

An Old Man Remembers

Memories of the early life of Christopher John Gibbs,

b. December 1902 d. June 1985.

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Foreword

Writers of autobiographies are inevitably conceited. Often the more conceited they are the better the story! As we grow older we become more and more self-centred. This attitude of mind does nothing to help the reader to understand and deal with the ever-changing problems of the modern and future world. The only justification for re-awakening old memories may be that some of the old experiences may be found to be relevant to present day circumstances.

My life though insignificant by national standards, has been full of variety. Although I have found every moment of interest, I fear have lacked the gaiety and as can be seen from this note I often verge on pomposity.

When I started to consider writing these reminiscences I made a list¹ of the important or interesting people with whom I had, usually very fleeting, contact. Most of them would have laughed at such vulgar "names droppings"! However I hope I may be forgiven for mentioning some to enliven the otherwise dull story.

It may be that reverence for "the great" started from the reading of the "Told to the Children" stories² when Lord Roberts who was still living became one of my heroes.

I made up my mind to become a Field Marshall. Alas however the baton eluded me! Though a very keen territorial, it soon became clear that I lacked the moral and physical stamina to be a successful professional soldier.

The nearest I could ever reach towards my ambition was to meet a few real Field Marshals and in at least one case to be impressed by his humility and charm. In my experience the really distinguished people are always humble. The story must be written as a history unfolding gradually and never becoming really important or thrilling. I shall not be good at introducing emotions.

Perhaps the most important feature of my career was my work for the National Trust which inspired me with real enthusiasm for many years and still provides much interest.

Any history has elements of the inexplicable to human intelligence. I asked my Granddaughter (aged 8) why Tarzan wore bathing shorts and she said "because he's a tree man". I did not pursue the matter by asking where he bought them.

From where did the overwhelming flood of memory come?

Of "what stuff are dreams made?"

Whence came Bronte's inspiration?

(Did) some other being stand behind the simplicity of Bunyan's mind?

To quote Mr Justice Macnaghten who said according to Henry Cecil³ - " the courts are full of honest witnesses whose memories as the years go by become more and more certain and less and less accurate"

Christopher Gibbs

The Porch House 1982

¹ See Appendix

² The 'Told to the Children' series published by EC and TC Jack was in fact a sister series to 'Children's Heroes' by the same publishers. Lord Roberts was one of the heroes see <http://www.heritage-history.com/index.php?c=academy&s=read&author=sellar&book=roberts>

³ 'The English Judge' by Henry Cecil 1970 Hamlyn Lecture

Childhood and London before the Great War

My Father and Mother were married in January 1902 at St Peter's in the East church in Oxford. (now no longer a church). At the wedding the best man, my father's brother Francis, lost the ring. The situation was saved by my Aunt Isabel Medley who realised there was a crisis and quickly produced her own wedding ring unknown to my Father. When he was told he had to leave the reception and buy another one.

They spent the honeymoon in Sicily and returned to lodgings in Putney, before moving into the house which became my first home.

This house was 20 Cleveland Gardens, Bayswater, about 10 minutes walk from Paddington Station. Bayswater was then a fashionable part of London. Cleveland Gardens had a small garden in the middle surrounded by railings and with some good plane trees which rustled in the wind; No one except the gardener ever went inside.

The house was in a terrace. It was tall with a basement and ground floor and four stories above.

The Basement

- Kitchen at the back with a scullery off a very small back yard

- Larder with a primitive Ice box on the passage wall

- Pantry

- Safe: later made into an air raid shelter against Zeppelin raids in the first world war

- Servants' hall (in the front)

- Under the pavement in the front a coal cellar, store shed and outside WC

- Stone steps outside

- Dark stone staircase leading to the ground floor

I remember an occasion when the family and maids were assembled in the basement to watch a demonstration by my father of the fire extinguishers he had just bought, which he squirted into the back yard.

Ground Floor

- At the back my Father's study with windows opening onto steps leading into a large communal garden which served about 40 neighbouring houses. We seldom went into the garden which was gloomy. It had dirty grass patches and shrubberies.

- WC

- Back Dining Room. Where prayers were kept - Picture "Eight Bells, Midnight"

- Dining Room (in the front). Much later on a food lift was put in leading down to the pantry.

- Long narrow front hall with a tiled floor

- Steps leading to front door

- Bottom of staircase with a mahogany rail.

- Lovely for sliding down but verboten as my Father had had an accident when doing that as a boy.

Landing

- with windows opening out onto lead flat (roof) above the garden.

- The grandfather clock⁴ stood on this landing.

⁴ Now in the possession of Julian/Isabel

First Floor

Drawing room in front with windows opening out onto a balcony.

Back Drawing room, originally used as a bedroom for my Bright Grandfather. Much later on a room where I worked at my surveyor's exams while Tony did his medicine and played the wireless.

Second Floor

In front: my parent's bedrooms

Dressing room Spare bedroom. (Later a bedroom for Tony and me with a door to my parents' room through which my Father came to admonish us when we made too much noise pillow fighting)

Landing

WC

Third Floor

Bathroom

Night Nursery

Day Nursery, much later on a sitting room for me.

Small spare bedroom

Top Floor

Box Room

Three maids bedrooms

I was born in this house on December 6th 1902⁵. My Father was the eldest son of John Lomax Gibbs (see his 'Reminiscences'). He spent his boyhood chiefly at Clifton Hampden in Oxfordshire where his Father had the family living. He went to prep school at Clevedon in Somerset and was then in Hawkin's House at Winchester. Afterwards he went to Keble College Oxford where the Warden was Talbot, A high church parson who married Lavinia Lyttleton⁶, and as Bishop of Winchester confirmed me. My Father read Natural History and achieved a first class degree. I do not think he was very athletic. Keble College owed much to the benefactions of members of the Gibbs family.

Whilst at Oxford my father went on an expedition to Spitsbergen. After leaving Oxford he was enlisted into the family firm of Antony Gibbs and Sons. By then the head of the firm was his uncle the 1st Lord Aldenham. He spent some time in Melbourne with Gibbs Bright and Co and afterwards was sent to Chile, where he spent his time chiefly at Valparaiso and Iquique but crossed the Andes on a mule and got mixed up in a civil war.

There was a big battle and he and the English colony went out afterwards to tend the wounded⁷. He returned to the London Office in 1900 or 1901.

My Mother was the third daughter of James Franck Bright the historian. Her mother, who was the daughter of Rev Edmund Wickham died when she was a year old. She was brought up by her Mother's unmarried sister Aunt Julie who went to live with her Brother-in-law. I remember Aunt Julie at Oxford - a formidable person - but kind.

She was helped by a Nursery Governess called by the odd name of Whartonaby: she was tiny.

⁵ It was finally sold in 1932 (from CJG audio tape)

⁶ Hon Lavinia Lyttleton dau. of Lord Lyttleton of Hagley Hall Worcs see 'Victorian Girls: Lord Lyttleton's Daughters' by Sheila Fletcher

⁷ See J A Gibbs 'Civil War Diaries'

My Grandfather was the first housemaster of Preshute Marlborough where my mother spent her childhood.

When he was made Master of University College Oxford his four daughters who were known as the "Maglets"⁸ became very popular and three of them married members of the college.

My mother was particularly keen on riding. She hunted with the Old Berkshire and was devoted to her black mare called 'Gipsy'. Gipsy's stable was in Logic Lane behind Univ.

Her other great recreation was skating and she told me how she used to skate with Arthur Johnson who as a very old man was my history tutor for a short time.

Mrs Johnson founded the "Home Students" for women in the University.

My mother with her sister (Aunt Evie) helped the girls clubs in Oxford.

She also attended lectures - one of them by Ruskin in his old age when his mind was failing and there had to be a keeper in attendance.

At 20 Cleveland Gardens the normal staff consisted of a Cook, Scullery Maid, Parlour Maid, two Housemaids, and our Nanny and Nursery Maid. They all used to troop into the Dining Room (except Nanny who was excused) for prayers before breakfast which my Father read. On the rare occasions when he was away my Mother felt it was her duty to take the prayers which she hated doing. She had a slight stammer (like her Father) and for some reason would only read the Psalms as she found them easier.

My first Nanny was a Cornish woman who was very old fashioned but kind. She had a bad temper. She retired in about 1908 and was replaced by the devoted Nanny Edith Day who stayed with the family till her death in 1950⁹

After breakfast we were normally taken to for a walk in Kensington Gardens by our Nanny and Nursery Maid. There we met other children with Nannies, among them a broad Scotswoman who one day told us that one of her charges had been run over by a four wheeler - He survived and went on to become a successful doctor in Warminster. His elder brother became a bishop.

Tony and I made cardboard shields emblazoned with coats of arms (not the Gibbs' chopper). We used to have battles with these with big sticks and I can still remember how the blows hurt even through the cardboard.

My Mother often went to Whiteley's to shop where she had an account. Later on I sometimes went with her. Mr William Whiteley was murdered in the shop by a disgruntled employee, but when it happened we were too young to be told!

I suppose I must have been six or seven when I had a governess, a much loved Miss Horner. She used to come every morning and I was brought back early from Kensington Gardens. Miss Horner taught me an enormous amount and I learned more from her about some aspects of History and Geography which no one taught me at school.

Later on a French governess used to come. We did not like her. She wore an Astrakhan coat and had red hair. She used to give us what she called 'Bons Points' which were little cards with puzzle pictures on them.

My Father went off every morning to the city in a top hat and in the early years a frock coat. He used to come home at about six and go into the Drawing room to talk to my Mother. Soon afterwards the parlour maid would come in announce the arrival of Mr Hill.

⁸ from *Magister* latin for Master

⁹ And is buried in the family plot at Abinger

Mr Hill was a masseur who, ever since an illness my Father had after his return from South America, he considered necessary to keep him fit. He worked on my Father on the sofa in the study (which I still own) and my father felt himself dependant on him. In fact he would often not come away from London with the rest of the family as he did not want to miss Hill. I believe Hill was a liar and a trickster and persuaded my Father that his services were essential.

After dinner my Father retired again to the study where he worked on his 'History of Antony and Dorothea Gibbs' and later on the 'Gibbs Pedigree'. His diligence was astounding and he wrote notes on everything.

On Sundays my parents always went to Mattins at Christchurch, Lancaster Gate (now demolished). The vicar was Mr Gordon, afterwards Bishop of Hull.

One day my Father had been changing electric light bulbs and put one in his tail coat pocket. When he got to church he sat on it and it went off with a loud report.

Before we were old enough for Mattins my mother used to take us to the children's service in the afternoon.

One of the churchwardens was Mr Campbell, a neighbour in Cleveland Gardens. He was a Metropolitan Magistrate and never smiled.

I remember the Bishop of London (Winnington-Ingram) preaching at Christchurch.

When we were grown up we used to go to early service at Holy Trinity Paddington (now demolished) and sometime to Mattins at St James's Paddington or St John's Southwick Crescent, where the Vicar was Canon Blunt, father of Wilfred and Anthony.

After church we used to proceed to Rotten Row where we found all the fashionable people parading and looking at the horses. My Father usually met Gibbs cousins there.

On Sunday afternoons my Father often took us to the Natural History Museum where I am afraid I was rather bored.

Sometimes we hired a 'Victoria' from Rickards and went to the Zoo. My Father was a Fellow and only Fellows and their families could go on Sundays.

My pervading memory of those days was the clip-clop of horses passing under the nursery window and the jingling of bells on their harness. The horses of hansom cabs nearly always had bells on their bridles.

There were horse buses on the Bayswater road and it was thrilling to sit on the top just behind the driver with a mackintosh sheet provided to cover the knees.

Sadly not a very uncommon sight in the streets was a dead horse and dead dogs often seemed to be in the gutters.

On the way to Kensington Gardens there were often balloons to be seen floating overhead but of course no aeroplanes.

Thick green fogs were a feature of the autumn and people were often lost in the choking murk. If the sun appeared at all it looked like a big red football.

When there was a case of serious illness in a house, straw was put down in the street to deaden the noise of horses and iron cartwheels.

We were discouraged from looking at funeral processions but were always struck by the glass hearses and the black horses with great black tufts like mops bobbing on their heads.

On the way to Kensington Gardens we were sometimes allowed to stop at a shop and buy penny toys. There was an old lady at the gate of Kensington Gardens with bundles of blown up balloons.

On the way back we often went to a bakers shop and bought buns and crumpets for nursery tea.

There always seemed to be goings-on in the street outside 20 Cleveland Gardens. There were "German" bands, sellers of roast chestnuts and strawberries, organ grinders (often with monkeys), a muffin man came once a week. I remember once seeing a performing bear.

One of the great pleasures was going to rallies of the 'Coaching Club' by the Serpentine where we saw grey coloured coaches with four-in-hands and guards with long coach horns.

Once a week the postman with a wicker push cart delivered Devonshire Cream from the Cathedral Dairy in Exeter.

'Mundies' library used to call once a week with a horse van to deliver library books.

At one time my mother used to have a special 'Walkers Garden' milk for us.

We had to go to children's parties (often birthdays) and my parents used to give one for my birthday. At these parties there was a conjurer and sometimes a magic lantern with lovely pictures of trains going through tunnels. We danced 'Sir Roger' and the 'Swedish Dance'¹⁰

Our cousins Geoffrey and Humphrey Gibbs gave parties and came to ours. One their birthdays was close to mine in December.

I made great friends with Elizabeth Buxton and met her at a number of parties. She was older than I was but used to encourage me to sit next to her at tea.

Another friend was Emma Winkworth with whom I played in Kensington Gardens. I met her in later life when she worked for a short time at the National Trust. I found her very disappointing!

One of the great joys of Kensington Gardens was bowling hoops. We longed for iron ones but they were not allowed as they were considered 'common'.

Our Nanny and Nursery Maids were of course devoted to Royalty.

I remember seeing King Edward VII driving past on his way to the White City to open the 'Franco British Exhibition' He had an escort of Life Guards. On another occasion we saw Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany looking arrogant. The greatest excitements of our lives were the funeral of Edward VII and the Coronation of George V.

On both occasions Kensington Gardens was turned into a camp for the troops taking part and it was full of bell tents and marquees. Our Nanny got us up very early in the morning (5o'clock I think) and took us to see the men turning out and forming up to march off to the processional route.

The Infantry wore spiked helmets and red coats (except the Green Jackets) and had dark blue trousers with red piping so it was a very impressive sight. We tried to identify the regiments by the colours of their collars and cuffs, some had yellow - the Dorsets or Norfolks?

There were many Royal Army Service Corps Wagons driving about and to our surprise a motor car drove down one of the broad walks, sitting in which we identified Lord Kitchener.

We did not see King Edward's funeral procession except from over the heads of the crowd with only the helmets visible.

However for the Coronation, my Father acquired seats on the roof of the Bank of England for the procession through London on the day following the actual Coronation.

We were much impressed by the splendid men in top hats and pink tailcoats who showed us to our seats. The procession was a wonderful pageant of military glory.

There were Lancers, Dragoons, Canadian mounted Police and gaily coloured contingents from all parts of the Empire. Finally of course the King and Queen in a carriage escorted by the Household Cavalry.

¹⁰ Sir Roger de Coverley well known folk dance, but unable to find out anything about the Swedish Dance

The Lord Mayor rode a horse in his full robes and caused some amusement as he was clearly no horseman!

The 21st Lancers had a great cheer for the part they had played in the battle of Omdurman (at which Winston Churchill had been present)

At the time of the Coronation nearly all the houses in Bayswater were illuminated by candles in glass jars. A cousin Jack Medley (afterwards Chancellor of Melbourne University) helped my parents to put ours up and light them.

Some of the hotels and houses had more elaborate decorations and we were taken by our Nannies after dark to see them.

One of the great pleasures of those childhood days was riding.

We were taught at Mrs Brown's riding school not far from Paddington Station. Mrs Brown was very fat and wore a brown riding habit; She rode side saddle.

For the first lessons I was put on the pony "Mouse" and had a girth strapped over my knees. I did not enjoy that.

However later on the real pleasure started when we were taken on our rides to Rotten Row.

Our teacher was a charming elderly man called Mr Smith. He wore a bowler hat and took it off in the most courtly way to every lady he met. I have never seen anyone do it so well!

I was always interested in his conversations with his friends in the Row. After the Liberal victory in the 1910 election I remember they all agreed the Country would never recover until we had a Conservative government.

There was one dreadful day when Mrs Brown sent out another man to take me to the Row instead of Mr Smith. I was on a lead rein on "Mouse" and when we started to trot I fell off on my face in the mud. My instructor did not see me and rode on until some other riders pointed out to him that he had lost his pupil!

My parents made a great fuss about this episode and I always had Mr Smith after that.

Before I went to school my mother thought I should learn to swim and took me to the very smelly Paddington Baths where I made no progress.

I used to be taken by my mother on the top of a bus to the oculist and dentist and one day we went to see Dr Wiggett a throat specialist.

On my way back from one of these visits I was given a wonderful model steam roller which alas came to grief soon afterwards as it was trodden on by mistake by a young man on the pavement.

The sequel to Dr Wiggett's consultation was the removal of my tonsils.

I was not told about it beforehand but was taken into my bedroom to find Dr Wiggett, another man and a strange nurse with a bed on a high table on which I was told to lie.

I then had a foul smelling mask clipped over my face.

When I woke up with a beastly sore throat I was very unhappy at being looked after by the strange nurse instead of my dear Nanny.

No wonder I had a horror of operations after that!

When he retired from Oxford my Bright Grandfather took a lovely house belonging to his son-in-law Willie Carr at Ditchingham in Norfolk. It was called Hollow Hill and our holidays there were always the greatest fun. The journey was something of an adventure as we had to go from Liverpool Street Station at the far end of London. My parents usually hired a horse bus to take us there and my Mother was always in a panic that it would not come in time. We had to allow at least an hour. At

the station we hired enormous metal foot warmers and my Father often ordered a lunch basket from the Railway Company. This was handed to our compartment at Colchester or Ipswich¹¹

We always had to change for Ditchingham and go on the Waveney Valley line from Beccles to Tivetshall. There was one day when we missed the connection at Tivetshall and had to wait for an hour. It was a dull place and we could only watch the station horse pulling trucks into the sidings.

The return journey was less exciting but we enjoyed seeing the boys with dustpans employed by the City Corporation to dodge in and out of the traffic picking up the horse dung.

One day there was a crisis as our private horse bus collided with another vehicle and our pole was broken. We sat in the bus for an hour in the street while it was mended.

On nearing home we were pursued by poor unemployed men who used to run beside the bus in the hope of earning a little money by helping to take the luggage off the top.

The happiness of our holidays at Hollow Hill was, in my memory, only once marred when with a lovely new knife I had been given for Christmas I inflicted a deep wound in my brother Tony's hand whilst cutting a stick in the shrubbery.

We loved our Grandfather and became devoted to his house and garden. He used to tell us interesting stories of Victorian times including how at the Duke of Wellington's funeral the enormous funeral car stuck in a narrow street in the City.

There was a big oak tree in front of the house where the red squirrels used to play. We once counted nine in the tree. We used to feed them from the drawing room window and they became very tame.

One of our great amusements was tricycling round and round the house or going with the gardener to feed the pigs. The greenhouses were full of delicious peaches and nectarines and there was a fine fig tree.

Our cousin Bill Carr used to come over to play with us. He kept goats and we had great fun dashing up and down the drive in his goat cart.

We were woken every morning by the hand pump in the back yard which the dear old under gardener used to have to pump for an hour every day.

Hollow Hill was lit by oil lamps which made the house nice and warm. Our great friend the Butler Rowling used to do the lamps and bring them into the rooms as soon as it was dark. He and his wife lived in a cottage in the orchard.

The Library at Hollow Hill had in it all the bound volumes of Punch which we used to look at.

On our earlier visits we were taken on walks round the muddy lanes near Hollow Hill. We loved stopping at the Blacksmith and watching him shoe the horses, revelling in the unforgettable smell of burnt hoof. We were often taken on the mile long walk to Bungay for shopping including, on the way in, delicious 'hot cakes' at the little baker. We used to visit too the windmill at Ditchingham village and call in at the home of Harriet the cheerful under housemaid

I remember too boating expeditions on the Waveney under the Bath hills - studying the water beetles.

Sometimes we were taken to children's parties and I have never forgotten a big one at the 'Three Tuns' in Bungay where I had a programme with pencil attached in which it was necessary to write the names of partners for the various dances.

¹¹ AJG used to tell us that the bus was provided by Rickards (still trading) and that a whole carriage was reserved for the train journey.

A near neighbour was Rider Haggard who used to call in his carriage to pick up my Grandfather. They were both Magistrates and went together to Loddon to the local "union" Rider Haggard used to read the lessons in Church and I have never forgotten his splendid voice as he read the first Christmas day lesson.

We walked to the church every Sunday morning for Mattins. The parson's name was Scudamore. As we grew older my Father used to take me out shooting and I had some instruction from the Carr's nice old keeper called Abbott, however he was much disappointed at my inability to shoot a rabbit!

One day when walking with the beaters through a root field looking for partridges a strange figure appeared behind the hedge of a nearby lane gesticulating wildly - it was Rider Haggard who had seen a snipe!

We often went to Ditchingham Hall where my dear Aunt Meggie lived with her terrifying husband Willie Carr. Our female cousins were older than us and we never became great friends. Uncle Willie once took me for a walk along 'mud lane'. He lectured me all the way on farming and made me feel very small at my ignorance. I remember staying at Ditchingham Hall once and lying in bed terrified because a cow was mooing and keeping me awake. Eventually the maids dragged my mother from the dinner party to comfort me.

A good deal later on we were staying at Ditchingham Hall when my brother Martin, who I was teaching to ride, was run away with by the pony in the park and went under the low branches of a tree, fell off and broke his arm. I felt responsible and miserable.

Besides Ditchingham, we often went to Speen House Newbury to stay with my Grandfather and Grandmother. Kind Aunt Blanche and Aunt Ethel used to look after us there but we always had to be rather quiet in the house because my Grandfather was old and ill and my sweet Grandmother did not want him disturbed.

We had to go and see him in his study 'by appointment'. He used to give us horrid little stale chocolates out of a silver box.

When he was well enough he used to take morning prayers which I found more of an ordeal than at home or at Hollow Hill. There were special Prayer Books on all the chairs.

Our Aunts used to take us to feed the pigeons from a tin of corn in the conservatory.

They kept two carriage horses, one of which was a chestnut mare called 'Lady Smith'.

The coachman Miles (who afterwards kept an off-licence in Devizes) was always kind and used to give us lifts on the horses backs.

My Aunt Ethel drove a dog cart and it was great fun driving with her to Newbury. She used to stop outside the shops and the shopkeeper would come out to attend to her needs.

Church at Speen was not such fun as a Ditchingham. The parson was an old man with a red beard called Dickson whom I don't think my Grandparents liked very much His son Reggie later on married my Aunt Ethel and took her out to Rhodesia to live.

I was too young to go to my Grandparents' Golden Wedding celebrations when there was a big family party at Speen.

When my Uncle Hubert Burge was headmaster at Winchester we used to go and stay with them there. There was an exciting back stairs with pictures of early Christian martyrs being eaten by lions.

A great game there was to dress up in our Uncle's hooded gowns and surplices and parade round the dining room table.

After lunch one day when I was quite small Mrs Webbe who was a guest took me off alone right

across Meads to New Field where her husband A J Webbe¹² was playing cricket. He unsuccessfully tried to make me catch a cricket ball.

My cousin Hester stayed with us in London for several months and did lessons with us when her parents were in South Africa where they went for a holiday. While with us she had her portrait painted¹³ (in pastel) by the drawing master (MacDonald) at Winchester. It was a present to her parents from the Winchester dons - I suppose on his leaving to be Bishop of Southwark. Hester used to have to come back early from Kensington Gardens for her sittings.

In 1910 my baby sister Angela died of meningitis. I remember playing with her bricks when she was taken ill and coming in from Kensington Gardens to be met by Mother in deep mourning. My parents had a visit from Mr Gordon the vicar of Christchurch, Lancaster Gate (he was afterwards Bishop of Hull). It was Easter Sunday 1910.

I wonder how different my life would have been if I had grown up with a sister.

My parents had the Illustrated London News regularly and I used to read it avidly. I remember seeing pictures of soldiers in full dress uniform confronting and perhaps firing at a mob of striking miners in railway sidings in south Wales.¹⁴

The most vivid memory of the time was the sinking of the Titanic and the paper was full in imaginary dramatic pictures of that tragedy.

¹² See Wikipedia entry: Alexander Josiah ("A.J.") Webbe (16 January 1855 in Bethnal Green, London, England - 19 February 1941 at Fulvens Farm, Hoe, Abinger Hammer, Surrey, England) was a cricketer who played for Oxford University and Middlesex. He also played one Test match for England.

¹³ Used to be at Huish - who has it now?

¹⁴ The Tonypandy riots.

Summer Holidays

Swanage

The first one I remember, I suppose about 1907 or 1908 was at Swanage where we had lodgings with Mrs Trim. Mr Trim owned the shop on the beach where we went to buy delicious buns after bathing.

He also had a milk round and we were allowed to ride on the milk float with the big churns from which the milk was drawn from a tap into open cans.

Another year we had lodgings further inland. It was not a very exciting place. Some cousins, the Brickdales¹⁵ had the next semi-detached house. Edmund Brickdale and I used to amuse ourselves by riding down the path at the side of the house in a bath chair. It was steep and rather fun.

For our last stay at Swanage we took a house on the top of the cliff with a steep path leading down to the beach. My Uncle Bertie and Aunt Emily came there with their son Claud. Claud was going into the Navy and we admired him.¹⁶

On one of our earlier visits I was once taken by my mother in a bathing machine from which you climbed down steps into the sea. I thought it smelly and did not like it!

We usually had a tent of our own on the beach where we changed into our very uncomfortable and ugly bathing dresses.

One of the great joys of Swanage was the steamers that plied to and fro to Bournemouth and Boscombe. We knew them all by name and watched them cross the bay. As a great treat we were sometimes taken on one of the steamers (a paddle steamer) and were thrilled by the sight of "Old Harry" and his wife.

Other activities at Swanage were visits to the Globe, The Tilly Whim Caves and the lighthouse nearby at Anvil point. We used to hire carriages and drive out to wonderful picnics at the Agglestone Rock and on Nine Barrow Down (where we were always bitten by harvester ants necessitating the use of 'toilet vinegar'.)

After Angela's death we no longer went to Swanage for our holidays.

Falmouth

It think it must have been in the spring of 1911 that we went to lodge for a fortnight at my old nanny's sister at Falmouth. Our old nanny was there too.

The house was opposite the barracks and it was fun being woken in the morning by the bugle calls. It was also on the way between the town and the station. Every hotel had its own horse bus with the name on it - Royal hotel - Greenbank hotel - and so on. They went to meet every train and we learnt to know them all.

Old nanny's sister had a bad temper, I had a trick which looked like spilt ink and I put this on the tablecloth in the sitting room. The old lady was furious on seeing it and still more furious when she tried to mop it up!

Eva the nursery maid laughed heartily and was belaboured on the head.

... Meanwhile my parents were staying at the Bay Hotel.

The Down House

In 1910 we were lent the Down House, Tockington in Gloucestershire by Mr and Mrs Rylands. Kirk Rylands was a Land Agent in Cirencester and his wife Bertha was an old Marlborough friend of my Mother's and sister of Mrs Pellatt of Durnford School.

¹⁵ Fortescue-Brickdale, descended from Joseph Gibbs (C stream).

¹⁶ We have photos of them on this holiday - RMG

The great excitement at the Down House was that there was a Talbot Motor Car there with a chauffeur. We were allowed to use it for a limited mileage and used to go for drives in it. There were many steep hills nearby and it was always doubtful if we would get to the top. When going downhill my brother Arthur used to say we were going down into a quarry. I think because he was impressed by seeing a big quarry nearby. I was once taken by the chauffeur alone in the car to Thornbury and we went at 30mph much to the disgust of my Mother!

The chauffeur allowed me to hold the wheel sometimes when he drove the car round from the stables to the front door, and I once pinched my fingers in the throttle which was on the steering wheel.

Kirk Rylands had a sunbeam car in which he used to come and see us.
There was a small golf course nearby where my Father tried to teach us.

We used to go to parties at various houses nearby. I remember one at the Vicarage near Almondsbury and another at a house owned by people called Harwood.

We had some distant cousins called Bennett¹⁷ who lived at Thornbury and their son Alec had a splendid house in a tree. Phoebe Newbolt¹⁸ came to stay with us and used to lead us in exciting games in the garden.

I also remember a visit from my Aunt Isabel and her son Ralph.¹⁹

One day my parents gave a tennis party for neighbours.

I remember a picnic by the side of the Severn estuary and a visit to an agricultural show somewhere, where we saw maypole dancing and men playing "push ball" on horses.

Adbury Holt

In 1911 my parents took a house called Adbury Holt at Newtown near Newbury.

It was near Speen and within reach of Clifton Hampdon. We used to hire a car from Stradling and Plenty of Newbury for our drives.

It was an exceptionally hot summer. There was a small lake in the grounds and a lovely area of heather coloured slopes.

While we were there, there were tremendous heath fires on Greenham common, Coldash common and other commons around Newbury, and the gardeners were always afraid that our heath would take fire. We went on Sundays to Burghclere Church which meant walking through a wood of young larch and their pungent smell was most oppressive in the great heat.

The gardener and his assistant (his brother) wore big straw hats and we used to get runner bean seeds from him for our catapults. (Later on the gardener was found to be stealing groceries)

We had a charming little spaniel puppy there called Ben, but alas he died very soon of distemper. (Ben had a successor, a Skye terrier called Judy. Poor Judy had a fit in Kensington Gardens and Eva our nursery maid and I had to carry her writhing back to Cleveland Gardens where she died.)

Our Bright Grandfather came to stay while we were there and his old brother who was a doctor in Cannes.

Other visitors were Edgar Medley and Claud Gibbs. Edgar was keen on colour photography using an amber screen in front of the camera.

I tried unsuccessfully to ride a bicycle at Adbury Holt.

¹⁷ William Gibbs' Granddaughter Albinia married a Bennett

¹⁸ 1st Cousin: Daughter of Gertie's eldest Sister Alice Bright who married Sir Frank Newbolt

¹⁹ Isabel married Dudley Medley

East Woodhay

The next summer was my first holidays from school and I remember being quite horrid to Tony and Arthur! The house we had that year was at East Woodhay, again handy for Speen.

I don't think it was a very nice house but there was a coachman there who used to take us out riding.

There were gorgeous rides on the downs up by Inkpen Beacon. I tried unsuccessfully to learn to jump in the field near the house.

I also learnt to ride a bicycle at East Woodhay - getting by the step. One day I got out of control and charged the greenhouse earning smashing disapproval!

Another day I climbed out of the attic window in the stables and slid down to the ground. It was a nasty bump but I was more frightened than hurt. My brothers were more frightened at seeing me disappear off the roof.

It must have been in my first summer holidays after starting school in 1912 that my parents took me to Hendon to see the flying.

There were queer old biplanes (Henri Farnham and Maurice Farnham). My mother asked if I would like to go up in one - but I refused!

The star attraction was a German called Gustav Hamel²⁰ who was the first man to loop the loop. By 1914 when war broke out there had been great developments in aeroplanes with Avro's and Sopwith planes.

Littlehampton

For Easter Holidays in think 1912-1913-1914 we went to Littlehampton where we lodged at 40 South Terrace looking across the green to the sea.

My Bright Grandfather came to stay with us there and we had great fun playing on the beach with his butler Rowberry and our much loved Eva. There were Donkeys on the beach which we used to ride and a pony which was my special joy. Eva was so heavy that one of the donkeys named "July" collapsed under her weight.

We had an excellent kite which used to fly over the garden at a great height. One day the string broke and we had to go a long way among houses to retrieve the kite, eventually finding it in a street the only occupant of which was an astonished cab driver and his horse.

A man at a bicycle shop gave me lessons on bicycle riding in a quiet road.

We used to hire carriages and go to Arundel Park for gorgeous picnics. One day Rowberry and I walked back from Arundel (11 miles).

I had my first camera at Littlehampton and took bad pictures of Arundel.

The primroses in the Sussex woods were very lovely.

On one unforgettable day we hired a motor boat and went up the Arun as far as Pulborough, having lunch on the way back at Houghton Bridge Hotel. I was allowed to steer the boat. We all loved Littlehampton and our holidays there.

Beareyard

The most exciting house we had in a summer was Beareyard Wallingford close to Shillingford Bridge. It was 1913.

The house belonged to an early wireless enthusiast whom we suspected of being a German spy. He had a right-hand man called Juffkins who was the chauffeur. We had the use of the car (A Renault).

²⁰ He was actually British

Juffkins also used to look after a Laughing Jackass which lived in a cage near the garage.

The garden ran down to the Thames where there was a boathouse in which there was a canoe a rowing boat and a punt all of which we used.

The house was full of musical instruments - pianos, a pianola and a gramophone and an enormous electrical machine called an "Orchestrion". We used to play the pianola and the gramophone ourselves ("Lets all go down the strand") but we were only allowed to use the "Orchestrion" occasionally. Juffkins had to come in to work it.

The house was in easy reach of Clifton Hampdon and out cousins Tom and Denis used to bicycle over to see us; I don't remember Michael coming.

We used to bathe in the river and had lovely river expeditions and picnics, sometimes going up river as far as Day's lock.

Salter's steamers regularly came past and of course we knew all their names.

Cousin Gerald and Elsie²¹ came to stay and we laughed a lot about Gerald who was hopeless about paddling the punt.

Aunt Isabel and Uncle Dudley came too and he hated wasps. His antics with a table napkin earned him the name of "Uncle Flapper". One day we had big children's party and unrehearsed Juffkins suddenly came down the step from the house dressed as a bear which terrified some of the children.

We often used to bicycle into Wallingford and went to church at Warborough. One Sunday a girl fainted in church which caused a sensation.

²¹ Cannot find Gibbs or Bright cousins with these names. Has anyone any ideas?

Durnford Prep School

In May 1912, three weeks before my brother Martin was born, I was taken by my parents by train to Swanage to start at Durnford, Langton Matravers. The school belonged to Tom and Eleanor Pellatt. Eleanor Pellatt was an old friend of my Mother²² and was a very gentle and kind person with a great sense of humour. He was an extraordinary looking man with a great round head and deep voice. He was inclined to stoutness and often wore a scarf round his neck instead of a collar. He had been good at cricket and soccer at Oxford and wrote plays for the London stage. He had strong unconventional views on education and a great contempt for most other prep schools. He wrote long reports on every boy underlined heavily in red ink.

Durnford was an exuberant place and when I was there, although would never admit it, I found so much to enjoy that I must have been happy.

To begin with I was very homesick. Mrs Pellatt said before my parents left that if I felt unhappy I was to go and see her in the drawing room.

A day or two later I felt so miserable that I plucked up courage and went to see her. But the room was empty! Then Miss McPhail the music and French mistress came in. She realised what was wrong and said some breezy words of comfort!

I think I was always homesick at the beginning of term.

The dormitory had scarlet blankets on all the beds and wash stands with basins and jugs.

There was a big plunge bath and we started the morning by running naked along the passage to dip in the cold water.

There was one big schoolroom in parts of which the masters took their forms. There was also a 'loose box' for the top form.

The school was lit by oil lamps which sometimes smoked.

We started work for three quarters of an hour before breakfast.

I always enjoyed the breakfasts but there tended to be the same weekly dish - Potato cannon balls on Tuesdays, rice cannon balls on Thursdays. By my parents special wish I had hot milk instead of tea. It was sweet and not very nice. The masters had breakfast at a separate table but at lunch sat with the boys. For my first term I sat at lunch next to Mrs Pellatt. On her other side was her nephew Peter Rylands (who was afterwards killed flying in the first war)²³. TP carved the lunch and after the first helping used to shout "any more seconds stand up please".

On Sundays as a treat we were given disgusting little apples from the orchard.

For tea which was at six o'clock we had bread and butter or bread and jam - not both, and slabs of cake on Sundays.

Before we went to bed we had dry biscuits which when left in the which when left in the pocket produced 'pocket dust'.

We wore shorts and sweaters and suits on Sundays.

The school cap was scarlet which was bought at "Our Boys". We only wore it when we went to Swanage.

Durnford had a small rough golf course on which we used to play in the winter. I learnt there not to be very fond of golf! I seemed to spend most of my time searching for lost balls. I had a driver and a

²² The Rev J S Thomas was a lifelong 'servant' of Marlborough, first as assistant master, then a senior House master and finally long serving Bursar. He died in 1897 His daughters were Bertha Nisbet Wolferstan Thomas - She married Thomas Kirkland Rylands of the Down House in 1897 - and Bertha's younger sister Eleanor who married Tom Pellatt. Eleanor and my Grandmother Gertrude were both born at Marlborough and were lifelong friends.

²³ See obit at the back of this diary

mashie for all purposes.

The great winter activity was "the woods". The woods belonged to the Pellatts. We wore enormous hessian overalls and equipped ourselves with billhooks. My first winter an older boy and a contemporary of his (whose name I have forgotten) made me their 'slave'. Max Gregory whose mother was a friend of my mother's was the slave master. They had a lovely house in a tree which was hard to climb. My job was to carry up brushwood for building the house. When the other two were away it was lovely to sit alone in the tree reading. Some of the boys spent their time damming the stream, but I did not do that.

After giving up the house in the tree I joined a party of boys under Peter Godfrey-Faussett who called themselves 'burrow-men'. We used to cut our way through thick brambles and undergrowth and make cosy houses inside.

A scout troop was started at Durnford by Leslie Winterbottom and I became very keen. We used to have rallies in the woods where we had lovely picnics and cooked sausages over camp fires. Each patrol had its own camp fire. Mine were the 'curlews'. Mrs Pellatt used to come to the picnics.

I learnt the Morse code and semaphore. I had some flags and we used to have great fun standing on farm walls and signalling to each other.

I took in 'The Scout' which I read regularly.

Dancing ledge, where T.P. had had the splendid pool blasted out of a rock ledge, was about a mile from the school. It was put where the tide reached it and so was cleaned twice a day. We bathed naked.

I was taught to swim there by masters with a long pole with a belt at the end. I hated learning but when I could swim I really enjoyed myself.

We used to go down to the Ledge after morning school every day and in the height of summer in the afternoons as well. It was a lovely walk past Spyway Farm through fields where the larks always seemed to be singing in the sky. The walk ended in a steep hill and then a climb down a cliff.

On half days (Wednesday and Saturday) we had wonderful picnics at the Ledge. There were heavy tins of biscuits and cans of water to be carried down and anyone who volunteered to take one was given a reward of a special piece of cake at tea. We drank disgusting "Eiffel Tower" lemonade.

Mrs Pellatt and Miss McPhail and female guests used to change round the corner to bathe. When ladies were not present T.P. used to bathe naked and when he jumped into the pool he was greeted by shouts of 'tidal wave!' from the boys.

When we had had our picnic we used to sail our model boats in the pool.

On calm days those who could swim were allowed to go over the ledge into the open sea. This was great fun especially when there was a heavy swell. I used to revel in it and remember refusing to obey T.P.'s shouted orders to come in.

He started a 'high dive' at one end of the ledge. I used to jump off it because I could not dive. One boy Rennie Hoare went off and dived vertically nearly hitting a rock below. I saw T.P.'s look of horror. He then had a diving board made by a local carpenter protruding over the rock.

When we did not go to the Ledge for bathing we went to Winspit or Seacombe at both of which there was splendid bathing.

Walking there and back we used to pick up stones and find slow worms which we took back to the school as pets. Many of the boys collected butterflies and there were plenty of Blues of various kinds to be caught in the fields.

On Sunday afternoons the whole school went for a walk. We used to make mad switches and blowpipes which shot berries. One day a boy shot T.P. in the face with a blow pipe and there was a row.

On Sunday evenings Mrs Pellatt used to read to the whole school (exciting books like Moonflete and Jim Davies²⁴). When TP wanted his supper he used to shout to Mrs Pellatt to stop. It was always an exciting bit of the book and the whole school shouted to him to GO AWAY which he meekly did. While Mrs Pellatt was reading a favourite boy called Coulter who afterwards went to Bridport, used to rub her ankles.

Once a year we used to go to Studland for the annual picnic. We were issued with horrid little bathing drawers and went off in horse drawn charabancs driven by Stevens from the local pub. TP and Mrs Pellatt used to bicycle. He had a very special type of bicycle.

At Studland we bathed and paddled and collected the lovely coloured sands from the cliffs and drank pop from bottles with glass ball stoppers.

We also went sometimes on an expedition to Blue Pool near Corfe. It was quite a long drive in the horse charabancs and when people misbehaved there were shouts of 'Whip behind' and Stevens used to turn and whip the offender. This usually happened when we got out to relieve the horses going up the hill and boys used to hang on behind.

T.P. had a Sunbeam motor car and a chauffeur called Cockles. He once took me to Wareham in his car as a special treat.

On Sunday afternoons in the summer boys who wanted to were allowed to go out for walks on their own exploring and collecting Natural History specimens.

I was too idle to do this and instead used to construct a house with chairs and a rug in the garden and read a book.

In the winter roller skating was our greatest pleasure. We skated up and down the passages. There were long 'trains' of crouching skaters being pushed at speed by younger boys. Later on T.P. had a tarmac skating rink made in the playground.

In the holidays my mother used to take us to skate at the Holland Park rink.

War broke out on August 20th 1914. I remember hearing the news at Goddards and talking to my mother in the rose garden. I could not understand why she was so unhappy about it.

I don't remember much about the rest of that summer holidays except that we were driving up to London, probably on my way to Waterloo Station to go back to school, and we passed some troops marching in Putney (I think the Public School Corps).

At Durnford we heard much about the war. I took a magazine called "War Illustrated" T.P. had always maintained that the best thing anyone could do for the country was to join the Navy, or as a second choice the Army.

He had sham rifles made by the village carpenter. We used to drill with these wearing our dark blue sweaters and grey shorts.

T.P. took us out into a field and taught us to advance in extended order in short rushes throwing ourselves to the ground after each advance. We had books on platoon drill and used to practice on the school golf links holding string to represent the lines of soldiers. We all expected a great naval victory and the news of the battle of Jutland and our serious losses was a great blow.

However T.P. was delighted to hear how well an old Durnfordian Tovey by name had done (he later became Admiral Tovey CinC Home Fleet).

In the battle of the Dogger Bank which was earlier, the father of one of the boys, Engineer Captain

²⁴ One of five childrens novels written by John Masefield.

Taylor was killed in the Tiger. He was the only officer casualty.
The first parent I remember being killed was Col Boileau, a sapper at the time of Mons.

It must have been in the Christmas holidays that my parents took me over to Aldershot to gaze at the first German prisoners behind barbed wire.
Aldershot was full of troops drilling. We lunched with some friends of Uncle Bertie who were full of talk about General Chetwode the Cavalry Commander.
When conscription was introduced schoolmasters were exempt for a time but then the "Derby" scheme²⁵ was introduced which meant that after a time they could be called up; meanwhile they wore green armbands with red crowns on them.

There was a master at Durnford called Arthur Howell. He taught music and mathematics. He used to shake boys who did not try and make them cry. For some reason I became fond of him and sympathised with his lurking fear that he would be called up.
He took boys who were interested in long walks on Sundays which I very much enjoyed. I remember walking to Ballard Down and to Swyre Head. We trespassed in the grounds of Encombe House. They were full of garlic and we feared man traps which were said to be there.
After a time he was indeed called up and joined the King's Royal Rifles. He came to visit us as a private and then again after getting a commission.
On the occasion of his last visit for some extraordinary reason he took me down to Dancing Ledge to bathe. I was much touched by this as it made me feel for the first time that I was an individual and worthwhile company.
While we were at the Ledge he talked to me and gave me the strong impression that he knew that this was his last visit and that he would not survive after going to France. I have never forgotten the impression this made on me.
Sure enough it was a great blow to me when my mother told me he had been killed in action.
There are other memories of Arthur Howell which I cherish. We were at school for one Easter and 'Owly' taught us to sing the Easter Anthem for Sunday Church using the new organ which had just been installed at Langton Church.
One day on one of our long walks we went into Kingston Church and he played the organ there. He taught me about music - Beethoven and Schubert. I have remembered the unfinished symphony ever since and Schubert's 'March Militaire'.
Another master Leslie Winterbottom used to sing his 'Erl King'.
On another occasion the whole school went to Leeson House girl's school and joined with them in a concert. Owly was ragged about flirting with the girls.

A boy in the school 'Muddy' Gardiner was always practicing Beethoven on the schoolroom piano.

Leslie Winterbottom was in the Oxfordshire Hussars and joined his regiment as soon as the war started. He went to Belgium when we occupied Antwerp but came back safely and survived the war.

Another master who was killed was called Gibson. I did not know him very well but he was a good chap.

Another intimate friend who was called up under the 'Derby Scheme' was Mr Carpenter the village schoolmaster at Abinger. He was a nice little man.

²⁵ The Derby Scheme was an attempt to recruit further men into the Services. The Earl of Derby introduced the scheme in October 1915, whereby men could volunteer for the forces. They completed one days service & were placed on reserve. They went home and waited to be called upon when they were needed. It was not a success and conscription had eventually to be introduced.

After his death his widow carried on the village school with great success.

She remained a friend for years.

The Carpenters had one son, Colin. Colin joined the army and had a terrible time during the retreat at Dunkirk (WW2) and his nerves were shattered by being dive bombed. Later in the war he joined the Air Force and was killed in an air accident at Detling

During the first war there were frequent stories of Zeppelin raids and once one was said to have come up the Tillingbourne valley searching for the powder factory at Chilworth.

This factory was just below St Martha's church which could be seen from Goddards.

The church was camouflaged and we always thought that it was due to this camouflage that the Zeppelin failed to find the factory.

My Father had the wine cellar at 20 Cleveland Gardens converted into an air raid shelter.

One day Nanny and Martin as a small boy were in Kensington Gardens when the first heavier-than-air raid came over (Gothas).

My final memory of Durnford was the "leavers picnic". We went by horse charabanc to Warbarrow Bay at Tyneham. A really lovely place. We spent the whole day there. It was a lovely day and I have never forgotten it. I remember sitting at the top of the hill with Ralph Cazalet looking at the view. (Warbarrow bay and Tyneham Village were later taken over by the army as part of the Lulworth Tank range. There was a promise that they would be returned after the war but they are still retained (1982)!)

Ralph Cazalet became a great friend and used to stay at Goddards. He and I used to go for long bicycle rides.

Goddards

My parents had taken Goddards, Abinger Common in the spring of 1914 as a holiday house. It was let to them by Sir Frederick Merrilees, a shipping magnate who lived at Pasturewood, Abinger Common.

The house was built by Lutyens and the garden was designed by Gertrude Jekyll.

The house was intended for Sir Frederick's daughter Mrs Craven. (The badge of St Cecilia, her Christian name was over the front door).

She married before she went to live there and the house was then converted for use as a home of rest for tired nurses. It had a dormitory on the first floor and a common room on the ground floor. It was later enlarged by Lutyens and made into a house for Sir Frederick's married son Major Merrilees. He and his American wife lived there for a time before moving to Scotland. (He was killed in the second world war instructing the Home Guard).

In the grounds of Goddards there was a lovely stable (loose box, two stalls, corn store and harness room) with the coachman's cottage on the other side of an arch (after we left Lady Wootton bought it and made it into a house for herself).

Motor cars were just coming into fashion and there was a good double garage. Near the house there was a barn consisting of a wood shed, knife and shoe cleaning room with a good cellar below. There was also a charming old gardeners' cottage which had once been the village Post Office. It had an old notice over the door saying it had a licence to sell "tobacco and snuff".

The main house was centred on a fine old beech tree supported by chains.

The big lawn had a splendid view from it over woodlands to St Martha's chapel above Chilworth.

There was a tennis court and a rose garden as well as a shrubbery and orchard. The lawn was separated by a haw haw wall from a field (about six acres) running down to the wood below. In the field were buildings used as a shelter for ponies and later as a pig sty.

The water for the house came from a well in the field where there was an electric pump. The house was lit by an electricity generated by a big Ruston Hornsby engine under the coachman's cottage.

The rooms in Goddards consisted of:

On the ground floor

A big central common room with a big drawing room in one wing and a study in the other wing. All these looked out onto a courtyard laid out by Miss Jekyll with a dipping well and sundial.

The unusual feature of the ground floor was a huge skittle alley in which it was said Lord Roberts had played.

There was also a cloakroom and WC, kitchen, scullery, pantry and servants hall.

There were two staircases, one at each end of the common room, and visitors were often confused and went up the wrong one!

The main common room door had a strange old lock on it. There were nine outside doors to be locked every night. A big coal cellar and boiler room were approached from outside the front door. To reach the front door the servants had to cross the courtyard to avoid going through the common room.

On the first floor

There were two big bedrooms one in each wing. They both had dressing rooms leading from them. Two spare rooms (one small) Nanny's room three maids bedrooms, two bathrooms with WC's and a housemaids cupboard with sink. The airing cupboard

consisted of a long row of cupboards along the central passage. There was a box room with access from it to the roof space

We soon learnt to love the house and always enjoyed our holidays there. The lawn was a wonderful place for bicycle chivvy and bicycle polo.

On our holidays from school we usually spent a few days in London when we were taken to theatres and then drove down to Goddards for the main part of the holiday.

Soon after we moved to Goddards my father invested in a motor car.

We first of all hired an open Rover which we afterwards bought, but very soon we had a big Wolsely Landalette which was excellent for taking us all to and from London. Donaldson became our chauffeur and we learnt a lot from him. He was a Roman Catholic who had been a marine in the Boxer Rebellion. When war broke out in 1914 he was immediately called up and did not come home till after the war.

He had a wife whom my mother found rather tiresome and one daughter. They lived for a time in the coachman's cottage but later on moved to a house in the village. When Donaldson went to the war he was succeeded by a rather slick chap called Curtis about whom I don't remember much. There was another chauffeur whose name I have forgotten.

In the holidays I continued my interest in Scouting and joined the Abinger troop started by Mr Carpenter (the school master).

We used to make wooden splints during the war.

I once went to a big rally in Dorking reviewed by a very boring old man called General Elles who was scout commissioner.

My mother organised the making of hessian sacks for sandbags for use in France in the village and she and nanny spent a lot of time making them.

In the war my mother kept pigs and chickens. We had an incubator for hatching the chickens and then kept them in a brooder house. It was a very successful enterprise and we had lots of eggs which we used to pickle with Sogol, a chemical produced by one of my Uncle Francis's companies. My mother and nanny looked after the two pigs and fed and cleaned them. When the time came for the pigs to be killed, I think it was done by Coleman the under gardener (a big fat man) Old Daniels the deaf and grumpy old gardener helped with the cutting up of the carcasses and rubbing them with saltpetre to preserve them; a very hard job.

We had two ponies at Goddards. The first was a stubborn black welsh pony called Tommy. He was very slow and sluggish in the pony cart and was apt to kick in the stables. When he was turned out into the field and did not want to come in we used to have a terrible time trying to catch him. The Gardener (old Daniels), Chauffeur and under gardeners were all enlisted to help but Tommy usually broke through the cordon and escaped!

However when we got used to his evil habits we became fond of him though he was no good for riding.

Our second pony whom we really loved was called Daisy. She was a bay Exmoor type pony. Kerr the charming coachman at Pasturewood (the Merrilees' house) found her for us.

Daisy was a real pleasure to drive in the pony cart with a fast trot which developed into a gallop at the bottom of any hill!

When my mother took her to Gomshall station to meet a train she used to stand on her hind legs when the train arrived and it was difficult for the passenger to get into the cart.

One day when I was taking her out of the cart I forgot to undo one of the traces. She was frightened and galloped off through the stable arch dragging the cart by its shafts.

Fortunately she did not hurt herself and the cart was not too badly broken. I was much ashamed of myself.

When Daisy first came Kerr used to take me for wonderful rides round the country. He also used to take me out cub hunting. Kerr acted as a whipper-in and it was a nice experience riding with the hounds and huntsmen to the meet. Daisy loved hunting and was good at jumping small ditches and hedges.

The master of the Surrey Union Hunt was a terrifying old gentleman called Lee-Steere from Jayes Park, Ockley.

I have never forgotten how, when waiting in covert he shouted at me "Keep that damned pony still!"

(Years later his son became quite a friend. He was a nice quiet chap who married one of the Piggott-Brown girls. He was I think killed in the 2nd war)²⁶

²⁶ As I know Gordon Lee-Steere, I showed him this snippet, he replied: Ray, Many thanks. Harry Lee-Steere (nicknamed 'the foul mouthed squire' by some) was my grandfather's first cousin. He had been master of the Warnham Staghounds which closed down at the beginning of the first world war, I think. There is a portrait of him at Jayes celebrating his retirement as master of the Surrey Union. His only son John was killed in 1914 at Ypres aged 18. My father was summoned back from Australia to inherit and went to Oxford about 1928 I think. Christ Church. He got a blue for hurdling. He married my mother Patience Piggott-Brown in 1938 and was killed in May 1940 over Belgium in 601 Squadron. (Before Dunkirk!). Yours Gordon

Winchester Years

Thanks to Durnford and TP I took the Winchester exam in my stride without any special cramming. I took Junior Part 1 (Archie Wilson) which was not the bottom form.

My father took me down to Winchester and introduced me to George Blore the housemaster of Chawkers²⁷ (where my father had been).

George Blore told my Father that Dr Sweeting the music master would test all new men for singing and my Father, without consulting me, said I should like to join the Glee Club.

I performed very badly in the singing test and Sweeting grunted. He did however accept me into the Glee Club on the strength of his friendship for my Uncle Hubert Burge the ex-headmaster of Winchester.

Like all new men I had a Tégé responsible for showing me the ropes and teaching me my "notions" during the first fortnight, after which there was a "notions" examination by the prefects.

My Tégé was a man called Frazer who did the job adequately but was not very inspiring and never became a friend.

I remember clearly my first day at Winchester. We had bicycles which were kept at the bicycles shop near Chawkers.

I went out for a bicycle ride with Ralph Ricketts and Rupert Byass and went to Fishers Pond. This gave me a great sense of freedom. There is so much to write about Winchester that I think it best not to attempt any chronological sequence and will try instead a division under certain headings. But before embarking on these I must mention "Hills" which took place on the first day of the half when we all went before breakfast to the top of Hills for name calling by the Headmaster. It was a lovely walk in the early morning mist.

Work Routine

The day normally began with "Early morning lines" which started at 7 a.m., but later on the time was changed to 7:30.

We had to get up half an hour beforehand and it was the duty of the junior man in the dormitory to be "peals caller" and shout "bells go" at a quarter to seven or if morning lines were at 7.30 "first peal". It took about five minutes to walk (or run) "up to books".

I think it took three quarter of an hour and was followed by breakfast "up to house". One junior had to collect the newspapers on the way back.

The morning's work was divided into two or three periods with "Books Chambers" up to house in the middle of the morning. There were two periods of work in the afternoons except on Wednesdays and Saturdays which were "half rems".

Once a week after work there was a short service in Chapel at which we sang the psalm "I was glad when they said unto me". I think this was started by the Headmaster halfway through my time in the school.

On Sundays we wore black clothes and top hats.

Every week the names of the Wykamists who died or were killed in the war were read out. It was very sad as the list became bigger and bigger. I knew a number of the men myself.

Morning chapel was compulsory and we walked in Meads before and after chapel.

Once a month we went to evensong in the Cathedral.

The service was held in the Choir and was a special one for the school. The lights were blacked out and it was almost impossible to read. We heard many sermons telling us that we were so important

²⁷ as Hawkins' House is informally known

as the coming generation.

For the first two years in the school the juniors went to Chantry instead of Chapel. Chantry was presided over by Bather²⁸ who was known as the "Bishop of Chantry"

Dons

Archie Wilson who took Junior Part 1 (JP1) where I started in the school, made little impact on me. I think I achieved a reserve after one half into Middle Part III.

Crick was the Divinity Don. He was a delightful man who afterwards became Bishop of Chester, but I don't think he taught me much.

I stuck in Middle Part II and was up to Charles Little for a year. He had a very abrupt manner and for a long time I was terrified by him, but later on I became very fond of him. When he got to know me I found what a kind heart he had.

In Middle Part I, I was up to Davidson a charming Scotsman who had moustaches growing out of his cheeks!

I remember I once had to go to David²⁹ for a lesson. He had a reputation for reducing men in his form to tears and soon accomplished this with me.

Stephen Burge was in his house and was fond of him. He was a pastor, but in the war commanded the OTC. His brother was Bishop of Liverpool.

Later on in, I suppose, Senior Part 3, I was taken by Bather who I also found frightening.

My Father was not satisfied with my progress and arranged for me to have private tuition with Davidson who was most kind and helped me a lot with Demosthenes. Unfortunately this led to a big row amongst the dons!!

Bather had noticed a great improvement in my work and discovered that Davidson had been teaching me exactly what we were doing up to books!

From then on dons were not allowed to give private tuition in divinity subjects. Poor old Davidson was much upset!

One very dry don who taught me a lot was Aris, housemaster of Toyes. He taught me some geology and opened my eyes to navigation and various projections. He commanded the OTC

To my regret, (apart from one inspiring lesson) I was never up to my housemaster George Blore who I believe was a most inspiring teacher.

At the end of my time in the school I was up to History Bill³⁰ the second Master who afterwards became Headmaster and later Bishop of Winchester. He was a splendid history teacher and what he taught me was a great help when I went to Oxford.

Monty Rendell the Headmaster had a Senior Part form once a week on Shakespeare. He made it very inspiring and rather fun.

He used to ask questions about what we had read and we wrote down the answers. He then asked us how many we had got right. He never checked and it was a great game to tell him being careful not to be too bad or to call attention to yourself by giving too good an answer!

He must have known what went on but seemed to wink at it.

²⁸ Rev'd Arthur Bather

²⁹ Rev'd Frederick Paul David

³⁰ Rev Alwyn Williams

Monty was much laughed at for his mannerisms and forgetfulness of men's names. He used to give marvellous lectures on Italian Art in Memorial buildings.

Shortly before I left the school he came to Abinger with a friend and stayed at the Abinger Hatch. My father of course entertained him and I was delighted to find how kind and friendly he was to me.

When the war was going on we were sometimes taken by not very efficient temporary dons who, I am afraid, were often ragged and made to lose their tempers.

Our French teacher was a sweet little man called Du Pontey. He never taught us anything but we liked being up to him as he played gramophone records to us (including *La Chèvre de Monsieur Seguin*).³¹

The Science teacher was Goddard who was good followed by Humbie (rather dull) and also of course "Guts" McDowell one of the chaplains whose sermons in chapel were so clever they were incomprehensible.

There was a very dry Maths don called Thompson whom we disliked. The best Maths don was a housemaster called Broomfield. I was always bottom of his form with Eardley Knollys and Lord Elmley³². He tried to teach me differential calculus.

I was never up to Rocky Wilson but everyone liked him and he talked all the time about cricket.

At the end of my time in the school I was up to "Lille" Hardy for 19th century history. He was an inspiring little man with a rather sharp tongue.

Friends

My great friend in the school was William Fellowes, and we used to go about together a good deal. His father³³ was a Minor Canon at Windsor. He was an authority on Elizabethan Madrigals and sixteenth century music. He played the fiddle and gave at least one recital in the Music School. The family had a lovely house in the cloisters at Windsor with a splendid view over the river to Eton. I used to stay there fairly often and they always entertained my parents when Eton Match was at Eton.

William Fellowes and I spent much time walking round Winchester and he taught me a lot particularly about Heraldry.

Looking back on it I am afraid he was rather a bore, but I did not mind it at the time.

He and I often used to go round the Cathedral and we made friends with Elkins the chief verger, Elkins used to take us up the tower and showed us the bells and we walked all along the nave above the vaulting.

Another friend was Francis Portal. When my brother Arthur died his parents were very kind to me and took me out for a nice picnic. During the picnic a ginger beer bottle burst!

Francis Portal's family lived at Whitchurch and made paper for banknotes. He had a cousin in the Air Force (who later became Lord Portal). The cousin was stationed at Worthy Down and used to take Francis up for flights; He never took me!

Francis gave a lecture to the Natural History Society on "Landscape Gardening".

³¹ Well known Folk tale from Provence

³² Actually Viscount Elmley, later 8th Earl Beauchamp. Said to be the model for the character of Lord Brideshead ("Bridey"), eldest son of the Marquess of Marchmain, in Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*

³³ E H Fellowes

I often used to go for walks of Sunday afternoons with Lance Wickham (another rather dry man). He lived in Chester where his father was registrar of the Cathedral (not a parson).

Another great friend was Archie Nisbet. He came to stay at Goddards and I had an unforgettable stay with his parents at Humbie in Mid-Lothian and we had lovely walks on the moors. Archie had a sister Christine with whom I thought I fell in love. She used to play Chopin preludes on the piano. Not being used to female company I was very shy with her. There was also an elder brother who was in Chawkers with me - but senior. He was very charming. He joined the army and was later killed in Palestine.

One Leave Out day I took Archie to Speen to see my Grandmother and Aunt Blanche and Aunt Ethel. We bicycled there from Winchester and went shooting in the woods in the afternoon. I shot a pheasant which we found rather difficult to kill.

Another man in the house of I became very fond was Evelyn Baring³⁴. He was junior to me and was the only child of his father's second marriage. His mother was very possessive and we used often to see them in London on Leave Out days when she took Evelyn to the theatre or Opera. His father Lord Cromer never appeared at Winchester.

Evelyn Baring was large and a bit of a bruiser! In the war the Germans had a big gun which they used to bombard Paris. This gun was called Big Bertha, so Baring became known in the house as Bertha.

There were lesser friends in the house. One was John Nowell, son of the headmaster of Sherbourne. John came to stay at Goddards once, and we found him rather tiresome.

I used to find myself associating a good deal with Ralph Ricketts and Rupert Byass, neither of whom I liked.

Ralph Ricketts had been at The Malthouse (next to Durnford) and I was expected to like him. We often found ourselves working together as we were in the same div.

Poor Rupert who had had an elder brother in the school was led astray by his brother's friends. He went into the army and to the dogs! His family imported sherry and they lived in South Wales.

Forily Flower was a great friend. His father³⁵ was the head of Flowers Brewing and Mayor of Stratford upon Avon. He started the Shakespeare Memorial Celebrations each April 23rd and did a lot for the town. He was an American. Forily and I used to bicycle a lot together.

He was as bad as I was at cricket and was sent up to house one evening by Blore for bowling into the wrong net!

He joined a cavalry regiment but retired early and became the head of the brewery.

He often used to stay with us at Goddards. He died suddenly in America

Ekker

The taking of daily ekker much dominated our lives.

A roll had to be sent in every week setting out what exercise had been taken. There was a minimum necessary and various activities had different levels.

"Tolling" was much indulged in and was a comparatively easy way of obtaining points.

There were standard Tolls with different values. Half Milers were runs which took half an hour and

³⁴ Younger son of Lord Cromer, (first British ruler of Egypt). He went on to be Governor of Rhodesia and later of Kenya during the Mau Mau uprising. Lord Cromer's cousin John was the Second Lord Revelstoke. He was a director of Baring's Bank and the Bank of England. and knew Hubert Burge. It was this connection that got Stephen Burge his job at Baring's (see letters from Hubert Burge to Stephen in my possession).

³⁵ Archibald Flower. Forily seems to be an American surname

meant going to the Portsmouth road junction beyond St Cross.

There was a much shorter run round the local roads which could be done in ten minutes.

I hated tolling at first but later began to like it.

One spring at the instigation of Andy Grant some of us used to go for a toll before breakfast. This was fun because it was gorgeous April weather. I had to go in for the Junior Steeplechase once and came in I think fifty fourth - almost the last!

Another activity was playing Fives which I much enjoyed. I did not play Racquets but we occasionally played Squash.

Later on I joined Boat Club. It was lovely sculling in a skiff down river.

There was compulsory football and cricket. I did not like football (our game in the Autumn and soccer in the spring). I was hopeless at cricket and never got beyond "Jun Jun"

"Watching out" was a terrible imposition. It was a Senior Junior's job in the school to collect people to field at nets for cricket and to throw in balls at football. He could "nail" any junior for this job and it was infuriating to be nailed if you had other plans for the afternoon.

You could escape being nailed if you were under a roof. I remember having a terrible time being chased and taking shelter under a very exiguous arch outside Sick House. Fortunately I was rescued by a don, Broomfield who came along at that moment!

OTC³⁶

The OTC took up a great deal of our time. Although as the war progressed it became more and more likely that in a year or two we should be in the army, we treated the OTC as just a part of school life and sometimes rather fun.

It meant frequently having to change into the most uncomfortable uniform with puttees and heavy boot. An enormous amount of time was spent on cleaning brass buttons, belts and boots.

There was a inter house Drill Pot in which Chawkers did rather well.

We all loved "Tubby" the Regimental Sergeant Major who taught us to drill and stand still on parade.

There was an annual inspection by a general at which the band (Rifle brigade or Hampshire regiment) played Scipio March by Handel.

I remember on a hot day one man fainted on parade and fell flat on his back.

We learnt to shoot on "Cecil Range" (given by his mother in memory of her son killed in the war).

Later on we used to bicycle to Chilcombe and learn to shoot on the outdoor range. I enjoyed that very much and was quite good in spite of firing one day at the wrong target!

We took turns at marking in the butts. There was a row one day when one man shot off his rifle by mistake! The Field Days were always great fun. We were issued with blank ammunition and had to clean our rifles afterwards. They were kept in the armoury.

I remember a big field day with Marlborough on Hartford Bridge Flats. Afterwards we marched to Wellington where we had tea and were addressed by the headmaster of Wellington (Vaughan).

One day on a Field Day there was a funny scene: Aris, a Housemaster and our Colonel, rode a horse

³⁶ From www.winchestercollegeatwar.com:

2488 pupils, teachers and choir boys served in the Armed Forces, predominantly the Army. There were 513 recorded deaths when total pupil numbers in the school were no greater than 450. Like other public schools, Winchester College lost a generation of young men to the Great War. Many went straight from the classroom into the Army, their time in the Officer Training Corp at Winchester assuring them of a junior commission and a ticket straight to the front line. These officers who led their men out of the trenches faced a life expectancy of just 6 weeks. Four Winchester men were awarded the VC, the highest military honour.

and was much laughed at.

One day he passed my cousin Stephen Burge who was sitting resting by the roadside. Stephen did not get up and salute him and he was furious. Later on there was a parade at which he cut off Stephen's Lance Corporal's stripe!

There were annual camps two of which I went to at Tidworth Pennings.

The first one was very hot. The Guards Brigade with my cousin Lags Gibbs³⁷ ran the camp. We were very snobbish and beastly to the other Public School OTC's (especially Solihull).

I dreaded being tent orderly because it meant washing up very greasy plates with messy "Hudson's Soap". I always did it very badly and horrid remarks were made about me by the others in the tent. There was a Guards adjutant who we laughed at; He was always saying 'Right or wrong Stand Still!'

We slept on paliasses filled with straw and on the first day it was a horrid job to fill them in the smelly straw tent.

Another memory was a splendid concert which we much enjoyed given by Uppingham under their music master (Sterndale Bennett³⁸).

The Army laid on various demonstrations for us and I remember particularly one showing us how to march and how not to march.

One day we marched across Salisbury Plain to Netheravon to see an artillery demonstration on the Larkhill range. It was very hot and we were carrying rifles and everyone found it really exhausting. At the end of the camp I had to carry my full kit bag from Tidworth Pennings to the station and tired as I was after the camp, I felt I should never make it.

My parents were horrified at my appearance when I got home.

I don't remember much about the second camp but I do remember Bobber (Robertson, a housemaster) giving the OTC a lecture, at the end of which he said he guaranteed that the stupidest man in the school would understand it. He then said "Now Gibbs what did I just say?"

In the face of all these activities I succeeded in acquiring a little military knowledge which was useful.

I learnt about the parts of a rifle, map reading and the compass (Budge Firth of all people taught me some of this).³⁹

Anyhow I was very proud of myself for getting Certificate A as I really thought I should like to go into the Army.

Housemasters

Our beloved housemaster George Blore was a great character.

In the war he used to get up at 5 a.m. to go into town to buy us food.

We never appreciated it properly and used to be beastly about the unappetising fish which we called 'Shark'.

The meat he bought we called 'horsemeat' and I am afraid it was indeed horse sometimes!

Once the house was given a stag by the Grant family and 'Jones' Grant helped George Blore cut it up. The venison was a great treat.

We had to weigh our bread on a scales in the dining room and were limited to about a slice a day.

³⁷ Probably Lancelot Merrivale Gibbs

³⁸ Robert, Grandson of composer Sir William Sterndale Bennett

³⁹ The Rev'd. JD'EE Firth (Coll, 1912-18), always known as Budge, was later Master of the Temple and priest in-charge of the Temple Church in London. Before that, he was for many years a chaplain and Housemaster of Trant's (1939-46). As a pupil he captained Lord's in 1918 and took all ten wickets in the Eton Match.

My parents used to send me cakes to supplement the rations, but when Blore found out he was furious and had a frightful row with my mother. He did not see why I should be favoured while others had to live on the rations.

George Blore was very kind to me when my brother Arthur died in 1917.

One day after the war he rushed into Hall and said did we know it was St Bananas Day!

He asked us all into his private drawing room where we feasted on bananas which were a luxury. I think he had then decided to give up the house.

I was so glad to be able to go and see him in his house when he was in bed just before he died (this was years later).⁴⁰

When he gave up the house he was succeeded by Bobby Quirk, an old Etonian parson with a very high sense of right and wrong.

We did not like him and were quite beastly to him. Once he had his old father, who was Bishop of Jarrow, and his mother to stay. The Prefis (Prefects) used to choose the hymns for the Evening Preces and on this occasion they chose "All things bright and beautiful" which the house sang with great gusto. Bobby Quirk was not amused.

Other Snippets

In the winter we used to play "Uppers" in the house yard. We had a miniature football and I learnt to enjoy it very much.

There were four flagstuffs outside the house and juniors had to take it in turns to put the flags up in the morning and take them down in the evening (Union Jack, France Russia and Italy).

I think it must have been after the war but there were delicious hot dishes (eggs, bacon etc) obtainable at the school shop next door and sent into the house for tea. I only had them occasionally for a treat because they were too expensive for me to buy them often on my allowance.

Perhaps the greatest excitement of my time at Winchester was Armistice Day.

As soon as we heard about it when we were 'up to books' we all stopped work and rushed 'up town'. There we crowded in the street opposite the Town Hall cheering and throwing our straw hats into the air.

We realised that we should not have to go into the army when we left school and it was the end of those horrible casualty lists which were read out in chapel.

When I was about sixteen I had to do the School Certificate Examination, which I think I passed without difficulty.

One day the ministry of education inspectors came to visit the school.

I was in Senior Part II (Bathers class). An inspector took the form for an hour and we were not impressed. He was chiefly interested in whether one went 'up' to Scotland or 'down'!

I ended my time at Winchester in Senior Part I. I did not achieve the sixth book.

An exciting event near the end of my time was the necessary visit to Oxford for matriculation.

I stayed in Univ. where I was given a room in the Radcliffe quad with a terrifying scout called Green. The first impression of Oxford was the lovely noise of bells which went on incessantly. The examination took place in hall and while I was doing it Farquarson the senior tutor came and talked to me about my Grandfather (Bright). He was very amiable but rather frightening.

⁴⁰ G Blore 1870 - 1960

He told me my Grandfather always said 'You must go on to the top of the hill'.
I was later summoned up to the high table to talk to the Master (R W Macan) who was charming.
He too talked about my Grandfather and indicated that it did not matter a bit how I did in the paper
- I was bound to be accepted.

My chief memory of my last day at Winchester was attending 'Domum' Dinner in College Hall. The
guest of honour was Lord Oxford and Asquith⁴¹. We had to wear Dinner Jackets for the occasion.

⁴¹ Actually the title Earl of Oxford and Asquith was not created till 1925. In 1919 he would still have been plain Herbert Henry Asquith

University

Going up to Oxford was quite a frightening experience. I took a taxi to Univ. and was received at the lodge by the porter who had a very abrupt manner. He showed me to my room which was a magnificent one on the ground floor with a bow window looking out onto 'The High'. It had formerly been occupied by Prince Yousouppoff, the Russian prince who murdered Rasputin.

On the top floor of the same staircase there lived Bill Milligan who was a distinguished runner and president of the Junior Common Room.

My scout was known as Albert. He was an imposing figure of whom I was greatly in awe. He had an assistant called Tom.

My mother had come up with me and after inspecting my room and being introduced to Albert, she took me shopping to buy a few things that were lacking in my room - cushions etc. She bought me an enormous basket armchair in which later on I used to sleep when I should have been working.

On arrival at Univ. I don't think I knew any of the men except my cousin Bill Carr whose room was in a remote part of the College beyond the Shelly memorial. Bill was not very forthcoming. his interest was only in riding and point to points!

I renewed my friendship with Keith Ronald who had been at Durnford. His younger brother died there and his mother and mine became great friends. Keith had been at Rugby. He was a dour character but nice.

I made friends with a number of old Rugbeians who were all nice. Sandy Mackesack who read History with me, was one and H J Kittermaster, who was a great Rugged player. He was a charming man. He played Stand off half for England but sadly died young after leaving Oxford.

Another distinguished athlete in the college was Cyril Tolley the golfer. He was an enormous man. Legend said that he had hit a golf ball from the Univ. quad over the High into Queens Quad. He was too imposing a man for me to know!

Bill Carr once asked me to lunch. He shared his rooms with a frightening rugged player called Hamilton, and I did not enjoy the lunch party.

Bill Milligan also had me to lunch; he was much kinder.

I used to see a lot of a funny little man called Hughes who had been a chorister at Kings college Cambridge and was mad on Bach. He rather clung to me and I found him rather a bore.

He afterwards became a high church parson and had a parish at Bovey in Devon.

Another friend in the college was Francis Yates who had been at Sherborne. I kept in touch with him long after leaving Oxford. He had a very dull elder brother who became a parson and vicar of Hampstead. I was Godfather to Francis' daughter and went to the christening at Hampstead parish church.

There were men in other colleges who were great friends. One was Evelyn Baring who was at New College. He used to come into my room and play rugged with my cushions. He had been at Chawkers at Winchester with me.

Another old Chawkerite friend was Archie Nisbet who was at Brasenose. He coxed trial eights but not the Varsity boat. He had a very nice American friend called Pat Mellon who stroked the Varsity boat. The rowing blues were rather heroes to me. One was Irvine from Merton who was afterwards lost⁴² on Mount Everest. I remember attending a lecture on the mountain by Mallory who was lost soon afterwards with Irvine.

⁴² 1924

I took little part in College games (I once tried to play hockey but it was a dismal failure). My principal activity in sport was being a cox which I was persuaded to do as no one else would take it on.

It meant many afternoons spent on the college barge with a very nice lot of oarsmen. Graham Spry a Canadian who was a distinguished man who became Agent General for Saskatchewan, Bruce Halt a south African, Charles Duncan, Butterfield and others.

We spent many hours rowing up and down the river.

In the winter it was bitterly cold coxing. We always had to get out of the way if the Varsity Boat came past. Gradually I learnt to love the job.

It was very exciting in Toggers as we did well and got a number of Bumps
This was celebrated by a 'Bumps Supper'.⁴³

There were good tennis courts on the college playing field off Abingdon road and I used to enjoy playing there.

My tutor when I first went up was David Keir, who afterwards became Master of Balliol. He was very dry and I found him most uninspiring.

He soon went to America in exchange for an American don called Blake. I don't think Blake taught us anything. For one term after that I went to the senior history tutor Jeyes who was very different and I enjoyed going to him.

Finally I went to Arthur Johnson who was a splendid historian but very old. My mother was very fond of him. He used to skate and hunt with her. He usually wore riding breeches.

For a short time I went for special tuition in French from an old man called Theodosias. I think this was to help me the History Previous exam.

I attended a variety of lectures, the best of which were 'Sligger' Urquhart of Balliol, Godfrey Elton of Balliol, Wakeman of BNC, Lee of Magdalen (on Roman law) and Mowat of Corpus.⁴⁴

My brother Tony came up to Univ. a year after me and read Medicine under Dr Ainley-Walker⁴⁵. Tony shared rooms with a nice little man called Donald Bateman⁴⁶ and I often used to go there to hear Tony play the flute and listen to gramophone records.

Through Tony I met a number of his friends.

Apart from Rowing, my great interest was the OTC. I was approached by K S Sandford, a senior man in the college who had fought in the war. He was a rather dry Geologist but I became rather fond of him.

He persuaded me to join the OTC which I gladly did as it provided opportunities for riding. I could not afford to hunt or hire a horse.

I used to attend lectures on gunnery in the evenings at our headquarters in Manor Road.

Our instructor was a funny little foul-mouthed regular sergeant from Glasgow. I liked him and got on well with him but afterwards found out that he was most unpopular in the army which is why he was sent to Oxford!

⁴³ Oxford rowing slang translation: Toggers are eight oared rowing boats; Bump Suppers were celebrations after the team's boat "bumped" the lead boat to take over first place.

⁴⁴ BNC: Brasenose. All these eminent tutors have interesting Google entries

⁴⁵ Ernest Ainley-Walker (1871-1955): elected to a fellowship in University College in 1903, the first 'medical tutor' in any Oxford College. Published a text book of Pathology in 1904. Acting Head of Pathology Department when Ritchie left and on several occasions when Dreyer was absent. Also appointed as first Dean of Oxford Medical School from 1922

⁴⁶ Donald Bateman was later killed in WW2. His younger brother Geoffrey (later Knighted) also at Univ. went on to become an eminent ENT specialist based at St Thomas's and operated on me in 1952!

We used to ride regularly at a big riding school which was somewhere beyond St Clements. We bicycled there.

Sergeant Campbell our instructor was a very good horseman and taught us a lot. I even learnt to vault on and off a cantering horse. I cannot remember where the horses came from. Besides the riding school we often went for rides in the country.

There was one horse which I liked. It had been with the Heythrop Hunt and they had disposed of it as it had bad habits.

It jumped beautifully but sometime developed a habit of rushing up to jumps then refusing.

Because of this one day I think I was thrown about seven times running. I was riding the same horse along the Abingdon road when suddenly it slipped on all four feet at once and crashed sideways onto the ground. I was thrown nearly under a bus which was luckily able to stop.

My social life at Univ. was not very exciting. I had people to breakfast sometimes, among them Jack Evelyn (who was terrified of my scout Albert) and Denning my Chawkers friend. Francis Portal had asked me to be kind to Denning as he was rather lost at Magdalen, however he hardly spoke a word at breakfast and it was not a success.

My Academic career at Oxford was not a success either, and I only achieved a 3rd in History.

Looking back on it I can see that I did not deserve anything higher. I had not the kind of brain that earned 2nd or 1st classes.

Land Agency, The Territorials and London Between the Wars

My Father was very disappointed. He longed for me to go into Antony Gibbs and Sons but I was determined not to do that for two reasons: I should have been sent to South America at once with no undertaking that I should ever return to London. The second reason was that I had brilliant cousins already in the firm and there was no chance that I should ever be a partner.

I did not know what to do and was unhappy.

One thing I thought of was the army. I thought I might get into the Gunners through Oxford. My Father took me to see a don at Queens called Thompson who was a mathematician. He seemed to think there was no chance of my getting a commission as the war was only just over and the army was being cut down.

In desperation my Father sent me to do a course at the Business Training Corporation in Smith Square. There I learnt about accounts but found it boring!

There was one minor incident whilst I was there which impressed itself on my memory. I was walking back from Smith Square when a woman appeared at an upper window of a house in Cowley Street covered in blood and shouting 'Help Murder' and waving to me. I did not know what to do but rushed off to Parliament Street and collected a policeman.

He and I went to the house where luckily we found other police who had rescued the woman and found her assailant a butler who I think had committed suicide.

So I went home and left them to it!

Living in London at that time did have its compensations. We often went to the theatre and used to go the Grosvenor House or Queens Road Ice Rink.

My Parents gave me a small Wolseley Hornet car. Whether it was at this time or later, I am not sure, but I took Hester Burge and I think my cousin Joan to the Aldershot Tattoo. When it was over we returned to the car to find it had a flat tyre. It took us a long time to get it mended and we did not get back to London till 5.00am.

I was still uncertain what I wanted to do, but my mother suggested I might be a Land Agent.

One day my beloved Uncle Hubert (Bishop of Oxford) came to see me and suggested that I should go to the office of his friend Sir Trustram Eve⁴⁷ and this was settled.

I used to walk across the park to the office of J R Eve and Son in the Sanctuary, Westminster. From there I had a wonderful view of Queen Alexandra's funeral in the snow.

Meanwhile I had, at the suggestion of a Wykamists friend Mark Overton, got a commission in the City of London Yeomanry (Rough Riders).

I had to be interviewed by the Colonel Trevor Lawrence. He was a bachelor and lived in South Street Mayfair.

The headquarters of the Rough Riders was in the city in Bunhill Row. The Battery Commander was Lord Limerick who became a great friend (He was then Mark Pery⁴⁸). I commanded the Guard of Honour at his wedding at St George's Eaton Square. A Royal Princess was to be there and we were supposed to "carry swords" when she arrived. However I was chatting to the Colonel and did not recognise the old lady and failed in my duty.

⁴⁷ Sir Herbert Trustram Eve, Likely connection was that he had sent his sons to Winchester while Hubert was headmaster there

⁴⁸ Mark must have been a nick name, he was actually Colonel Edmund Colquhoun Pery, later 5th Earl of Limerick (16 October 1888 - 4 August 1967)

After the service I let the Guard of Honour keep their swords in an arch for too long and their arms began to ache and their swords to droop onto heads of the guests.
Pery invented an emergency ski tip. In Gallipoli he had won the DSO.

He was succeeded as Battery Commander by Ellis Robins, a charming American who became secretary to the Bath Club and later director of the British South Africa Company in Rhodesia. For years I used to go once or twice a week to Bunhill Row in the city for parades. There was often little to do there but to sit in the Battery Office and get to know my fellow officers.

When the General Strike⁴⁹ came Sir Trustram Eve willingly let me leave the office. Major Robins was organising a bureau for enlisting volunteer workers and I joined him there. I sat in one of the magistrates' court-rooms with a number of assorted men and girls making a card index of volunteers and available jobs.

I was sworn in as a special constable and issued with an arm-band and truncheon. Among other helpers at the Guildhall were Hugh Walpole a charming philanthropist, Colonel Freeman, and Lawrence who was the head of Twinings the tea business in the Strand. During the strike I used to walk from Cleveland Gardens to and from the city. My father bought a wireless set on which we used to listen to the news. The only newspaper available was Winston Churchill's "British Gazette" It was amusing to see the buses being driven by volunteers often with a policeman sitting beside them.

A fellow pupil at J R Eves and Son was Geoffrey Youard who became a lifelong friend. He had been going into the army but while at Sandhurst he lost a leg in a motor cycle accident. Sir Trustram Eve's son Douglas an old Wykamist was also friendly. He had an ingenious mind and was most ambitious and keen on the surveyors' institution. Sir Trustram was a rough diamond who could be beastly to people in the office. He was always telephoning Canon Partridge (Later Bishop of Lincoln) who was the secretary to the Church Assembly.

Other people in the office were Wilks and Caton. Caton was partly paralysed. He was a nice old chap. I saw a good deal of Wilks and he used to take me with him when he went valuing. For a short time the wife of Adrian Bell the author worked as a typist in the office.

Also in the office was Charles Hunt, an ambitious and pushy young man. He was very friendly and patronising. I had him to stay at Goddards where he was not popular with my parents. Later on he married a member of the Guildford family and became a well known Chartered Surveyor.

Another man in the office was a rather rough chap who was nice and had a quiet manner. He was called Ackland, and went down well at Goddards.

I had a most interesting time doing valuations of important properties for rates with Wilks. We went to see coal mines in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and the Bristol Waterworks including visiting all their reservoirs. We also visited a large number of big country houses in Kent including Bedgebury and Finchcocks. I helped with a number of farm valuations and attended auctions.

⁴⁹ May 1926

It was most interesting to attend several cases in court and to hear Norman Birkett and other distinguished counsel. Douglas Eve who had married Lord Atkin's daughter Nancy took me to court once to hear Lord Atkin deliver judgement. I could not understand a word of it!

While I was with J R Eve and Sons, Sir Trustram Eve was given the job of valuing the whole of the county of Bedfordshire for Rates.

He put me in charge of Luton District Council area with Geoffrey Youard.

I had a squalid office in Bute Street Luton and lodgings in Dunstable road. Geoffrey Youard shared these. We were well fed but it was not very nice.

I had to bicycle round the area visiting farms and cottages with a big bag of plans on my back, which had to be filled in. People thought I had been playing golf.

One on the farms I went to was Hall Farm, Whipsnade, before it became a Zoo.

When I had done an area, Sir Trustram Eve used to come and visit them. He rode on a cob which I sometimes had to collect from the Station.

I had to walk beside him and always to produce the right plan. It was hard work. He was furious if I took him into a field with no other way out. I had to put all the elm trees on the map as it meant good land.

While I was working in Bedfordshire I often used to go to London in the evenings to work for my exams. My Parents had dinner parties at which Elaine Edgedale and her husband⁵⁰, Francis and Dorothy Cockayne, Uncle Francis and Lord and Lady Atkin came among others.

I went to a terrifying supper with Sir Trustram Eve and Lady Eve who was on the LCC.

Malcolm⁵¹ was there and they talked shop all the evening.

One evening my kind Mother decided to take me to the opera.

Most unfortunately on that evening I found myself working in Hendon. I could not get away in time and arrived at Covent Garden much too late. It was a Wagner opera (not the meistersingers) I am ashamed to say I went fast asleep! I have never forgiven myself. It may have been partly because I was tired after along day's work and the rush from Hendon.

In the evenings I worked in the back drawing room at Cleveland Gardens on a correspondence course for the surveyor's exams. At the same time Tony was working on his medicine. He was very keen on radio and kept it on all the time!

This is as far as Christopher's written record goes - RMG

⁵⁰ neé Elaine Blanche Gibbs, married His Honour Judge Samuel Richards Edgedale QC

⁵¹ Presumably Malcolm Trustram Eve, Sir Hubert's son. In 1963 he was raised to the peerage as Baron Silsoe, of Silsoe in the County of Bedford

APPENDIX

Names Dropping - A list of distinguished or well known people I have met, mostly through my connection with the National Trust.

G M Trevelyan	Sir Harold Abraham
Ralph Vaughan Williams	Lord Hunt
Lord Atkin	Harold Nicholson
Roland Vaughan Williams	Vita Sackville-West
Lord Montgomery	Sir Edward Salisbury
Lord Templar	Sir David Bowes-Lyon
Field Marshall Montgomery-Massingberd	Lady Davidson
Lord Tethund	Sir John Slessor
Julian Corbett	Sir Ellis Robins
Mrs Rudyard Kipling	Lord Limerick
Lady Milner	Charles Ponsonby
Lord Layard	Lord Bathurst
Lord Allenbrooke	Lady Bathurst
Arthur Bryant	Anthony Buxton
Harold Macmillan (correspondence)	Rider Haggard
Sir Charles Mallett	Lilias Rider Haggard
Sir John Salmond	Lord Salisbury
Sir Geoffrey Salmond	The Duke of Devonshire
The Princess Royal	Sir General Gardiner
The Duke of Gloucester	Lord Denning
General Hobart	J. C. Squire
General Fullar	Watson Harris
Mr Pastry (Richard Hearne)	Lord Aldington
General Barrett Stewart	Sir Adrian Boulton
Lord Bridges	C. V. Wedgewood
Lord Crawford	Bishop Talbot
Lord Esher	Mrs Roper
Lord Rosse	Lord Baden Powell
Duke of Grafton	Lord Norwich
Duke of Wellington	Max Beerbohm
Archbishop Fisher	Lord Gibson
Archbishop Coggan	Jim Lees-Milne
Bishop Burge	Lord Methuen
Sir Basil Brooke	John Betjeman
A.J. Webbe	Georgina Masson
Errol Holmes	Rosamund Lehman
Sir George "Gubby" Allen	Hester Chapman
Lord Howick	Anthony Blunt
The Duke of Westminster	Lord de la Warr
Cecily Courtneidge	General Frederick Piles