Close Leonard and I went to the nearest school, Handside. Nan went to a Montessori nursery school where our aunt, Mollie, taught. I don't remember anything much of Handside except that we walked there everyday. When the family moved to Parkway, there was a prep school that was within spitting distance and I went there for a while, but by then I must have been about ten and at eleven I was packed off to Ackworth, a Quaker boarding school near Pontefract in Yorkshire. Leonard had already started there. From my point of view Ackworth was a bit of a disaster. I seem to have spent most of my time in the sick-bay with one cold after another. Ackworth was a pretty cold and bleak place and I suppose I wasn't as tough then as I became later. At any rate my parents must have realised that it didn't suit me and after only a year there I went on to the Downs School at Colwall, near Malvern. I acquired two pieces of information while at Ackworth. The first was that not all French verbs when declined have present tenses that end in ..s, ..s, ..t as I thought. The other bit of information was really advice from Leonard. I remember him telling me that if I wanted to pee in the bath it was better to wash my face first. Useful advice for a ten year-old and advice which I have been following ever since.

The Downs was quite a small prep school at the foot of the Malvern Hills, on the Herefordshire side; I suppose it had under a hundred boys there in my day. It wasn't a Quaker school - in as much as it didn't belong to the Society of Friends - but the headmaster then was Geoffrey Hoyland, who was a Friend and his wife was a Cadbury, Dorothea. The school itself was situated in extensive grounds. It had its own wood where there were badger sets; there was a stream running through one of its fields and the stream needed damming up by small boys; there were moles in the fields which had to be trapped and there were trees which needed tree-houses; and there was a narrow gauge steam railway which could take about twenty boys at a time but was only to be driven by the head!

I enjoyed the Downs a lot. The Hoylands created a delightful atmosphere. I remember that the senior boys - say, the twelve to fourteen year-olds - were invited into G.H's study on Sunday evenings to have stories read to them and to listen to classical music on his gramophone. Some boys, and I was one of them,
slept out of doors all the year round in rotatable 'summer houses': we were provided with waterproof covers for our beds and I remember waking often to find an inch of snow on my bed. The teaching at the Downs must have been pretty good. Fred Sanger, who was at the school when I was there, went on to get two Nobel prizes for his work in molecular medicine. I remember him as a small boy who spent a lot of his time catching and skinning moles. Another contemporary was Lawrence Gowing who was then a rather gawky boy with a dreadful stutter, a good painter who was encouraged by the art master, Maurice Baring, and who later was elected President of the Royal Academy. Not all Old Downians were as successful!

I was at the Downs for a couple of years, from twelve to fourteen, and then went on to join Leonard who by then had moved on from Ackworth to Bootham in York. Although I wasn't at all academic I thoroughly enjoyed my schooldays there. One of my school reports from Donald Gray, the head, was 'Happy, friendly, noisy and untidy'! I was much more interested in sports than in schoolwork but Bootham used to pride itself on its emphasis on hobbies and non-curricular activities and in those respects I suppose I might have benefited.

I made some good friends at Bootham. My closest friend was Ted Branson, the son of a judge. Ted was equally unacademic and equally keen on sports. He broke just about all the school records for swimming. I used to visit the Branson home in Frimley Green during the holidays, sometimes, and I remember that on one occasion I arrived there on my motorbike with my clothes in a rucksack and was shown to my room by a butler! This wasn't as off-putting as the fact that when I returned to the room I found that my rucksack had been carefully unpacked for me. We weren't in the same social class as the Bransons! I last saw Ted in Cairo, during the war but I have seen more recent photographs of him. His son Richard Branson is better known. Ted went on from Bootham to Cambridge, read law and was called to the bar and finished up as a judge, like his father. Another close friend was Mike Rowntree, one of the sons of Chocolate Jumbo as Arnold Rowntree was called by Bootham boys. Mike was one of the founders and later the Chairman of Oxfam. He was at one time the managing director of the Oxford Mail. Mike and I were later together in the first party of the FAU. Other Bootham friends were Bryan Cranstone, who became the head of one section of the British Museum, and Kenneth Cadbury, who went into the Post Office but the school was full of nice chaps and some of them, like Alan Greenwood and Martin Lidbetter, I only really got to know years after leaving school.

There isn't much to brag about in my academic record at Bootham but I was captain of the school soccer team, captain of tennis, won the school fives tournament, and was the champion diver for all the five years I was there! I was also a reeve (a prefect); Leonard did better. He became the headboy and got into Cambridge. Nan's education included a year or two at Hitchin Girls Grammar School, some time at Godstowe, a girls' prep school in High Wycombe, and thence to the Mount, sister school to Bootham and also in York. Nan and I overlapped for a couple of years in York.

Whenever I am asked where I hail from I always claim to be a Yorkshireman. I suppose this is justified because both my parents were from Yorkshire, and I spent several years at school in York. When Dad retired he and Mother moved up North
again to the village of Lastingham on the edge of the North Yorkshire moors so the family home was in Yorkshire again. York was a lovely place to be at school; Bootham itself was near enough to York Minster to be influenced by the sight and sound of it. I guess living in its shadow, more or less, for five years leaves a permanent impression. But we also had several family holidays in Yorkshire.

One of them was in Hawkswick in Littondale where my aunt Winifred had a cottage. Winifred was my father's older sister and was the widow of Harold Wager. Harold's sister-in-law had died early and he and Winifred more or less adopted the four children, or at any rate were closely concerned with their upbringing during their schooldays. One of the boys, Lawrence Wager, was at Hawkswick during that holiday. I think he must have been a Cambridge undergraduate at the time. Lawrence was a terrific rock climber and I still have a vivid memory of seeing him shin up a niche between two cottages largely with the use of his elbows!

Lawrence Wager became rather a hero of mine. He was President of the Mountaining Club at Cambridge and went on expeditions to Greenland with Gino Watkins and again with his brother Harold and their two wives. He also was on the 1933 Everest expedition and for a long time was the chap who had been highest up Everest without Oxygen. We named our youngest son partly after Lawrence Wager. He was a geologist and held the chair of geology at Reading before being appointed to the Regius chair at Oxford. George Pickering was his best man and was influential in advising that Lawrence was O.K. to be included in the Everest team despite having a cardiac murmur. (George Pickering was the Professor of Medicine at St Mary's and I did his house job. He's bound to figure in this account a bit later).

From 1931, when my Uncle Herbert (Dennis) and his wife Muriel came across an unoccupied cottage at Tarn Hows, owned by Beatrix Potter, and were able to start renting it for family holidays we often went to the Lakes for our holidays. Rose Castle was part of Beatrix Potter's estate which passed to the National Trust at about that time. The Dennises used to pay five shillings a week rent and that went on till after the war. They handed on the tenancy after the war to Stee, their son, and when he lost interest in continuing it we took it on and have been running it as a non-profit making venture ever since. So it has been in the family now for over sixty years and has been much appreciated by friends and relations and friends of friends and friends of relations. I left Bootham with adequate qualifications to get me accepted for Manchester University and went to Dalton Hall, but I didn't have any enthusiasm for the course which I was to take - physics and applied maths as far as I remember (with the expectation that I would go into Casella's) - and having failed my inter BSc at the end of the year I left Manchester and attended a special course in Scientific Instruments at Northampton Poly in London. At the end of my year there it was looking ominously likely that we were going to be at war with Germany and the declaration of war came a matter of weeks after I had begun work in the office at Casella's.

That looks like a suitable place to end chapter 1!
Chapter 2

The Friends Ambulance Unit, which was first formed during the first world war, was reformed within days of the start of the second and as soon as I saw it announced I applied to join it. Most of my age group had had to consider their position over the months of threatened war that started with Czechoslovakia in 1938. I found it quite a difficult decision to take: in many ways it's unpleasant to feel you have to take a course of action which is deeply resented, and despised, by most of your contemporaries. Pacifism, thank goodness, is much commoner nowadays than it was then, especially among the young: and more respected. It was not an easy decision, but I'm glad I took it. As I've got older I have felt increasingly that it was the right one for me. The FAU was started again by Paul Cadbury and others who had been active in the unit during the 1st war. I joined the first training camp which was held at Manor Farm, Northfield, Birmingham. This was probably about October 1939.

The FAU was I think largely but by no means exclusively composed of Quakers. Many of us in that first camp had been to Friends' schools, and I suppose I must have known ten (of the sixty or thereabouts in our section) previously. The training was in first aid, home nursing, and driving ambulances and was supplemented with physical training to get us fit. After the initial training which lasted about six weeks we went on to a training in hospital work based on the London Hospital and involving Bethnal Green and other nearby hospitals. It was an interesting experience for us and sometimes quite grim. The atmosphere of London in the blackout, with it's fairly frequent air raid warnings but no bombing at that time, was memorable.

One of the chaps that I met up with again in that first section of the unit was George Greenwood. I'd known him at Bootham but he was a year or two older than me and we hadn't been particular friends in those days. George was really Alan Greenwood and I can't remember how 'George' came about. He had been George in Bootham days. We became close friends from those Bethnal Green days and have remained so ever since. I have some vivid but not pleasant memories of things we experienced there. Like the first operation we watched which was an above-knee amputation on an elderly woman, and having to witness the frightful death of a chap who had swallowed hydrochloric acid, and watching the PM examination of another we had nursed. It was valuable experience which came in useful, or at any rate made us better prepared for later work in the Unit.

Nothing much was happening in the war: the phoney war was at its height! But Russia had launched an attack on Finland and as we were unable to find useful work to be done in England someone must have offered our services to the Finnish Red Cross. These were accepted and once ambulances - specially designed for use in cold and snowy conditions, and painted white for camouflage reasons - were available, and we had been equipped with special clothing and tents, we started off as the first party with ten ambulances, a staff car, a kitchen
car and a repairs lorry. A second group, with another ten ambulances was to follow us shortly after.

That was the beginning of a journey which didn't return us to England again for four and a half years. We left for the North of England, driving in convoy, on January 18th 1940. I don't remember much about that journey except that it was snowy, and that my family were there on the side of the Great North Road waving us goodbye. We sailed for Bergen from Newcastle, in convoy, but having left our ambulances to come on later. Half way across the North Sea there was a submarine alarm and we came across a merchantman that had been torpedoed. Slightly apprehensively, as we thought our turn might be next, we watched from the deck as the accompanying destroyer went about its rescuing activities. I can't remember whether any survivors were put on to our ship. I suspect not because the general feeling was that it wasn't a healthy place to be for unnecessarily long. And I imagine the destroyer wouldn't have risked such a manoeuvre either. We went on to Bergen without further adventure. I had been to Bergen once before when I went on a ski-ing holiday with a Dalton Hall friend and was again impressed by the beauty of the place - especially at night with its lights sparkling in the cold moonlight. It was quite a change from London in the blackout.

Next day we went by train to a village called Asker, near Oslo, where we had to wait for our ambulances. We had a frustrating wait of about three weeks during which we were befriended by some Oslo University students who appreciated what we were about. The frustration was ameliorated, too, by the need to get more adept at skiing! Once we were reassembled we left in convoy again for the drive around the Gulf of Bothnia via Stockholm, Umea, and Lulea and so to Tornio on the Finnish frontier. After crossing the frontier we loaded our cars on to a train which was waiting for us and which took us to Kuopio. From there we went to a place called Sortavala, north of Lake Ladoga.

Our job was to provide the ambulance services for one part of the front line. We had to rest up by day because it was much too dangerous to try to use the roads during daylight, and when dusk came we drove the few miles east to an advanced dressing station to collect wounded; the wounded had been brought by sledge to the dressing station which consisted of a few tents hidden in the forest. It was an eerie atmosphere. Almost completely dark and as we were not far from the front line we had to be very quiet. In any case we couldn't converse with the Finns. But we knew that our job was to convey the wounded back to a base hospital at a place called Joensuu, some sixty or so miles from the front and then get ourselves back to our base at Sortavalla before daylight came and kept us in hiding again for much of the day.

The roads were appalling. They were used by all kinds of military vehicles and were deeply rutted. George and I were together. We had been working together since leaving England. George had only recently learnt to drive and was always running off the road into the deep ditches which of course were hidden beneath a metre of snow. I was usually able to predict when this was going to happen, and did so, much to his annoyance! We had ropes and tackle and were able to extricate ourselves with the help of other road users. It was happening to lots of vehicles all the time but inexperience of those conditions, combined with having rather light cars, made us particularly vulnerable. When it was good sunny weather
it was unwise to show ourselves outdoors because the Russians had complete air
superiority and we were being straffed by 'Molotoffs', as the Finns called the
Russian planes, at intervals throughout the day. We were billeted at different
places; I remember a farm where I experienced my first sauna, and I remember
the bell tents we slept in with deep snow outside. They had metal stoves
incorporated in the tentpoles and we had a rota system to make sure there was
always one chap awake to keep stoking the fire. The temperature was always well
below zero, Fahrenheit. One morning it was forty degrees below. (Minus forty is
the same temperature for Fahrenheit and Centigrade.) At that temperature you
have to be careful not to touch metal or you are liable to freeze to it. We also had
to keep an eye on each other to make sure we weren't getting frostbitten noses
and cheeks.

After all the efforts to get ourselves and our ambulances to Finland we really
arrived too late to be very useful. We had only been there eighteen days when the
Finns had to agree to peace terms which were very unfavourable from their point
of view, and there was a general air of depression where we were because all that
border area was being ceded to the Russians. For the next few weeks we were
busy transporting refugees, and the sick, who were being evacuated.

Early in April 1940 Germany attacked Norway and as our work in Finland was
becoming less urgent we offered our help to the Norwegians. This was before it
was known that Britain would be sending an expeditionary force there. By the end
of April we were back in northern Sweden, heading for Gaddede, close to the
Norwegian frontier. We had a hectic drive over the mountain pass into Norway; the
road was not normally open until June and there were snowdrifts up to about
fifteen feet high on each side of the road, in places. German aircraft were active
and on one occasion machine-gunned our convoy despite the large red crosses
that were painted on the roofs. A couple of the vehicles were hit but no-one was
injured. It took us two nights and a day to cross. We were heading for Namsos.
The unit had been divided into three sections. One was to work with the British
who had by then landed troops at Namsos, one was to work with the French, and
we were going to be in a section with the Norwegians.

When halfway to Namsos we got an urgent message from one of our FAU
"officers" who had gone on ahead there, telling us to leave all our ambulances and
kit and pile into two vehicles and head for Namsos as fast as we could. On
reaching a place called Formafoss we were told that the British were already
evacuating Namsos and that we had to be there by 4 am to get the last destroyer.
We made it in time but found the quayside deserted. A message had been fixed to
one of the other FAU ambulances (that had got there in time to catch the
evacuation) telling us that the last boat was leaving at 1.30am.

We also learnt, somehow, that the Germans were advancing along some other
road to Formafoss and that if we were to avoid capture and get back into Sweden
we had to pass that junction before the Germans got there. We did this, managing
to pick up seven of our deserted ambulances, and our kit, on the way. And so we
were back in Sweden in safety again. We reached Gaddede where we caught up
on some sleep - we had been driving continuously for two days and two nights and
were dropping asleep as soon as our depleted convoy was halted! From Gaddede
we went to Ostersund where we left the ambulances and went on by train to Stockholm.

We were destined to stay in Sweden from early May 1940 until October; indeed it looked at one time that we might be spending the rest of the war there. We stayed for a while at a pension outside Stockholm, called Borgen, while FAU head-office in London tried to get permission for us to go through Russia to get to the Middle-east. The Russians wouldn't give permission for us to go through Russia because we had been in Finland and had been responsible for ill-treating their Russian wounded. We were accused of cutting their ears off. Stafford Cripps was the British ambassador in Moscow at the time and had considerable sympathy with Friends and it was he who eventually managed to convince them that this wasn't so and on October 8th we flew off in a Russian plane to Moscow via Riga.

While in Sweden I had been seeing George and Martin Lidbetter more than the others and we were all three working in the Uppsala area. Martin was another old Boothamite, and was an architect. One couple we met in Sweden was Ralph Erskine and his wife, Ruth. They had been at Saffron Walden school and knew George. Ralph was an Englishman, also an architect (and later became a famous architect) and soon became a close friend of Martin's. The Erskines introduced us to their friends. One was a delightful Swedish girl - Eva Ternstrom - who later became Martin's wife. She, too, has been a close friend ever since.

George and I had been working on a farm near Uppsala and had been enjoying that, but were always scheming about ways of getting back to England. We went as far as destroying our passports because they had the evidence that we had been in Finland, and we were also in touch with the owner and captain of a small boat who was reputed to be sailing across the North sea with chaps like us. But neither ploy came to anything.

In many ways we were sorry to leave Sweden. The Swedish friends we had made had been very kind to us and we had made some good friends. I had fallen for a lass called Birgit and was sad that I had to leave her. We corresponded for a long time but eventually I think she thought better of waiting for the war to end and wrote to tell me so.

But back to the journeying. We had an interesting couple of days in Moscow. A conducted tour one day leaving me with the strong impression that most of the things they were most proud of in Moscow were of foreign i.e. Western origin, like the underground which was designed by an Englishman I think and certainly had features which were indistinguishable from their counterparts in London. I believe even the Kremlin was designed by an Englishman. We stayed in an Intourist hotel where nothing worked properly - no hot water in the bedrooms, telephones out of action, lifts not functioning etc. But the food was O.K. On the second day we were invited as a group to have tea with Stafford Cripps and his wife at the British Embassy. Moscow at that time reminded me of the grimmest of impoverished industrial towns in Lancashire. But that was in 1940. It's probably very different now.

From Moscow we had a two day train journey through Kiev and down to Odessa. We had a carriage to ourselves and I remember the train stopping fairly
frequently at stations where countryfolk were selling food from baskets. It seemed an endless journey as we trundled through the grain growing area of Georgia. From Odessa we caught a boat to Istanbul, via Varna, in Bulgaria. Istanbul was my first experience of a really Middle Eastern culture. The view of it as we sailed down the Bosporus, with its domes and minarets, was superb and buildings like Santa Sophia and the Blue Mosque were magnificent, but much of the city was dirty and pretty sordid.

Next day we crossed the Bosporus by ferry, and caught a train from there to Aleppo, in Syria. It was another long train journey through largely desert scenery but interesting. Then on to Tripoli in Lebanon and Haifa in Palestine (as it was in those days) and thence by train across the desert to Cairo. The end of a fantastic journey which would have been fun had it been slower and had we been tourists but was an interesting but rather too rapid way of getting back to being able to do something useful as an ambulance unit.

The unit which originally comprised about sixty chaps had now been reduced to twenty. The others had been able to go back to England from Norway. We reported to the Red Cross in Cairo and were told that we would be working as the transport section of the 2/5th and 8th General Hospitals in Alexandria. This in practice meant conveying wounded (from the Western desert front) from hospital ships to the hospital. We did that for about six months but the work was patchy and we weren't satisfied that we were doing anything useful.

From the end of February we learnt from the Red Cross that we would be going with fifteen ambulances to Greece. Greece was occupied by a fairly small British expeditionary force and was under threat from a much larger force of Germans massing on the Northern frontier. On March 21st we sailed from Alexandria to Pyraeus, in a troop ship, in convoy, but as we approached Crete we were attacked by Italian aircraft. Fortunately the bombs they dropped landed in the sea some yards from the ship. It was an unpleasantly exciting time because we were on deck acting as lookouts.

That evening we took shelter in Suda Bay, Crete's main harbour. Either that night or the next, two Italian mini-submarines were able to get past the nets guarding the harbour and let off torpedoes at the ships there. The cruiser, York, which was within a few hundred yards of us was sunk. Luckily a torpedo aimed at an ammunition ship berthed next to us missed its target. We arrived at Pyraeus on March 31st and left Athens a week later on our way to the Albanian front.

The Germans declared war on Greece that very day and that led to us being rerouted towards Salonika. We went north through Lamia and Larissa to Veroia where we learnt that the Germans were expected to take Salonika in a couple of hours. Veroia was only about fifty miles from Salonika. We were again redirected - this time to evacuate a hospital at Florina, near the Jugoslavian border. When we got there we found that the hospital had already been evacuated and that the Germans were still some way away.

We then had a lot of to-ing and fro-ing across mountain passes between Larissa and a place called Kozani but on the Servia pass we started to get involved in a series of retreats where we were leapfrogging the front line troops who were
steadily falling back because of the relentless air attacks which included machine
gunning and Stuka dive bombing. The countryside and the spectacular passes
were beautiful but the straffing wasn’t!

At about that time we were working with the 2/7th Australian Field Ambulance.
We were transporting sick and wounded from the front to field hospitals,
sometimes we were at the front, sometimes we were sent back to Thebes and
Athens. The columns of traffic along those roads was being bombed without much
respite. Eventually it was clear that the German troops were within twelve miles of
us and from then there was a general and rapid retreat Southwards. Our party was
reduced to taking just three of the ambulances: the others were left in Athens. We
went through Corinth and Argos, and eventually finished up on the outskirts of a
small harbour called Kalamata on the South coast. During the whole of that
journey we were frequently having to stop and hide ourselves in olive groves, and
the straffing was pretty continuous.

On the evening of April 25th after spending the whole day hiding up in an olive
grove we were ordered to go down to the quayside with thousands of others, and
when we got there were queuing to get on to a couple of naval ships that had
come in to evacuate us. It soon became clear that we weren't going to get aboard
that night and we were told to disperse and return the following night. During the
next day a German armoured column came into the town but was overcome by
the much larger number of retreating Allied troops. But by then the British
commander had destroyed the signalling lights - which he thought must not be
allowed to fall into German hands - and thus, despite Kalamata still being in British
hands there was no way of signalling to the Navy the following night and 10,000
troops waited on the quayside for a couple of hours beyond the appointed
rendezvous time before being told to disperse again. By then of course we knew
that we were destined to become prisoners of war.

There had been a lot of casualties resulting from the fighting in the town the
previous day and many of them had been taken into a large hall in the Town Hall.
We started to work there and awaited the arrival of the Germans. We had very
little equipment and there were a lot of seriously wounded people but our presence
was vital and when the Germans arrived they left us undisturbed and we carried
on doing what we could. The place stank terribly. A lot of men had filthy infected,
maggot-ridden wounds. We cleaned them and dressed them and did what we
could provide food which was being brought in by the townfolk. We stayed at that
primitive hospital for a fortnight and then were moved by train to Corinth where we
were put into a POW transit camp.
Ours was a funny war! We had spent over two years careering round Europe trying hard, but not always very successfully, to find useful ways in which we could relieve suffering only to find ourselves incarcerated in prison where we could do nothing but try and keep up our morale and stay alive. Looking back now over those first two years I really think our section of the FAU did quite a lot for the cause of pacifism despite spending so much money on a Cook's tour of Europe. We had shown our willingness to go anywhere where there was a need for a volunteer ambulance unit and that must have helped other sections of the unit to be acceptable. Our reputation was perhaps greater than it should have been, but the fact that we weren't as useful as we had hoped to be was largely due to circumstances outside our control.

Corinth transit camp was one of the low spots of our prisoner days. It was almost tropically hot weather and there was virtually no shade. We were in the open and had no shelter. We dug ourselves trenches to sleep in and rigged up some sort of roofing to provide some shade. I can't remember now what we found to dig with, nor what we used for the roof. But I do remember that under those conditions being deprived of water is far, far worse than being deprived of food. There were probably several thousand prisoners in that camp and the only water supply (or at any rate the only one I recollect) was a standpipe just outside the perimeter wire. To get a can full required queuing for hours.

We were not needed in the camp hospital which was already staffed when we got there so there was nothing much to do for the month or so that we were at Corinth. During that time Crete was attacked by the Germans and we saw large numbers of German transport planes flying off in that direction. We were to hear more about that campaign when we got to Salonika.

From Corinth we went to an even worse, and less temporary, camp in Salonika. This involved a 7½ mile march to a railway near the Corinth Canal, and then a train journey in cattle trucks via Athens to one of the passes where we had been having adventures a few weeks previously, the Brallos pass. The railway tunnel had been blown up then and so we had to march from there some forty blistered miles to Lamia. We were bringing up the rear of the long crocodile of weary chaps clambering over the pass and down the steep slopes to the plain on the other side; blisters were the main problem but we had plasters and could help with those.

Eventually we came across another line of cattle trucks and were loaded in and taken on to Salonika where we were marched through the town to an old Greek army barracks. Salonika was without doubt the worst experience I had during the war. The barracks consisted of a number of mostly single storey brick buildings with a large parade ground in the middle. Roll calls in the hot sun on that parade ground took place twice daily and lasted for hours. The camp held about 10,000 prisoners at a time, but being a transit camp it was a changing population.

The German policy during those relatively early days of the war, when everything was going well from the German point of view, was to provide the
minimum in the way of food and facilities for prisoners while in transit. Starving men were less likely to try to escape. Our mid-day meal in that camp consisted of a dead donkey made into a very weak and watery soup for the complete camp. I remember seeing chaps trying to scrape a bit of meat from behind the eyes of the skull of a donkey on one occasion. On another occasion there was quite a fight involving patients - some even with amputations - over some bad cheese that had been thrown out of the kitchen. The first week there we had nothing to do except the endless parades but then started work in the camp hospital.

The hospital had some 200 beds. There were two doctors - a Surgeon-Lieutenant from New Zealand called Hugh Singer, and a Scottish Captain called Archie Cochrane. The rest of the staff were orderlies; our group which had been a group of twenty in Greece was down to thirteen (seven had got away to Crete and were back in Egypt again, we learnt later), and several Australians, New Zealanders, some from the UK and Yugoslavians. There were medical and surgical wards; the main medical problems were infections - sandfly fever, diphtheria, malaria, typhoid and hepatitis - and later on beri-beri. I remember having hepatitis myself and how ill I felt with it. I suppose the fact that you lose your appetite with hepatitis was an advantage in those circumstances, but the itchiness associated with jaundice, coming on top of the dreadful plague of bed-bugs there, was really troublesome. The surgical beds were, I think largely filled with those who had been wounded at or before their capture, together with several others who had been shot since - including two or three chaps that were shot inside Salonika camp including one rather nice New Zealand medical orderly who was shot in the arm just outside the hospital. He lost his arm and later went on to Germany and was in the same hospital as us months later.

I think I must have already heard about Archie Cochrane from home; at any rate I soon heard about his friendship with Ruth Dawson. Archie in those Salonika days was sporting a large Viking-like auburn moustache and beard. He was particularly friendly with the FAU contingent and I remember used to let me use his bedroom as one of the few quiet places where you could get a bit of peace to read. I somehow got hold of a copy of Lin Yutang's "The Importance of Living" and read it there. Archie had been captured in Crete where, according to him, he had been responsible for surrendering the island. He was chosen for this as a fluent German speaker. Archie was an interesting character. Even in those conditions Archie found the energy to do research; although I didn't know about it at the time he carried out a controlled trial of the effect of yeast on the oedema of the legs which he was convinced was due to protein-deficiency. The results of his trial were sufficiently convincing to the Germans to make them willing to provide yeast for affected patients and to increase the calorie intake for everyone. Or so he claims in his autobiography.

Archie had been a volunteer in the Spanish Civil War while still a medical student. Several years after meeting him in Salonika I heard of a job going at the MRC Pneumoconiosis Research Unit and became his assistant in the early days of epidemiology in South Wales. Much more about him in due course!

The brutality of the guards in that camp at Salonika was quite extraordinary. On one occasion they threw a hand grenade into the lavatory block at the end of one of the sleeping quarters in the middle of the night when the place was in use; on
other occasions they shot and killed people by deliberately shooting them from outside the periphery wire and then left them as a warning to others. They were not front-line troops and maybe had been selected as being particularly well qualified for being pretty ruthless with POWs!

We were several months in Salonika before being shifted off to Germany. The sanitaters, as we were called, were sent off in small groups with the sick and wounded. George and I were able to stick together and were sent by train with a large group of sick and wounded in September or October, 1941. We didn't know where we were heading for but after about five days in the train we ended up in a camp - Stalag V B - in Villingen, in the Black Forest. From there we went to Rottenmunster Hospital near Rottweil. Rottenmuster was a large and quite pleasant building in the country; at last the German treatment was getting more in line with the Geneva Convention for the treatment of POWs. We started to be issued with Red Cross parcels which came weekly and made all the difference to our diet. We started getting letters from home too, and were given letter forms so that we could write home. We started to be taken for walks in the country every week - a perk which was only allowed for medical personnel but one that we very much appreciated.

George and I were responsible for the care of a wardful of surgical cases. At first most of them needed daily dressings but their wounds gradually all healed and they were convalescent. At that stage we were again beginning to think that we weren't doing anything useful.

But at about that time we had an interesting distraction. One of the convalescent officers, whose name I have now forgotten, was planning an escape and wanted help from us. The German guards had their offices in a block at one end of the main hospital building. The two areas were separated by a locked door. I've forgotten how the key was obtained, and whether it was us or someone else that got hold of it, but it was and was used to make an impression in a piece of soap. From that he was able to make another key, which he tried out in the door, successfully. The plan then was to disguise himself as a painter and he somehow managed to get a pair of painter's overalls and a large bucket. (The bucket was used to carry his kit and food). His aim was to brazenly unlock the door out of the hospital and walk through the German quarters and out through the front door and away. Careful timing was necessary. He chose a time to do this when the guards were off at lunch but there was a continuous patrol of a guard marching up and down the front of the hospital and he needed us to watch the guard's movements and signal to him when the opportune moment had come. We did this and had a somewhat nerve wracking time after seeing him unlock the door till he appeared outside the front door, bucket in hand. He headed off nonchalantly in the opposite direction from the guard and we watched him disappear into the gardens behind the hospital. Unfortunately we heard that he had been recaptured at the Swiss frontier three or four days later. As far as I know the Germans never discovered how he'd managed to get away.

Shortly after that the whole hospital, patients and staff were moved from Rottenmunster to a place further north - Nagold - and, darn it, I can't now remember why we were moved, but it was a fairly temporary measure. Within a matter of weeks we were to be moved back again. By then George and I were
really getting very tired of not having useful work to do. We were not needed for medical work and were beginning to think about trying to escape, ourselves. The move back from Nagold to Rottweil seemed like it might offer an opportunity.
Chapter 4

We were en route from Nagold to Rottweil. It was March, 1942 and a rather dull wintry day. The ground was covered with a foot of snow but the snow was beginning to melt. George and I had got ourselves ready to make an attempt to escape if the opportunity arose. In other words we had saved enough high energy foods, like sugar and raisins and bully beef and bread, to last us several days, and we had got hold of a motoring map of the area south to the Swiss frontier, and drawn enlarged versions of it which we hoped could be seen better at night; more importantly we had made or modified various clothes so that in semi-darkness they would give silhouettes which could be those of civilians. We were in ordinary carriages in a passenger train. Each carriage had two armed German guards in it. We got into a compartment two compartments in front of where the guards were.

Nagold, Horb, Oberndorf... the station names passed as the train meandered slowly down the valley of the River Neckar towards Rottweil. We discussed ways and means of getting out. It was a slow train and never got much above thirty miles an hour, we guessed. Perhaps thirty five. Our main aim was to avoid alerting the two guards behind. The doors of the train were not locked and others in the compartment were willing to be helpful about chucking our packs out and reclosing the carriage door if we managed to get out. Somehow it didn't seem very likely. Our aim was to get as near to Rottweil because every mile travelled in the train meant one less for us to walk; the countryside was pretty hopeless for a long journey by foot - a journey which would have to be done at night, and we would have to find safe places to hide by day.

When still about fifteen or so kilometres from Rottweil we collected our kit - a pack each, a greatcoat and George's sleeping bag. We must have left our other belongings in the care of those going back to Rottenmunster. George had a dressing gown and a very chic red hat; I had an old Greek army greatcoat that was cut down to a civilian jacket shape. Thirteen, twelve ten. We were watching the terrain ahead. Nine more, then eight. Then we saw a tunnel ahead. It looked too short. We could see right through it. We decided against. Then the train rumbled into it and all was black and smoke. We changed our minds and nipped out quickly on to the footboard and jumped, George first, me a second later. Jumping from a train going at about twenty five miles an hour into total blackness in a tunnel isn't to be recommended! I wouldn't do it again but in the excitement we didn't recognise the danger and we were lucky. There we were a bit shaken but lying on the ballast by the railside with the train going on rumbling past. We looked round and made sure that we hadn't broken any bones; in a matter of seconds the smoke and steam dispersed and we felt nastily exposed.

Then we were appalled to see that the train was slowing and it came to a halt with the back carriage only fifty or sixty yards into the light beyond the tunnel. The immediate reaction was that they must have seen or heard us getting off so we dashed back along the track and out into the daylight beyond, up a snowy bank among trees. With hearts pounding and feet scrambling for footholds we got up to
an old ruined castle - an ideal hide-out with no snow and good views of anyone who might be looking for us.

George had cut his knee rather badly and we bandaged it up. I escaped lightly with only a few grazes on my hands and knees. It was about five o'clock and we thought we'd wait about three hours for real darkness. It was cold and trying hard to rain but at any rate we seemed to have avoided any immediate reaction from the guards. It was soon twilight so we had a snack and George started getting himself dressed so that in silhouette he would look like a woman; this meant hitching up his trousers, putting on his dressing gown, adjusting his little red hat and carrying his pack as though it was a handbag. Our only hope of getting through Rottweil without getting soaked and without losing too much time was to walk arm in arm right through the centre of the town. So by eight o'clock we went down to the road, and set off as a couple, arm in arm and George taking little short steps beside my larger masculine ones! Bikes passing us were worrying and when we heard a car coming we dived out of the headlights into the snow; as we neared the town we were walking along a pavement among lots of people, all with torches. It was distinctly nerve wracking but George's Jermyn Street walk worked wonders and before long we found ourselves going out of the town, but unfortunately on the wrong road.

Eventually we found the right little road that went towards Schaffhausen from Rottweil - passing close to Rottenmunster where we felt envious of our friends who by then would have been warm in bed. On up the hill that our old room at Rottenmunster looked out on, and we were away, heading South. Occasionally we stopped for a rest. George's leg was bruised and stiff. We daren't risk being caught in the headlights of passing cars, especially in the early hours of the morning, so we were often diving into the snow pretending to be piles of manure. At last we found the road to Trossingen which was on our originally planned route and we took it, passing through more villages. By 6 am we found ourselves in the middle of an open plain with daylight fast approaching.

Our aim was to walk only at night and to try to find safe hiding places to spend the days in. We weren't well enough camouflaged to risk being seen in daylight. Soon we came across a forested area, found a pile of logs to lie on to await the dawn and rest our weary bones. Within minutes we were asleep but with the daylight we woke to find ourselves shivering from head to toe. We found a dense patch of young fir trees and settled for it; the wood was by no means ideal as a hiding place - there was evidence of recent activity, wood piles and newly chopped down trees - even footsteps in the snow. But by then it was too late to look for anywhere else. So we collected up pine twigs and made ourselves a bed to lie on. The snow at that spot was a foot or more deep.

We had some breakfast and settled down, alternating between having three hours in the sleeping bag and three hours shivering in the cold. Halfway through the morning footsteps of a woodsman approached within about twenty yards of us. Our hearts sank; in the stillness he seemed so close and so sure to follow our tracks, but luckily he passed us by. We lay there shivering and feeling pretty miserable for the rest of the day until the welcome twilight returned when we could get up and stretch our legs and get our blood circulating again.
On through the villages of Bessingen and Baldingen, resting often, we reached Unter Baldingen. These villages were a bit of a nightmare; not so bad in the early part of the evening when there were people about but village streets seemed endless when there was no-one about and dogs were barking. After losing our way several times we reached the village of Pfohren, within three or four kilometres of the track we were aiming for to take us down to the Danube. It had been an exhausting night, especially for George whose leg was causing a lot of trouble. The expected track turned up eventually and we headed South towards the river. We found a barn, carefully crossed the field (avoiding leaving tracks in the snow) and found an unlocked door into it. It was full of hay and an ideal place to rest up for the day.

The bridge over the Danube which we hoped to use was within sight of the barn. We expected it to be guarded so we had a good opportunity to watch what was going on. Luckily there was no sign of guards: the escaping season hadn’t begun in earnest by then! During that day we decided, having seen the condition of our blistered feet, that we’d stay in the barn for another twenty-four hours. By then we’d have more or less run out of food, but we were very near to the frontier.

So the following evening, when we felt really rested, we started off again at about 8 pm and within ten minutes were crossing the bridge at Gutmadingen, then crossed the railway on the other side and got on to a road running East through Geissingen and then south to Leipferdingen. George’s leg was beginning to play up again and we had to decide not to attempt to cross the frontier that night. We looked unsuccessfully for another barn and had to settle for another wood where we stayed till sunrise. It was bitterly cold so we decided to make a hole in the other end of the sleeping bag and squash in together head to tail. That sleeping bag, which had been with us since we left England, was due to be jettisoned that night anyway.

So we rested up in a wood for another day. We still had enough food for two more meals. It was a peaceful scene with lovely wooded hillsides. There were deer about, but otherwise no sounds but the birds and the distant chimes of a church clock at a village called Thengen. At sundown we started off South, came across what we thought was the main road from Donaueschingen to Schaffhausen, watched to make sure it was not patrolled and gingerly crossed to the other side, waited again and then went on. After about another kilometre of rough going we came across a steep wooded descent. We had seen lights to our left which we guessed were at the border. Suddenly we heard footsteps and found there was a narrow lane just ahead of us. The sound of the footsteps disappeared. We nipped across and hid behind the hedge on the other side. Again we waited and military footsteps came again. They passed immediately behind us. When out of earshot we carried on again keeping to the strips of land where the snow had melted and trying hard to avoid making ourselves obvious against the white snow patches. We crept on for fifty yards, crossed a full rushing stream and started climbing up the other side. There we noticed a line of posts. They looked like telegraph poles but there were no wires. We realised that they must mark the border. Amazed and amused we carried on southwards, guiding ourselves by the Pole star.
By then we were pretty sure that we had crossed into Switzerland, but we were very conscious of the danger of recrossing the frontier accidentally in the pocket of Schaffhausen which is an area of Swiss territory just north of the Rhine. The area is the shape of an outspread hand, with Schaffhausen on the Rhine at the wrist. The danger is that you walk right across one of the fingers. Our plan was to continue walking cross-country till we reached Schaffhausen, which was only six miles away, and to go straight to a British or American consulate rather than report directly to the Swiss authorities.

When we were about four miles from the frontier we came across a road which was going slightly east of south, but took it. It led us to the outskirts of a village. There, there was a village notice board by the roadside with Nazi Party notices pinned up on it. We were so certain that by then we were well inside Switzerland that we assumed that the notice board was just a manifestation of Nazi activity in that German-speaking population. But we decided to skirt round the village, avoiding it’s centre. While doing so we came across a river - a real torrent of a river due to the melting snows - and it was coming down a minor canyon and went straight through the middle of the village. (I think it must have been the river Biber, a tributary of the Rhine.) We started to follow it, keeping away from the village but soon the track petered out so we changed course and went downstream again to where there was a bridge, intending then to return up the other side of the river and carry on skirting the village.

On the bridge was a guard with a rifle and a large Alsatian. "Halt. Who goes there?" "Zwei Englander" we said, knowing we were in Switzerland. "Hander hoch" and he raised his rifle and marched us into a nearby building where there was a large picture of Hitler adorning the wall. They took our particulars. We showed them our passports. These guards weren’t in the ordinary German uniform and we still thought they were Swiss. We tried to persuade them that we were civilians and that we wanted to phone the American consul in Schaffhausen. But we soon found out they were German frontier guards, and weren’t at all interested in that idea!

Soon we were being marched back towards Germany. After about an hour and a half’s hard walking, with two German guards with fixed bayonets just behind us, we crossed the frontier again, saw the barrier across the road, and found that we were in a village called Busslingen. We were taken into the village pub, allowed to wash, and taken off to the village school where we slept till they gave us dinner. Dinner was a magnificent meal - the best we had had for months. Quite extraordinary; they gave us soup, spuds, vegetables, a kind of Yorkshire pud, stewed apples, beer and schnapps! Next day we were taken by train, via the town of Singen, to Villingen, where the main camp of Stalag V B was. Back to fourteen days bread and water in solitary confinement. (The Geneva Convention rules that "bread and water" means bread and water for two days followed by ordinary camp food on the third day, so fourteen days of bread and water was really ten days bread and water and four days proper food.) It provided us with a good rest, and plenty of time to contemplate how near we had been to a successful escape.

We later learnt, but only from other prisoners, that there is one large estate, once owned by the Hohenzollen family, which though German, is completely surrounded by Swiss territory. Much later, I think in 1961, we had a family holiday on the continent and tried to retrace that escape journey. We managed quite a lot
of it, but it wasn't easy. We started at Rottenmunster again and found the same little roads most of the way to the Danube but then lost track of where we'd been. We did go back to Busslingen, though, and confirmed that that was at the frontier, but we couldn't be certain about the Hohenzollen estate story and don't really know to this day exactly what happened.

Luckily George and I were sent back from Villingen to Rottenmunster again and got back to our friends and what possessions we had. But after a few weeks we were transferred from Stalag V B to Stalag VII A, at Moosburg, twenty five miles north-east of Munich. Perhaps the aim was to move us further from the frontier!
Chapter 5

Moosburg was a large camp with prisoners of war of several nationalities. I guess there must have been 10,000 or so there, not counting a separate compound for Russians. Russia had not signed the Geneva Convention and Russians were treated appallingly. We could see them through the wire, gaunt and emaciated in the way that we now associate with Belsen. Moosburg was the headquarters camp for a lot of working camps (kommandos) around it. As medical personnel we were not required to do anything other than medical work, and there didn't at first seem to be any medical work for us to do.

Camp life without anything special to occupy one's time was pretty deadly. We had some books and there were classes run by prisoners; there was football; we played a lot of bridge. We slept in barrack rooms that I suppose must each have held 100 or so chaps on two-tiered bunks. We had straw palliasses and slatted beds, but the slats were always being used as fuel for cooking! George and I were there for perhaps three months or so, with nothing sensible to do. The prospects of getting work at the camp hospital which was at a place called Freising, ten or twelve miles away, seemed pretty remote. We started to plan another escape, and I remember lots of walks we had together up and down an exercise area when we were considering the various options and at the same time trying to get fit. It was much too dangerous to think of trying to get through the wire so we had to think up some alternative.

I imagine each POW camp had its own escape committee. Certainly Moosburg had one and they were very helpful to us. It was known that we had made an attempt before and that it had been nearly successful. On the strength of that we somehow managed to get high up the list of potential escapers who might deserve help. One possibility for getting away was to go out with one of the lorries that delivered parcels to outlying kommandos. We were offered the chance and so went about getting prepared for it. We thought we'd adopt the tactics we'd tried last time and go as a man and girl pair again. Actually we decided on a plan which would allow George to change sex, depending on the circumstances! This meant getting a set of women's clothes as well as some civilian-looking men's clothes. The camp had several professional tailors in it and we got a Frenchman to make George a dress and a little coatee. With white socks that he could roll down over his boots, and a scarf stuffed with the sort of parcel packing that could give the shape of a head of hair, we thought he might get away with it provided we weren't seen at very close range! We had pretty rough trousers made for us out of Red Cross blanket material which was rather like cheap blue felt.

We also needed maps and food. It was surprisingly easy to get hold of maps, and even such things as radio sets, in POW camps. I suppose they were all paid for with cigarettes which were in short supply for the German guards. (In several of the camps we were in we got a news service which was based on BBC bulletins. The news was usually delayed for 24 hours so that it was less likely to cause suspicion among the guards.)
It was midsummer before we were ready again. Glorious weather. Crops just about ripe. We knew the lorry would be driven by an English POW with another POW and a German guard beside him in the cab. We were to be packed under the parcels in the back and once away from the camp were to get ourselves out and sit on the load and hope for an opportunity to get off. The lorry would be going in the direction of Munich and we were planning to leave it as soon as we were outside the camp and to make our way around the west side of Munich and aim for the mountains in the Garmisch Partenkirchen direction. The driver and the POW in front knew about us and were going to try to distract the guard as much as possible.

I didn't write any sort of account of this second escape attempt and now have forgotten dates and place names, and probably much else, too. But I still have clear memories of lots of the more exciting bits. I guess it was late July, or thereabouts, in 1942.

We got ourselves to what I suppose was either the post office hut or a hut used for storage of parcels, and were helped into the back of the lorry which by then was half full of parcels. They had left a hole for us to crouch in, and there must have been boards to go over us to allow another layer of parcels on top to hide us. I suppose someone must have been distracting the German guards there at the time but I don't have any memory about that. But we were successfully dispatched, the lorry was driven off through the camp, stopped at the camp gates and was passed by the guards there and started off in the direction of Munich.

Once we were a mile or two from the camp we poked our heads up to make sure that there wasn't anything behind and then climbed out of the hole and sat on the back on the parcels. We were dressed as two chaps - civilians. Quite soon after that we found that there was another lorry coming along a couple of hundred yards behind us. And it remained like that for mile after anxious mile. It clearly wasn't intending to overtake and it seemed highly likely that it would just follow us into Munich. I guess under those circumstances you aren't a reliable judge of time and probably it was only following us like that for ten or fifteen minutes, but it seemed much more!

Luckily it eventually stopped and we immediately threw our packs off and clambered down and off at the back. We were just opposite a house, and a small child, on a bike, spotted us getting off and rode off looking as though he was going to tell his Mum what he'd seen. So we dashed off away from the road and into a field of ripening wheat. We were luckily just at the time of year when the crops were ripe and tall but not yet beginning to be harvested. They made ideal hiding places which we were going to need in the coming days.

George, who had jumped off as a man, changed into his dress and quite soon we walked off together as a young couple. George's dark jowl had to be concealed with liberal quantities of talcum powder and I guess we must have looked a strange sight but at least from a distance it seemed to work OK. Later that first day we wandered up and down a village street looking for bikes. On one occasion we had to walk past an old chap coming in the opposite direction on a narrow country lane and we got away with that.
Our aim this time was to steal, (or perhaps only to borrow) a couple of bikes if we could find some unattended. We would use these to get a really good start and get well away from Moosburg before we were missed. But we could never find two unattended bikes together. Having spent several hours on that first night wasting time on the bikes problem we decided that we'd go back to our old technique of walking every night and sleeping up during the days. We had brought enough food for a fortnight and planned to supplement it with nice fresh lettuces and onions from people's allotments. We had a small home-made stove which worked on solid meths tablets and so were able to get a hot meal and hot drinks, though we used it only once each day. So we reckoned we had enough food to last us even if we had to walk all the way to the Swiss border which was about 120 miles away, as the crow flies. In the dark, and across country, the crow didn't fly all that straight!

That first night we made quite good progress. It was a wonderful feeling after several months incarcerated in a compound where you couldn't see any grass, and could only see trees in the distance, to be in real country again. It was bright moonlight. We tried to avoid all roads which probably slowed us down a good deal but it made for a more relaxed journey for us. Each morning at dawn we had to find a hiding place to sleep. It was extraordinary how we were disturbed on almost every occasion. That first morning we had chosen to hide in the centre of a really dense patch of blackberries, at the edge of a wood, miles from anywhere. We were disturbed in the middle of the afternoon by a mother and her child who chose just that place to go blackberrying. Luckily they didn't notice us. On another occasion we hid in the hay at the top of a recently filled barn - the sort of place you'd think would be left undisturbed for months - but a small boy came up the ladder, saw us, and dashed off to tell his Dad. We dashed off and hid in the middle of a nearby wood and waited for darkness. By then it seemed pretty certain that the wood had been surrounded judging from activity we saw on the road at one side of it, but we were aware of them, and where their torches were, and they weren't aware of where we were hiding, so we were able to creep across the road and get away without difficulty.

We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves on that trip. Bright moonlight nights. Crops rather too drenched with dew for our comfort but the sun was hot during the days and we were able to dry off again. It's amazing how keyed up you get on an escape. Your hearing seems much more acute. In fact your awareness of everything around seems set at a higher pitch. One night we had a moonlight swim in Ammersee, a large lake about twenty-five miles west of Munich. It all felt like a well-earned holiday and we thought would have been worth doing on those grounds alone, even if we didn't get away.

After about nine days of this - walking all night, hiding up, usually in the middle of cornfields, all day - we got into the foothills of the mountains a bit east of Garmisch. The terrain became too rugged for us to be able to continue walking cross-country in the dark. We had to risk doing it in daylight and had one glorious day high up in the hills, trying to keep to the uncultivated ridges. But there were a lot of folk around, haymaking, and it wasn't possible to avoid being seen even though we kept our distance! After that one day we had a good night's sleep in a barn and set off again at daybreak next day. We were aiming to get back up to the ridges but on the way were spotted by one of the state gamekeepers, a chap who was armed with a rifle. We optimistically tried to convince him that we were Swiss
tourists on a walking tour but he wasn't having any and not surprisingly because we must have looked a very odd couple. I remember George was wearing a balaclava helmet, his little navy-blue coatee, and his blue blanket trousers which after nine or ten nights of walking through dew-drenched crops were splitting up the seams!

The gamekeeper took us to a nearby kommando where we were questioned and had our passports taken away, and where we were put down in a cellar - an underground boiler-room. That was one of the few occasions when we were actually threatened by a guard who was shouting at us and had drawn his revolver which he was pointing at us in a nasty way. I think we spent one night there and the following day they sent another guard to march us to the nearest railway station, which I suppose was about four miles away - a rather elderly simple soul, as I remember him.

We had gone about a mile from the kommando when we remembered that we hadn't had our passports returned, and as they were our only identification documents it was jolly important to get them back. The guard had a bike, and we persuaded him to go back to collect them. This meant leaving us unattended! He agreed to do so and there we were again with another opportunity to get away but we knew that it would be very unwise to risk being caught wandering about in Germany with no identity document, and we were conscious, too, that the poor old guard would get it in the neck if he'd allowed us to escape again. So we waited for his return and then carried on to the station!

We were taken to another kommando, I think, where we were locked up for another few days before being returned to Moosburg. The German camp commandant at Moosburg must have been a reasonable chap. His policy about punishing escapers was to reward good attempts that had caused his guards little trouble with shorter sentences. They had no idea how we had got out of the camp, and we had been out for longer than others that season before being recaptured, (and then had had several days confinement on the return journey,) so we were let off any further punishment.

Quite soon after that we were needed as medical orderlies in the POW hospital at Freising, got really satisfactory and satisfying work to do, and didn't have any inclination to try to escape again.
Chapter 6

Lazarett Freising was housed in a large Catholic seminary on a rocky hillside in the middle of the town of Freising. It was a superb situation with extensive views south beyond Munich: on a clear day you could see the Austrian alps and if they were visible it was a remarkably reliable indication of impending rain. Freising was a small Bavarian market town some twenty miles northeast of Munich.

The hospital itself consisted of a square central courtyard surrounded by a three storied building. On each floor there was a cloistered corridor overlooking the central court with four or five large wards on the outer sides of the building on each floor. On the ground floor there were rooms used as operating theatres and offices. In the basement were kitchens staffed by nuns who did all the cooking for us. There were also nuns who were trained as theatre sisters. By POW standards it was humane and civilised, and much of the credit for this should go to the catholic nuns. Some credit too to Stabsartz Gruber, the German doctor in charge of the place.

It was a hospital for most nationalities of POW's. There were about fifty British patients; about six were officers and the rest other ranks. George and I were the only two British orderlies. There were a lot more French patients and probably ten or fifteen French orderlies; some Jugoslavs and Poles with two or three orderlies of each nationality and a ward full of Russians who must have had their own staff, though we were not involved with them. Later on there were a few American patients and two American orderlies and an American doctor arrived and after Italy had surrendered to the Allies, there were even Italian patients who were treated by the Germans exactly as other POW's rather than as Germany's ex-allies!

There were no English doctors, just two Polish doctors and later on an American surgeon. Dr Gruber looked after most of the patients and as far as I remember did a frequent, perhaps daily, ward round - certainly of the British patients. Treatment was fairly basic, I suppose. In those days there were no antibiotics, and the only really effective agents against infections were sulphonamides. Prontosil was the German sulphonamide then. Luminal, a barbiturate, was the most used sedative. Cod liver oil ointment seemed to be used a lot and was a rather effective treatment for granulating wounds. Gruber did any surgery that was required and we were often in the theatres when it was going on though it was one of the doctors who assisted.

It was a busy and interesting time for us. George and I must each have had some twenty-five patients to care for. There were all kinds of conditions to cope with, from epileptic fits, asthma attacks, diabetics, amputations. Acute and chronic medical patients were in the same wards, I think, as all kinds of surgical cases. I don't know whether we were any good as nurses but we seemed to be appreciated by the patients and were well treated by the Germans. We went to Freising during the Autumn of 1942 and were there until about the April of 1944. In many ways I think we actually enjoyed life there despite the restrictions. The comradeship within the place was terrific; we were in as good conditions as any prisoners - had quite reasonable sleeping quarters, simple but adequate food
supplemented by Red Cross food parcels and enough exercise (which meant
volleyball in the hospital grounds and walks once a week or so in the countryside
around Freising). I still remember the walks we had along the banks of the river
Isar in the summer and along snowy tracks in the winter.

Freising was one of the centres where patients were considered for repatriation
on medical grounds. So regular visits by Swiss commissions occurred, and as with
each batch that was repatriated there was an exchange of medical personnel our
hopes of being repatriated ourselves kept on being aroused and then dashed. I
suppose at times we were bored but we had books and we were getting letters
from home. On the whole the news we were getting about the war was beginning
to be brighter and as the likelihood of a German victory diminished the guards'
treatment of prisoners improved.

While in Freising I wrote to the Red Cross and asked for some medical text-
books to be sent out to me. I was by then thinking seriously about the prospects of
becoming a doctor. They sent me three books - an old copy of Ostler's Medicine, a
very beautiful book on surgical anatomy and an incomprehensible book on
histology which I couldn't read without having either a medical dictionary or
someone to explain the meaning at half the words! So it wasn't easy to start
becoming a medical student while still a prisoner.

We made some good friends in Freising. Stefan Kuriansky was a delightful
young Polish sanitarer who we used to play bridge with; Paul Maritan was another
great friend - an excellent French guitar player. Ginger Ware, a rear-gunner in the
RAF who had a wonderful Cockney sense of humour despite a painful amputation
of one leg. A charming English officer called Gerard Koch de Gourynd, and lots of
others. Unfortunately we lost touch with all of them after the war.

Eventually, but not until 1944, we were included with a group of wounded for
repatriation and were to be sent off, (by train I suppose though I can't remember
anything of the journey,) to a repatriation hospital at Annaburg in eastern Germany
between Leipzig and Berlin, near the river Elbe.

We once revisited Freising during one of our family holidays years after the war
and found it very much the same old place. There were friendly nuns there still. It
is a place I shall always look back on with only slightly tempered affection.

Annaburg didn't make a deep impression on my memory. We were really just
biding our time waiting for news of our onward journey. I made good friends with a
young German doctor there, Wolf-Dieter Uhlig. He spoke good English and we
had long conversations, alone and usually in the operating theatre. He was very
anti-Nazi and I think always had been. Dieter was one of the German doctors
providing medical care for the returning prisoners. His wife was also medical and
was working in the hospital too. Dieter actively encouraged me towards a medical
career. We last saw Dieter and his wife on August 31st, 1944 when there was
some sort of a farewell "dinner". I didn't hear of them again until I got a letter from
Dieter dated March 31st, 1946 written from Hanover.

In it he told of their adventures after we left. They stayed on at Annaburg; the
last repatriation train left in February, 1945 and by April American and Russian
troops were approaching the camp. Within one night all the German officers and guards had left, marching to the west and crossing the Elbe to avoid capture by the Russians. The Senior British medical officer, a Major Parkes and Dieter, refused to evacuate the camp in such a hurry because there were 150 or more patients who couldn't walk at all. Then Russian troops entered Annaburg. On April 26th the first group of British and American POW's left and Major Parkes, who was in charge, offered to take Dieter and his wife, both dressed up as British soldiers, with them. After several days marching they arrived at a collection centre near Muhlberg and had to leave "those who had been our true comrades during the previous hard days."

A year later, when he wrote, he was working in an UNRRA camp in Hanover. Their house in Hanover had been badly damaged, all his money was with his parents who were still in the Russian Zone, and there was a shortage of food. Worst of all, in his work with displaced persons he had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis.

I started to send them food parcels at about that time. Another letter, half written by Dieter but completed by Marianne because Dieter was so weak, was dated May 14th. 1946. Somehow I had managed to get parcels to them using FAU channels and a representative of the FAU's office in Hanover was visiting him. But all to no avail. Dieter died on July 26th - a very sad loss.

After I left Annaburg at the beginning of September 1944 we went by train, via the outskirts of a very bombed Berlin to Peenemunde (on the Baltic) and thus in a Swedish Red Cross ship to Gothenburg, and then on round the north of Scotland to Liverpool. We were back in England for the first time for nearly five years.
Chapter 7

George and I went down to London from Liverpool by train, reported to FAU head-office at Gordon Square, and then went our separate ways. He caught his train to Watford, I caught mine to Welwyn North. It was Sunday, September 17th, 1944. I know the date exactly because it was the day that British parachutists were landing at Arnhem and literally hundreds of planes, most of them towing gliders, were passing overhead as I travelled home from Kings Cross.

Although I had been looking forward to getting back for the last several years I found it difficult. My experiences and the family’s had been totally different for five years and it took me a long time to feel happy with ordinary day to day interaction with them. I really wanted to be by myself. I think perhaps I needed to be by myself. Certainly I spent a lot of the time during those first few days at Sewells Orchard doing jobs in the garden and avoiding conversations about the times we had spent apart. This must have been as difficult for the family as it was for me.

My father would have been sixty-five in 1944 and was still going into Casella’s every day. He didn’t retire until the end of the war and then moved with Mother up to Lastingham. That was early in 1946. London was still being attacked with V l’s, and V 2’s were just beginning, but the worst of the blitz was already over.

Leonard was actively involved with his BBC duties in the German news and propaganda service. I think at the time he may have been in Luxemburg or somewhere. He had I think recently returned from the USA where he had been co-ordinating English and American policies on broadcasting to Germany. I remember that I was in Annaburg when I got the news that Roger, their first-born had arrived. He had been born in Washington in May, 1944. I had seen photos of Lorna, Leonard’s wife, but I hadn’t met her.

Nan was in personnel management in an armaments factory at Thorp Arch, near Tadcaster. She had been at Oxford, reading Maths, and later at the London School of Economics which had been evacuated to Cambridge, and had then been posted up north. I think she wasn’t at home when I got back, and neither of us can remember meeting each other that day but she says she also saw the planes going over to Arnhem from Sewells Orchard!

I haven’t so far mentioned a major development in our family which had occurred before the war, in 1931 I think. William Littleboy - the old boy in whose house I was born - had adopted twins when he was in his mid-seventies. He had done this because he had married a second wife who was years younger than he, and I suppose they thought it would be a sensible move from everyone's point of view.

The twins were quite young at the time, only a matter of months. Unfortunately the wife died first. She developed some malignancy and committed suicide. W.L. then found a second substitute Mum for them, but again there was a tragedy and that person died young. Shortly afterwards William Littleboy died too, at the age of eighty-five when the twins were ten years old. His will indicated that he hoped they
might join our family at his death. I don't know at what extent this had been discussed with my parents. Probably fully because he had made all kinds of provisions for them and for any financial aspects involved and we had been told of the possibility.

Al and Min (Alice and Mary, they were) had had a very disturbed childhood. They were really fond of William Littleboy, but three deaths among those who had been caring for them, before the age of eleven, must have been traumatic. And the rather sombre and devout atmosphere of South Hill, Selly Oak wasn't a very natural environment in which to bring up young and active kids.

Like many identical twins, I think. They were either as thick as thieves or squabbling like nobody's business! Mother wasn't terribly tolerant of the situation and I think hoped for more affection from them than she was entitled to expect. On the whole it was an arrangement that gave the girls some sort of a family life, but at a cost. It wasn't ideal for them and it certainly produced psychological stress for Mother.

Al and Min went off to a co-ed boarding school, St Christopher's, in Letchworth. For some reason it was thought that they would be better at separate schools and Min went off to the Mount at York, where Nan was at that time one of the older girls. Having joined a family that was more or less grown-up and then being sent off to boarding schools meant that the twins were a bit short of local friends when at Tewin.

When I returned to England Min was working on a farm somewhere; she was engaged to an American sergeant. Al had started a nursing training but it was interrupted when she got married to a young forestry officer and went with him to Nyasaland where he was drowned within weeks of the birth of their daughter. (The story was told by Laurens van der Post in "Venture to the Interior" much to Al's chagrin at the time.) Min married Jim, a young farmer who she had met at a training course in St Albans, and they have been living on a small farm in Addingham, near Ilkley, ever since. She has written a rather good account of her childhood.

Al unfortunately developed cancer of the ovary some years later but when she was still quite young. She died in St Mary's when we were living in Jordans. Al had asked me to find out from the consultant who operated on her whether it was a malignant tumour or not and to tell her, honestly. It was and I did, but I don't think I did it very well and she had a rather miserable end.

After a few weeks I managed to get the terms of my exemption from military service changed to allow me to become a medical student. My parents had generously given me enough money to allow me at least to be able to start. Luckily, and somewhat surprisingly, the powers that be allowed people in my position to apply for ex-service grants and I was given one. Having made all the arrangements I was accepted by a cramming college in Eccleston Square to swot for first MB which I hoped to do - more or less from scratch - in six months. Only at that stage did I get hold of a publication of old first MB exam papers and realise, with horror, what I had let myself in for!
Leonard and Lorna were now installed in a flat in Westbourne Terrace, in Paddington. They kindly offered me a room and for some weeks I was there. I found the first MB work really quite tough - especially tough were chemistry, which I hadn't done since matric days and biology which I hadn't done since even earlier. Most of the other students at the cramming place were aiming to be medical students, and were a hard-working lot and the tuition was good.

Luckily I passed and then had to apply for a place in a medical school. St Mary’s and the Middlesex were the only two that hadn't been seriously disrupted by the bombing and so I applied to both of them. St Mary’s was only round the corner and I was offered an interview there. I was seen by Lord Moran, the Dean at the time. I had good supporting letters from Muriel Bromley-Davenport, a big shot in the British Red Cross, and from Dr Gruber from Freising who both gave favourable accounts of our work as POW's and luckily Moran accepted me for a place that October. So I never needed to proceed with the Middlesex.

I wasn't at 50 Westbourne Terrace very long. I found a room in Bayswater which was adequate and within walking distance of St Mary's. It was the autumn of 1945. The war had come to an end but there was still austerity and food and petrol rationing. Our year at St Mary's included seven or eight ex-service students. It was the first year that had done so. The older chaps, like me, all had a clear idea of where they wanted to go and realised that they were going to be in a mess if they didn't pass all their exams at the first try. So it was an enthusiastic and very hard working class, and was said to be one of the best classes they had had.

I thoroughly enjoyed the work, which I found extremely interesting. Second MB proved easier than first MB and Finals easier than second MB. I made a lot of good friends there. I teamed up with three others and we developed a way of working together which proved helpful. The other three were Harry Barclay, Ted Cooper, and Leslie Capel. Harry, who married a very bright lass who was working with him at Glaxo's, Brenda Ryman, was really a part time student in as much as he was still employed as a biochemist by Glaxo. He went on from St Mary's to become a consultant pathologist but died of a coronary while still relatively young. (Brenda became Professor of Biochemistry at Charing Cross, and later was elected Mistress of Girton.) Ted was the brightest of us and went on to become Professor of Cancer Research at Leeds. Leslie married a BBC producer and became a consultant at the Brompton. But as students we all worked hard and managed between us to carry off most of the prizes!

As a student I had been elected Secretary of the SMH Medical Society, which held meetings every month or so at which distinguished folk were invited to talk and then go out to dinner with the President and members of the committee. One of those invited by me was George Bernard Shaw. I still possess his reply which was on a printed postcard. It reads as follows;

“Mr. Bernard Shaw has long since been obliged by advancing years to retire from his committees and his personal activities on the platform. He therefore begs secretaries of societies to strike his name from their lists of available speakers. Mr. Shaw does not open exhibitions or bazaars, take the chair, speak at public dinners, give his name as vice-president or patron, make appeals for money on behalf of “good causes” (however
deserving), nor do any ceremonial public work. Neither can he take part in new movements nor contribute to the first numbers of new magazines. He begs his correspondents to excuse him accordingly.”

The card was dated 22/8/1949. After the words “advancing years” on the first line he had written in ink ’93’. A pity! Shaw had little sympathy for orthodox medicine and would have been a good catch!

Anyway, we qualified in May, 1950 but that was after another and more important landmark in my life!
Chapter 8

March 9th, 1945 is an important date in the Miall and Scott archives. Nan and Joe were married in Lastingham church and I met Mary for the first time.

Nan and Joe first met in Oxford, as students. Joe was called up in the middle of his degree course, joined the Royal Armoured Corps as a tank commander and was in his tank rather too close to the German lines in Belgium and was wounded in the shoulder and chest. He was sent back to England and landed up in Harewood House for convalescence. Nan at that time was doing her stuff in Thorp Arch, and met Joe again. That must have been towards the latter part of 1944.

Mary and I met in York station on the way to the wedding. It was a war-time wedding and there were very few folk there. Mary was the bridesmaid and I was the best man. The only non-family person there was Geoffrey Berry. At that time and for a few months after the wedding I was living in a scruffy room in Inverness Place, opposite Bayswater underground station. Mary and I met occasionally there and subsequently at 19 Coram Street, where Nan's friend Bickie Wood had offered me the rental of their flat there. By the Coram street days George Greenwood had returned to England after his second stint with the FAU in Europe and he and I shared that flat with another ex-FAU chap, John Harrison. George had been offered the place in Casella's that Dad had been keeping open for me.

In January 1946 Nan and Joe acquired a house in Headington. Joe had been released from the army and was back at Queens to finish his degree. Mary and I met pretty often after that and went on holiday with N. and J. to the Isle of Skye during the summer of 1947.

The Skye holiday was a bit of a joke. Nan and Joe had an old Riley; we had an old motorbike. I mean I had an old motorbike! A Norton 500, which Mary learnt to drive one morning when we were camping near the Pass of Glencoe. That afternoon we were careering through the Pass of Glencoe, Mary at the controls, me hanging on for dear life on the pillion seat. "Can you remember how to stop?" I don't suppose she could, but somehow we survived despite her travelling at about sixty mph along an unfenced road in sheep country! Mad. Most of our courting was in the Peak district from Sheffield but we had another holiday together at Rose Castle, chaperoned by my parents. That holiday, which was in October 1947, was curtailed by a telegram telling Dad that his sister, my Aunt Winifred, had died. We had to return home. Winifred had had a rather miserable end. She had earlier come to live with us at Sewells Orchard but had then needed nursing home care. She had moderately severe Parkinson's disease and went to two places in Ealing where she just vegetated. The last time I met Lawrence Wager was at Winifred's funeral.

Mary and I didn't get married until May 11th, 1948. Our wedding was also a small one; it took place at Ranmoor Church, which was the regular church for Mary and the 100 Watt Laners. The Reverend Foster officiated and told us that in his view there were three qualities needed for a successful marriage: tolerance, a
sense of humour and longsuffering. Not bad advice, I think, except that it has given Mary the idea that she has been longsuffering ever since!

We had our honeymoon at Saas Fee, in the Swiss alps near Zermatt. Because we had booked in at a hotel we had to economise on the journey, jolly well, and went by train to Dover and then overnight on the cheapest possible channel crossing. Then on to Paris for the inside of that day and thus onwards on another overnight and therefore cheap train journey. We didn't have a bed for either of the first two nights of our marriage!

In those days Saas Fee was accessible only by foot, up a long climbing pathway punctuated by little Catholic shrines every few hundred yards. Luggage had to be sent up on mules. The scenery was breath-takingly beautiful. There were then only about five hotels in Saas Fee, and most of them were empty. As far as I can remember there was only one other person staying in our hotel - a very nice Dutch medical student who was convalescing from tuberculosis, Hans Appelboom. We got quite friendly with Hans but have never been in touch with him since, though we've made unsuccessful attempts to try to find whether he was listed in the Dutch equivalent of the medical register.

We returned to Saas Fee on our way back from a holiday in Italy three or four years ago and were astonished by the changes. There must have been a hundred or more hotels by then and the old village was unrecognisable.

We went back to a little flat in Twickenham. 72 Churchview Road. Mary got a job teaching in Staines but only until Henrietta started to make her presence felt. Henrietta was the intra-uterine name for Hugh who was born in St Mary's on March 27th, 1948. Mary was three weeks past her expected date of delivery, and it took several doses of castor oil and attendance at an exciting boat race to get Hugh on the move. His late arrival had stimulated the exchange of a series of jokesy poems between us and Nan and Joe. Here is an example, written by Joe:-

Henrietta! Can you hear me
Through that bulging epidermis,
Hear me tell you your full term is
Two weeks past? Hey! Henrietta!
P'raps you'd hear a little better
If you weren't quite so anterior –
Occiput a little nearer
To the daylight. Less insistence
On this uterine existence.

Can 'ee hear me what I tell 'ee
Sloshing round in Mummy's belly?
Can't you make a little crack
In the amniotic sac?
Life in fluid may be snug
But now's the time to pull the plug,
And take a header down the drain.
One plunge and then the sailing's plain.
Life in there is dim I know,
I was once an embryo -
Found it very dull and flat -
Hadn't room to swing a cat.
Here placentae just aren't worn.
Take my tip, and please be born.

Mary and Hugh between them had provided me with lots of first-hand experience of palpating a pregnant tummy and listening to a foetal heart and when I got honours in Finals, with a distinction in obstetrics and gynae, they reckoned that they deserved all the credit!

While living at Twickenham we acquired a little bright red Austin 10 sports car which I used to get me from Twick to St Mary's everyday. We called it BAT - its registration letters. BAT became quite a feature of our lives in those days. It took us to Teddington or Twickenham or Richmond on lots of Saturday afternoons to watch rugger matches and it took us up North for visits to Sheffield and Lastingham. Stan Peart and Mike Hamilton, the two registrars on the medical unit at St Mary's when I qualified and applied for that plum job, under George Pickering, reckoned that BAT was responsible for me getting the offer because they guessed (rightly) that they would be able to borrow it!

I was delighted to get the Medical Unit house physician job. George Pickering was the Professor of Medicine and in a class of his own among the physicians there. He was a really great teacher and a charming chap and he led a group of doctors who made high blood pressure, which was his speciality, their speciality. And I was to join that group.

George Pickering had been one of the team of chaps working under Sir Thomas Lewis at University College Hospital in the 1930s who together coined the term "Clinical Science". Not only did they use that term but they introduced a new, questioning, scientific and experimental approach to medicine which really was an innovation. Others in that team included Harold Himsworth who succeeded Lewis as Professor of Medicine there and later was appointed Secretary of the Medical Research Council, Wilfred Trotter, J.H (Yonkie) Kellgren, and Philip D'Arcy Hart. Archie Cochrane, who had interrupted his medical studies at UCH by going out to help in the Spanish Civil War returned to UCH to be taught by the Tommy Lewis team. Several of them, George Pickering, Wilfred Trotter, Yonkie Kellgren and D'Arcy Hart, collaborated with us in the South Wales studies which I joined later.

The Medical Unit job at St Mary's was a very exacting but very interesting one. I was HP not only for the medical unit but also for Tommy Kemp, a physician at SMH who was probably better known then as a recent (late 1940s) English rugger captain, and for the Psychiatry Dept, though I can't now recollect any psychiatric beds or psychiatric patients I had to deal with. While I was doing Pickering's job I got involved in a minor way with collecting blood pressure measurements for a study he, John Fraser Roberts, Clive Sowry and Mike Hamilton were to publish on the nature of essential hypertension.

We had stopped renting the flat in Twickenham while I was resident in SMH and Mary had gone with Hugh, who was about fifteen months old, to live with my uncle...
and aunt, Hugh and Mollie, in Berkhamsted. By then Mary was preggy again. Uncle Hugh was a diabetic, and the sort of happy-go-lucky chap who won't bother to control it properly. Uncle Hugh was admitted to St Mary's while I was there, into another firm, but they never got good control of his diabetes and he died later that summer. Though happy-go-lucky he was a lovely chap and in our childhood we had a lot of fun on the various farms that Hugh and Mollie owned.

Our second son, Steve, was born in Sheffield in October, 1950. Mary had gone back to be with her mother (always affectionately known as Ma Scott) while I was still on the house at St Mary's. I remember coming up to the Jessop Hospital to see a tiny very dark haired shrimp a day or two after he was born and then having to rush back to London again.

I suppose my job at St Mary's ended in November, 1950. By then we had been living in London quite long enough and decided to look for a job within reasonable access of nice country. An SHO job at a sanatorium near Ilkley was advertised and I applied and got it. It satisfied the criteria in terms of access to super country in the Yorkshire Dales, but choosing a job largely on the position of the hospital isn't really very sensible! I enjoyed the job, nevertheless, and we enjoyed being together again.

We lived in an enormous and very cold flat in a building called Heathmount Hall, in Ilkley. My memories of Heathmount Hall include Hugh inventing the word "rou", for sugar, a sheepdog puppy called Barney which we had been given and which seemed to be more or less permanently attached by the teeth to the back of Hugh's nappies, and a huge bath which we could only fill with hot water to a depth of about two inches, so shared hot baths were the order of the day.

At Middleton Sanatorium I worked for a consultant physician, Dr Bertram Mann, and assisted a surgeon, Jimmy Davidson, with operations which were largely thoracoplasties for TB. There was a medical superintendent, Dr Raeburn, and two other junior doctors, a young Irish girl called Maureen O'Callaghan, and a fifty year old Irishman who preferred to remain a house physician though he must have been qualified for years. His name was Clancy. Dr Clancy had his own method of practicing medicine. He had a fixed set of medicines which went with a fixed set of symptoms. Cough got one mixture, stomach ache another. There was no question of trying to investigate the cause of the cough or the stomach ache. I remember on one occasion he sent a blood specimen from the patient in the next bed when he had failed to get one from the intended patient! I have always been a bit suspicious of Dublin medical qualifications since meeting Clancy.

I was lucky because that unwise method of choosing a job didn't seem to have any seriously adverse effect on my subsequent career. Towards the end of 1951 George Pickering received a letter from Dr Charles Fletcher, the then Director of the MRC Pneumoconiosis Research Unit in South Wales, asking whether he could recommend anyone for a job as assistant to Archie Cochrane in his epidemiological study of the role of tuberculosis in causing the progressive massive fibrosis in the lungs of coalminers. The same letter had gone to all the professors of medicine in London, I learnt later. Mike Hamilton had reminded George that I was in the TB world and thus I heard about the vacancy and, of
course, I had the unfair advantage of already knowing Archie a little from our POW days.

We had gone to Ilkley on Christmas Eve the previous year. The removal van had run off the road in a snowstorm and didn't arrive till late in the evening. Meanwhile we had been waiting there, in the cold, with two tiny kids. Luckily our neighbours had kindly lent us beds and given us food. When we left Ilkley we avoided risking that sort of nonsense again and Mary went back to Watt Lane while I went down to South Wales. Archie gave me accommodation for some weeks while we looked for a house for ourselves.
Chapter 9

Curiously, as a medical student I had read about the work of the Pneumoconiosis Research Unit (PRU) and thought to myself that's just the sort of work I would like to be involved with. It had the right sort of mix of 'do gooding' and scientific interest. PRU was attached to Llandough Hospital, outside Penarth, three or four miles from Cardiff. It was a pretty impressive place in terms of its staff.

Charles Fletcher was the Director. He was the son of Morley Fletcher who had been the first Secretary of the Medical Research Committee - the forerunner of the Medical Research Council. Charles's mother was a Cropper, and had been brought up in Burneside. His aunt had lived in Hollin Hall which now is our near neighbour! Charles had been appointed to that job as quite a young chap. He had previously worked in Oxford where amongst other things he had been the first doctor ever to inject Penicillin into a patient. Charles was also one of the first diabetics to be treated with insulin. His diabetes had been diagnosed when he was quite a kid. (Insulin was discovered in 1926, I think. Charles was born in 1911). So Charles is now 84, and has been injecting himself, sticking the needle through his trousers, for almost seventy years! I have frequently witnessed that for myself.

John Gilson was Deputy-director. John had been at Cambridge and then at Barts with Charles, and in the war had been at Farnborough doing physiological research into the respiratory problems in flying. John was a great gadgeteer. When Charles resigned the directorship, and went on to be Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at the Hammersmith Hospital, John took his place, and with his wide interests and skills was an excellent director of a unit which covered the wide spectrum of disciplines needed for the study of dust disease in coal-miners.

Archie came third in the hierarchy of those days. He had also been at Cambridge and may have overlapped with Charles there. The two others I came into close contact with on reaching South Wales were Peter Oldham, a very bright statistician, and Martin Wright, a pathologist who was always more interested in bio-engineering than in pathology.

Peter Oldham and Martin Wright and Archie were all bachelors in those days. Archie was a wealthy bachelor and owned Rhoose Farm House where they all lived together. He was not only wealthy but also had very good taste in pictures, and at that time was buying pictures and sculptures by artists before they had really made their names. Before we left South Wales he was the proud possessor of, amongst other things, a Barbara Hepworth sculpture in his garden, a Michael Ayrton sculpture in his drawing-room, a Ben Nicholson abstract, a J.D.Fergusson portrait and one of Josef Herman's pictures of miners. When Archie died in 1988 he left part of his estate to Green College, Oxford and part to his nephew Joe. Some of his pictures were sold at that time and we were told, I think, that the Ben Nicholson sold for £180,000 and the Fergusson for £240,000 (a record price for a Fergusson). Archie probably paid only a hundred or so for each of them. He must also have endowed the research establishment in Oxford, now known as the Cochrane Centre, which is both perpetuating his name and providing medical
researchers with a very useful service - the collection and collation of information on respectable clinical trials worldwide.

Peter was closely involved with my blood pressure research later on, and Martin Wright was a person who we kept in touch with till retirement because we both finished our careers at Northwick Park Hospital, Harrow where the MRC had built a large establishment, the Clinical Research Centre.

We found a house in Clive Place, Penarth - a rather rambling old end-terrace house which suited us well enough from 1952 till 1959. Penarth wasn't an unfriendly place but it was clique-ish, and we weren't Welsh. Most of our friends were folk we met through the unit. Hugh and Steve went to the local elementary school and had to learn Welsh.

Sally was born in 1953 in St David's Hospital, Cardiff. She was born before 10.30 am after Mary had made the early morning cup of tea, had laid the fire, and had got herself down to Cardiff by ambulance! I visited that night. The nurse went off to bring the babe from the separate nursery for us to coo over which we duly did. A nice wee babe with a complete set of fingers and toes etc. but somehow it didn't seem quite right. I think we were both being polite to each other and coo-ed a good deal more than necessary until we read the label round the babe's ankle, which said "Timothy" on it. Whereupon we both guffawed, much to the amusement of the rest of the ward! But we took the right little babe home with us and I can still visualise Hughie jumping up and down with excitement when his wee sister came home for the first time.

Chris was born in the same hospital: it was another occasion when Mary had to take castor oil - not because he was overdue but in an attempt to let him have 5/5/55 as his date of birth. She missed by only a few hours.

When I joined PRU the epidemiological section was halfway through the first stage of an ambitious project called the Rhondda Fach scheme. The Rhondda Fach is the smaller of the two Rhondda valleys. It had four coal mines in those days and a total population of about 20,000 as far as I remember. The scheme was designed to determine the role of tuberculosis in causing the high incidence of PMF, progressive massive fibrosis, in the lungs of susceptible miners. The plan was to X-ray all adults, Mantoux test all kids, arrange treatment for all with TB and thereby hope to reduce the infectivity of TB in that Rhondda Fach population. The next valley, the Aberdare valley, was similar in most respects. It also had four pits and a similar sized population and it acted as a control. No special arrangements were made to clean up TB in that valley. Miners and ex-miners in both valleys were X-rayed before and at intervals after the clean-up and it was hoped that there would be a reduction in the incidence of PMF in the Rhondda Fach. I came in when the Little Rhondda population had been surveyed for the first time and the X-raying of the miners in the Aberdare pits was still to be done.

Archie had recruited a team of chaps to help with the survey work. Some like Gwilym and Hugh were ex-miners living in the valleys; their role was particularly to persuade folk to collaborate, often by visiting them at home. Gwilym was particularly skillful at that. Response rates of less than 90% weren't acceptable. Others were chosen for other skills - Fred, for example, was a male nurse who
was obsessinally accurate and fussy about keeping orderly records. Archie and I were the only medics.

The X-raying had to catch miners who were working shifts and we therefore had to work unusual hours. I had to quickly learn how to read pneumoconiosis on chest x-rays, and give appropriate advice. Because of the awkward hours, and the distance of the Aberdare valley from Penarth, we decided to rent a caravan and to live up there. We found a farmer at Ynysybwl who let us put our caravan on his land which was high up on the hillside separating the two valleys. We arrived there, with three little kids, in a snowstorm, at Easter 1953. Sally must have been only three months old. It was fun until all three of the kids caught whooping cough of all things, with its associated vomiting. This complicated life in a caravan! I remember we were in that caravan when the coronation took place, and when Everest was climbed for the first time.

At about that time I decided to try to get my membership (of the Royal College of Physicians). Trying to swot up small-print medicine while on survey, in a caravan with three kids with whooping cough wasn't ideal. I got as far as the final viva but was then questioned about the mode of action of various drugs which I hadn't been using for a couple of years, and didn't know the answers, and was rightly failed. Archie, thinking that having reached the final viva I was sure to pass very kindly bought me a three volume early - perhaps first - edition of 'The Dynasts' by Thomas Hardy. In it he wrote:-

"28th April, 1953. A small token of my deep and humble admiration of your 'clinical delinquency', which it is hoped, being a history of one epic struggle, will serve to remind you of another epic struggle in the Rhondda Fach. Archie"

Archie, with his tongue in his cheek, considered clinicians as delinquents. He achieved clinical respectability himself in 1961 when he was elected to the membership, (under bye-law 117) followed by the fellowship in 1965. I achieved clinical respectability myself in the same way in 1976 and 1977. I hadn't had the energy and enthusiasm to try sitting the exam again.

It was soon after that that we recognised the potential of the Rhondda Fach as a field for epidemiological research into other conditions which could be accurately defined and reliably measured. And having the Rhondda Fach population defined by private census, and on Hollerith punch cards - the nearest approach to computerisation in those days - we were in a position to get representative samples of the general population and get involved with research into other conditions, and this was really in the very earliest days of chronic disease epidemiology as currently known.

I was keen to start studies of the factors influencing blood pressure, and we consulted George Pickering and Fraser Roberts about them. It was at about this time that a heated debate was starting between Robert Platt, Professor of Medicine in Manchester, and George Pickering about the nature of essential hypertension. The debate later was known as the battle between the jousting knights. Both of them got knighthoods. Platt took the view that essential hypertension was a discrete entity transmitted by a single gene and therefore due
to one specific biochemical disorder which you either had or you didn't have. Pickering believed that essential hypertension represented no more than the upper end of a continuous distribution of blood pressure and was influenced by lots of factors of which one was polygenic inheritance.

One of the difficulties faced by both Platt and Pickering was that they had to start their studies with hospital populations and studied patients selected as having blood pressures which were above some arbitrary threshold. We were in a good position to study the distribution of blood pressure in people, and families, that were not selected in that sort of way. We took a random sample of the Rhondda Fach population and I visited them all at home, and we got blood pressure and other measurements from over 95%, and from their parents, siblings and children living within reasonable range. This was the first of a series of longitudinal studies of hypertension in the general population which later included an agricultural population in South Wales and eventually similarly defined populations in Jamaica.

This isn't the place for describing the results, but in general our findings strongly supported Pickering rather than Platt. Blood pressure was continuously distributed in the general population and relatives tended to resemble each other in blood pressure to the same sort of extent whether their pressures were high, average or low. This is what would be expected if blood pressure was determined by polygenic inheritance. Pickering described all this in a book entitled *The nature of Essential Hypertension* which he dedicated

"To my friends in whose company this adventure has been pursued, and especially John Fraser Roberts and Peter Oldham, who contributed the mathematics, Michael Hamilton, William Miall and Clive Sowry, who collected most of the data and Robert Platt who proved that disagreement does not dim but may enhance friendship"

At this stage the unit was still primarily involved with studies of industrial diseases, including their epidemiology but increasingly we became involved in studies of the epidemiology of a number of other conditions; anaemia, goitre, rheumatoid arthritis, psychiatric disorders, ophthalmic conditions as well as chronic bronchitis, TB, and other pulmonary diseases.

One very interesting study which I did was on Caplan's Syndrome. Tony Caplan was a doctor on the Pneumoconiosis Medical Panel, in Cardiff. He claimed that rheumatoid arthritis (R.A) could be diagnosed in some coalworkers from their chest X-rays. He recognised that a distinctive type of PMF, associated with a number of discrete rounded opacities on the X-ray, seemed to indicate a rheumatoid diathesis. We offered him the opportunity to have his observation confirmed or refuted. From all the Rhondda Fach X-rays of miners and ex-miners we got him to pick out those he thought would be in men with rheumatoid arthritis. He picked out twenty, I think. We matched these with X-rays showing ordinary PMF, simple pneumoconiosis, and no pneumoconiosis from chaps of the same age. I visited all these men without prior knowledge of their X-ray status and
examined them. We also did blood tests for the rheumatoid factor, and X-rays of hands and feet. The study confirmed Tony Caplan’s claim. More than half of those with the characteristic lesions had R.A. R.A. was also more common in men with PMF than in the other groups, significantly so as far as I can remember, but nowhere near as common as in those with the rounded type of lesion. It was perhaps the first time that a new syndrome was confirmed with a carefully controlled study of this kind. Caplan’s syndrome is an interesting oddity. It seemed to indicate a tendency towards a different kind of tissue reaction in the lungs of men with, or liable to get, rheumatoid arthritis. In some of these men we could predict the arthritis but were unable to do anything to prevent it.

During these studies we collaborated with Yonkie Kellgren and his team in Manchester and later they carried out their own studies of the prevalence of arthritis in populations we were using for other purposes. Wilfred Trotter helped with thyroid disorders.

Archie was an interesting but in many ways an odd character. We really got on very well together though he was sometimes rather inclined to overdo the prima-donna role! He was very kind indeed to our family. Sometimes we thought he overdid his visits to us which always seemed to coincide with bedtime for the kids on Sunday nights, but he was a bachelor and yet was very fond of, and good with, children. He was a tremendously generous host and was always inviting us out to Rhoose for parties and posh dinners. He also regularly invited us to dinners with Bill and Pam Foreman at a French restaurant in the middle of the docks in Cardiff. Bill was a delightful New Zealander, Medical superintendent of Sully Hospital. Pam, his wife, was a particular friend of Mary’s. The Foremans had the same experience as we did of Archie’s Sunday evening visits and had the same views about them!

Charles Fletcher had resigned from his Directorship of the unit in 1952, fairly soon after I joined it. In a letter he wrote to me after he’d left he said, amongst other things, "You have got a big job to do - not only in the future as you learn more and more about epidemiological research and begin to do it independently perhaps - but now in helping Archie especially through the emotional contortions with which he tortures himself!" How very true!
Chapter 10

Emotional contortions or not we really got very fond of Archie. Over the years we had a number of trips overseas with him. One of the early ones was to Barcelona, for a meeting of the American Society of Chest Physicians. Goodness knows why we were reporting to that rather odd group. Archie took his Jaguar, flying it across the channel, and we motored all the way. Stewart Kilpatrick, who was also at PRU at the time, made up the fourth. We didn't know at the time that Mary's car sickness was really morning sickness and that Chris in utero was responsible!

On the way south through France we were lucky enough to visit the Lascaux caves and it was during the time they were open to the public. Then on south from there and over the Pyrenees, via Andora, to Barcelona. I can't remember much about the conference except that John Crofton joined our group; he was the professor of chest diseases in Edinburgh. The other memorable event occurred at the start of the opening plenary session of the conference when a technician while up on the stage holding a microphone in each hand was almost electrocuted. He was unable to let go with either hand and the audience of a couple of thousand or more medics was unable to do more than shout to someone to switch the current off. It was nearly a very embarrassing, tragic occasion.

We combined that conference with a week's holiday on the Costa Brava, at a little place called Tamariou. I had lots of other conferences about then with Archie, but Mary couldn't come on most of them. One of the real perks of epidemiology was its international aspect which brought interesting contacts with people from other countries. We had a lot of visitors at PRU. It was probably the leading centre for industrial chest disease in the world at that time. No good work was coming out of the States where the coalmines were all privately owned and the trade unions were powerless to get proper surveillance of the health of miners.

Unfortunately my father - Bomore, as everyone called him by then, (a name coined by one of his grandchildren) - didn't survive to see his namesake, Rowland Christopher. Dad died in Scarborough Hospital on March 23rd, 1955 having had his prostate removed. Prostatectomy in those days was often a pretty lethal procedure. Dad and his older brother Stephen both died following prostate ops, each at the age of seventy-five. When mine started giving trouble I determined I wouldn't wait till that age and I suppose it has paid off, though had I waited a few more years I'd have got away with the less traumatic apple-coring operation.

Dad was a bit of a joke. He had a very nice sense of humour and there are lots of stories about him - mostly his stories and nearly all of them told against him. A characteristic one was when he was asked by Mother to write to the owners of a rather posh hotel in Lastingham, Lastingham Grange, to thank them for providing particularly good hospitality for Leonard and Lorna and their family who were over from the States and needed more room than Causeway could manage. Dad duly wrote, showed his letter to Garnee who thought it wasn't gushy enough, did a second gushier version, and unfortunately made the mistake of putting both into the same envelope and posting them!
He told another story of an experience he had in the black-out during the war. He had been invited out for an evening meal by some relatives and offered to escort one of the other guests, a woman, home on the bus. When the bus came, Dad sat down in the dark next to some other woman and started to make polite conversation with her until she said that she wasn't Dad's friend. "I would be very grateful if you'd tell me which my friend is" Dad said!

On another occasion he had walked down to the village shop in Lastingham and had bought himself an ounce of pipe tobacco. When he got back he opened the packet, poured the tobacco on to the kitchen floor, and then swept it up into his tobacco tin. "That's how you make two ounces of tobacco out of one" he told my cousin Mary Dennis who was there at the time! Enough stories about Dad. In any case they don't sound as funny when someone else is telling them.

Fairly soon after Dad's death Mother sold Causeway and tried sharing a house with her sister Muriel Dennis and her husband, Uncle Herbert. In fact they tried a number of different menages but it really wasn't a very sensible or satisfactory arrangement. Eventually, Mother went to live with Nan and Joe, having a granny-flat in their house in Glossop. and this was a good solution to her problems. Mother lived with N. and J. until her ninetieth birthday, and having achieved that target she seemed to stop trying to survive any longer. She died peacefully, on July 1st, 1975 having spent her last afternoon watching Wimbledon. It was a good way to go. I had just arrived at N. and J.'s house that afternoon and was with her when she died. She had had a good life and was ready to go; she begged me not to call the doctor.

During the last few years of her life Mother had struck up a remarkable friendship with Joyce Grenfell. Nan had invited Joyce, who was a well-known and talented actress who specialised in very amusing 'one-man' sketches, to Glossop to give an evening's entertainment in aid of a charity that Nan was active in. Joyce stayed the night with them and from that time until Mother's death in 1975 they exchanged letters every two or three weeks and often saw each other. Garnee features in a book of Joyce's memoirs, and Joyce came to her funeral service and spoke very kindly of her.

We had some goad holidays during the 1950s. Sometimes on our own, sometimes with Nan and Joe, sometimes with others like George and Ros and their kids, and Martin Lidbetter and his son. During the early 1960's several were camping holidays on the continent. On those camping holidays we seemed to be always either driving, putting up or taking down tents, cooking or sleeping! They weren't very restful as holidays but we enjoyed them.

In 1957 I was given the opportunity to learn more about what was going on in epidemiological circles in the States and had an extremely interesting trip round most of the main centres in the Eastern seaboard cities. As I was packing to leave I had things strewn over the bedroom floor. and Chris was found with a half empty bottle of soluble aspirins in his hand. We had no idea how many he had eaten so we had to take him into Llandough Hospital to have his stomach washed out and I remember how very fed up he was to be left on his own there! My American trip was a good one from my point of view but not so good from Mary's, because she
had to cope with the family on her own for about three months, and by then we had four children covering an age span of eight years down to one.

The blood pressure research in South Wales, which was a study involving two different populations - the Little Rhondda families and a similar group based on families in the agricultural Vale of Glamorgan, had gone quite well and had revealed a number of factors which influenced pressure. We thought it might be rewarding to see whether the same factors were important in a very different population where the prevalence of high blood pressure was reported to be much higher. This led us on to thinking about a similar sort of study in a Jamaican population. Jamaica had certain advantages over other Western countries with black populations. It was English speaking, it had had compulsory registration of births since some time back in the 1870s as far as I can remember so it was thought that people would know their ages. But it also had an MRC unit there - John Waterlow's Tropical Metabolism Research Unit (TMRU). We got in touch with John and he came down to PRU to discuss the possibilities.

All this led on to the decision to go out there and see what was feasible. So early in 1959 Mary and I and Hugh, then aged 10, Steve, aged 8, Sally, 5, and Chris, 3, set off on board a cargo boat, the Suncliffe, to Jamaica via Bermuda. Sally had her 6th birthday on board and the ship's cook produced a birthday cake and chocolate wrapped up in seaweed as a special present from Neptune!

The Suncliffe transported either bananas or bauxite from the West Indies to Canada, general cargoes from Canada to England and then returned to Jamaica again, I suppose with general cargo for the West Indies, to repeat the process. When we were on it the ship must have been half empty, and it was really quite rough weather. As a result the propeller kept coming right out of the water which shuddered the whole ship. To avoid this they reduced speed and instead of it being a ten day journey it turned into a three week one.

There were only eight passengers on board. An elderly retired couple who seemed to be spending their retirement going round the world on cargo ships, and six Mialls. Mary had brought lots of things for the kids to play with so they were O.K. but the game that was most fun was sliding up and down on a mat on the cabin floor as the Suncliffe heeled over from 45 degrees one way to 45 degrees the other. Bumps, as Chris was called in those days - (derived somehow from Christopher Crumps) - got involved in a good natured wrestling match with Steve when we were three quarters of the way to Bermuda. and broke his collar-bone. We had this confirmed by X-ray in Bermuda where Bumps created the biggest fuss and screaming since the episode with the soluble aspirins at Llandough Hospital! Bermuda was our first experience of Caribbean-like weather, coral beaches and palm trees. I suppose we were only there a couple of days and then we went on, in calmer weather to Jamaica. That part of the journey was memorable for the flying fish.

John Waterlow met us in Kingston harbour and Ken Stuart drove us up to the University in his car. Ken is a Barbadian. Bumps sitting in the back seat was fascinated by Ken's hair and asked whether his own hair would grow crinkly like that! He'd been told I suppose that he'd get sunburnt and brown after a few weeks in that sunny clime and didn't know quite how brown and what else to expect.
The Cruikshanks had managed to arrange accommodation for us on the University campus. Eric Cruikshank was Professor of Medicine at the University of the West Indies, Ann was his wife. The Vice Chancellor's house was empty at the time and we were housed there! It was a superb house with a spectacular view towards the Blue Mountains. Not only was it a super house - the best on the campus - but Ann had found us domestic help and had been out and bought us what we needed in the way of groceries etc. for the first day or two and borrowed little beds and crockery for us. We soon learnt that this kind of help for new arrivals was fairly standard procedure at UWI but it was the first time we had come across it and we were much impressed.

This was the beginning of another important and exciting phase of our lives.
Chapter 11

Life in Jamaica really was pretty exciting. There were always unpredictable things happening. Nothing ever went quite according to expectations. And at first everything was strange and thrilling. The light and the colours in that strong sunlight were lovely and the scenery with the backdrop of the Blue Mountains, going up to about 7000 ft. was spectacular. Almost every day in that early part of the year was clear and bright; it was like the best English summer weather day after day. And the birds and flowering shrubs and trees were all unfamiliar and interesting.

The University of the West Indies had been founded in 1948, I think. It was founded as a University College, part of London University, and students in those early days took London degrees. It was largely financed by the Commonwealth Office. The campus was at Mona, some six or seven miles from the centre of Kingston, and as university campuses go it was really beautiful. Mona had been a sugar estate. and there were still the remains of some old aqueducts on the campus but otherwise the buildings were new and modern in their architecture. The University housing was a mile away on what was called College Common, and that again was architecturally interesting and well designed for that hot climate. Most but not all of the buildings were single storey structures with wide verandahs. The gardens were gay with bourgainvilia, and hibiscus and pouie trees.

We had a lot of arrangements to make; schools for the kids; a car; contacts with the medical school; office accommodation for me. The school was the least of the problems; Miss Butler's was where all the university kids of primary school age went. She was reputed to give a good basic education. Miss Butler herself was a bit of a snob. She insisted on keeping the same dates for terms and holidays in her wee school as those that Eton kept! Hugh and Steve went to Miss Butler's straightaway - Sal, who had only just had her sixth birthday waited till the beginning of the next term.

John Waterlow kindly offered me a room in his unit as a base. Dr Harold Johnson who was in charge of the department of social and preventive medicine at the time was helpful with suggestions about field staff and the choice of a community to study. We had heard that Johnson was already using a population at Lawrence Tavern, fifteen to twenty miles north of the capital, Kingston, for teaching medical students, and it seemed a good idea to see whether it would be suitable for us, and if so to cash in on the goodwill he had already established there. We needed a census, and we needed to check age data, and we needed to recruit a team.

Lawrence Tavern consisted of a few shops, a post office, a police station, a primary school, a secondary boarding school, and a health clinic; the village was surrounded by a scattered rural population of small farmers, each with an acre or two of land, the odd pig or cow and mixed crops grown mostly for the use of the immediate household. The basic type of house was a wattle and daub single room structure with a corrugated iron roof and usually a separate building across the
yard as a kitchen. Such a house might be the home for a couple and anything up to about ten children. Not all the houses were as basic as that. Many had two or more rooms. None needed any indoor heating; none had its own running water supply. Most houses were guarded by small but vicious, underfed dogs who did a good job in keeping strangers at bay!

The clinic at Lawrence Tavern was run by a Jamaican nurse, Carmen Atkinson, who was a most remarkable person. Carmen was a local. Born and bred in or near Lawrence Tavern. Very good natured and generous and kind, and hardworking but pretty intolerant of, and outspoken about, any sort of second rate behaviour by the local folk. For these qualities she was well respected.

The terrain was extraordinary. The houses were strung along the ridges between deeply eroded hillsides. The blood pressure survey work done in South Wales had been based on home visits so that people were as relaxed as possible and in their usual surroundings rather than in hospital or clinic environments and I was keen that the Jamaican data would be as comparable in that respect as possible. So this meant that the survey work had to include the visiting of almost every household in the Lawrence Tavern area.

We organised transport, recruited local chaps to carry out a private census and to check dates of birth by looking at the Registrar General's records in Spanish Town, and then got to work. Medical and family histories, BP measurements, heights, weights, urine tests, etc. It was energetic but the work went reasonably well. The overall results showed that the same factors that had been shown to determine BP levels in Welshmen were present and were of the same sort of magnitude in rural Jamaicans. The familial factor, the influence of age, weight, renal factors etc. were all similar in both racial groups.

While we were doing the blood pressure survey in Lawrence Tavern we heard from Ken Stuart that a bacteriologist from Harvard was thinking about mounting a study of the relationship between urinary tract infections and high blood pressure in the general population and was wondering about doing it in the Caribbean. I made arrangements to meet him in New York, and thus started a friendship with Ed Kass which involved both our families and grew closer and closer until Ed's death in 1990. Ed was a perfectly delightful chap. He decided to take advantage of the fact that we already had surveyed communities in Wales and Jamaica and soon started to make arrangements to graft on a bacteriology technician to work with us.

At that time Ed had never been outside the United States. I think he went on to become the most widely travelled person I knew. I suppose this was a reflection of his wide interests which seemed to grow throughout his life. One interest which led to a lot of trans-Atlantic travel over the years arose out of a chance remark that my mother made to Ed when he was staying with us in Penarth. She happened to mention that she had recently met a person called Ellen Bosanquet who was a grandniece of Thomas Hodgkin the physician who had first described the condition that subsequently became known as Hodgkin’s disease. Ed pricked up his ears because he said that there had never been a decent biography of Hodgkin and he had been thinking he would like to write one.
He asked Mother to arrange an introduction and this led on to Ed getting to know other members of the Hodgkin family, including Professors Thomas and Dorothy Hodgkin in Oxford and Thomas Hodgkin's mother who had in her attic in her home in Ilmington, in the Cotswolds, two large crates of letters from Thomas Hodgkin the physician. The Hodgkin clan were quick to give Ed permission for these letters and documents to be photographed and encouraged him to go ahead with his research into Thomas Hodgkin's life. Ed was Jewish but his work on Hodgkin, and his contacts with Friends while researching it, made him very sympathetic with and interested in Quakerism.

About eighteen years, two Sabbaticals and lots of Atlantic crossings later Ed and Amilie Kass published a very scholarly tome entitled "Perfecting the World. The life and times of Dr Thomas Hodgkin, 1798-1866"

Ed later became the President of the International Society for Infectious Disease, was on the Council of the International Epidemiological Association, sat on the committee advising NASA on the medical aspects of the early space programme and as such (and somewhat to his embarrassment) felt that for political but not for scientific reasons they had to have a quarantine period after the first manned landing on the moon. He was also one of the Americans chosen by the Ford Foundation to advise on the best methods of enabling some groups in backward countries in Africa to catch up with the West educationally, within a generation. All these interests and a considerable demand for lectures and consultations on infectious disease and antibiotics took him all over the world.

Ed lost his first wife, Fae, in 1975 and a few years later married Amalie Hecht, a widow and a historian who became very involved with the Hodgkin story. They and their two families (eight grown up kids by that stage) moved into a superb house in Lincoln, Massachusetts which Mary and I visited on several occasions. We were there when, despite being terminally ill with metastatic cancer, he was trying to finish his share of the editing of a massive textbook on infectious disease. I wrote an obituary for the Independent but now seem to have lost my copy of it. Ed added a lot of interest and fun to our lives. Over the years we spent a lot of time together - clam bakes on Martha's Vineyard, weekends at Rose Castle, conferences in Boston, Jamaica, Chicago, London, swims at Discovery Bay, picnics in the Blue Mountains.

We had just a year in Jamaica on that first visit. It was a thoroughly enjoyable time. It was energetic and busy but the work went reasonably well. We managed to complete studies of factors influencing blood pressure in both a rural and an urban population and included surveys of the role of bacteriuria in hypertension in those populations. Archie Cochrane came out and we wondered about the possibility of setting up a second MRC Epidemiology unit there to carry out studies parallel to the work going on in South Wales - similar studies in the two different ethnic groups.

We were able to relax and explore the island too and most weekends we were off to the north coast for swims on the most exotic coral beaches. But on one occasion we went to a little place on the South coast, Treasure Beach, west of Kingston. It was a trip which nearly ended in disaster. It was a Sunday, I think, and we were the only family on the beach. Mary and I were sunbathing. Sally and
Chris were making sandcastles and Hugh and Steve were having a swim. Suddenly we noticed that the boys were swimming hard for the shore but making no progress. We dashed out and managed to manipulate them so that they could scramble ashore but then found that we were getting pulled further and further out ourselves. It was our first experience of a really fierce undertow, and very frightening. In those circumstances the natural thing is to try to keep your feet on terra firma, but we couldn't and eventually had to swim. We then found that on the surface we could just make headway against the current and reached the shore again. It was a really nasty experience.

(It should have taught us that it would be better to let the current take you out and attempt to swim in at another spot but several years later, in 1985, while Mary and I were in a place called Puerta Vallerta, on the West coast of Mexico attending a hypertension conference, I got into difficulties with the sea again. There was not only a fierce undertow but strong waves too. At one moment I was tossed about by the waves and really felt that I must have been close to having my neck broken, but I survived that only to have my swimsuit ripped off me by the current. As there were folk on the beach I had to continue the rest of my struggles to get back to the beach backwards!)

UWI had a large outdoor swimming pool and families would tend to meet up there at the end of the day; the university also had an old wooden house, Bellevue, high up in the Blue Mountains where one could retreat to a more or less European climate. It was the nearest thing to a Rose Castle that we found there. One really good thing that happened during that year was that Angela Waterlow, John's wife, got us enthused about oil painting and started to give us some lessons. More about our painting activities later.

During the winter of 1959/60 we had visits from Mother and Nan, and Nicky Ingham, a friend of Hugh's, was out with us for a couple of terms with Hugh at Miss Butler's. Jamaica in those days was an exciting place to visit. The University had a friendly mix of different nationalities on the staff. We lived a somewhat nomadic existence; having started in the Vice-chancellor's house, we moved to two other and less grand houses on the campus before finishing up in a one-bedroomed MRC flat in John Waterlow's housing! The one bedroom was enough for Steve, Sally and Bumps as Chris was called in those days, and Mary and I slept on the verandah. Hughie was farmed out to nearby friends!

We made a lot of good friends during that first year in Jamaica, and are still in touch with many of them. The Waterlows, Cruickshanks, Westons, Stuarts, Garrows, Fletchers, Stewarts, Goodbodys. The campus, which housed a lot of like-minded folk, encouraged sociability. It provided a lovely environment for evening chat on pleasant verandahs with warmth and rum and gingers and the sounds of cicada and tree frogs. Unfortunately conditions changed and we were disappointed to find, when we went back to Jamaica twenty years later that all those verandahs had had to be protected by burglar bars and it was considered no longer safe to sit there in the evenings without that protection.

After about fourteen months in Jamaica we returned to Penarth for a couple of years during which we decided to explore the possibilities of setting up an MRC unit in Jamaica. The MRC approved the idea and put us in touch with the
Wellcome Trust who looked with particular favour on schemes for sponsoring research in the tropics. Wellcome provided funds for a fine building on the campus at UWI, a director's house and a block of four flats on College Common. John Waterlow was very helpful in negotiating excellent sites for these buildings and we found an enlightened firm of modern architects, Chalmers and Gibbs, who drew up plans more or less to our own specifications. As far as I can remember Archie and I went out again to look into the details of the plans before going ahead.

Once it was certain that we would be returning to Jamaica we sold our old rambling, big but inconvenient house in Penarth and bought a smaller and we thought more easily lettable house in Dinas Powis. Hillcroft, Heal y Cawl, Dinas Powis was an 'up-betarted' house made from two old cottages. It was a house that none of us really enjoyed though it was nearer to some of our friends - like the Foreman family and the Inghams. Although in theory it should have been easier to let, the agents we appointed to act for us were a useless lot and landed us with tenants who failed to pay any rent for several months and then did a moonlight flit. Having a base in South Wales was nevertheless very convenient because we were returning at intervals for the follow-up work in the Rhondda Fach and Vale of Glamorgan. It was also good to own a property at that time of rapid inflation. By the time we came to selling it again it had increased in value to an extent commensurate with the general increase in the value of houses throughout the country.
Chapter 12

By the spring of 1962 our new buildings at UWI were sufficiently far advanced for me to go out ahead of Mary and the family. We had been making enquiries about West Indians who might be suitable to join the scientific staff; Ken Standard was a name that was always cropping up. Ken was a Barbadian. He hadn't been on the island during my first year in Jamaica. He had worked in childhood nutrition, partly with TMRU, and had done the short course in Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene under Geoffrey Rose. He was keen to keep his links with the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at UWI and I think was never actually employed by the MRC but was given office and other facilities in the Unit and lived in one of the ERU flats.

Later on Ken was appointed to the chair of Social Medicine at UWI and later still was given a knighthood. (There were four of his contemporaries at his school in Barbados who got knighthoods: Sir Roy Marshall, who was one of the Vice Chancellors at UWI, and later VC at Hull; Sir Hugh Springer, also a VC at UWI and later Governor General of Barbados; Sir Kenneth Stuart and Sir Kenneth Standard. Quite an achievement.)

Karl Smith, a Jamaican who had qualified in Medicine at Aberdeen, was highly recommended by Maurice Backett, the Professor of Social Medicine there. Karl was an enterprising character. He had lost a leg as a result of a motor bike accident when he was employed as a radiographer in Jamaica and decided to use the money he got by way of compensation to go to the UK and get a medical training. Karl's amputation was below the knee and he was not really very disabled by it. He used to dance pretty expertly! Karl did a useful job for us by running the health clinic at Lawrence Tavern. He eventually went off to work for PAHO and afterwards for the Ford Foundation where he was working on population control in various parts of Africa. Karl eventually settled in Canada and is still there. Another West Indian recruit to the team was a sociologist, Herman McKenzie, who was trained at LSE. Tony Swan, an English statistician joined us too at the start of the Unit. Other scientific staff like Mike Ashcroft, Charles Florey, George Miller, and Patricia Desai were recruited in the West Indies.

First we carried out studies of heart disease, ECG characteristics, anaemia, haemoglobinopathies, and diabetes in Lawrence Tavern. Later we had teams out from South Wales who helped with chest X-ray surveys and tuberculin testing, a study of ophthalmic conditions, audiometry, and a team from the Rheumatism Research Council measured the prevalence of osteo- and rheumatoid arthritis.

Malnutrition in infants was common in this sort of population and Angus Thomson, director of the MRC Growth and Reproduction Research Unit in Aberdeen (which was later transferred to Newcastle) organised a series of studies of child growth and social factors influencing it, in the Lawrence Tavern area. The team that had already been involved in studies of nutrition and illental development in Aberdeen included, amongst others, Herb Birch, a professor of Medicine at Albert Einstein, Ernest Gruenberg, an American psychiatrist and Steve Richardson, a Professor of Sociology also at Albert Einstein University in New
York. Steve is English and he and I had overlapped at Bootham. He was the adopted son of Louis Richardson, the distinguished meteorologist, who amongst other things attempted the first statistical studies of conflict. Steve and Angus became good friends of ours.

They continued their work in Jamaica for several years. We kept in touch with both of them for years after returning to this country; Angus was a broad Scot, dour but good company. Unfortunately after his retirement he developed macular degeneration and was teaching himself braille but then developed angina which interfered with his favourite activity - fell walking. At the age of eighty he persuaded the cardiac surgeons in Newcastle to give him a by-pass operation. They agreed but told him that it would be at his risk; they hadn't done one on men of that age before. Poor old Angus succumbed. Steve Richardson still keeps in touch - at any rate at the Christmas card level; he visits us sometimes when over from the States. Hugh is currently a lecturer in the Richardson Institute at Lancaster University - a peace and conflict research unit named after Louis Richardson. In fact Steve has recently been contributing towards its funding.

When discussing with the MRC the establishment of the unit in Jamaica I had made it clear that I wanted to be able to continue the long-term studies of hypertension in the Welsh populations; this involved returning to Britain at intervals. I had also indicated that I was willing to work in Jamaica for a period of about ten years.

The roughly ten year spell saw Hugh and Steve complete their educations at Bootham. The MRC at that time allowed the children of its overseas staff two fares home each year; we tried to get back ourselves for the other holiday so the arrangement meant that we saw them during all the school holidays. They managed to fit in some pretty exciting holidays, too, so they really didn't suffer much from us being abroad. When each of them came to the end of their school days they each had the best part of a year out before going to university. Hugh got himself a place at Merton to read history. Ralph Davis, a close friend from FAU days and a Fellow at Merton was helpful once Hugh had got the requisite grades in his A-levels. During his time between school and university Hugh, and a Bootham friend of his, Neil Goulty, spent a month or two in Mexico, Steve in his turn got into Exeter University to read Economics, and spent part of his year out on a trip with Pat Hughes, a Bootham friend, from Jamaica via Guatamala to the States and Canada, taking a beaten up old Mini with them. Hugh was part of an exceptional year at Merton when something like nine out of twelve who read history, (including Hugh), managed to get firsts. He went on from Oxford to Lancaster and did a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies. Steve, like his Dad, didn't work hard enough and after a couple of years at Exeter abandoned economics, which didn't interest him for computer studies at Manchester Poly which did. At Manchester Poly Steve met Sue and from there they both went into the computing section of Simon Engineering.

Sally stayed with us in Jamaica until she was about sixteen and had got her O-levels. She then went on to The Mount. Hugh and Steve were still at Bootham. Chris had begun there too. Sal had been pretty happy at her school in Jamaica and didn't enjoy The Mount, and in particular didn't enjoy the then headmistress!
After A-levels Sal went to Hockerill College, Bishops Stortford to get a teaching diploma. She had wanted to go in for occupational therapy but was advised that it required a teachers training course and that it was better to get that out of the way first. At Hockerill she met Paul and from there they both went in for teaching in Essex. Sal and Paul both got degrees from the Open University after they had begun teaching.

Chris had got enthused with biology during his A-level course at Bootham, and after having a year out between school and university during which he also travelled all over the place in the USA and Canada, with a Bootham friend, Pete Merrell, he went on to read Zoology at Imperial College. He also got a first and went on to do a PhD at Silwood Park (part of Imperial College). There he met Stephanie, who was also doing a PhD in zoology. After his PhD Chris went out to Austen, Texas, for a year before returning to take up an MRC grant to do a course in electronics as applied to physiological measurements. From then onwards Chris, and Stephanie, have been working in either Oxford or Cambridge; Stephanie in the pharmaceutical industry, Chris as a Wellcome Research fellow in neurophysiology.

What an enormous family! And so far I have hardly even mentioned Lawrence. Lawrence was born in December 1966. He was, and still is, eleven years younger than Chris and seventeen years younger than Hugh. A bonus child if ever there was one! News of Lawrence’s impending arrival stimulated Nan and Joe to write another poem:-

When Hugh and Steve each neared his time
We welcomed them with comic rhyme,
And Sal and Chris we likewise cheered
Poetically, when they appeared.
And so dear 'X', now almost due
We'll try to do the same for you.

First, no delays. Please, 'X', don't wait
Like Hugh, for weeks beyond your date.
Next, 'X', obey your parents - don't,
As Steve used to, say 'I won't',
Avoid your sister's faults. (Sal eats,
If she's allowed, too many sweets.)
But 'X' - no fads. Remember this,
If Heinz means beans, then beans means Chris.

Warned by these faults, we hope that you
Get GCE's as good as Hugh
And dive as well as Stevie, while
You share with Sal her friendly smile
(And kindness to her Uncle Joe)
And like your brother Chris, you show
A ready sense of how things work.
We hope all this. But we would shirk
Our duty not to add the view -
In our opinion five will do.
Lawrence was born in the University Hospital in Jamaica. Mary had been under the care of Dave Stewart throughout her pregnancy. Peter Curzen actually attended her delivery and all went very smoothly. Mary was forty-six at the time and lots of folk, ourselves included, were keeping fingers crossed to avoid a Downs syndrome child. We were lucky. Lawrence spent most of his early childhood in Jamaica and as a result seemed to develop unusually fast. Perhaps because there was no need to encumber him with nappies for as long as the others he was walking by about ten months and was potty trained early too. It was an ideal environment for a little child. Inez, our kind Jamaican maid became very fond of him and considered herself more or less a substitute Mum. And Lawrence with a Dad and three nearly adult brothers and a Mum and a nearly adult sister got pretty confused about who his parents were; we used to say that he used to call four of us Dad but I'm afraid that was being economical with the truth!

We felt very guilty at first a) for exceeding our 2.4 children by so many and b) for landing Lawrence with such elderly parents. We were also rather conscious of the fact that by the time he was a teenager the rest of the family would have flown the nest and he might be pretty lonely. Looking back now we reckon a few extra babes than the 2.4 ought to be encouraged for families as nice as ours! And we are certain that Lawrence really didn't have an unhappy childhood by being so much younger than his siblings.

In some ways he became a rather precocious chap. For example, he was swimming before he was two, and would jump off the end of the springboard at the Olympic pool when he could only just swim far enough to get himself back to the side. By being brought up largely with adults he learnt to speak to adults in a rather easier and more confident way than other kids and we reckon this served him well during his schooldays. He had other advantages, too. We weren't quite so harassed and could give him more time than the others got. And we were a bit better off financially at that stage of our lives.

In 1969 (or maybe 1970) I got an invitation to participate in a WHO conference in New Zealand. The group was to advise WHO on the potential use of the migration that was going on from the Polynesian islands into New Zealand in assessing the effects of the changes in the environment on cardiovascular disease. Lawrence (aged three or four) and Mary came along too. The conference started in Auckland with a bus trip through the Maori areas of the North Island. Each night we spent in a different Maori meeting house, sleeping on mattresses on the floor. Our group must have numbered about twenty five, including wives and offspring and there would have been a similar number of our Maori hosts and hostesses. At each place we received an official Maori welcome which included a long speech in Maori that no one could understand. After a few interesting but somewhat repetitive days of this we finished up in Wellington for the conference. The whole experience was a bit marred for Mary by her sitting down hard on the arm between our two seats on the coach and damaging, maybe fracturing, her coccyx. She also was running a high temperature while we were in Wellington.

After the conference we had ten days holiday, motoring and bed and breakfasting round the South Island. We were most impressed by the beauty of the place; got as far south as Milford Sound and returned via Mount Cook. Had we been at the beginning of our married lives we might well have been tempted to
emigrate there despite its somewhat parochial culture. But New Zealand is about as far as it is possible to get from England and we might well have really regretted it. From New Zealand we flew back to Jamaica via Tahiti and Mexico. In Mexico we spent a couple of days seeing the wonders of the Mayan remains in Yucatan before getting back home. That was the first of Lawrence’s exciting travels, though I suppose he had already crossed the Atlantic there and back several times before that.

We had a lot of very interesting visitors while we were in Jamaica. Some were official visitors from the MRC, members of the Tropical Research Board who used to come out annually, and other more epidemiological friends. Archie used to visit fairly regularly and was always good value; so was Ed. In fact we had more, and more interesting, visitors when we were there than we used to get in Wales. We had family visitors too. Noll spent a few months with us. Tris came for a short visit. Leonard and Lorna came. So did Pix and Patrick - several times. Gladys Fry, hardly family but a distant relative who as Dr Gladys Miall-Smith (to most people but 'Auntie Gladys' to us and our family GP in Welwyn days.) came at the age of eighty plus. She was a remarkably active person who at that age travelled round Jamaica by herself quite happily and was still occasionally going out to South Africa helping to run child welfare clinics there.

During that time we had a lot of help from Angela Waterlow with our oil painting and we used to spend more and more time at weekends and during holidays at our easels. We got hooked on it, and painting and visiting art galleries became a major interest for us during retirement. Mary got keen on potting, too, and we acquired a wheel, (ingeniously made for her by John Garrow) and a kiln and she got together a group of UWI wives who used to meet at ERU house most weeks. Our house turned out to be all that we expected of it. It was not only a superbly situated house with ever changing views of the Blue Mountains from its verandah, but cool and comfortable too. It was a house built on a sloping site - up on stilts at the front but at the same level as the garden at the back. It was really a well-designed bungalow on stilts, and that meant that there was a useful area below it for potting, painting, table tennis etc. Angela at that time was doing a number of large murals which decorated John's unit and some of the university buildings. She did the cartoon for a large mural for the entrance to the medical school under our house. It was of a Jamaicanised version of the Good Samaritan story, very colourful in oils. We were able to put in a word for it while she was painting it and it has decorated our living rooms in all our abodes since then.

Having the house on stilts saved a lot of damage when we experienced the rains, though not the full winds, of hurricane Flora in 1964, I think. We had seventeen inches of rain in twenty-four hours and a torrent flowing right under the house. The damage to the island as a whole was tremendous and many householders were much less fortunate.
Chapter 13

In many ways it was a terrific experience, and a very interesting one, to run an MRC unit in Jamaica and spend the best part of ten years there but it had its problems and from both the work point of view and the family point of view we felt by 1970 that it was time to return. Hugh and Steve had left Bootham and were at University, but they needed a home in England. The directorship of the unit was taken on by Rick Davis, who had been involved in schistosomiasis research in Africa. I don't think he enjoyed life in Jamaica, judging from the relatively short time he was there and the unit then concentrated on Sickle Cell disease and was directed by Graham Serjeant. Curiously, Graham was also a Bootham Old Scholar.

Years later his step-mother, Rita Serjeant, became a good friend of our when she and Mary met up at Gatesbield, a sheltered housing scheme run by Friends in Windermere. Mary was on the Gatesbield management committee and chairman of its house committee; she also started a small art group and used to go there every Friday morning to encourage a group of octogenarians to paint and pot. Rita, who was rather disabled with Parkinson's disease, used to enjoy those Friday mornings.

Early in 1971 we returned to Cardiff. Archie's unit by then had split off from the Pneumoconiosis Research Unit and had moved into an old building in Richmond Road, Cardiff. Archie, for a while, had taken on the professorship of TB and chest diseases in Cardiff but he had retained the honorary directorship of the unit. By the time I returned he was back full time with the MRC. He was still very involved with the long-term (twenty-year it was by then) follow-up of the miners and ex-miners in the Rhondda Fach, but he had also started what was probably his best work - the promotion of randomised controlled trials (which almost became an obsession with him) and studies of the effectiveness and efficiency of health services. He wrote a very good little book with this title when he got a Rock Carling fellowship in 1972.

My first aim on getting back was to complete the final follow-up survey of the two blood-pressure populations. This took most of that first year. We weren't really wanting to spend the rest of our lives in South Wales nor was I keen to spend the rest of my professional life working with Archie, much though I valued the time spent with him. As Peter Elwood, who had been with Archie through all the years we were abroad, was a natural successor I started to explore the possibilities of a transfer to Jerry Morris's unit at the London School of Hygiene. I then found out that a new MRC Epidemiology and Medical Care Unit was being established, under Tom Meade's directorship, at Northwick Park Hospital at Harrow. Northwick Park was the brainchild of Sir Harold Himsworth, secretary of the MRC: it was a large new regional hospital to which was attached the Clinical Research Centre. CRC was intended to link research laboratories with 'national' beds - beds that would accept patients from anywhere in the country. It wasn't ever very successful from that point of view. The EMCU was not actually part of the CRC but an
autonomous MRC unit. I went to see Tom and fixed up to transfer to his unit once the blood pressure follow up was completed.

At about that time the MRC had a committee discussing the problems of Mild to Moderate Hypertension and I was asked to join it. It's chairman was Stan Peart, Professor of Medicine at St Mary's, who was an old friend from my days as a houseman on the medical unit. That committee recommended that the most urgent need was for a randomised controlled trial to determine at what level of blood pressure treatment did more good than harm. The committee eventually turned itself into a Working Party to design and run a pilot trial on the treatment of mild hypertension and I was asked to be it's Secretary.

St Mary's was rather well represented on that Working Party - a manifestation of the continuing influence of George Pickering in the hypertension field. George (Sir George as he was by then) had left St Mary's and had been the Regius Professor at Oxford for some years. In addition to Stan and me there was Tony Lever, Director of the MRC Blood Pressure unit in Glasgow, Geoffrey Rose, Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene, and Mike Hamilton, a consultant physician in Chelmsford who had been the other medical unit registrar when I was on the house.

When we had finished the survey work in South Wales we had to sell Hillcroft and find ourselves a new home somewhere near Northwick Park. Mary and I spent a few days motoring round the countryside within reasonable range of Harrow. The best area to aim for seemed to be out to the west, and within close range of one of the two railways serving that district. One Monday we were passing close to Jordans and I thought it might be interesting to stop and look at the Quaker meeting house there and see if we could find the grave of my maternal grandparents.

We found the grave and then found that the meeting house itself was closed. The warden saw us and came out to see what we were wanting. (She later admitted that she was wondering whatever those people were doing on a Monday morning when they should be doing their washing!) We told her and then said that we were really house hunting in the district. After she had been chatting to us for a minute or two Mary thought she recognised the voice and said that she had a friend in South Wales who spoke very similarly. It turned out that the voices belonged to sisters! The South Wales one was Ethel Waller, wife of Frank Waller who had been at Bootham when I was there (not as a pupil but as the youngest son of the school matron.) The Wallers had boys at Bootham of the same age as ours and we knew the family quite well. The Jordans sister was Nora Simmons, wife of Rob, a retired doctor. Nora immediately started talking about us coming to Jordans and said she would let us know if and when anything suitable came on to the market!

Within a few days Nora had heard about a house which was about to be for sale, and rang us with the details. It was a modern pseudo-Georgian house in Longwood Drive - a cul-de-sac of similar, rather too posh but nevertheless convenient four bedroomed houses which had been built outside the original Quaker village. At £20,000, which was a lot more than we’d paid for any previous house, we wondered whether we were being silly to consider it. The prices of
houses had only recently started to escalate. But we went to see it, and decided in favour. Jordans was a super village, in a well preserved bit of green belt and about the nearest real country to Harrow. 10 Longwood Drive wasn't quite our cup of tea but we were sufficiently impressed with Jordans to make allowances for that.

We managed to sell the Dinas Powis house without too much trouble and moved to Jordans at the beginning of November, 1971. Our first experience of the terrific community spirit in Jordans was on Guy Fawkes night. Jordans was started by Friends and was originally intended for Friends. The land had been bought in 1919 and the aim was to create a self-supporting community. The first houses were built by people who went on to occupy them: the bricks were made in the village. The intention was that they would grow their own food. For various reasons the scheme didn't work out: Jordans, with its good rail service to Marylebone became a particularly attractive place for commuters to live, but the village always had a strong Quaker presence there and something of the original intentions was still discernable when we settled there some fifty years later.

Lawrence started at the primary school in Jordans. It was a good little school for most of the time he was there though towards the end several of his buddies were sent off to private schools to ensure they got their 'common entrances'. We were relying on him passing the 11 plus sufficiently well that he would qualify, in due course, to go on to Dr Challoner's, the grammar school in Amersham. As an insurance policy we put his name down for Bootham, too, but we weren't keen on him going there: there didn't seem much point in sending him so far away from home when we had really ceased to have close, current family connections there. Luckily Lawrence got a good enough pass in his 11 plus to get into Challoner's, which was a school which very much concentrated on achieving good academic results. 'An exam factory' the boys used to call it. We benefitted from that aspect of the school because he went on to get good A levels, was accepted for St Mary's, took a year out during which he saved enough money, by acting as a trans-Atlantic courier and by working at TMRU in Jamaica, to spend several weeks travelling in South America. He then went on to SMH, did well and finished up with Honours in his finals, and a house job there.

We lived in 10 Longwood Drive for about four years. During that time Steve married Sue, Sal married Paul, Mary tore a large chunk of flesh from her left shin when she tripped over a decorative but dangerous chain fence and I had my prostate removed at St Mary's. Leonard lost Lorna in 1974. She had been anorexic for years and frighteningly thin for a long time and can't have been getting much fun from life. She died of a stroke in the end. We reckoned Leonard had had a rather raw deal and were delighted when we heard that he was planning to marry Sally Bicknell, an old friend from Washington days. Leonard and Sal were married on October 10th, my birthday, in 1975.

We loved living in Jordans. There always seemed to be a lot going on there apart from marriages and surgery! There was an active music society and good concerts held in the Mayflower barn during the summer. There was a talented amateur dramatics society, too, Jordans meeting, housed as it was in one of the oldest meeting houses in the country, attracted more than its share of visitors, particularly American visitors. William Penn and Gulielma and several of their children are buried in the burial ground there; the old barn, dating from the
seventeenth century was thought to be built from the timbers of the Mayflower which had been owned by a friend of the owner of the farm at Old Jordans.

At about that time, too, there were a whole series of lectures. Some were organised by Friends; there were two courses on literary subjects given by Ormerod Greenwood, I remember. We organised several courses too. There was a set of medical talks, which included George Pickering, Charles Fletcher, Richard Schilling, Archie, Geoff Rose and Ed Kass. Ed was visiting fairly frequently and gave one or two interesting talks on the NASA space programme for kids. Angela Waterlow used to come all the way from Oare, in Wiltshire and gave two series of illustrated talks on modern painting and painters. We had a lot of interesting dinner parties associated with all this.

In 1975 one of the original houses in the village, Further Pegs, became empty and as we were keen to move across into the older part of Jordans, we showed interest. Further Pegs, named after a field name, we thought would suit us well. It was the fourth house in the village to have been built. It had previously been owned by an old lady, Mrs Wheen, the widow of an Australian who had been librarian at the V and A. The house was full of old artefacts of various kinds, and some original paintings, including a Ben Nicholson. Among the artefacts we found in the house were neolithic flints - arrow heads and stone tools - which had been found in the garden there.

But the house itself was in a fair state of chaos, inside. Mrs Wheen, also an Australian, was said to have been one of the first women to have had a proper training in horticulture in England. So she knew how to grow things and the garden, which was about an acre and a half in size, was really fertile. What's more there were several large outhouses, and a big greenhouse. We enjoyed Jordans tremendously and made some good friends there.

Mary took an active role in the Jordans Management Committee, and was Chairman of the Tenant Members Committee, the body that had most to do with social activities there. She started 'Tea and Sociability', too, an afternoon tea for the over-sixties held once a month: after a few months this changed into a monthly lunch for the elderly, and this really met a need and is still going strong several years after we left Jordans. But it was Mary's idea to start it and she certainly chose the teams of residents who provided the Cordon Bleu cookery.

In May 1978 we had a really nasty surprise. Mary discovered that she had a lump in her left breast. It was quite small but very definitely there. I immediately rang Stan Peart who saw her and arranged an appointment with one of the St Mary's surgeons, Mr Glaser. Within days Mary was in a ward, reserved for SMH staff, having a mastectomy. Everything went smoothly and Glaser thought he had eradicated the cancer completely and had found no evidence of glandular involvement. We felt very relieved that she had found it so early. Routine follow-up visits for the next few years were reassuring and she was eventually discharged. Mary's morale throughout had been terrific.

My work during that period was particularly enjoyable and satisfying. The mild hypertension trial had started with a pilot trial to determine the best way of running the main study. That was in 1973. The main trial began in 1977 and finished in
1985. I was in charge of the running of it from the outset until 1983 when I retired. 'The MRC trial' as it became known (without specification of which trial on what subject!) became quite a landmark in medical research. The pilot trial had indicated that the most successful way of running it was in general practice. We managed to devise a means of recruiting highly motivated, enthusiastic GP's who, provided the conditions were right, showed themselves to be able and willing to follow a strict protocol. The trial developed into a very large study. About half a million people were screened for hypertension and seventeen thousand were found with mild hypertension and were suitable and agreeable to enter the trial in which they were randomly allocated to groups receiving either active drugs or placebo.

I enjoyed running the trial, especially in the early days. I hadn't had much contact with or experience of general practices and the mounting of the trial in over 175 practices, selected as being particularly keen and enthusiastic, was fun. The MRC funded the whole exercise, including the provision of part-time nurses specially recruited for the trial work who took the main responsibility for the smooth running of the programme in each practice. One of these nurses, Greta Barnes, played an active role in running the trial and devised an efficient system for training practices and monitoring their performance. Greta became a good friend. She was a highly organised person and soon got co-opted on to the trial working party.

This isn't the place to detail the results; the trial came up with the main conclusion that treatment for mild hypertension conferred benefit with respect to strokes but no benefit in terms of coronary events. Stan Peart wrote in a paper that in his view the demonstration that a team of busy general practitioners could successfully carry out a research project of this size and complexity was more important than demonstrating whether or not it was of value to treat people with mild hypertension. I don't agree. One of the most satisfactory aspects of the trial was the recognition by all concerned of the importance of the question being asked. The answer it came up with would have been more welcome if we had been able to show a benefit in coronary disease, as well as stroke, because coronary troubles are much commoner than cerebral ones in middle aged folk with mild hypertension.

Other large scale trials of the treatment for hypertension were going on at the same time as ours. There was the Hypertension Detection and Follow-up Programme, designed by a committee of which Ed Kass was the Chairman, in the States. There was a European Working Party on Hypertension in the Elderly which was running a trial for mild hypertension in the elderly, and there were other studies going on in Europe and in Australia. All this led to quite a lot of international meetings and conferences. Several in the States, one in Australia, one in Japan, and lots in Europe.

I retired just before the end of the trial in 1983, and applied for and got an MRC grant which enabled me to spend some time writing a book about the study which was published by Cambridge University Press in 1987. The book didn't sell very well but it provided a smooth way of changing from one very interesting life to another equally interesting and perhaps even more enjoyable one. Looking back on my career I reckon that I really was fantastically lucky. The job of running the
MRC hypertension trial couldn't have been more fun or better tailored to my interests and temperament.

There can't be many people who have experienced a Monday morning feeling so rarely in a long career! And I count myself very lucky to have worked closely with some of the really great innovators in medicine - more particularly in epidemiology - during that period. Amongst these I would certainly include George Pickering, Archie Cochrane and Ed Kass but others like Charles Fletcher, John Gilson, Geoffrey Rose and Stan Peart have all had a lot of influence and made important contributions. One of the advantages of an MRC job is that while you are holding it you stay close to the growing points in your particular field.
Chapter 14

We stayed in Jordans until 1987 when we decided to have a change of scene. I was keener on this than Mary who was more involved with and had more friends in Jordans than I did. We spent about a year looking for the right spot.

The search for a new house was made more difficult by the decision to try to find somewhere we could share with Joe and Nan. This meant finding a site which was acceptable to all four of us, and then finding a house which had two of everything! Two kitchens, two bathrooms, two staircases etc. We wanted to be within range of either the Yorkshire Dales or the Lake District or both. After a year of searching unsuccessfully we were about to abandon the attempt and find our own unshared houses when Sidegarth came on the market. It was the house that most nearly satisfied all the conditions we were imposing. It had one or two features that we hadn't specified, such as a couple of fields and a six acre wood, but we were all sufficiently keen to go ahead and clinch it. We eventually moved in November 1987. Nan and Joe still had to sell their house in Glossop and joined us a few months later.

I retired in October 1983. During the interval until we moved up north we had a lot of very interesting and jokesy travels. In November 1983 I was in Boston, and Washington, and combined that with a visit to the Campbells in Colorado Springs. In 1984 Paris and Interlachen, where I spent the whole of the meeting of the International Society of Hypertension stuck in bed with some nasty bug and Mary had to make arrangements for us to squander our O.A.P. cheap rail tickets and fly back again. I then spent most of the next month in bed at home. During that time I remember Hugh introduced us to his very nice girlfriend Claire, a psychiatric social worker, and shortly after that they announced (in a delightfully formal kind of way) their intentions of not getting married!

In 1985 we went to Puerta Vallerta, Mexico, where I nearly got drowned, and then to Mexico City, where we only just missed (by about 24 hours) the earthquake which killed literally thousands of people, and then on to Washington where we were on a plane which had to suddenly apply its brakes when halfway down the runway and about to take off! We seemed fated during that time. After Washington we called on Ed and Amilie Kass at their home in Lincoln, Mass. and they took us to Martha's Vineyard for the weekend. While in Washington we had visited the Air and Space Museum and had been much impressed by it. Amongst other things there they had a Dakota hung from the roof and were making a lot of fuss about the fact that it had been in use for the last forty or fifty years. When we came to leave Martha's Vineyard to fly to Boston airport we weren't all that enthusiastic to find we were on a Dakota!

Later in 1985 we had a conference in Jerusalem and combined that with a four-day coach tour which included Bethlehem, Massada, the Dead Sea, Gaililee, Capernicus, a Kibbutz up north near the Lebanese border, and back to Jerusalem via Nazareth and Caesarea. We met a charming Dutch couple, Jan and Hiete van der Feen, at that conference and have been friendly with them ever since. The Israel trip was very interesting though we didn't like the commercialised tourism or
the obvious nationalism which seemed such a feature of life there. I was invited to
another meeting of the same group in Jerusalem a couple of years later but at a
time when we thought that the Israelis were behaving particularly badly and
decided to decline their invitation, as a protest.

In 1986 we did the Dalesway walk from Bolton Abbey to Bowness. From Bolton
Abbey up to Kettlewell and Buckden and then up Langstrothdale, over Cam Fell
and down to Dent, and then via Sedburgh and Brigflatts Meeting House to
Burneside and Bowness where Sue met us and took us up to Rose Castle. We did
it fairly gently, taking eight days to do the 85 or so miles, and bed and breakfasting
rather than camping; and as the route follows river valleys it doesn't include many
vicious hills. It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Hugh (and Claire and Rich
and Barb for a little way) and Steve, and Jamie joined us. We didn't realize, until
the following year, that we were about to buy the wood just above Staveley which
we walked past on the Dalesway between Staveley and Bowness.

Later that year we had an invitation from George Fodor, a Czech who had been
with us in Jamaica as a WHO Fellow and had subsequently been appointed
Professor of Epidemiology at the Memorial University in Newfoundland to visit
various parts of Eastern Canada and lecture about the trial. We decided to
combine that with visits to other old friends in Canada who included Jo Feng, in
Toronto, and the Stewarts near Winnipeg. From there we flew to Calgary, had a
nice evening meal in a rotating skyscraper restaurant and were given hospitality
overnight by an old nursing friend of Dave's. Next day we started an exciting coach
ride through the most spectacular part of the Rockies. We finished up in
Vancouver where we stayed a couple of nights with Dave Stewart's cousin who
was at that very time presiding over a meeting of some international society of
dermatologists so we hardly saw him. He had a magnificent house on the
waterfront, and his family was very hospitable to us. We spent one day seeing the
Vancouver 1986 World Fair, and another seeing the Buchard Gardens on
Vancouver Island.

1986 was a great year for foreign travel for us; during the summer we had the
first of a series of good family holidays chez the Renoux family at St Hippolyte,
near Loches, on the Loire. (We had been introduced to the Renoux family by
Denis Richard, the son of Yvonne Richard who as Yvonne Malrieu had come on
an exchange visit between the Malrieu and Miall families when we were at Sewells
Orchard. Pierre Malrieu was a Bootham friend of Leonard's.)

Ken Standard invited us out to Jamaica for a month's visit during February and
March, 1987. He had British Council money which was intended to provide the
fares and some sort of per diem rate for academic visitors and asked whether I
would like him to submit my name. He needn't have asked! The teaching
commitment was minimal and the whole thing was very enjoyable. We still had
friends in Jamaica though many of those we had known best at the University had
gone. UWI put us up in one of its visitors' bungalows which was quite adequate
though we didn't like having to more or less barricade ourselves in for security
reasons.

Ken and Evelyn were kind to us and arranged lots of sociability, and there were
folk like the Serjeant's and the Goodbody's still there and the Golding's and
Ingledews and a number of non-UWI friends from former days. We were able to go up to Lawrence Tavern and meet various old friends there, including Carmen Atkinson, the old nurse, now retired. Carmen's husband, Fitzie, had recently been shot dead. The only motive apparently was to get his gun - he had been in the Jamaican Police. Despite the violence, and the fear of violence which was widespread, it was really good to go back to renew our acquaintance with that beautiful island and its people again.

That summer we had short holidays in Northern Ireland and, with Sal and Paul and Richard and Sarah, in Rouay and later Charbonnieres in France. After that we were busy negotiating with agents and solicitors about Sidegarth, which we moved into in November.

We were very lucky in the timing of our various house sales and purchases. House prices were going up faster than inflation and I suppose our activities on the property market earned us more than my activities on the MRC market! The sale of Further Pegs, occurring as it did just at the height of the property boom and before house prices in the North had really taken off, enabled us not only to afford our five-eighths share of Sidegarth but also to share some of the gains with the young at a time when they needed it. Further Pegs was rather difficult to sell because Gretchen Wheen had put covenants on it when we bought it from her - one of which prevented any further building on the site, and most potential purchasers seemingly needed at least a separate dining room and a second bathroom.

The purchase of Sidegarth was relatively straightforward once we had decided that we would avoid the sort of troubles our predecessors had with only a private water supply shared with an absentee landlord who was a really awkward cuss. We managed to persuade the Thurnhams to knock a little off the asking price because of this and got Sidegarth on to the mains. Peter Thurnham is a Conservative MP. The Thurnhams moved from Sidegarth to Hollin Hall and are still about our closest neighbours and we remain on friendly terms with them. Peter became better known to the public when he reduced John Major's majority in the House of Commons from two to one by resigning from the Parliamentary Conservative Party - because of sleaze! His wife, Sarah, is the daughter of farming folk and I imagine is pretty well heeled. They were already owning Hollin Hall, which is a farm, as well as Sidegarth.

To satisfy our insistence on having two of everything we had to have various alterations done to the house after we moved in but before Nan and Joe did. Their bit needed a bathroom and a kitchen, ours needed a more convenient staircase and a front door. A nice chap, Roger Holden, and his buddies did the work, and it has resulted in a very sharable home with rather more flexibility of accommodation, for example, than is normally the case with three-bedroomed semi-dets.

Staveley has proved a jolly good choice. There is a lot going on here. Perhaps we are rather too detached from the village proper - or at any rate will be when we get really decrepit - but that is a sacrifice we have to pay for having fifteen acres of ground and superb views from the house.
Joe has started a really flourishing local history society and has already published a book about the place – “A Lakeland Valley Through Time”: he is involved with all kinds of other history societies in the district too. Joe isn't only involved with local history, either. He has written a series of textbooks for GCSE level schoolkids and thereby must have influenced the teaching of history in Britain much more than most schoolmasters can have done. Having a captive readership of schoolchildren all over the country can't have done his income any harm, either!

Nan is Secretary of Staveley Choir and Membership Secretary of The Roundhouse, an amateur dramatics society. She also is the leading light in the northwest section of a charity, Winged Fellowship Trust, an organisation which provides holidays and respite care for physically disabled people.

Mary and I joined the Open College of the Arts when it opened a centre in Lancaster, did the Foundation Course for Art and Design there and then transferred to a much better centre in Kendal when it opened there the following year. We did all four years of the Painting Course with great enjoyment and I suppose with some benefit to our oil painting. During the four years the group changed in little ways but in general stayed together. There were about twelve of us. Some had already had a training in Art and were a good deal better than us, but this was helpful. Mollie Whitworth and Ken Graveling were probably the best and most experienced and we were lucky to acquire paintings by each of them. Unfortunately Mollie died shortly before the end of the fourth year of the course.

David Morris, who remained our tutor for the four years, was excellent and showed about the right combination of encouragement and constructive criticism to be really useful. After completing the course the group decided to continue to meet, more or less monthly, in each other’s homes, and criticise our work usually ourselves, sometimes with more professional help.

We've not only enjoyed the OCA activities but have joined the Kendal Art Society and the Friends of Abbot Hall and also the Friends of the Royal Academy of Arts and have been seeing a lot more art exhibitions than we did in the old days. We are really still mostly holiday painters; and we have had most fun, I think, sitting painting in the bright sunlight of Provence or the Dordogne area.

We shared a holiday with Chris and Stephanie at Les Quelles, a family house of Chris's friend, Dan Wolpert, near Bonnieux, in Provence in the summer of 1993. We had just seen the Summer Exhibition at the RA as we passed through London and had seen several large and very colourful impressionist-type landscapes by Frederick Gore, all painted within a few miles of Bonnieux.

When we got to France I looked him up in the local French telephone directory thinking that we might find that he had a studio in Bonnieux where we might find Frederick Gore paintings at something much less than the £4000 that he was selling for in London. No such luck but we did find his address in Bonnieux and went to see him. He was painting then but didn't have any for sale. He reckoned he could get a better price for his work in England than in France! But he said he would see we got an invitation to an exhibition of his work which was shortly to be held in London to celebrate his eightieth birthday. He did, and we appreciated that.
We have since seen a reproduction of one of his paintings which is of a scene painted from the exact spot we chose for one of our painting days near Bonnieux.

Apart from our painterly activities Mary has been doing courses on various crafts at the Brewery Art Centre and I did a couple of terms of wood carving, which was fun. Mary also started a Friday morning session of drawing and painting and clay modelling at Gatesbield, the Quaker sheltered housing complex in Windermere. Mary is on the Management Committee there and Chairman of its House Committee. I have done a stint on the Management Committee of Glenthorne, the Quaker Guest House in Grasmere and am one of the two Trust Managers for Rookhow. Dick Whittington, a good friend from Ambleside meeting is the other.

During the Autumn of 1995 Mary was experiencing pain and swellings in the joints of her fingers and went to see our GP who referred her to the rheumatologist at Kendal. An appointment was given but before the date came round her fingers had responded well to Volterol which had been prescribed by the GP and she was thinking she needn't bother to see the specialist. Fortunately Lawrence had recognised that the arthritic changes were unusual and that Mary was developing clubbing of the fingers. He rightly cajoled her into keeping the appointment and she saw the rheumatologist who diagnosed the joint trouble as hypertrophic pulmonary osteo-arthropathy, a condition associated with certain infections and with lung cancer.

He immediately organised a chest X-ray which showed a shadow in the lower part of the right lung. Mary was then referred to the chest physician, and seen (without much delay) on December 20th. I went with her. The radiograph showed a solitary rounded shadow a bit more than an inch in diameter. With hindsight I thought the beginnings of that shadow were present in a film taken for other reasons a year earlier which would indicate that whatever it was it was fairly slow growing. The consultant didn't think the earlier film showed anything. He arranged for Mary to have a bronchoscopy on December 29th.

So all this was happening just immediately before Christmas when all the family were coming either to us, or to Lancaster where Hugh and Claire were settling into their new house, or to Rose Castle where Steve and Sue and their family were going to be. For Christmas day itself twenty one, (which included Claire's mother, Joy,) were going to be with us at Sidegarth. We decided not to divulge the worrying news about Mary, which would have spoilt Christmas for everyone, till after the holiday.

The bronchoscopy didn't help much. The lesion wasn't visible. It was too peripheral, so they couldn't take a biopsy, and the washings etc didn't show any cells. At another appointment with Dr Willey, the chest physician, he discussed with us the next step, which was referral to a thoracic surgeon. The usual thing would have been for Mary to have a CT scan in Lancaster and be seen by the surgeon who consults there but operates in Blackpool. At that time the CT scan in Lancaster was being moved from one hospital to another and was out of action for three weeks. In any case I was keen that she should be treated in a teaching hospital if at all possible, and Dr Willey was quite happy for us to make our own enquiries.
So we consulted Lawrence and Domini about Leeds. They had friends who had worked with a much respected chest physician, Dr Hunter, in York, and found out for us that he referred his cases to a Mr Nigel Saunders in Leeds who he very strongly recommended. Saunders operated at Killingbeck Hospital which is the cardio-thoracic unit for Leeds University hospitals. By these rather devious means we got Dr Willey to refer Mary to Saunders, who saw us without much delay, arranged a CT scan for a couple of days later, and then arranged for her to be admitted for further tests and hopefully for surgery. We were much impressed with Nigel Saunders who was efficient and very considerate.

Saunders was off in the States for a few days which perhaps delayed her admission but only for a day or two. She was admitted on February 5th. We drove over from Staveley that day and I went on later that evening to stay with Lawrence and Domini at Little Ouseburn. The following day she had a bone scan, an ECG, and blood tests. Surgery, of course, was conditional on the scan being normal. Almost as afterthoughts - or so it seemed to us - they wanted another scan, this time an ultrasound scan of the liver and then an echocardiogram. Each additional test made us wonder whether they had found something untoward but this wasn't so. They were just being extremely thorough. Saunders did his ward round on the following day and said all was set for the operation next day - hopefully only a lobectomy.

The attention paid by all concerned to make sure that we fully understood what the procedures would be was impressive. Explanations about where the incision would be, how to operate the PCA (patient controlled analgesia), what nursing care there would be, when and why various drains would be removed etc etc. Very different from the state of affairs when I was involved with thoracic surgery in 1951!

The next day, half way through his list, Nigel Saunders rang to tell me that the operation had gone very well and that he saw only the one nodule. He had taken some hilar glands for histology but thought that they were unaffected. What a relief! And he had needed only to resect the right lower lobe. Lawrence and I went to see her for a few minutes that evening. The following day - or was it the next after that? - she was sitting in a chair by her bed and was walking the day after that. The pain control was achieved with a para-vertebral block which fed local anaesthetic into the depths of the operation site supplemented by a device she wore on her wrist which allowed her to press a button and thus deliver morphine in safe doses into a cannula in her left wrist when she needed it. She made excellent progress - interrupted one day when she got a lot of pain from a drainage tube into her pleural cavity which might have been dispensed with earlier.

We had some anxious days waiting for the histological results to come through from the pathologists but they came at last and showed that though the growth was malignant there was no spread to the mediastinal glands. They weren't sure whether the growth was a primary lung tumor or a solitary secondary from her breast cancer of seventeen years earlier. They said they would see whether St Mary's still had the slides from the time of her mastectomy.

The quality of the care at Killingbeck was fine. Luckily Mary had been given a side ward to herself so she was less disturbed by the noise and busy-ness of the
main ward than she would otherwise have been and she recovered fast. On the eighth day after the operation I drove her home in the car. Hopefully the end of a very worrying episode for Mary and for the whole family.

One abiding memory of all this will be of the love and support which has been showered on her - on all of us - by lots of friends and relatives. It has been by far the most traumatic time during our married lives. When Mary discovered that she had a nodule in her breast in 1979 I never really thought of it as life-threatening. It had been a very small nodule and the treatment - a radical mastectomy - had seemed almost unnecessarily comprehensive. But this time the threat seemed a very real one. During the interval between knowing that the growth was there and her admission to Killingbeck we had many bad nights when we would both be lying awake through the early hours of each morning, each, I imagine trying hard not to worry the other.

Once we had her home life gradually started to return to normal. Sal, who had come up the previous weekend with Richie to visit her in Killingbeck, came back to Sidegarth for Mary's first week back at home and was very helpful. Luckily the timing exactly fitted in with half term.

Nigel Saunders had given her a follow-up appointment for three and a half weeks hence, and by then she was meant to be walking a couple of miles a day! She achieved that, and we went back to Leeds, via a 'bargain break' of a couple of nights at Stone House hotel, in a village called Sedbusk just north of Hawes in Wensleydale. We had been recommended that by George. We chose about the worst two days of the winter! It was bitterly cold with a strong wind and driving snow. Not at all what we had been hoping for. However the visit to Killingbeck was satisfactory. Mary had another X-ray which showed some pleural thickening or fluid which was to be expected. Saunders said he would like to continue seeing her at intervals and gave us another appointment, this time three months ahead. They still hadn't had any news from St Mary's about the previous pathology, and when we got back home I wrote to Billings, the Senior Registrar at Killingbeck, to remind him to press the pathologist there to write again to SMH. Mary had managed to dig up her old St Mary's number of seventeen years earlier, so that made a reasonable excuse for writing.

She made good progress after that except for a slightly worrying persistent cough. But another follow-up visit, this time to Dr Willey, in Kendal, and a new X-ray on April 23rd, were reassuring.

People sometimes ask how we spend our time in retirement. We aren't exactly busy but we are always pretty fully occupied. No doubt everything we do is done slower than it used to be, but we manage to fill the time sensibly, and we have a lot of fun doing it. Gardening, goggling, getting logs in from the wood with the grandchildren, writing memoirs, painting, going to concerts in Kendal, walking, visiting the young in their various homes, having visits from our friends, dinner parties (not all that often), running Rose Castle, reading obituaries in the Independent - most of them either written by Leonard or Tam Dalyell - doing the Independent crossword!
Mary spends her time more usefully than I do. She's always doing things for other people. Cooking nice meals for the rest of us, making clothes for grandchildren, firing pottery for old folk in Gatesbield, demonstrating at the Quaker Tapestry in Kendal, re-upholstering for Rose Castle, or for Sally, or for Rookhow. But she's not only doing things for other people - all the time she's being helpful and generous to other people in all kinds of thoughtful ways. And it's usually pretty clear how much it's appreciated by other people. May 11th, 1948 was a good day. It was A VERY GOOD DAY.

Sidgarth,
Spring 1996.
Chapter 15

Mary died on October 14th, 2000. She was tremendously brave throughout a series of medical setbacks. She survived another four and a half years after the lobectomy and remained wonderfully cheerful despite the disappointments. In many ways those four and a half years were as happy and as much fun as any that we had had together.

But growing old is a traumatic business. In August 1997 while we were on holiday in the Dordogne with Sal and Paul I started to have symptoms suggestive of an obstructive bowel. These became acute once we were home and I had to call in the local GP’s locum on a Sunday evening. She authorised me to ring Lancaster Royal Infirmary if I started to vomit during the night. I did and Mary and Joe drove me to Lancaster at about 4 am. The nurses at reception were – not surprisingly – more interested in the fact that Princess Di had just been killed in a motor accident in Paris than they were in the state of my bowels. However, I was admitted immediately and after X-rays and scans was operated on that afternoon by a young and very competent surgeon, a Mr Abraham.

Abraham removed what he thought was a localised tumour and carried out a hemicolectomy. After a rather stormy few days during which I was pretty delirious, I went on to make a steady recovery. I had been lucky. This episode stimulated Joe to offer his classic and delightfully apt bit of advice – “a semicolon is better than a full stop!”

My operation meant that we had to miss out on a ceremony when Leeds University honoured my grandfather by naming a new block “The L.C.Miall Building”. The opening ceremony was carried out on Sept. 11th by the Minister for Science, John Battle. The Miall family was represented by Leonard and Sally, Nan and Joe, Rich Scott and Joanna Miall. Joanna was actually a student in the Zoology Dept at the time. I thought it surprising that this should happen so long after L.C.M.’s death and when no-one in the department would have known him personally.

In November 1997 we had a short trip up to Perth to see the J D Fergusson Gallery there and on the way home called on Archie’s sister Helen Stalker and his nephew Joe, and Maggie, Joe’s wife, in Galashields. Back via Haltwhistle and the Roman Wall, where Lawrence and Domini were on holiday. Coming South from there the next day I almost killed us both by driving up the wrong side, against the traffic, on a dual carriageway. It was touch and go and by far the most frightening motoring incident we ever had. It happened in the dark when it was raining and I blamed poor signposting. I complained to the road safety people in London about it and they were sympathetic and grateful for my report but I never went back to see whether they did anything about it.

After the colon cancer business I had a series of episodes of haematuria which were investigated by the urologist at Westmorland General but without determining the cause. I wondered whether the fact that I was on prophylactic aspirin played a part. Then followed the next lot of surgery. Joe and I and Mary and Nan, in that order, had our eight cataracts operated on successfully by the same
ophthalmologist at Westmorland General. My first cataract operation coincided with Mary’s last follow up visit to Nigel Saunders’ out-patient department. It was a sad occasion because when we got there we were told that he had died, also of cancer, and as a relatively young man. We had much to thank him for.

1998 was rather a good year for us. On May 10th we celebrated our Golden Wedding by booking a B and B at Yockenthwaite Farm, just above Hubberholme at the lower end of Langstrothdale, which had been a favourite haunt of ours since the Ilkley days. Our real celebration of the Golden Wedding was on June 27th when lots of the family came for the weekend at Sidegarth. The family made us two beautiful golden brochures for visits either to northern France or to Bruges. They were going to treat us to whatever it might cost; the choice was ours. We decided on Bruges and postponed going there until September and then had a lovely three day break staying in a comfortable hotel (‘t Bourgoensche Cruyce) right in the heart of that exciting city.

The next major excitement was Naomi’s birth in Lancaster. A super thing to happen, and lovely for both Hugh and Claire. Hugh, at fifty, must have been wondering if paternity was going to pass him by. Hugh and Claire and Lawrence and Dom between them were producing another little crop of children – a lovely second crop of grandchildren.

Early in 1999 Mary started to have pain again, this time in the region of her spleen. We weren’t very happy with the follow-up care she was getting at Westmorland General and asked our Staveley GP Dr Pagan Burns, whether we could have a second opinion. She agreed and we were soon seeing a nice physician at Ulverston. He confirmed that it was her spleen, arranged for us to see a surgeon and on February 15th she was admitted into Furness General for a splenectomy. Poor wee Mary. She had already had more than her fair share of surgery. When the histology came back there was again some doubt about the origin of the tumour.

Apparently secondary growths in the spleen are rare after breast cancer. We were told that they thought it might be another primary, a lymphoma, but that seemed very unlikely in view of her previous history. In any case it didn’t make any real difference to future decisions. The family were being very supportive; all the young came and stayed with us and cheered us up.

After a few days in Furness General Mary was home and we had quite a peaceful and pleasant summer. She continued her follow-up visits to Ulverston but was beginning to get pain again in the site of the splenectomy and that led to another scan. On November 2nd she was referred to Professor Mcillmurray, the local cancer specialist, who gave us a frank and full account of the options we had. Mary decided against chemo- or radio-therapy, which were unlikely to provide any long-term benefit. I’m glad she did. It was a brave decision but I’m sure the right one. Mcillmurray referred us to a charming chap, Dr Nick Sayer, who was the physician responsible for providing continuing care for those who couldn’t be helped otherwise. Nick Sayer and his team of Macmillan nurses looked after her for nearly a whole year, and despite everything it was a year she enjoyed largely because her family and friends were so kind and helpful.
Mary made friends easily. 2000 was a year in which she made several new friends. Some were folk she met through her treatment. Sally Jeffrey was her masseuse at the Cancer Care centre in Kendal. Nick Sayer became her friend as well as her physician. They used to tease each other in a jokesy way. Mary often disobeying his advice, especially when it came to taking opiates which she did very reluctantly. During those last months she needed a series of blood transfusions which caused only temporary benefits.

On June 2nd we celebrated Mary’s 80th birthday with a lunch for all our family at Howtown Hotel on Ullswater; boat there, walk back. Twenty three of us, including Marguerite, her cousin from Bellaghy.

Mary carried on oil painting almost to the end and enjoyed that. We had made friends with others who had been painting together in the Open College of the Arts course and we had visits from the and from Rosemary Smith, who taught mixed Media painting and was a rather special friend. By about September she could no longer manage the stairs and we brought beds down into our large sitting room. This was a good arrangement for visitors and friends from Gatesbield and Ambleside Friends Meeting who visited during those last few days. Sally was with us from October 10th, and Chris from the 13th. Hugh came daily from Lancaster. Unfortunately Lawrence and Dom and Steve and Sue were abroad when Mary died peacefully on October 14th.

My birthday had been on October 10th and Mary had commissioned Chris to buy me a new set of carving chisels so that I had something to interest me when she was no longer around. What a lass!

She was cremated at Lancaster Crematorium on Wednesday October 25th. Norman Frith and Hubert Hayhurst led a simple Quaker Meeting. Several of the family spoke and Hugh read a poem he had written for the occasion. There was another moving meeting on November 18th when we buried Mary’s ashes in Jordans graveyard. Mel Nash and Nora, among others, spoke and Mary Rosso sang, beautifully, and most of our old friends from the Jordans days were there. It was a fitting farewell.
Addendum

I wrote the following letter to my friends in April 2004 and had a lot of very nice replies to it.

I’m sorry to have to send bad news for you but this is just to let you know that my colon cancer has provided my liver with a set of its offspring. This came as no great surprise because I have been getting painlessly but progressively more jaundiced over the last three weeks. Yesterday I had an endoscopy (ERCP) which allowed the physician to fix a stent into my bile duct which should cure the jaundice but of course won’t help the secondaries.

There is no need for sympathy. I have had a long and interesting life, was blessed with a large, happy and successful family who are being very supportive and was happily married to Mary for over 50 years. What more could a fellar want?

So don’t be sad.

With love from

Bill

_________________________________________________________________

Dad died at home, in his sleep, on June 5th 2004. This excerpt was from a letter the family sent out to his friends:

We expect that you received a letter from him telling you about his liver secondaries. Since then he had a very peaceful and contented time at home at Sidegarth, enjoying his garden and the views of the Lake District, in beautiful spring weather. He very much appreciated the care and help of the District Nurses and his palliative care team, and through this he avoided all pain.

He was active and enjoying life up to the end, welcoming many visitors - friends and family - and going for trips out to his old haunts in the Yorkshire dales and the Lakes.

He also much appreciated the many messages he received. He had written to his friend Geoff Rose: “Those who can so calmly acknowledge that death is an essential part of life and have the strength to write and tell their friends their own death is imminent, run the serious risk of having to read their own obituaries”. And he ran that risk himself.

We will all miss him enormously.