

**THE ILLUSTRATED AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
PETER JOHN COLERIDGE MACKARNESS**



I was born at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of 25th August 1919, at the Belvedere Nursing Home in Scarborough, the younger son of Cuthbert and Eileen Mackarness (nee Godfrey). My father (Radley and St. John's College, Oxford) had entered the Indian Forest Service in Assam in 1912, My mother had joined him in 1915 in Calcutta, where they were married in St. John's Cathedral on 5th March of that year; and my elder brother (and only sibling) Richard had been born in the Hill Station of Murree the following year. My father had served in the Army in Palestine in the First World War, and my mother and Richard had joined him after the Armistice in November 1918 in Cairo, where I was conceived.

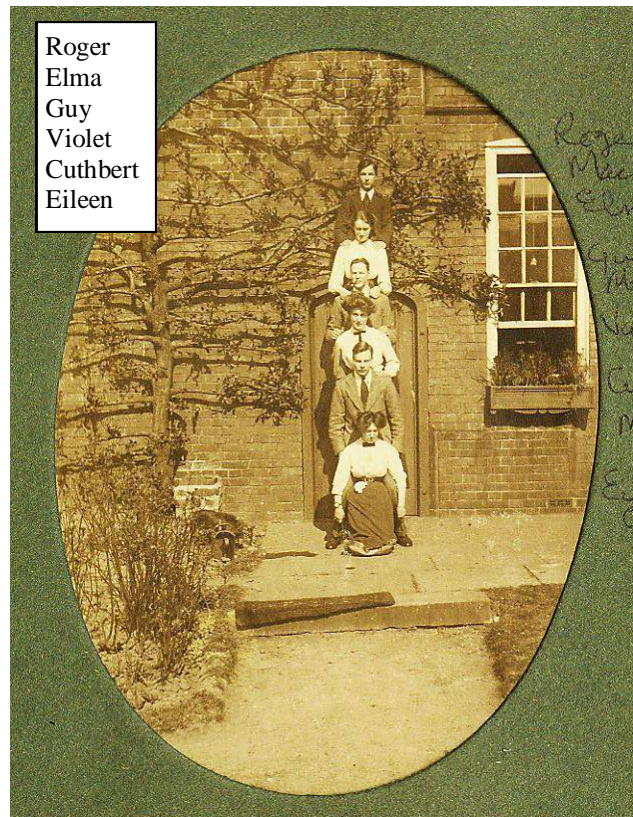


Violet (7), Elma (2),
Eileen (9)

Cuthbert and Eileen had known each other since they were ages 4 and 6 respectively - he the fourth of the six children of Charles Mackarness, Vicar of St. Martin's Church, Scarborough and Archdeacon of the East Riding of Yorks, she the eldest of the three daughters of Dr. Frank Godfrey, a GP who lived at 5 Montpelier Terrace, exactly opposite the Vicarage. The Mackarness and Godfrey children saw a lot of each other, growing up together in the last decade of the 19th century and first of the 20th, and there's a story that a pulley was rigged up across the street between Cuthbert's bedroom and Eileen's, over which messages passed!



Eileen pre-WWI



Roger
Elma
Guy
Violet
Cuthbert
Eileen

Forest Lodge, Shillong, Assam
Official residence of the Conservator of Forests

Cuthbert returned to his job as a Forest Officer in Assam after the War, and when I was two my mother,



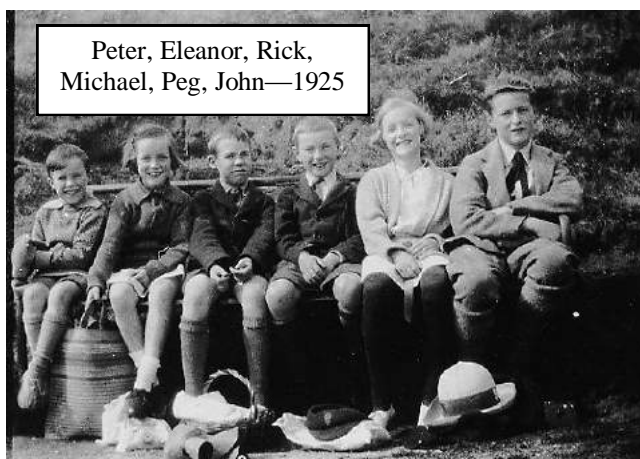
Richard and I joined him. We had an Indian nurse, or ayah, whom we loved, and from whom I learnt much Hindustani alongside my English. Ayah had difficulty pronouncing her charges' names, and to her we were always 'Ricksharse and Pert'! My memory of those early days of infancy (from 1921 to 1923) are dim, and I recall now only two experiences: (1) hiding away after blistering my feet

walking through hot ashes and (2) Richard and I collecting fireflies (glowworms we called them; in fact they were small insects with luminous tails) in handkerchiefs after dark in Jorhat - where Father was District Forest Officer - to make lanterns. In 1923, sailing home to England from Bombay via Capetown with my mother and Richard, I'm told that I forgot every word of Hindustani.



Richard's and my home for the next 15 years, until just before the Second World War, was with our father's eldest sister Margot Booker in Worcestershire. The widow of a schoolmaster who had retired in 1920 and died suddenly two years later aged 57 leaving her with five children aged between 14 and 4, Aunt Margot was (as I look back 60 years on) an inspired choice as between-the-wars home provider. It must have been a really difficult task for her, often, especially keeping control of my brother who was strong-willed and endlessly inventive where mischief-making was concerned. Although I'm told I was more tractable I also hero-worshipped Richard (as younger brothers sometimes do) and was not slow to follow his lead.

Thus two brothers joined a family of five Booker first cousins: Mary 15, John 13, Peggie 10, Michael 8 and Eleanor 5. Mary and John were already at boarding school, Mary at Queen Margaret's in Scarborough (where my mother had been also) and John at Eton, and soon seemed completely grown-up. So my memories of those nineteen-twenties and early-thirties are of Peggie-Micky-Richard-Eleanor-Peter.



Peter, Eleanor, Rick,
Michael, Peg, John—1925

For my first two 'Booker' years we lived at the family home, the Manor House (in the small village of Elmbridge near Droitwich) which then had neither electric light nor mains water and was set in many acres of its own land, called the Oakland, from which its lawn was separated by a sunken fence (known as a 'ha-ha'). The lawn boasted two magnificent trees; a

beech and an araucaria ('monkey-puzzle'). I was of course closest to Eleanor (14 months my senior) and she and I came under the care of a Nanny named Dorothy Waters. Always



known as "Doy", she was still 'nannying' in the Booker family years later, and I last met her at Michael's wedding in 1963 shortly before her death. Two memories of those early Elmbridge years (1923/5: the later ones were '32/5). Catching whooping cough (and, when convalescent, falling into a ditch saying 'damn' - Doy told me this!) and staying in the cottage at the entrance to the Oakland, where I slept in a true feather bed (you sank into it as if you were in the foxy-whiskered gentleman's wood-

shed in Beatrix Potter's 'Jemima Puddleduck').

In 1925 Aunt Margot took a 7-year lease of Sidrnouth House, Worcester Road, Malvern, a large three-storied house built on a steep slope, and having one strange feature I have seen nowhere else~ a vertical timber-clad extension running the full height of the house, at the back, but only a few feet wide and even narrower in depth, and containing nothing but. W.C.s! The Worcester Road traffic, even in those early days of motor vehicles, was noisy, mainly because of the gradient, which caused the buses from Worcester to change gear just outside Sidrnouth House.



Memories of the Malvern years (1925/32):-

Riding on donkeys up the Malvern Hills to the Worcestershire Beacon, a permanent feature with steps up to it, and a glass-topped map to check your position. You can see the Bristol Channel on a clear day. " And twelve fair counties saw the blaze from Malvern's lonely height" ('The Armada' by Macaulay).

Climbing the 99 steps towards St. Ann's Well, where sparkling Malvern water (famous world-wide: one Governor of Assam used to have it shipped out in barrels) bubbles out of the hillside. There was in those days at the Well a blind harmonium player who, as often as he heard Aunt Margot approach, would strike up the 'Eton Boating Song' (her husband, Uncle Bob [Robert Penrice Lee Booker] had been an Eton Master for 20 years).

All five of us children out on bicycles and often stacking the five bicycles against a single lamp-post (a dangerous practice, in retrospect).

Playing Mah-Jongg, and all becoming so keen on it as to set the board up overnight. The Bookers' first car, a bull-nosed Morris 'Chummy', which my cousin Peggie was the first to learn to drive.

The name of our local MP , whose posters exhorted electors to 'Vote for Stanley Baldwin, the man you can trust' .

Granny Godfrey coming to stay at a nearby Malvern boarding house.



Granny Godfrey



Rick
Peter
Michael
1936

Playing with the children of the Morgan family, which still, 60 years on, has its factory at Malvern turning out hand built Morgan cars.

Having tea with old Mrs Perrins, widow of Perrins of Lea and Perrins Worcester Sauce. She lived near us in some style, in a grand house.

Spending some time (about a month, perhaps) in a Nursing Home called Spring Bank with an actual or suspected 'patch' on my lung, and there being entertained with a crossword compiled by cousin Michael, containing the now immortal clue "Nothing in it" which stumped me, even though I'd got three of its five letters E-P-Y!

Using tea trays as 'toboggans' in the snow, down the steeply sloping garden.

Trying to 'take' a wasps' nest, and Richard racing away pursued by angry wasps, and getting so much stung that he was given a Lysol bath.

Spending a year at Etton Rectory near Beverly, Yorks, a Home School run by the Revd. Jack Cholmely and his wife Eve (Uncle Jack and Aunt Evie to their pupils) from September 1927- July 1928. 'Home School' because the children (14 of us in that year—see pic) lived there in the holidays as well as during the term. There I learnt to ride a bicycle (a child's one, known then as a Fairy Cycle) and still remember the thrill of first going



Pupils at Etton Rectory (I am third from right)

solo. My parents must both have been together in India during that time, for the only family I remember visiting me was my Granny Godfrey (widowed two years earlier) who used to come over in her Austin 7 from Scarborough to take me out for the day. She was an unconventional person and I clearly recall two illustrations of this: (1) sitting on her knee at the wheel of the little car in the long drive of Etton Rectory, being bidden to steer, and (2) her oft-repeated description of herself when a child "Oh but you know, I was such a tomboy!" She was the youngest of the eleven children of a Malton GP, Dr Hartley.



'Lazyland' - the Godfreys' beach hut in Scarborough

Spending holidays in Scarborough at the very spacious Granny Godfrey flat in Seacroft Mansions up the Filey Road, where I stayed both alone with Richard and, at least once, with him and both my parents, when the Battle Cruisers Hood and Repulse were floodlit

at night in the harbour, and my parents woke me up to see them, to my testy comment "Very pretty , very pretty" before sinking back to much-preferred sleep!

In September 1928, aged 9, I joined Richard at Packwood Haugh, Hockley Heath, Warwickshire, the prep school earlier attended also by cousins John and Michael Booker- Bob Goodman, whom Peggie married in 1935, had been at Packwood earlier still, but I think had been unhappy there. I was at Packwood for five years. Although close to Birmingham it was in the heart of the country. The train journey included a change at Birmingham where on a platform, in those middle-of-the-Great- Depression-years, stood a mechanical Appeal cabinet which, fed with a coin, lit up to show (1) a well-fed family and (2) an unemployed family (I think it was a coal miner's) and the words "Your Life... Their Life... Thank you". Packwood had extensive grounds, on which we played cricket in the summer

and both soccer and rugger in the winter and spring terms - but mainly soccer. There were about 50 boys there, sleeping in big dormitories, and the regime was spartan (eg morning cold baths), and the academic standards high. The emphasis was on the classics, and in the top form in their final year scholarship candidates had to study all the books of Virgil during periods which extended into Saturday afternoons. Packwood had a remarkable record of scholarships won to public schools. An example (not at all untypical) was my year, 1933, with a 1st to Bromsgrove, 1st to Shrewsbury, 1st to Uppingham, and 4th to Bradfield.

On the day I sat the Bradfield written scholarship exam (I suppose in London) Aunt Margot and I watched the 1933 ceremony of Trooping the Colour outside Buckingham Palace.

Outings from Packwood included visits to the Dunlop factory and Cadbury's. At the latter each boy received a small flat presentation tin of chocolates.

Model aeroplanes which flew were very popular and I had a top of the range Warnford 'Racer' powered by twin elastics, which had an impressive range (200/300yds) when the trim was right, which all too often it wasn't! It cost 21 shillings.

One day in 1930 the ill-fated airship R 101 flew low over the school, to cheers from us all. On 5th October 1930 it crashed at Beauvais in France on its maiden flight to India, and was totally destroyed by fire with the loss of 48 of the 54 people aboard. Our headmaster, George C. McFerran, was an advocate of caning, one of his favourite (supposedly jocular) remarks being "Stick for chaps". His stick was a bamboo, applied to the buttocks of a boy bent over a chair. It was applied to me once, to Richard many times! My great regret about my time at Packwood was giving up piano lessons. I could not 'relate' to the man who taught me, and I've been sad about that all my life.

As part of the Bradfield scholarship exam there was a viva from the headmaster (EEA Whitworth), Mr Sopwith (Maths - whatever did he ask that I could answer?!) and EG LeGrand- at his own house (French). I recall reciting to LeGrand ('Froggie' to all of us later) a huge chunk of Victor Hugo's poem 'Napoleon Deux', most of which I still have by heart. I believe this went down well and may have helped me to the award of a Foundation Scholarship; certainly my Maths didn't!

At Bradfield (September 1933 - December 1937) we had cold baths every morning, and boys in the 1st year did 'fagging' for the prefects, including things like cleaning their shoes. A prefect would shout 'F-A-A-A-G', there'd be a rush of fags and the last one would do the job. As a scholar I went straight into the Certificate Block at 14, and sat School Certificate the following summer term (1934) while still that age.

I took up Shooting (.22 indoors, .303 outdoors at 200yds and 500yds), and shot at Bisley in the Cadet pair (under 15) in 1935 and in the VIII in 1936 and 1937. In the Ashburton Shield in 1937 (about 60 schools competing) I was Captain and we came 2nd, with 474 points, behind Winchester, 477, with Clifton 3rd on 467, a member of the Clifton team being Torla's cousin. Tony Wedd. Winchester earned Silver Medals, we large Bronze -I still have mine -and Clifton, small Bronze. In those days The Times used to print the Ashburton result in great detail, including the names of the first three teams in full. We also all competed in OTC uniforms, and attended a prize-giving so dressed, at the end of the Bisley Fortnight, when we marched on to a platform and saluted as a team, to receive our medals. By a strange quirk of fate we were also awarded a trophy, a massive and rather ugly silver one, called the Lucas Cup, awarded for the best aggregate score by a school's Ashburton and Veterans' (Old Boys) combined teams. Winchester won that too, but because they failed to send in a Claim Ticket. the Cup was awarded to 2nd placed Bradfield. Protests cut no ice, the Cup came to us. Very odd.

During my four years at Bradfield there were two of the every-three-years Greek plays~ Agamemnon in 1934 (in which, voice still unbroken, I was 'wailing voices off' (Clytaemnestra's conscience), and Oedipus Tyrannus in 1937 when, taking alternate performances with AGB Helm -later, it happens, English Amateur Golf Champion - I was a member of the chorus. So it was memorable, in 1997, 60 years later, to sit, enthralled, watching the same Oedipus performed there, but better for having three- quarters of the 16-strong chorus acted by girls, with such grace and feeling.



Mackarness family group at Betty Hughes' wedding in 1935: Roger, Denis, Eleanor, Peter, Cuthbert, Eileen, Rick, Joy Hughes, Hugh, Elfie Hughes, Francis Hughes, Granny Mackarness, Guy, Margot, David Hughes, Mary, Michael, John, Peggy Booker

In 1936, with no career planned, I was offered the prospect, two years on, of Articles in the family firm of Mackames and Lunt, by my great-uncle Arthur. 71 years old, twice married- first wife died in 1932 and he married Aunt Virginia, a widow aged 55, two years later- he was childless and was looking for a nephew or great-nephew to carry on the name. To enter into Articles I needed to pass either School Certificate (which I hadn't) or the Law Prelim; so that summer I sat LP and passed. Luckily for me the Maths element in that exam was Arithmetic only, and I could just manage that!



Arthur Mackarness

I left Bradfield, turned 18, in December 1937, and less than a month later set sail, with my mother, for India; but before continuing, I must step back a few years.

My father had wanted to come home to UK long before he finally retired, and twice he tried. First in 1931, when he sank £1000 - a very large sum in those days - in a venture called Home Service Association (HSA) which offered servicing of people's cars in their own garages. It never caught on (this was in the middle of the Great Depression), the money Dad put in was lost, and he returned to Assam for another spell as Forest Officer. The second time, five years later, my parents bought a house, Tas Combe, in Church Street, Willingdon, Eastbourne, which became the family home.



First picture of P and T together, aged about 16, in Eastbourne

(I must admit that I'd no idea, when we settled in to Tas Combe, of the part that the occupants of a house named Fairlight, a few doors higher up in Church Street- a widow with 16 and 11 year old daughters and an 8 year old son, plus a live-in couple and their young son—were to play during the rest of their and my joint lives. I knew only that the elder daughter went to the same boarding school (St.Mary's, Calne) as my cousin Eleanor. Their names were Muriel Tidman with children Torla, Mary and Paul, and Mr and Mrs Cuthbert with their son Mac.)

Then, in 1937, on the death of Mr Milroy, the Conservator of Forests in Assam, Dad was offered the job, which meant more money and a better pension on retirement. He accepted—another 5-6 year stint - and went out almost immediately.



Eileen and Peter
on board ship

On 8th January 1938 the Cabin Class MY Circassia, Anchor Line, with my mother and me aboard, left Liverpool and for the next four days encountered really rough weather, first in the Irish Sea, then in the Bay of Biscay. Luggage came loose in the hold, someone broke her arm in a fall, and most passengers, I included, were seasick. My mother was a wonderful sailor and I think she and one other were the only passengers who took their meals in the dining saloon during those four days. Sailing (in calm, warm then hot conditions once through the Bay of Biscay) via Gibraltar, the Mediterranean, Port Said, the Suez Canal, Aden and the Red Sea, we disembarked at Bombay after a 3-week voyage, and travelled by train for two days and a night to Calcutta. It was a hot, very dusty journey, the only cooling being secured by a big block of ice in a box in our compartment, slowly melting until by journey's end it was just water sloshing about. We were well aware, but I'm afraid in those distant days near the 'end of Empire' just accepted, that conditions for most other travellers on that train were very different from ours.

In Calcutta we stayed a couple of nights with Matt Bradby (a cousin on my father's Milford side) and his wife Jan; but my enjoyment was limited by a severe tummy bug which a doctor colourfully told me was caused by "a change in intestinal flora" (in other words, I suppose, a move from European to Asian diet). The next stage of our journey was by train to Gauhati, followed by a 60 mile drive with Dad in his big silver Chevrolet (Regn A 816 S!) up into the hills, to Shillong, a town with such a temperate climate that it was sometimes called The Scotland of the East.

Dad was soon off on one of his tours in the plains of Assam, taking Mum and me with him.



This turned out a memorable tour, for on 15th February 1938 at Kochugaon, Dad and I shot a big tiger which had been regularly taking the villagers' cattle. For a full account of this, and of the rest of my time in India in 1938, see the separate diary I kept at the time.

Peter and
Cuthbert with the
tiger

Between September 1938, when I became articled to Uncle Arthur (who was my grandfather Charles Mackarness' youngest brother), and 24th August 1939 when our Territorial Searchlight Battalion was mobilised a week before the outbreak of the Second World War, the main events in my life as a 19 year old were:

The Munich crisis in September, when Alan Lunt and I joined the Territorials, and Conservative Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain flew to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden (over the latter's threat to Czechoslovakia) and returned waving a piece of paper and saying "It's peace in our time". Of course, it wasn't.

Mussolini invading and overrunning Abyssinia during the blazing hot Easter weekend in 1939.

Spring 1939, singing in my first Petersfield Musical Festival, conductor Sir Adrian Boult. The main work was Handel's 'Israel in Egypt', for which Torla and her mother came down, staying in a High Street hotel which is long gone.

As Territorials, Alan and I attended a drill hall in Horndean and trained in searchlights. We were both Sappers to start with; that is to say, private soldiers in the Royal Engineers, and three months later we were commissioned second-lieutenants.

In August 1939 our battalion, as it was called then, was mobilised a week before the outbreak of war, and while the rest of the battalion went to man searchlights round Southampton and Portsmouth, I was posted as Intelligence Officer to the 35th Anti-Aircraft brigade headquarters at Fareham, the brigade HQ being in a big building, Fareham House, on the main West Street, and I was billeted on the owner of the Cedar Service Station in part of which there was a restaurant where we were fed. Needless to say, I knew nothing about Intelligence. I just had to do the best I could, and one of the perhaps unusual jobs I had to tackle was to take a well-known Daily Express columnist called Godfrey Winn round gun sites. The article he printed in the Express was almost unrecognisable to me compared with what had happened, but he was good enough to send me the original script, so that I could see what he'd written. There are only two things I can remember about that article as it appeared in the Express. First, he described the person who conducted him, that is to say, me, as someone who a year earlier had been sitting on his base, as he put it, in a solicitor's office in Petersfield. (Actually I used the word 'arse'.) Secondly, a Battery Commander we met at Beaulieu, a heavy anti-aircraft gun site, had what he described as a pedigree dog, and Godfrey Winn commented 'My dog, Mr.Sponge, would not agree'.

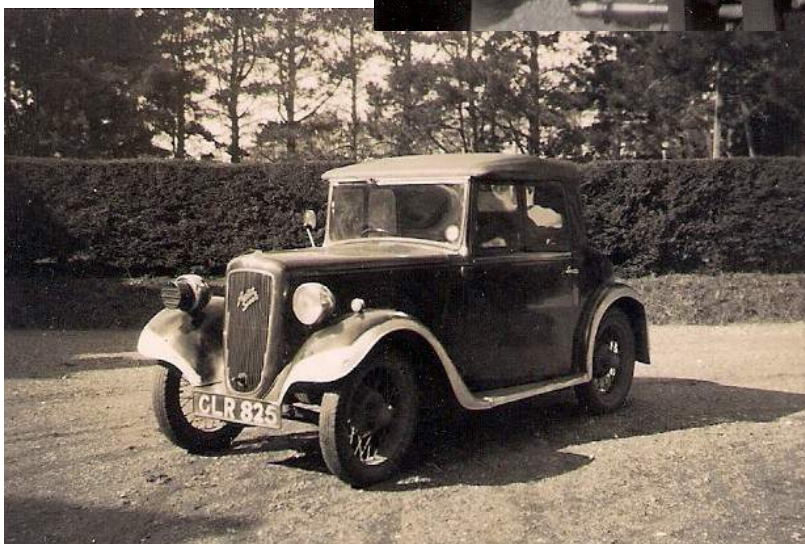
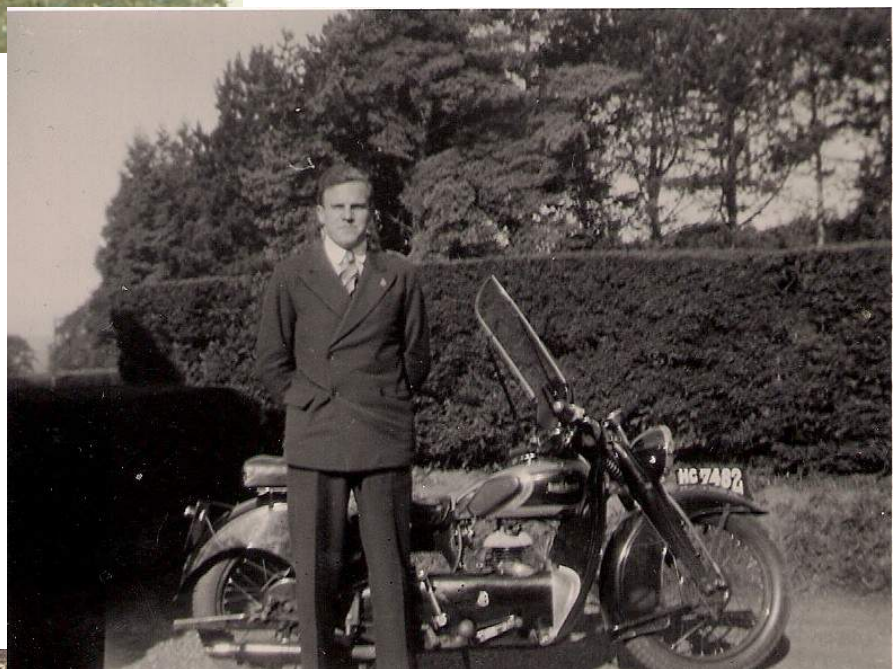
After eight months in that job, during which I sold my Francis Barnett 'Cruiser' motor bike and bought a 1936 2-seater Austin 7 for £27.10s, I was posted back to the battalion, which had by then become a regiment Royal Artillery instead of a battalion Royal Engineers, and found myself in August 1940, just short of my 21st birthday, in command of a troop of about 80 men. manning 6 searchlights round Southampton Water. It was the time of the German daylight raids, and I saw formations of Junkers 88s and Heinkel 111 s coming over and on one occasion bombing the Supermarine aircraft works in Southampton, and just down the road was the Folland aircraft factory at which Spitfires were repaired. After they'd been repaired and took to the air again, they always, by way of a test, did 'victory rolls'. In the late autumn of 1940 I was posted to another troop in the regiment, with a similar sort of layout to the other one, and my headquarters was at Copythorne near Romsey; and during the Germans' night raids on Portsmouth and Southampton, I was stationed partly there and partly on



*In uniform
1939*

1939

*Brand new 250cc
two-stroke 1939
Francis-Barnett
'Cruiser'
Price new: £45
At Buckmore,
Petersfield*



1940

*My first car, a 1936
Austin 7, equipped for
driving in wartime
blackout*

a second site at Bursledon, by which time the experiment was being tried of, instead of having six individual lights a few miles apart in a troop, clustering them in clusters of three.

I was very lucky at that time, because my troop area included two of the best pubs in Hampshire, the Bugle at Hamble and the Swan at Bursledon. In that latter part of 1940, when it was thought that an invasion was imminent, one of the things I had to do was choose positions round my searchlight sites for ground defence. Believe it or not, all I had in addition to rifles were a few First World War Lewis guns with three pans of ammunition for each, and each pan would have lasted about a minute and a half. During those night raids on Southampton in that early winter of 1940 I had a lot of Portsmouth men in my troop, and it was a terrible thing for them to have to watch helplessly while Portsmouth burned, just a few miles to the east. I took a great chance, I'm afraid, on one occasion. One of my sergeants had his family in Portsmouth, and when a particular night raid was over and the all-clear had sounded, I took him in my little Austin 7 into the heart of Portsmouth where we found his family, fortunately, in what was known as an Anderson shelter, a little hoop-like structure in his garden, and they were safe. Had it become known in my battery headquarters that I had left my post to make this journey, admittedly a journey of mercy, I would have been in trouble. Southampton was raided on three nights out of eight, 23rd and 30th November and 1st December 1940.

I shall never forget going to one of my searchlight sites at Woolston. when the fires were so intense and the smoke so thick that that particular searchlight was totally ineffective because the beam was reflected back to the ground and couldn't get through the smoke. Incidentally, my official car for travelling round my troop area was one of the very recently off the assembly line Austin 8s. On one of the sites at a place called Hound, just north of Hamble and very close in to Southampton, I had my 21st birthday, on 25th August, and the troop HQ staff made a big key of plywood and a bow with the gunner colours on it, and all signed their names along it, 21 today. My fellow officer on that troop was a solicitor of 37 (which of course seemed immensely old to me) called Ian Mitchell-Innes, who practised in London, and I got to know him after the war again. He was a good friend.

During 1941 I applied to be trained as a camouflage officer, and attended a three week course at the Retreat House attached to Farnham Castle. I was the only one on my course who was not either an artist or an architect. One of my fellow students on that course was later to become famous as the architect of the new Coventry Cathedral, Basil Spence. At the end of the course each of us had to give a lecture on a subject of his choice, and I well remember that Basil Spence chose Architecture Through The Ages, and he did it in the form of the drawing of a Christmas cake, and when he got to the layer representing the Victorian era he had drawn a discreet cloud around it, as Victorian architecture was a bit out of favour at that time. Promoted to Captain, my first posting was to the headquarters of the First Anti-Aircraft Division at Knightsbridge in London.

Now perhaps I might digress from my army career for a minute to something my family might find, I suppose, mildly interesting, which is my girlfriends during the period 1939 to 1943. Although I had met her to whom I have been married for over fifty years well before the war, and in fact we'd become quite keen on each other in early 1939, we then went our separate ways until we came together in June '43 and got engaged. Well, early on there was Joyce. She was the daughter of the vicar of Meonstoke, and a VAD at Netley Hospital. We only went out together a couple of times, but I remember her chiefly as being the sister of a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy who became famous as having been leader of a party that

rescued British prisoners from a German prison ship called the Altmark in Narvik Fjord in 1940, in the course of a daring raid into the fjord and the uttering of the immortal words "The Navy's here". His appointment aboard ship was known as Jimmy the One.

And there was Mary, a nursing Sister from the same Netley Hospital, whom I used to take out in the second car I owned. By now I had a maroon two-seater Austin 10, 1935 vintage, with a thing called a dickey, which was a folding seat that you opened up at the back in which two people could sit, in the open of course.

Perhaps the most serious attachment I had was to Maxine, who lived just round the corner from my searchlight site at Copythorne. She had been one of the danceband leader, Victor Sylvester's dancing "young ladies" and her I actually took to lunch one Sunday at Buckmore, which was where my Uncle Arthur lived in Petersfield, later the home of Kenneth Oates. When Maxine suddenly dropped me to get engaged to a local dentist called Leonard, I was so steamed up, and it astonishes me still to think of my temerity in doing this, that I actually gatecrashed her engagement party in order to remonstrate. Her father told me to clear off, but she made him apologise and I withdrew with what dignity I could muster.

Then in London there was another Mary, with whom I had quite an intense affair in fact. The interesting thing, looking back, was that of those four women, three of them, the two Marys and Maxine, were all older than I was, two of them seven years older. Yes, and Torla did in fact appear once in those early years of the war, and she had already joined the War herself in 1940, as a member of the A.T.S. (Auxiliary Territorial Service, now the W.R.A.C.). When I was stationed in London in 1941, she met me there and we hitchhiked up to her home in Cambridgeshire, during a short period of leave for both of us.

Well, continuing with my army service, still in London as Camouflage Officer for the Division, we were not experiencing daylight raids any more, but the night raids had continued, though not at the same level as during the winter of 1940-41. I managed to get taken up from I think Northolt Airport to take photographs of anti-aircraft sites and how they were camouflaged, using a hand-held air camera which you just poked out of the window of the aircraft, a small Dakota. In order to do this I was allowed to get the barrage balloons, which were permanently in position over London, to catch any aircraft that flew too low, close-hauled so that I could take photographs from a fairly low level. Two of the places that I was able to photograph, but alas, the results are long lost, were Big Ben which we actually flew past at not much higher than the clock face, and Buckingham Palace. That phase of my service as a Camouflage Officer lasted during the early months of 1942.

In the summer I wanted to take a more active part in the war, and I applied and was accepted for training as an Air Op pilot. OP stood for Observation Post and these were Gunner Officers who, going first on a course of gunnery on Salisbury Plain, and then on a pilot's course, ended up as pilots of Auster spotter aircraft, spotting targets from the air, and directing the guns upon them in field operations. Unfortunately, I failed the gunnery and never got near the pilot training. That was frankly a very grim period for me because on being failed I was sent to what was known to some as the home of lost souls for gunner officers, namely the Depot at Woolwich, reduced in rank from Captain to Lieutenant.

My period at Woolwich wasn't very long, I'm glad to say, and eventually I got a fresh Camouflage Officer posting to a unit that was training gun batteries, who had been in a static role of anti-aircraft, to become mobile, and that took me to various parts of the

country, including Leigh-on-Sea in Essex and to Scotland including Loch Lomond. For several months I was teamed up with an artist called Jack Heath. Jack and I got together a collection of instructional slides, which we used in lectures given by us alternately, and here again, I almost squirm at my brashness. I gave a lecture on camouflage, with slides, to a French Canadian unit, and I spoke to them in French. I rather fancied my French, I still do, but my goodness me what a nerve!

This seems to me in retrospect to have been quite a carefree time, and I often had the opportunity to be flown in small aircraft, quite often photographing the units that I was trying to train in my particular subject, camouflage, making the pictures into slides and then using those in lectures to show them how they looked on the ground. I remember in particular taking a set of photographs of a Canadian armoured unit with Canadian tanks called RAM tanks, which I don't think were a great success, the tanks I mean. Certainly by the time of Normandy they had been replaced by American Sherman tanks.

We're now into 1943, and on 1st June of that year, known to Torla and me always as The Glorious First of June (after a British naval battle of 1797), we got engaged. And on 8th September that year we were married. The wedding was at the parish church in Fowlmere, Cambs, close to Torla's home 'The Green'. My brother Richard was my best man, and Torla was given away by her mother. There were three bridesmaids; Torla's sister Mary, Althea Roberts and



Hannah Bridgeman. Torla's 15 year old brother Paul, a schoolboy at Rugby, was much in evidence too. In the Christmas holidays, on 4th January 1944, Paul was killed while cycling in the country near his home. His excellent School Certificate exam results from Rugby were published shortly after his death. Paul Richard Oscar Wedd Tidman had been born on 19th June 1928, two months after the early death of his father.

In the winter of 1943/44 the preparations started for the D Day invasion, and I was attached with a little unit of Captain, Sergeant, draughtsman and driver to Number Eight Beach Group. Each beach group was a set of mixed units - engineers, signals, REME and so on... grouped around a regiment, in our case the 5th Royal Berks; each beach group being assigned, as we discovered much later, to a particular Normandy beach, and our beach was 'Juno'. So, during those months before D Day, the early months of 1944, the beach group trained in more than one place suitable for practising beach landings, two of them being Gullane in Scotland and West Wittering in Sussex.

When we were sufficiently trained for that, the whole beach group settled down in a vast wood at Bitterne, on the edge of Southampton, in tents, and the great period of pre-invasion security began; to such an extent that we were wired in to that wood, and not only that, but we wired in with us two or three houses which it was impossible to exclude from the perimeter, and the families in these few houses we fed. I suppose that means, although I can't recall it clearly now after fifty years, that they weren't allowed, during that fairly short period of two or three weeks, to go outside the perimeter either. This was also a time when gradually, batch by batch, all officers were briefed about where we were going, and there was a codeword for being briefed; if you had been briefed you were 'bigoted'. So you would ask a person if you met them "Are you bigoted?".

A few days, about a week, before D Day my little unit of a jeep and three soldiers, Sergeant Tony Fielding, Corporal Brereton and Gunner Rowland, headed off for Tilbury, which would be our embarkation point. I travelled by train, ordinary passenger train, and I can still remember the extraordinary sensation of having the name Bernieres-sur-Mer, the place we were assigned to in Normandy, in my head, aware that there were hundreds of others with similar knowledge, and that if the secret leaked out in those circumstances to the wrong ears the whole of this operation could be blown. During those first few days of June every vehicle that was going ashore on the beaches of Normandy was waterproofed in three stages, the last of which, in the case of our jeep, was a flexible pipe up the side of the windscreen, to take away the exhaust as we drove through the water on to the beach.

So during the evening of 5th June our jeep, along with a lot of other vehicles, was driven aboard a vessel called a landing ship tank, LST, ready for sailing early next morning, which happened. Very early on the morning of D Day, 6th June, we left the Thames and slipped into the Channel, through the Straits of Dover, and anchored about a mile off shore, off the Normandy beaches. I can remember as if it were yesterday the sound of the gliders being towed overhead to land across the River Orne, and during the next forty-eight hours the shelling by HMS Warspite of targets well inland.

On 8th June, D+2, we were brought close inshore, and in fact our jeep never got deeper into the water than half way up the wheels. We landed at a place called Courseulles and drove the short distance east to Bernieres-sur-Mer. Our personal tent close to beach group headquarters, a few hundred yards back from the beach, was in a farmyard - of course the whole farm had been evacuated - which had a nest, an abandoned nest of ducks' eggs which unfortunately were addled.

Two of my colleagues from camouflage training days were nearby; Walter Hodges, an artist and writer with whom we kept up after the war, and who later collaborated with Bernard Miles, the actor, in the design and construction of the new Globe Theatre in London. The other was Basil Spence, who was stationed at the extreme east end of the beachhead, at Arromanches, and who, as his place was right at the end of the beachhead, arranged for the construction of quite an elaborate tall screen of camouflage netting to prevent the Germans from seeing what they were shooting at. Arromanches was also the site, shortly afterwards, of the famous Mulberry Harbour, an ingenious construction of sunk concrete blocks, and I believe sunken ships as well, which enabled heavy goods to be unloaded before we had captured a port. The other absolutely life-saving investment for an army on

the move was a thing called Pipeline Under The Ocean, or PLUTO for short, that enabled supplies of oil to be pumped direct to France from the UK.

After a few weeks my little unit was pulled out from the beach group and attached to the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, which was emerging from the very severe battle for Caen, and engaged with other armoured units in the encircling of vast amounts of German armour in what was known as the Falaise pocket, a terrible killing field.

Soon after I joined 4 Div it set off at great speed, chasing the retreating Germans eastward through France and into Belgium. The Germans were by then desperately short of fuel and relying heavily on horses for transport, and one of my abiding memories is of halting at night during the chase and experiencing the indescribable smell of a dead horse nearby. Other snatches of memory are of entering a French village and discovering that we were the first Allied troops that the inhabitants had seen since the Germans withdrew, and we received a somewhat ecstatic welcome.

Then the only occasion when my life was in the least bit in danger, which was also a contributory factor to the deafness for which I now receive a small disablement pension, was when our group of soldiers, including a Colonel, were sheltering under a small bridge, a shell from a German 88 gun actually struck the parapet of the bridge, proving to me incidentally, the truth of what I'd always heard, which is that the shell that lands on or beside you is the one of which you do not hear the whistle.

If you are wondering what on earth a camouflage officer would find to do in a period like this, the answer is that most of the time I was used, equipped with a light armoured vehicle called a Scout Car, as a liaison officer between divisional headquarters and brigade, and brigade and individual regiments. The only time I was given specific tasks connected with my particular job was when there were preparations for a planned assault following a period of halt and regroupment, for example, in a forest area called the Reichswald; on the River Maas in Belgium, during that very cold winter of '44/45; and on the crossing of the Rhine.

Well, I seem to have got ahead of myself a bit, because I missed out a most important event, in the autumn of 1944. when the division I was with had liberated Bruges, and the Guards Armoured Division had done the same with Brussels and moved on. I managed to discover through my contacts at headquarters 21 Army group (which was my headquarters) that Torla's battery, the very first mixed anti-aircraft battery to go overseas, was due in Brussels, to deploy it in the anti-aircraft defence of it.

I contrived to get some leave to be in Brussels when the battery arrived, and furthermore to persuade her battery commander to let her come with me so that we could be in a hotel together. A little later on, a fellow officer, a Canadian called Gordy Chase, and I were sitting in a restaurant in Brussels when a father and daughter came over and pressed us to go and visit them in their home in the suburbs, which we were not at that time able to do, but later did. Arising from that visit it was later arranged for Torla and me to stay with this family, called Wynen, at a place called Uccle, and the name of the house was the Villa Bleue. It was there that, as a matter of record, our eldest child, Simon, was conceived.

Going on to the approach to the end of the war, we were now into the heart of Germany, and the 4th Canadian Armoured Division was stationed just outside Oldenburg, when the war ended. Shortly after that I was withdrawn to the Army Group headquarters at Bad

Oeynhausen, where I was appointed Personal Assistant to Brigadier (later General Sir) Charles Richardson who, with exquisite timing, a little later on, took me with him on a flight to London, he to a conference in London, I to a chemical warfare course on Salisbury Plain. It was September 1945 and Torla, released from the army on the ground of pregnancy, was awaiting the birth of Simon, living at The Green. The birth actually took place on 10th September at a nursing home near Cambridge. I came back from a lecture on my course at Salisbury Plain to find on my bed what I thought was a laundry list, but it turned out to be a message announcing Simon's birth. Incidentally, we had thought of calling him Andrew but changed our minds.

Back at 21 Army Group headquarters, I was promoted to Major and appointed GSO2 (Cam and CW), although quite frankly that was a bit of empire building in that headquarters, because there was no chemical warfare or camouflage training to be done. I very quickly became bored with this, and applied for a transfer, securing a posting to military government headquarters in Hamburg as S02 (political parties) - a job for which, needless to say, I had virtually no qualifications. But I attended at the rebirth of political parties in Hamburg, and had the job of equipping the four main political parties at that time: the Communists, and Socialists, the Free Democrats and the Christian Democrats, with offices and office equipment. I did have, for many years, the copies of the first editions of the newspapers of those four parties, but alas, they've disappeared. Hamburg was an absolutely dreadful sight in that cold winter of 1945-46, and the misery of the Germans all around us, in stark contrast to our centrally-heated buildings, is a vivid memory, as is the state of most buildings in that great city, which were simply walls standing, but nothing inside.

Three other memories of this tail-end of my army service 1939-46. First. there was a radio station called British Forces Network and I was asked to take my turn in filling a slot -I think it was called Personal Choice - rather like Desert Island Discs where you had to choose bits of music and say why you had chosen them. I can't remember anything I chose except 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring'. My parents in Willingdon said that reception was quite good. Secondly, as I suppose a sort of climax to my job as SO2 Political Parties, I attended, with my boss the Military Governor, one Brigadier Armitage, and a bilingual Wren interpreter called Marion Bieber, the inaugural session of the Bundestag, which relaunched the government of Hamburg for the first time after the war. Thirdly, in my official car, which was an enormous Horch, I drove with two companions from Hamburg up to Copenhagen where we spent a couple of nights. It was an absolute revelation after the years of the war because although Denmark too had been occupied, there seemed to be unlimited food and drink. I remember going wide-eyed to a cheese shop where, if any cheese took your fancy, they would cut off a generous portion to try.

And so that winter and early spring of 1946 brought me to April and attendance at a demobilisation centre in England, being fitted out with a civilian suit, and settling down with Torla, 6-month-old Simon, Torla's mother, Cub and Cuffy, and beginning my interrupted articles of clerkship in preparation for exams and qualifying as a solicitor.

Our first family home, bought by Torla's mother in late 1945, was 7 Weston Road, a big house on the corner of Weston Road and The Avenue. Not partitioned off -as it was in later years. in other hands, being formally converted into flats/maisonettes - it contained three households: (1) Mrs Tidman on the ground floor with Mary in the attic bedroom, (2) The Cuffies (Mr and Mrs Cuthbert, 'Cub' and 'Cuffy') who had lived in as a couple working for the Tidman family since joining them at Emsworth in the 1920s, with kitchen entered from

Newlyweds

1943 or 1944

At The Green, Fowlmere



Torla in 1945

One of my favourite pictures

the back door (their own private entrance) and the rest on the first floor, and (3) our young family with living/dining room and tiny kitchen on the ground floor and three bedrooms and bathroom on the first floor. The front door, and large hall on to which it gave, were shared by (1) and (3), the hall being occasionally used as a dining area.

Our first motor vehicle was a side-valve 500cc Norton, EOU 718, bought from FW Tew & Son (half way up Lavant Street on the left) and fitted by Bunny Tew with a sidecar in which Torla and Simon travelled. The sidecar had a hinged weather-proof top, which was fine - except once, when 15-month-old Simon was sick over his mother in the enclosed space.

In April 1946, on demobilisation and starting studies, shortened from five years to two for returning members of the Services, I had found I needed glasses, and in those two years from Spring of '46 to March '48 my studies taxed my sight into needing two fresh lots of specs. No bad effects, though; nowadays (1998) I can see as well as ever. I was exempted from the Solicitors' Intermediate exam and required at that level to pass only in Trust Accounts and Book-keeping. Never a figures man, I found this quite an ordeal, but I managed it in July 1946. It was hot in London on the day of that exam; I remember it was Wimbledon Men's Singles Final day and the winner was a big Frenchman called Yvon Petra.

Our second child, Tom, was born on 25th June 1947 at Hillbrow Nursing Home, Liss. This was over a year before the creation of the National Health Service made possible childbirth 'free at the point of delivery'. Returning from my daily visit to Torla in the old Standard, I regularly switched off the engine near the "Jolly Drover" and coasted from there as far as the Half Moon in Sheet - the better part of three miles.

In March 1948, staying with my brother Richard (then a GP in Putney) and his wife Margie, I sat the Final, passed, and was admitted a Solicitor in July of that year.

The 7 Weston Road setup lasted until 5th June 1948 (Derby Day, as it happened) when our family of four moved to the first home of our own, at Sheet. Originally called Sheet Farmhouse, it was renamed White Cottage after we'd whitened the outside with 'Snowcem'. This also put a stop to requests from passing travellers, on the busy A3, for glasses of milk. Having a home of our own was thrilling. What we had bought was unusual. Not at all like one of a row of (in the words of a popular song) "little boxes. ..all made of ticky-tacky ...and they all look just the same", but a long low cottage with no damp-proof course, thick walls, and a roof whose timbers were, most of them quite literally, the not-totally-fashioned-and-planed branches of trees. Parts of that cottage were about three hundred years old. Adjoining it was a petrol filling station. Sheet Service Station, leased to one Ken Chadwick, and we had to buy the freehold of that too, as part of the £5,500 deal.

We lived at White Cottage for nine years, during which two more children were born, Kate on 15th April 1950 (a day when it snowed) and Libby on 11th July 1952. Both were born at The Grange Nursing Home, Liss. Before attending private schools Simon, Tom and Kate attended Sheet Village School, Libby a private one now long gone, 'Downlease'.

I became a partner in the family firm in July 1950, just four months before my great-uncle Arthur Mackarness, its founder in the 1890s, died aged 85. I rejoined the TA (the Cold War and 1950+ Korean War seem to have triggered local TA revival, though you'd have thought 1939-45 had been more than enough for us volunteers) and attended four Annual Camps,



White Cottage



Simon and Tom

finishing as Major in charge of a Battery equipped with 4.2 inch Mortars. My reasons were partly mercenary, since a TA Officer's pay was a welcome supplement to the very slender early income from M&L (starting salary in 1950 was £500 pa).

We had in succession two elderly cars: a 1933 Standard Big Nine CV 8708 (1948-52) bought back for £100 from cousin Michael Booker, for whom I'd acquired it in Petersfield for £25 before the War; and a 1934 two-cylinder black Jowett OW 5132 (1952-53) called 'Squeaky Joe' and then repainted green and renamed 'Henrietta'.

There followed our first new motor - a green Ford 7-seater Estate LHO 878 (1953- 58), very under-powered by an 1172cc engine. Kate seems to have been a shade accident-prone at this time; once, she started to fall head-first from the car when the passenger door flew open and I just managed to catch her heel and haul her back. Another time, aged 6, she rode her child's bicycle onto the main London Road and ended up underneath a passing car. She sustained just a small scratch on her elbow but the bike was badly damaged. She seemed quite unaffected mentally, talking cheerfully of 'the crash-up'. Not so I, for young Bill Mundy from the garage next door, having seen Kate lying motionless beneath the car, rushed to tell me she was dead. Stiff whisky needed, and duly supplied! There was also a scare with Libby at a similar age, when I was travelling with her by train between Portsmouth and Petersfield. A boiled sweet offered by a kind woman stuck in Libby's throat, she began to choke and go blue. I held her upside down, put my forefinger down her throat and managed to hook the sweet out. I am not normally so quick-witted.

I was a Churchwarden at St Mary's, Sheet for five years, 1952-57.

Between the births of Tom and Kate Torla had a miscarriage; but even so, with the arrival of Libby, we had 'four under seven '. After the miscarriage Auntie Charlotte (widow of Torla's uncle, APW 'Bobbie' Wedd) paid for T and me to spend two weeks at a hotel in Ventnor, all found, price £40. Auntie Charlotte had had more than one miscarriage as a young wife, never carrying a child to full term.

Mrs T, lonely after we left Weston Road, bought a plot of land next to White Cottage and she and Frank Childs of builders E Canterbury Ltd designed, and his firm built, a very fine bungalow which, passing through only one other ownership since she left it, is now back in family hands, having been bought by Tom in 1977.

In 1952, anticipating the birth of Libby, we had Canterbury's build on to White Cottage a two-storey flat-roofed extension for £500, making it L-shaped. Living room extension, and cloakroom, basin and WC downstairs, and two very small bedrooms upstairs for Simon and Tom.

On 7th February 1955, with a TV crew on board, the last train ran from Petersfield on the branch line to Midhurst and Pulborough. This was a journey we used to make, with a picnic, when the children were small.

On 6th October 1957 - Taro Fair day, chosen because we loved the Fair - we moved to 70 Heath Road, a big three-storey house built about 1900, the first of a row of eight built by John Gammon in the first ten years of the century. We were to be privileged to enjoy a view



*Torla, Simon, Tom,
Katharine, Libby*

1950s, White Cottage



*The Mackarness and Ellis families at Stane Street
Tom, Marian, Peter, Katharine, Fiona, Clive, Diana, Brian, Simon, Libby
April 1960*

of Petersfield Heath and Lake continuously, from two successive homes, for the next thirty-one years.

In 1958 we traded in the Ford Estate for UOU 204, a cream Morris Oxford Traveller, which Reg Warwick (the dealer) and I collected personally from the Morris factory at Cowley. In the line of waiting Travellers ours was the only one that colour, and the supplier (unaware that I was the buyer) remarked "This b***er must have got it for Diana Dors".

Soon after that, the lonely Mrs T disposed of her bungalow to the Classics Master at Churchers College (a Mr Ive, who installed a wonderful model railway in the roof space) and moved into a self-contained part of our ground floor at 70. She changed her 14 HP Austin, DOT 714, for a Standard 8, ROU 659 (with a boot space, curiously accessible only from the inside).

In 1958/60 Simon and Tom moved in succession from Marsh Court, Stockbridge (boarding) to Portsmouth Grammar School (day). Kate and Libby both moved from local day schools in Petersfield to become boarders at St Swithuns School, Winchester whose Headmistress, Miss Phyllis Evans, had briefly taught Torla at St Mary's Calne, and was Kate's godmother. Kate remained a boarder throughout to age 18, but Libby soon became unhappy boarding and switched to going daily. For some of that day-ferrying we shared the run with Rev John Lawry, whose daughter Rachel attended St. Swithuns too.

On 13th August 1960 Patience was born at St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth (rather than the Grange like her sisters, because she was a fifth child and also, I think, because Torla was by then 40 years old).



Family group plus Carders, 1959



Butlin's, Bognor
Regis, 1961

In May 1962, when my father had been helpless for over a year with cerebral arteriosclerosis in a flat in Eastbourne, looked after somehow by my mother with daytime help from a male



Eileen and Cuthbert 1950s

nurse called Jim Pooley, and with the use of two specially made indoor chairs, one on wheels, the other fixed and mechanically adjustable to bring an invalid from a seated to a standing position (procured by my doctor brother), my parents moved to ground floor flat No 2 in Winchester House, Petersfield. Within a month my father was in Petersfield Hospital with pneumonia, and on 13th June 1962, aged 72, he died.

I don't recall a longer cold spell than we endured in the winter of 1962/3. The frost and snow lasted from just after Christmas for about six weeks, during which, one night, our guinea pig froze to death. Birds suffered badly, particularly wrens, whose numbers dropped alarmingly; and it was the only time that a normally shy gold-crest - with a fire-crest, the smallest British bird - came to feed at our kitchen window-sill. Skating on the Lake lasted for weeks, and when the thaw finally arrived in late February or early March, the cold water tank at the top of 6-flat Winchester House burst, pouring water down past two empty floors to No 2 where my mother was then still the building's sole occupant.

By now Mrs T, though physically robust, was failing mentally (probably Alzheimer's, but we hadn't heard that name then) and liable to wander off just anywhere. She had shown no interest in driving for months, so we were alarmed when one day she disappeared at the wheel of her car. We don't know to this day where she went, but fortunately she returned safely, parking the car at an odd angle. In the autumn of 1963, still at home with us in No 70, she became ill, slipped into a coma, and died in the small hours of 3rd October. Torla and I had been taking turns sitting near her bed, and it happened to be during my watch that Mrs T drew her last breath - which I heard. She was 76.

From 1962-65 I did a Linguaphone Italian course, recorded on big spools of tape played back on a massive tape recorder - standard in those pre-cassette days. It was extremely thorough, with nothing but Italian spoken by native Italians throughout, and a written test after each lesson; and I acquired a good grounding which is with me still. This was really useful when in August 1965 we spent a family holiday in Rapallo. That coincided with Patience's fifth birthday, around which I taught her two phrases:- on 12th August: "Domani avro cinque anni" (Tomorrow I shall be five years old), and on the day: "Oggi ho cinque anni" (Today I am five).

In 1966 Mr Arthur Lunt, who had come from Manchester to join Uncle Arthur Mackames in 1903, and given to the family firm the name which it still bears, died. He, too, had lived to 85. The surviving partners who continued the practice were his two sons, Alan and Kenneth, and me.

The period 1969-98 covers modern history in my family, so I leave it to others to record it, if and when they choose. I merely note the dates of the weddings of our five children and describe with great brevity the two events which have brought us deeply shared sorrow, along with the death of Tom's father-in-law.

13 th September 1969	Tom married Andrea (Andie) Wilson
27 th September 1975	Kate married Richard Perry
10 th December 1978	Simon married Diana Reid
2 nd May 1981	Libby married Paul Mathias
23 rd August 1986	Patience married Eric Jones

On 12th February 1971, driving from Winchester (where she and Tom lived and worked, he in Estate Agency, she in a bank) to visit her parents in Petersfield, Andie met with a serious accident which was not her fault, but due to some badly misjudged overtaking by the driver of a car coming the other way. That car and driver were never traced, but Andie crashed into one of the overtaken cars, sustaining injuries mainly to her brain.

Unconscious in Winchester Hospital for seven months, she remained (since recovering consciousness shortly after receiving the Sacrament of Anointing, administered by the Revd Ron Granger, vicar of Petersfield, in the presence of Tom and of his and Andie's parents) severely disabled, partly paralysed down her right side and with impaired speech and memory and reasoning powers. On the implications of this for Tom's life, for hers, and for those of their respective families, I shall not dwell. She died on 8th September 2001.



The whole tribe: Eileen and her relatives at the 'noughts party' held at 54 Heath Road for her 90th birthday in 1978



My mother died on 4th December 1984, aged 96.

In 1987 Libby was found to be suffering from cancer of the liver. She went into remission for a few months from late that year until the early summer of 1998 when the cancer returned, and after spells in two hospitals (mainly the Hammersmith in London) she died at her home in Easton-in-Gordano on 19th October 1988 with her husband Paul, and three members of her own closest family, at her bedside. She was 36.



Patience, Kate and Libby in the late 1970s—in the garden at 54 Heath Road

Tuesday, August 25th 2009 was my 90th birthday, and held two surprises. Pub lunching, at the Shoe Inn at Exton, where Kate and Susannah joined us bearing gifts (before returning home), Tom and his partner Val took us on to the Surrey Village of OUTWOOD - just off the M25—where Val’s old friend and her husband Paul plied us with champagne and eats including a fine birthday cake made by Val.



We were soon joined by our hosts’ friends and neighbours Paul and Shân Daniels who—he unrelated to his magician namesake = arrived in



No. 1, a 1936 to seater Austin 7 identical to my first car (which I’d bought in 1940 at Fareham for £27-10s).

That Paul drove me round country lanes in the Austin, whose ride reminded me that car suspensions had improved a lot in 70 years! I was delighted to find, when I took the wheel, that I could still manage the tricky clutch.

On that trip we turned into a drive, where Paul said ‘Wait here, Peter, I’ve a surprise for you’. Surprise No. 2 appeared through the gap in a hedge, and it was JUDI DENCH, accompanied by her red headed young grandson and a football. Judi chatted for a while, utterly charming and natural. She then invited me to tea, and on learning

that I was short of time, offered me a bottle of champagne, which she ran to fetch, and proceeded to autograph! To Tom’s later letter of thanks Judi replied by return on a PC.

What a day, and what a lovely follow-up four days later when, taking over ‘Annie Jones’ restaurant in Lavant Street we sat down a 23 strong family ranging in age from Cousin Eleanor Booker, 91, to our great-granddaughter Emily Maria Hauer, aged 15 months.



JUDI DENCH 1.9.09.
 I was so pleased to get your letter and was utterly charmed by your father! I feel very lucky to be a tiny part of his birthday. I do hope we all meet up sometime - you sound a

lovely family.
 With all our wishes
 Judi.