

MEMOIRS OF HONOR THWAITES  
from 1914 to 1950

*Transcript of recording made August-November 1993 in Canberra*

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*Editorial clarifications are in square brackets*

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*Some memories of Honor Mary Scott Thwaites for those who follow after.*

*1. Childhood in Young, NSW*

My parents, Norman Good and his wife Viola\* [\*pronounced "vee-ola" like the instrument], who was Viola Wettenhall, came directly to live and make their first home in Young, New South Wales after their very beautiful Edwardian style wedding in Melbourne.

I often say that I owe my life to my father twice over. My mother and he were married in December 1913 and I was due to arrive the following September. My mother's pregnancy had severe kidney complications and it came to a choice which my father had to make, either to allow the pregnancy to continue with the very real threat to the life of his beloved young wife or to have the baby aborted. Consulting two other medical advisers didn't help, as their opinions cancelled out, and I know with his deep faith my father turned to God and as a result I arrived, a rather feeble specimen, on the 21st of September 1914 to embark on a life which has been increasingly rich and fruitful over 79 years. For this reason I cannot contemplate the widespread practice of abortion in these days without a personal feeling of deep distress.

The book of my mother's memoirs, "Look to the Mountains", so beautifully put together by my sister, Catherine, has a lot of vivid descriptions and pictures of this period, but just from my own memory I would like to say about my parents: my father was a tall, athletic man with a reserved manner which could occasionally seem quite forbidding, but with a tremendously warm heart and a firm faith in God. My mother, to whom he was utterly devoted, was rather lovely to look at, always artistically dressed, and full of fun and a great enjoyer of life. Books and music and the natural world were her great joys. She had a wonderful whistle and I can still hear her in our garden imitating our favourite bush bird, the grey thrush and his musical variations. It means so much to me now in Canberra that Michael and I have a frequent - a succession of visits from the local thrush community to receive cheese at the back door. They tell us when they are there and when they've eaten they sing their thanks. My mother's spirit is somehow involved: it's been going on for years.

The parents created a delightful small home with long windows opening on to the sunny verandahs and a sleep-out outside their bedroom where we, as young children, used to sometimes have our cots. A sleep-out in the Australian term is a piece of the verandah that is wired in with mosquito-proof gauze where you can sleep in safety and peace. I remember some very beautiful moments in that sleep-out. Against a golden sunset sky the trees silhouetted and a tune being played by someone practising the cornet, it happened to be Schubert's cradle song, and it sounded so lovely I have never forgotten it. It sounded so lovely and it has always lived with me, that with the golden sunset sky, a marvellous combination.

The parents struggled to make a garden. We only had the tanks that stood up beside the roof and collected the rainwater when it fell. It fell on the iron roof making a wonderful sound which I used to love to listen to. I can still see my father carrying 4 gallon kerosene tins of water to the plants that especially needed it, but, of course, this also meant the tremendous

threat and dread of fire as there was no reticulated supply. We had no mod cons, there was nothing really in our day that relates to the so-called standard of living of the present day. The only source of cooking was the wood fire stove, and if you wanted a cup of tea you had to make sure the wood fire stove was burning.

We had a big huge urn on the stove that you turned a little brass tap and got the water from if you wanted hot water. There was a real invention which was the chip heater in the bathroom, and that of course had its own hazards. It was an amazing device in which you lit a little fire with chips and small pieces of wood and they heated a pipe which went across the top of the water. So out of this marvellous invention we used to have a hot bath once a week; otherwise we were mainly cold showers every morning, winter and summer. So, a good hard rub with a towel afterwards was the only way to warm up again. Only the babies had the luxury of a bath, with nice warm water.

Actually we had a very narrow escape with our chip heater. As I said, when a house caught fire it was an absolute horror because there was no way you could put it out with no water. The only thing people did was to throw buckets of their precious rainwater on the next one to stop it catching fire. One day somebody went up in the roof to have a look at some electrical connection or something and they saw all round the flue of the bath heater were charred rafters and there'd developed a crack in that flue and the sparks had been flying out and trying to ignite the roof. So we were very close to losing our lovely little home.

I remember that horror, I remember going to music lessons past a house that had been burnt to the ground and I can still smell that horrible smell of burnt wood and ashes and a terrible feeling that those people had had to lose everything. But my memories are far from horrendous. One of my joys was the pepper trees which used to line Cloete Street [pronounced "Kleety"] which was where we lived. Their little pink peppers always fascinated me and the smell of them, and we had a wattle tree in the back garden and that used to produce these fascinating crackly pods, and everything had its sort of special feel and special smell and special excitement.

Round the sunny side of the garden we had a spare block, for a while anyway - I don't know how long it lasted but while I can remember - and in that block we had kept chickens, hens and chickens, and again the utter thrill of seeing a nice little rusty-coloured hen set on a clutch of eggs and the adorable little yellow chickies coming out one by one. All these things are so simple and yet they are so enduring and I didn't need anything that was man-made really, apart from the food and drink that we were so carefully supplied with.

I did have some toys. I had a beautiful old teddy, a very large one called Edward, and I had a small one, a very dear little small one called Weddub. I also had a doll in my early stages who was made out of a stocking with boot buttons for eyes and I called her Judy. She was very cuddly. And then on my third birthday, I suppose it must be my - almost my most vivid memory, I was called in from the sleep-out into Mother's bedroom and there in the fender, it was a little fireplace there, was this magnificent cradle with a life-size doll made of pink celluloid and about the same size as a baby and dressed in every possible detail like a real baby. So that was Bessy, and she became a very special member of the nursery. The thing I most liked I think was dressing her and undressing her and putting her to bed in her cradle and singing her to sleep.

The Young summers could be quite hot and at times we much needed cooling, but there were not many ways in which that could happen. It's hard these days to imagine no fridges, no swimming pools, not even garden hoses or sprinklers, and certainly no air-conditioning. Shady hats and shady trees and curtains and blinds kept the sun's fiercest rays at bay, and to preserve food there were only two places, or possibly three if you had a cellar right down under the ground, that could help; but the big drip safe with the hessian sides kept wet from an overflow from a gutter round the top and standing where the air could blow through it - that would give a cool enough air to keep the meat and the butter from going off. The more luxurious ice chest, kept cold by a huge, fascinating to me, block of ice brought in by the muscly ice man, that at least was one place where you might set a jelly.

Catherine, my next sister, was born on 6 May 1917, two years and [eight incorrect] four months younger than me, as I was over fond of reminding her when competition began to develop. She was a very pretty child and had an unconscious gift of saying most amusing things, eg, she was terrified, during the visit of a circus passing our house to the spare block opposite, that "the elephant might peck her". She also had an iron will, and when I was unable to get my own way I frequently lost my temper, so squabbles became a part of the scene.

One vivid memory is sitting opposite her across the small Montessori table that Mother had had specially made and hurling a spoonful of mashed potato, which landed neatly on the middle of her forehead to the startled surprise of both of us. We were always dressed alike, pink and blue respectively, very beautiful clothes made by our local friend and dressmaker, Miss Halstead, known as "Hal". She was an enormous person, an enormous friend and did a great deal to help me with my dolls. I remember her efforts with mine, dressing them so beautifully, and I think she was responsible for the baby clothes of this Bessy.

Catherine and I, being dressed alike, we also went everywhere together as an inseparable pigeon pair, the Honor and Catherine syndrome. In hindsight I realise that bracketing children is a great mistake and is bound to create tensions that more individual treatment might avoid. We were both christened at home by Mr Steel, a Presbyterian minister and Father's friend. Their little daughter, June, became our first and constant playmate, and remains a friend with us both, up to the present day. Another most vivid memory is the end of World War I. It was called the Armistice and it happened in November 1918.

Just across from our house was Mr Phillips' timber yard. I used to love the sleepy whine of the saw, as it cut wood during the day, and there was also a whistle which notified the workers that it was lunch time - a steam whistle. Everything went by steam, but on Armistice night everybody went wild with joy and Mr Phillips stoked up his steam whistle so hard until it blew its top and blew without pause all night. I remember this vividly, but nobody minded in the general delirium, and for Mother the end of the war brought unbelievable relief as my father had been in camp in Victoria, waiting to be sent abroad to the front. Now, she was able to travel joyfully down and join him and come back with him in literally a cloud of dust, as there were no made roads, in a little single seater French Vermorel car, canary yellow.

Auntie Floie, Mother's older sister, came in from her station home, Wadenhoe [pronounced "Woddenhoe"], about 25 miles from Young to look after us while Mother was down in Melbourne, or to help the nurse or whoever it was - and that is another memory: curtains drawn, a very hot day and Auntie Floie saying, as there was the sound of a little rattling engine in the distance, "Hark, hark!" They were on their way home. We were fortunate in

having two devoted aunts. My father's sister [Irene] used to come from wherever they were living at the time, it might be Western Australia or somewhere, and stay with us.

She came, particularly after Catherine was born, to help Mother, and she was a most creative person, and when we had the new night nursery built she did some lovely curtains for our day nursery, which had blackbirds, just simply perfect blackbird shapes cut out of black material and applied on to the buff-coloured curtains. I always remember. It's amazing what sticks in children's memories. And she also taught me to sew and she taught me to sing. She was very musical and played the piano and had a lovely book of children's songs which we learnt with great joy.

So we were very fortunate in all our grown up surroundings and very soon after that, I'd say two years or so, we started school. Perhaps because of her bush childhood, Mother (see "Look to the Mountains") was socially very diffident, added to which she was raised in the class system. Her life after marriage revolved around her home which was a delightful creation, and we constantly had people to stay and entertain; but she shrank from being part of the local community which she had no previous contact with and maybe this was why I didn't go to the local school, but was taught most beautifully by our friend, Tante - Alice Kitchen, Dr Dowling, my father's partner's sister-in-law. I have the delightful memories of padding down with my bare feet( we didn't wear shoes except in the mornings) the path of Cloete Street, down to Dr Dowling's house where Tante would be waiting for us, having her morning tea with black tea and lemon and a ginger nut - a wonderful thing, I thought, and which I have always been addicted to since. She gave us lessons in pot-hooks and writing and reading and French. I will never forget the intoxication of my first story. It went thus:

*A picnic, yes, let us go. Tell Dan to bring the van. His cap is on the tap. What is that bird? It is a tom tit.*

This to me was the most entrancing piece of writing, and I took it home and I followed Mother all over the house trying to read it out again and again, a little puzzled that she became rather bored. But with that small beginning there was no stopping me and I became a voracious reader, probably ruined my sight by reading with the first light of the morning in bed the very fine print of old books of Grimm's and Hans Andersen's fairy tales and the Arabian Nights and my great love of all, the Swiss Family Robinson in its original form. I devoured that about seven times over; I just couldn't have enough of this marvellous experience of finding everything you needed on trees in a desert island.

Other little memories are rosemary hedges in the local park, running my hand along it and the wallabies that came and looked at us with their soulful eyes.

Music lessons: I began music at quite an early stage, I think it was five, with Miss Starr who was a very enthusiastic teacher and a devout Methodist and as a result I was put on stage at the Methodist Fair at the age of seven to play quite a trippy little thing called the Spinning Fairies. I remember taking it all quite for granted although my mother was a palpitating mass of nerves as I went up on the platform. All I can remember is - a picture of the local Methodist minister in his black suit, it must have been another of those hot days, looking very wet; but the concert went off without mishap.

So, life had its small events but at very scattered intervals because it was an extremely quiet one. Catherine and I played around in our little garden. We had two make-up families, very original, Mary and John Jones and Margerie and Jenny Smith, and we talked with them and played with them and made up stories about what we were doing together.

But life was full of just observation, taking in what's around you and making things up, quite a different life from the input that most children have these days. Going about in bare feet also had its hazards. I remember one very salutary incident. I was down with the Dowlings and Tante in their kitchen watching them ice a cake, and on the edge of the table was most beguiling lump of icing sugar. So, I snuck it into my mouth and dashed out the back door, not at all subtle, ran along the garden path and alas my big toe came in contact with the sharp edge of a tile which was bordering one of the beds. To my great humiliation I was bellowing with pain and shock, and at the same time the beautiful icing sugar was running down out of the corners of my mouth, having me thoroughly exposed in my crime.

Our only brother, Robert Roland, arrived in October 1919. Tante joined in the general rejoicing at the arrival of a son and heir and used to inquire for him on her visits, "The light of the home, where is the light of the home?" I thought this was a quaint phrase.

Then two years later poor Mother faced another nightmare. Father contracted typhoid fever, and she was already pregnant with Jan and the situation was terribly serious. He nearly died in the local hospital but fortunately pulled through without any antibiotics, which must have been particularly wonderful nursing. I remember offering my hand to him, to this strange, pale, black-bearded man, when taken to visit him in hospital. Fortunately, he thought it was amusing. Jan arrived safely the next month, in January 1922, and in the course of those next months the family acquired a semi-permanent member in the shape of the faithful and irascible nurse, Nursie Pursie, always known as Pursie, who stayed on in various capacities in the family for about 25 years.

Our touches with the bush came mainly through Wadenhoe which was the lovely little station home of Auntie Floie and Uncle Jim Lempriere and our two cousins, William and Holford [and] a pony, Creamy. She was very quiet and I never lost the desire to ride ponies. But also, Father had acquired a little hobby farm and we used to go out there for picnics and I remember vividly the lichen covered grey rocks which are so the same as we have here in Canberra and little green carrot ferns growing up in the crevices of the rocks. There was always a deep love of the bush and a deep response to it.

However, at the end of 1922 my parents finally decided to make a move back to Victoria. My mother was ecstatic at the prospect of bowls of flowers grown from a free-flowing water supply, and they obviously had to do something about our education. Mother cutting an apple into four quarters would no longer suffice for maths! When the announcement was made I ran and put my head down on an old trunk and cried my eyes out. Catherine, just over five, greatly wondering, followed suit. But I did love my home. Two little poems I wrote at the time may conjure it up and the fairy populated world we inhabited. Here's the first one:

*Heaven's gift will soon arise, / Brighten up the clouded skies  
Then the sunbeams will dance down / On the happy country town.*

The next one (with original spelling):



*The sun is now rising, / And fiaries go off to there bed's  
The Children awaking / And flowers lifting there heads.*

A little old exercise book with these poems written out in a childish script is still in my desk. [inaudible...] coloured our lives at this stage. We had so much to feed upon, beautifully illustrated children's books were making their appearance and the Australian artist Ida Rentoul was coming into her own with her deliciously fine black and white drawings as they were at that stage. She later went into colour. May Gibbs, a consummate artist, produced the Gumnut babies, Snugglepot and Cuddlepie and their breathtaking adventures in the Australian bush. These were a wonderful complement to the very English adventures of Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit, Benjamin Bunny and the rest. It made a marvellous array of characters.

Then, of course, there was Father Christmas: his visits gave Christmas Eve a tingly magic. We never saw him, of course, but the evidence of his presence was seen next morning in the crackly pillow cases and stockings full of exciting things. The tooth fairy mysteriously carried away our milk teeth. We left them under a stone in the garden and found in the morning a large copper penny which would probably have taken a whole tribe of such gauzy creatures to shift the stuff.

But such sceptical thoughts never crossed my mind. Indeed, scepticism didn't exist. For example, I was once told that if you could put salt on a sparrow's tail you could catch him and I spent quite considerable time stalking sparrows in the back garden with a little bit of salt in my hot hand. We went regularly to the local Presbyterian Church where my father was an elder, but I found the Bible stories and songs we had at home a lot more interesting. Mother was wonderful at reading aloud to us and also at that time poems began to appear like "The Child's Garden of Verse". So words and their rhythm were early instilled into our minds and hearts. But now, the die was cast and we were to spend the rest of our youth in Victoria.

#### TAPE 1 Side B

All these special events that come along in children's lives... birthday parties... the annual show was a tremendous joy to me, the sound of the band, I could never keep my feet still. And then there was this merry-go-round, the most marvellous creation for children, for me anyway. Floating up and down on the horses and going round and round to the music was just sheer heaven. Also there was the sort of down sides, for instance, measles and things like that. I got measles at a very early age but, having everything around me sterilised since the day I was born, I was a horribly fastidious child and I remember being quite repelled at the idea of picking up a piece of bread and butter with my spotty hands. I thought the spots might come off on it.

I also remember at an early stage playing the interesting patient, when some medico tried my pulse and I thought I would make myself more interesting by making my hand shake. These things that go on in the life of a child, nobody really suspects I think sometimes. When you heard grown ups talking about things - I remember the tragedy of a broken engagement and the person concerned was a very dear friend of ours but somehow in my memory it's all mixed up with hand embroidered camisoles which were part of her trousseau and I don't think for a minute anyone or very few people now know what a camisole is but it was a piece of



ladies underwear which came in before the invention of brassieres. So you can see how far back I remember.

Then there was the excitement of seaside holidays, of an early one to Cronulla, sitting on the edge of the waves in my thick woollen neck to knee bathing gown, as it was called, fascinated by bringing up handfuls of sand full of wonderful coloured little shells. There are very few left now on our coasts but in those times the pools on the edge of the sea were all thick with these beautiful little coloured things, and staying with June Steel and her remarkable aunts who lived at Nowra, at the mouth of the Shoalhaven River. The journey there across the mountain, down past Kangaroo Valley, was an absolute adventure, especially in those days with cars not tremendously far developed and the road certainly not made - and picking yellow banksias from the trees, not looking at all sinister as our characters in May Gibbs were. Managing the car on the steep road was a really skilful thing for my father, and the first sight and smell of the sea intoxicating for inland children, and I am sure no-one understands just how sharply that different smell used to hit us at that time. At the old home Marulan where June lived with her aunts (see her very beautiful book, "The Women of Marulan") they were replacing the wallpaper and I remember appreciating the gusto with which one of these aunts was stripping off the old, and her statement of how delightful it felt to be destructive with a good reason.

I do not remember at any stage in my early youth having heard anyone mention an Aborigine, and yet here we were in Young on the tribal lands of the great tribe that stretched right through New South Wales. The Chinese also had received terrible treatment in that area, in fact, the name of the town was changed from Lambing Flat to Young because there'd been a hideous racial reaction to these poor, hardworking people who had scraped together enough to come out to this country and earn from hard labour in the mines or market gardens and to send their cash back to their families in China.

Our contact with a Chinese was very much happier because Sam Hop was our Chinese greengrocer. He used to come round with his cart and his very fat, well fed little pony and sell us vegetables at the gate. Such an amiable person and so fond of children, how could we be [inaudible]... Other prejudices, as I remember, were a very marked anti-Catholicism. In fact, in some cases, being anti-Catholic was almost the religion of Protestants. It made us feel that the priest, the local priest and his nuns were very odd people indeed. But Father was an honorary at the Sacred Heart Hospital. He used to go and look after people in their public hospital and he could never deny the amazing virtue and beauty of the nuns and the nurses and how they treated him and the patients and everybody else.

All our food was delivered to the door and the most dramatic one was the grocer; the boy always arrived in the morning with his hat on the back of his head and a pencil behind his ear prepared to take Mother's order. That duly given, it would be delivered in the course of the afternoon by the grocer in his spanking spring cart. He would stand up driving the horse with his white apron flapping in the breeze. I loved watching him. Another visitor, not quite so salubrious, was the night man as - with no water - we had no sewerage and everyone had their little house at the back, with its bin underneath a hole where you sat. The night man always called in the middle of the night and you would hear this rather exciting rattling of the bins as he exchanged them and took them off. Seeing him on the road in the day was a rarity but quite an event. These are just ideas for people to realise how we lived in those days. There was this advantage of having your food brought to the house and there certainly were no supermarkets,

everything was up on the shelf behind the counter in the grocer's shop. They didn't have everything for people just to look at and choose.

But of course, the great revolution in the history of Young happened after we left. They were talking about it just before we went, saying that the exciting development was the building of the Burrinjuck Dam. That would mean that Young would at last be connected with a permanent water supply. People who talk about Young and they say "Oh, yes, what a pretty town and the cherry orchards and the Olympic Pool" and all these things, they only became possible after the Burrinjuck Dam was built.

I call this period of my life the age of innocence. A serpent can penetrate even a child's garden of Eden. There were two instances, one from outside and the other from my own budding human nature.

We were extraordinarily protected from outside influences. In addition to not attending school there was no TV or radio and I'm sure I had never set eyes on a rude picture. So what I experienced in my fantasies would only have come from me. I had two habitual fantasies which after the light was turned out I resorted to, according to the mood. I was sufficiently aware to know they would not be the thing to talk to Mother about particularly. The one which I can only describe as a child's pornography - I was six to seven at the time - involved sections of human anatomy being displayed on hooks in the butcher's shop. I realise now they were all female, as I had never seen a naked male, but the spectacle gave me a guilty glow. I would say I probably grew out of pornography at that stage, as it has never had any attraction for me since. The second fantasy was my glittering palace, with everything to delight a little materialist's heart, gold backed hairbrushes being one of the items I remember. The interesting feature was it was surrounded by an impenetrable steel wall.

Outside came something I think I should mention, as it is too tragically relevant to the present day. While our parents were in the final throes of the move to Melbourne a couple they knew offered to look after us, Catherine and me, on their farm not far away. The wife had a new baby which my father had probably delivered. The husband took me out for a ride sitting in front of him on his saddle. I was just eight years old at the time. To my astonishment I felt his horny hand inside my pants and exploring between my legs. That is all I can remember. I found it most uncomfortable and wriggled in protest, but I don't remember saying anything about it, either to him or to my parents. It does help however to begin to understand the terrible predicament in these days of a growing number of children, assaulted and violated by their natural protectors, fathers, brothers, uncles, friends whom they long to be able to love and trust.

[The rest of tape 1 belongs later in the narrative so is omitted here.]

## TAPE 2

### *2. Move to Geelong, Victoria*

My youngest sister, Esther, was born in Melbourne during the six months that we rented a house in Caulfield and got to know our relations Uncle Jack [RNSG's uncle Dr John King Scott had a medical practice in East Malvern] and Aunt Isobel who lived not far away. It was in Uncle Jack's house that my defective sight was discovered. This was considered quite a

disaster, I think, for my parents and my father took me to a specialist friend in the city and sure enough I was short sighted. Father was obviously upset but he took me to give me a beautiful fruit cup, as a sort of a compensation, I suppose. Funnily enough, this attitude to a child having to wear glasses was quite different in those days and I inherited - or absorbed, rather, a sort of shame about it which became quite a thing for my early next years, especially when boys teased me and called me "goggles" and so on.

Apart from that life went on in its normal way until we found our next home which was in Geelong. A wonderful Victorian house, two storey, with iron lace balconies and huge verandahs all the way round and a front door that had lead lights in it. As we used to rush off to school and slam the door I can still see my father shudder with the sound, that he could easily visualise all that beautiful coloured glass ending up on the tiled floor of the hall. The house was built on quite a grand scale with a huge hall which would accommodate his oars and an enormous staircase of polished wood banisters which was our Saturday morning job to dust and polish.

By 1924 however we were launched into the Hermitage for permanent education for the next years. I quite enjoyed school. I learnt to play tennis and all that sort of thing but I think I was probably put in a class too low for me because they took the standard of my mathematics as a criterion. The result was that I sailed up the school as top of the form without any worries and it became quite monotonous really. School itself was tolerable. I mean, we had good little friends. My friends were mainly boarders and I remember in my second year, when I was aged 10, I made great friends with a girl called Elizabeth Mills who came from Tasmania.

I can remember very much my desolation at the beginning of the next year to find that she'd vanished, been taken away and sent to a more suitable school. I'm afraid the Hermitage was not at its height when we were there. Miss Morres had been an absolutely outstanding headmistress but her powers were failing a little and we used to have a lot of storms in tea cups. My schooling was fairly conventional. It was sport and work and that was about it. However, holidays were the thing. We were so lucky, we had so many wonderful places to go to.

All our relations seemed to live in the country and one after another they would invite us for the holidays and our supremely desirable resort was Glen Holford, Mother's old home [see "Look to the Mountains"], where her sister Aunty Floie was now hostess and ran a very beautiful establishment. We were taught all the graces. We went out in the bush in our jodhpurs and felt very happily then but when the evening came we came in and changed into little evening sort of dresses and lived a civilised life for the rest of the day. They had a huge fireplace, blazing logs, and I remember most vividly lying on my tummy on the sheepskin rug in front of the fire reading "Deerfoot in the Prairies" while William, the older of my cousins, performed on the pianola.

Uncle Jim [Lempriere] was a marvellous character. Glen Holford was still being run as an orchard to a certain degree and he used to bring down all the coddling-mothy apples, handfulls of them, on the lovely sunny north verandah and he'd get out all the bad stuff and feed us the rest. He was a dear man and we loved him and we loved Aunty Floie and we used to climb the mountain and find tracks and help with burning off and all the things that children do in the bush, and gather, search for the special wild flowers in the Spring.

Then there was Mount Buninyong where my father had spent quite a time in his youth, after his father had died and Granny went back to her own home; it was where she had grown up. It was about 10 miles from Ballarat. A very imposing Scottish mansion which her parents had been able to build when they'd made their money through the wool boom in the 1870s. It had the most superb garden, it went on for acres with huge well grown trees and one of the notable things about staying there was that I actually learned to ride a bicycle, rather stimulated by the fact that the paths were bounded by holly hedges. So, you just had to stay on. We also had a croquet lawn and our two cousins, Kathleen and John Scott, whose home it was then, and Catherine and I used to play croquet. I do not know what it is about that game but it seems to fray tempers. I remember at one stage we were pretty well intercepted into a hand to hand battle with four croquet mallets.

Barwon Hills, where Mother's brother, Uncle Allan, lived was 20 miles from Geelong and we used to have lovely times there. They were far from well off, in fact poor Uncle went bankrupt in the depression. He was an absolutely marvellous horseman and he had several lovely ponies. I never enjoyed riding so much as under his tuition on his lovely ponies. In those days, again, you realise how simple our pleasures were. We had enormous fun just playing cricket with an empty kerosene tin and an old bat and ball. One of the creative things that was going on, on the place, was the making of a dam. In those days there was no mechanism, it was all done by these wonderful old draught horses pulling scoops of earth out and piling it up on the bank. When the dam was finally finished it was filled with water, an extraordinary colour, a sort of milky reddish colour, and we used to plunge in this and have wonderful swims.

Aunty Dawdie, as we called her, was one of Mother's oldest friends whom Uncle Allan had married. She was an ideal hostess for young people. With four sons of her own she had great liberality. I remember wash-ups with plates being thrown from one to another, always safely caught, but she just went on peacefully doing what she was doing and ignored the antics of her young. Incidentally, I don't remember anything ever tasting so wonderful as puffed rice with the cream that came from their cow which we used to have for breakfast.

Another important factor in our life in Geelong, especially in its holiday aspects, were the Stuart Gray family. They were an interesting family. Stuart Gray had lost his wife and left with two little girls, much the same age as Catherine and myself, and his second wife, Vera Austin, was the most wonderful stepmother to them - used to do everything possible to make their life full and creative. Unfortunately the elder girl, whether it was due to the shock of the mother's death or whatever, lost every hair on her body and they never came back. So, she had to wear a wig. Well, in those days I don't think she even wore a wig. She wore a hat, one of those close fitting little stitched, black stitched hat. In order to her not to feel peculiar her younger sister had to wear it too so they always appeared in these black stitched hats with elastic under the chin, but as children you don't take a great deal of notice of these things and it was what we did together that was so interesting.

They had a lovely seaside house at Torquay and we used to go and stay with them and had marvellous times on the beach with - looking for shells. Margaret, the elder girl, "Garg" as we called her, was very good at spotting cowries and in those days there was a lovely selection of shells kept - washed up amongst the rocks and into the rock pools. It was a very profitable occupation looking for them, and you always had lovely ones that you could find, lovely coloured ones and curly ones and the greatest thrill of all was the nautilus, the snowy white

nautilus. We found one, once, and that was a red letter day. It is a romantic shell which sails along the waves and Ida Rentoul has done some beautiful drawings of them. Also the Grays had a little hobby farm and we used to go out there and ride the ponies and get that nice typical country smell of leather and stables and sleepy blow-flies buzzing about. So, we were terribly fortunate, really, and of course the Grays gave the first coming out or not really coming out, it was the first teenage hop which Catherine and I went to.

My father was medical officer now at Geelong Grammar and used to go out to the school every morning at 9 and we were always included in great events, sports days and special matches and concerts and plays and so on. So, that was quite an interesting aspect of our lives. But we didn't get to know Geelong Grammar boys much. They were rather shut away in a segregated boarding school.

[NB The following passage, until "... good experience to be part of it" is also recorded at the end of Tape 1.]

The Geelong College boys were much more immediate and we used to go down to St George's Church, which was the big Presbyterian Church, on Sunday mornings and we would sit in the transept and have a great view along all the rows of College boys who occupied the front of the body of the church. This was particularly exciting for me with my first love when I suddenly got a great crush on one of the friends of my cousins at Barwon Hills. It was returned, but because of the incredible inhibition in those days of having anything to do with boys it never actually had much chance to flower because my cousins would bring down a note from him on Sundays and try to pass it to me and although I was longing to read it I refused to take it. Extraordinary difference, isn't it, now when little girls ring up the boys they fancy.

However, that was all part of life and at the same time I was not exempt from having a crush on a senior girl at school. She was very beautiful, a sixth form girl, a wonderful sport and I lost my heart to her. I used to go and pick a rose in the garden to take it to her. She had quite a following, I think, because she would be very gracious and receive the rose and then put it up in her locker and I managed to see there was something - some water there where she put others of the same kind. So, I know what it's like to have a crush on somebody of the same sex and I know what it's like to be very ridiculously withdrawn from others.

The Geelong College cousins used to come down every Sunday afternoon from boarding school. The attractions of a nice afternoon tea had no doubt quite a lot to do with it but also I think they really enjoyed coming to our home. Mother kept us all entertained with reading aloud, books she wasn't madly keen on even such as Dr Dolittle but she knew we loved them. But when more boisterous games started on the back lawn, in which Catherine joined uninhibitedly, I used to stay inside and watch from a distance, I suppose because of my rotten glasses. However, at the age of 16 I decided I was just not going to wear them any more and Father took me to his friend, the oculist, who said, "Well, if you can manage without them that's all right and probably by the ripe age of 48, you will have normal sight."

So, I proceeded no longer inhibited and proceeded also to enjoy life a lot more in sport and other ways. Sports days on the baseball oval were always festive occasions and we were allowed to remove our heavy navy blue tweed tunics and operated in bloomers and long black stockings. This was quite revolutionary in those days. One of the College boys who lived



opposite always had friends on his balcony for these occasions. I was no sprinter but I did enjoy things like the potato race and the sack race and three legged race and Siamese race and all the ones that we did and of course the baseball throw.

Baseball became my passion. I longed to get into the team, which I did in my third last year. Even the sound of the ball connecting with the bat used to give me a slight thrill. At the end of three years being in the team became a little bit monotonous. We used to go to Melbourne to play MLC and PLC and Melbourne Grammar. We belonged to the same group. That was always exciting and we'd stop in Melbourne at Spencer Street [inaudible...] mistress came up with coffee and hot buttered raisin toast so that was always worth having. Then we would go, probably to the Glenferrie oval which was the place where we'd play. I wasn't madly good but I held my place in the team and it was a good experience to be part of it.

My friend, Catherine Parsons, who also lived in Geelong and our mothers were friends, was a natural sport in every way and she became team captain, not only of the baseball but of the tennis, so we ran through our school life together. Our headmistress, Elsie Morres, was a woman of real faith, and our school was very much based on that. We had assemblies every morning which included a short religious service with Bible readings done by the prefects and so on. Her scripture lessons were always worth listening to, and I learnt quite a lot about the Bible and the background of Christianity during my years in school.

I had two close encounters with her, one in my second year in school. In a nasty little bullying session, teasing one rather unpopular girl in our form, it was a rainy afternoon and we were finding something to entertain ourselves with, I suppose. This child survived the ploy and went home and we thought no more about it. Next morning, in assembly. Miss Morres said, "Will the lower fourth please remain behind." So, all our class remained when the rest of the school filed out. She then proceeded to say, "Who was involved in throwing Peggy's umbrella on the roof?"

I thought: "This lets me out, I was only trying to hook it over the rafters." However a robust young Jewish girl beside me looked down, having stood up and said, "You were in it." I felt very ashamed of myself and got to my feet. When I went home I must've told the family about this and they were horrified, not so much at the nasty little bullying bit but that I'd been so slow in owning up, so they took action and said I must go and see the Headmistress the next morning, on my own, and apologise. I was 10 to 11 at the time, I think. So, the next morning - I always remember what a cold morning it was - I dragged myself up the hill to the school (we lived next door) and dragged myself into her study.

I shall never forget the reception I had, because having got that far I just burst into tears and said, "I didn't mean to be sneaky." Whereupon Miss Morres pulled me down on the settee beside her and put my cold hands inside her warm ones and told me that she was very glad that I had come to apologise. The supplement was that those of us involved were given the rather harmless punishment of walking round the sports oval at recess instead of playing. The little victim was rather making up to our teacher, Miss King. Miss King was very icy. "I don't like telltales" she said. Miss King, she was so fair.

My second close contact with Miss Morres was much later - my third last year when I failed intermediate algebra which in those days was a prerequisite for matric as being my only maths. Miss Morres took me on in the summer holidays, gave me special tutoring. She was

extremely good at mathematics, apparently. I got through the supplementary exam, to everybody's great relief.

### *3. A Chinese friendship*

When I was about 14 we had one of those visits from missionaries which were a fairly frequent occurrence, addressing our assembly as they went on deputation. This was a very striking tall lady who wore a large hat, Miss Bendelack [Gertrude Bendelack MA, Dip Ed]. She told us about her school in Canton - daughters of Chinese. When she had finished her talk she said, "Would any of you girls like a penfriend?" I immediately applied, and that began a rather wonderful story. This little girl, her name was Mok Ue Oi, started sending me the most beautiful letters, exquisitely printed in perfect English. I, of course, replied in English as I had no Chinese, and we would send each other photos and little presents, and the presents she sent me were fascinating, very often beautiful little bits of carved ivory, delicately done in their Chinese skills.

I always remember the parcels had a special scent about them, just like all things you find in China. It has - you could almost tell when you were in China by the scent of things. And we had photos and we became really good friends on this basis, part of each other's lives almost. But alas when I left school, 1932/3, the war - the Japanese war - had started in China and all these little letters came to an end. Of course the other reason was that Mok Ue Oi - although she always wanted me to call her Anita, she liked to have an English name - had also left school and there was no one to help her with her English letters. So, March 1933 was the last time I heard from her.

That is not the end of the story and I will put it in here because it all belongs together. Years and years afterwards, in fact 40 years afterwards, Michael and I were travelling in Hong Kong and we stayed with our friends, the Buntons, and next door was Dr Katie Woo, a retired Chinese headmistress. It just occurred to me to see, if by any chance, there was any trace of my friend and her family, after all the traumas that China had been going through, including the Cultural Revolution which was roaring at that time. I left it with them and came back to Canberra where we had begun to live and to my amazement six months later I had a letter to say that they had discovered a sister of Mok Ue Oi who lived in Hong Kong. And this lady had told them that she was alive, living in Canton and had eight grandchildren. Amazing discovery.

So, I immediately sent off what I considered a rather discreet little note to the sister, and said if she thought it was wise, because of course foreigners were far from welcome in China at that time, if she thought it was wise could she send a note to Anita and just ask her - just tell her that I was thinking of her and give her my address. To my astonishment a letter came almost in two weeks, directly back from Canton and written in a flowing English hand. Very mysterious. She told me that her husband had helped her with the letter, that she had never had a job, that her little grandson, Alex, was very musical and was learning the piano.

Heavens, we thought, she must have married a communist cadre, with all these seeming privileges. However, we continued on a sort of domestic to and fro, photos and little good wishes and so on, and then Richard became the ABC correspondent in Peking [1978]. This now meant that he was able to invite us to China without us having to go in a package tour and we would have a chance to visit her. David Bunton in Hong Kong was fluent in



Cantonese so he was a great go-between and he would ring their number. They had what they call a call station, a group station or something, anyway it was one telephone for a whole group of houses, and it would have a very alert granny watching what was happening when people were using the phone.

But I learnt that her husband's name was To Nam - not only that, but he was the one who was writing the English. She had forgotten all her English, but he was a marvellous bridge. So, with all the negotiations going between To Nam and Canton and David Bunton in Hong Kong and Richard in Peking it finally was arranged that we would go into China via Canton, and visit them on our way. Seemed almost too good to be true. So, we went in by the train, with Richard, and arrived at Canton Station. Things were still very restricted for those who were not in favour with the government.

We found a little group of Cantonese, a family group, about seven of them, Mok Ue Oi and her husband and her son and daughter-in-law and grandson and two or three other daughters and children and it was absolutely amazing - this whole group, not on the platform but outside, waiting to welcome us to China. This was 1979 and when we last wrote to each other, before we had rediscovered each other, was 1933. Then followed the most moving experience, as we visited them in their home. Far from being a privileged cadre To Nam had been persecuted in the anti-rightist movement [1957], sent out to the rice fields to do prison labour for two years but he had always kept up his English. He belonged to a little secret group that used to meet and keep up their English. He was a graduate of Shanghai University and he was quite determined not to lose his education.

We stayed at one of the rather grim Russian-built hotels in Canton and then we couldn't have them there because they would be incriminated. So they had to wait for us and we took a taxi over to their home. Their home was the attic of a pair of terrace houses that they had once owned. One house had been taken over completely and the house they lived in had been filled with two other families on the lower floors and they had been allowed to remain in the attic, which didn't even have a lined ceiling. You could see the cracks.

They had also been robbed, twice over, first by being put out of their own home and secondly the neighbours, who were probably dedicated Communist spies, reported on them and they had a visit from the Red Guards who took what remained of their pictures and books, including a book that To Nam had written about the harmonica. He was very musical and had a harmonica band and then he'd written this book about the science of playing the harmonica. So, that went. They had practically nothing. All that there was in the room was a calendar and I can still see the date on it, September 7, and a little rather chipped table in the middle, but with a nice lace cloth over it. A marble slab on one side with an electric fan playing.

On the other side of the room, up against the wall, a most remarkable piece of furniture. It was the shape of a piano, and it had a cotton cloth over it but the keys were there and this musical grandson, who by this time was 13, sat down and played immediately Chopin's minute waltz and some Hungarian dance. We were staggered, we couldn't wait to understand how they got this piece of - how they got this piano. It appears, after the raids of the Red Guards had died down, Wong Ling, her oldest son, whose education was cut short at the age of 18, had found, in a junkyard, [a] completely wrecked piano.

He looked at this thing and he thought, "Now, I think I can do something with that", and he dragged it, secretly, up to their place, worked on it and brilliantly got it to the point where it was in tune. It had very little tone but the tune was there and accurate, the notes were all there, and he continued his son's musical education. Not only his son but I think he probably earned a little bit by teaching other children, but it was very, very secret. His very capable wife worked in a clothing factory and we had brought with us some pieces of material, we also brought some music books because having heard what this child was learning I took some of the old books that our children had had when learning.

We also took a sheet music of *Waltzing Matilda* and Michael had his poems which he showed to To Nam and immediately To Nam seized the book and was reading it and commenting on it with great enthusiasm. So, it was an amazing encounter with people who had lost, really, everything, but remained un-bitter and quite determined to remain civilised people. We had a lovely time with them. With some of the money that the government had given them as minimal compensation for their losses they were able to spend that feasting us at a restaurant on the side of the lake.

It was a most amazing meal. I'm not terribly keen on fish in its usual forms, but in this amazingly gastronomic treat we had five kinds of fish cooked in five different ways, and as this family gathered round this huge round table and we all shared the lovely dishes it was a marvellous experience and I enjoyed every mouthful. I didn't leave a thing. The children were there as well, the babies, the grandchildren, and Richard produced a tin of Coke for young Alex whose eyes absolutely popped, he was absolutely thrilled to have this. Then in the evening Richard gave a return banquet at another famous restaurant in Canton, also in a lovely lake and tree setting. So, we had that party as well, two in a day.

The waitresses came round when we started passing photos round the table and were absolutely fascinated with these pictures of western characters and their families. On our return, three weeks later, from Peking they invited us to a musical evening. This was an absolutely memorable occasion. In the attic, being in the evening, it was very dimly lit. They could only afford nine inches of fluorescent lighting above the piano so the rest of the room was virtually in shadow. They had invited to meet us an opera singer from Hankow who had been trained in western classical opera and a violinist who we discovered was a cousin of Penelope's musical colleague in Kingston-on-Thames.

The various gifts that we had left behind on our first visit had been put fully to use. Anita was wearing a new coloured blouse from the material which Mak May Lan, her daughter-in-law, had made for her. To Nam had translated one of Michael's poems, "Forestry", into Chinese and this had been set to music by his son, Wong Ling, an original composition exquisitely annotated. He had also invited an artist friend to paint a special cover for this piece illustrating the theme of "when night the blackbird perches". We were touched to see, that it was all done on materials that had been recycled. They had managed to steam off this very nice piece of paper from something else and the other thing was that Alex had learnt *Waltzing Matilda* by heart and the opera friend then proceeded to render it in Chinese. It was quite amazing. I wished and wished that I had had a tape then.

When we flew into Canton Airport from Peking our friends had struggled out by bus to meet us there, this was on this second visit, but alas once again the unhelpful authorities came into the picture. We wanted to go back with them on the bus. "Oh no, foreigners are not allowed to

travel on the bus." We had to go by taxi. So, there they were stranded, having to go all the way back on the bus. But fortunately our travelling companion was Gary Woodard, at that time Australian Ambassador to Peking, and we had got to know him there through Richard. He said, "That's all right, don't worry, I'll take them in in my official car." A delightful gesture and very typical. They saw us off at the station back to Hong Kong next morning, young Alex helping with the bags. We wondered if we would ever see them again but we did. But we had to wait another six years.

A few little notes on this might be in order, giving the background of my friend and her family. Her father, the Reverend Mok, was an Anglican minister under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society in Canton. His church was called the Church of Our Saviour.

Next door was an absolutely huge house which was apparently the normal thing for the incumbent minister to inhabit and Mok Ue Oi would have lived there all her life. She was the ninth child of a large family. Because of his identity in the CMS and the fact that he later became the first Chinese bishop it's obvious that it was easier to trace back that family through our Christian network in Hong Kong. As for Dr Katie Woo, she had said when she heard that Miss Bendelack was the teacher and the missionary who had introduced us originally, it was an extraordinary coincidence because she said, "Oh, that lady was my inspiration and helped me to become a teacher." She was much younger of course.

These are all interesting little connections in the background of this story. Fortunately for Mok Ue Oi's father, he died before the most violent phase of the communist takeover happened and thereby escaped much suffering, but his family were all scattered and that is why we had no communication through all those... [cuts out]

#### TAPE 2 Side B

##### *4. Later years at school*

Back to school. In my later years in school I really began to enjoy some of the work. I'd always loved English and I loved poems and we had quite good teachers giving us acting in Shakespeare's plays and things like that which I enjoyed. An outstanding teacher was one we called "Jab", unfortunately associated with a rather undershot lower jaw. She was a remarkable woman, very much cultured and had had to take up teaching when her family had lost their money. She had a real passion for poetry and literature and this I found tremendously helpful. She introduced me to reading up references and things of that kind which added body to what we were talking about in reading.

So, English was a great joy and also a totally different personality, Miss Davis, who was [the French teacher?].... I should give Jab her name. She was Miss Milvane Goode and she was the vice principal of the school. Our French teacher was a delightful character, quite young, quite pretty, and full of enthusiasm. She had spent some time in Paris, had a beautiful French accent and took us through our French lessons with great hilarity very often. She'd also take us out into the sun, we'd sit in the sun while we worked away at our text. We acted French plays, the *Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon* is the one that I remember in which I took the place of Monsieur Perrichon with the panama hat.

She made French a very special subject to me also. So, English and French were a great delight. I enjoyed other things too, I enjoyed history very much but we had a very poor teacher for that and if we'd had a better teacher I'm sure I would have specialised in it much more. So, that end of the school years became very much more interesting. And then the creative spirit spread and I suddenly decided I was going to make a garden for myself. So, one rainy day I put on an old felt hat and overcoat and went out and dug up a whole space that was not being used in our back garden - it had actually been the base for a coal heap - and designed it and designed the beds and the paths and got a nice log to sit on and thoroughly enjoyed myself.

I began to really love this little patch and it was something always to go back to and see how the latest seeds were coming up and how the nasturtiums were climbing over the log and so on. That was really only, I think, in my last year or two. Yes, there were prize essays which I enjoyed writing. Then also I began to search for more than that. I wanted to know what made Christianity tick. What were the things that were real. We had all the background at church and at school, we were thoroughly well educated, religiously speaking, but I wanted something real.

And it was in my last year, I think, that my grandmother, a devout Baptist and tremendously keen that we should find a faith, lent my parents a book called "For Sinners Only", or gave it to them. It was the first published publication describing the work of the Oxford Group. As I read this I thought it was quite magnificent and at the same time always with that feeling that things like that always happened out of reach or on the other side of the world. So, I just tucked away the idea of it and thought, well one of these days I might meet these people. The other thing, the other momentous thing in my last year was that the Geelong Grammar had an original contributions magazine, and in this magazine which reached us I read a poem. It was called, "Australia to her Children" and it was over the name of Michael Thwaites. I knew nothing about him, but the poem absolutely riveted me. I became tremendously enthusiastic about it and talked about it to Mother and everybody, but again I thought to myself, perhaps one of these days I might meet this chap. In fact I had heard his name once when we were at a school sports meeting and my father, who was always extremely interested in all the sporting events at his old school and the athletics and all, was standing in his usual position of advantage, being able to see over the heads of the crowd and he said, "Young Thwaites running well there", and that is the first time I heard the name of my future husband.

Perhaps the most, the deepest passion at that time was music. I really adored the piano. I had been learning since the age of six and by the age of 12 I was playing quite mature pieces, Beethoven sonatas and so on, but my music was just a tremendous expression of all the things I was feeling inside. I could play for hours and practise for hours, it was never a task. I always began at quarter to seven in the morning for my usual first hour and then occasionally I'd just open my music books and sit down, if I had nothing else to do, and play perhaps for a couple of hours at a time. My teacher was a remote cousin called Cousin Peg, Meta S. Moore[?] a dedicated music person.

She had been in Leipzig and soaked up all the German background of the great composers. Of course, unfortunately, I used these experiences as a great way of escaping the nitty gritty of learning. Whenever she conscientiously referred to the fact that we needed to do some theory, or harmony or something, I would lodge a neatly phrased question which would launch her

again into another long description and account of some of the marvels that she had seen in Germany. So, I paid the price for that because I never really learnt the structure of music which is so tremendously important. And because of my natural defect in any mathematical understanding, theory was not something which came easily to me in any case. Thank God our daughter has got the other side as well, and been able to become the complete musician. The piano, books, gardening, riding when we went on our holidays, and playing tennis. I love tennis and we had our tennis court which Mother and Father were able to build in my last year at school; it was a great asset. We could have our friends to play. I think it is perhaps the very best social game and I always enjoyed it.

Of course in these last years, in our late teens, romance was very much alive in my heart and I was always getting either elated or depressed by the reactions of any particular boy I was interested in. We were very, very restricted. We made no overtures and we had to just see what came. Then, of course, there was little dances that we went to, boarders' dances at the different schools and we so enjoyed our long dresses which, of course, nowadays are not around much. Lovely materials and lovely full skirts and being able to swirl around with a waltz and that sort of thing.

In my second last year, I was made a prefect and that meant that I was supposed to set an example and be responsible for the life of the school. Unfortunately, with my very undisciplined nature I still reacted to people and reacted to teachers and was really, on the whole, pretty irresponsible. At that stage two girls had been joint head prefects from the previous year, and it turned out that my friend, Catherine Parsons, and I would be the only two prefects returning at the final year.

So I thought, in my optimistic way, that either we would be joint head prefects or perhaps even I would be head prefect. In the Speech Day, at the end of the year, the headmistress announced that my friend Catherine had won the Maggie Cunningham prize which was for sport, work and general helpfulness and "I am glad to announce that she will be our next head prefect." So, in the storm of applause I sat like a stunned mullet. It was an extraordinary thing because I don't know why I'd persuaded myself that I was going to share it but there it was.

However, the final year turned out to be a very creative one. Not in any way restricted by official duties I decided to take on to produce something in the school that hadn't been there before, and that was a whole series of clubs whereby people out of school hours could join in sharing their enthusiasms for music or debating or plays or literature - I think there was about five clubs, including a music club 10 minutes away from the school in the evenings - and join these various little societies.

We had a wonderful, wonderful time. The teachers, some of them, were very, very supportive. One of my frustrations had been that I'd never been in a school play because one of the conditions was that you had to learn extra elocution and Mother was so against it that I never learnt it and never was allowed to learn it. The result was I never appeared in a play. Now, we had our own dramatic club, so I decided to produce a play by J.M. Barrie called, "Shall we Join the Ladies". It was enormous fun and we got it going and got it together and gave a performance and Jab said she thought it was quite professional. So that was very encouraging.

Then came the end of that year. I was, at the same time, working for a scholarship so that I could go to a residential college, Janet Clarke Hall in Melbourne for the next year at the



university. Also I was having a crash course in German so that I could do modern languages, French and German when I went there. This was hard going to get German up to some matric standard but a friend of the family, Mrs Morton, helped me and gave me extra coaching. So came the end of the year and I went down to Melbourne to sit for the scholarship. In English and French I sat for it and then came back and we had our public exams and to my joy I was given a scholarship to Janet Clarke Hall and actually passed the German.

So, with the end of the school year I was also awarded the Maggie Cunningham prize. It was a very creative year and I heaved huge sighs of relief as I looked forward to wonderful holidays free of all exams and tests and just to thoroughly enjoy all the things we loved doing. I went to stay with some relations, with the Dennises, at Tarndwarncourt (Mother and Father went off on a camping trip), and had a lovely day playing tennis in their garden, then my throat began to be sore. It got steadily worse to such an extent that I had to come home, and the only person at home was Pursie, our faithful Nursie Pursie. So, I went to bed and Pursie got in touch with the family.

My father returned from his camping trip, and I always remember the great feeling of satisfaction I had when I saw when he reacted to what he saw in my throat, because he'd always found his children's maladies very boring, like the plumber being asked to mend the tap when he comes home, but this time he really looked shocked. So, I thought, that's one achievement, but the throat was terribly sore and things really started humming at that point. It turned out that I had diphtheria or something very close to it, and for the next six weeks I was closeted in my room, no holidays and rushing round, but having a really big battle with a very nasty disease, with various friends of my father's, professional friends, coming to look at me and poke me and look down my throat and so on, but because he was a doctor I didn't have to go to hospital but had my own special trained nurse. When that was all over I had to have my tonsils out. So, the entire precious summer holidays was taken up with being ill, but fortunately I was over it in time to start on my university year.

##### *5. Melbourne University, 1933-37*

The years 1933 till 1937 were spent at Melbourne, at the university there. Life opened up like a flower when I went there. I loved college life. Janet Clarke Hall was for women only still. Having never been a boarder I enjoyed the community life. Miss Joske, the principal, tried to keep a tight rein on the rules, eg. the filling in of pink slips if you were out beyond 10 pm. But the freedom to make my own decisions and plans was joy for my independent spirit. There were only 4000 students at Melbourne and the country was just struggling up out of the great depression. There was still evidence of deep poverty on the streets and in the slums of Richmond and Collingwood and Fitzroy.

Mother's medical brother, our Uncle Roly Wettenhall, had a beautiful house and garden in Toorak, as also did Dr Gordon Shaw and his wife and their family. He had been Father's best man. I would travel out on the Toorak tram on Sunday afternoons to see them and incidentally to argue my new found social justice and pacifist beliefs. The Public Questions Society in the university kept us going with weekly lunch time meetings and we were abreast of all the major problems in the world. I revelled in a world of ideas although at that time Mussolini, the Italian dictator, and his Abyssian war and the dark image of Hitler arising in Germany were a growing threat of a final conflagration.

College food was ample and had some attractive aspects in lunch time salads. I arrived rather light weight after my illnesses and put on one and a half stone in the first term. Not surprising, as I and my friends would repair to the "dugout" which was a sort of tuckshop across the road after our very ample four course meal, three course meal at night, and buy ourselves more chocolate. It was wonderful to be reunited with my school friend, Elizabeth Mills, from Tasmania. We'd continued writing to each other since the age of 11 when she had gone to Frensham. Liza and I shared a room for the first year before achieving the privilege of a study bedroom of our own.

I loved mine. It looked out over the elms of Ormond Lane and had a little open fireplace. Fuel was brought by Billy, the college rouseabout, much harried by Miss Joske. The room was big enough for four or five of us to sit on the floor around the fireplace for our late, late suppers (black tea and lemon for me) when we talked and exchanged ideas into the small hours in student fashion. The University Union was not built until about 1936 so the university social centre was the shabby old club house ("clubbus") by the lake where we regaled ourselves on tea and chocolate frogs and set the world to rights.

The trams along Sydney Road were still run by cable when I first arrived but were changed shortly afterwards to electrical. All the exciting new acquaintances, male and female, that we made, some of the friendships that developed into life-long ones. When men took you out they paid for everything, it was a matter of course. However hard up my friends might be, I never gave this a second thought, it was just an accepted convention. Sometimes, of course, they wanted more than I was prepared to give, but never once in our experience did the thought of popping into bed cross our minds. Even a goodnight kiss at the front door was quite a rarity.

Geelong not being far away, I used to travel home by train for the occasional weekend and my parents would come up to town, Mother bearing exquisite flowers for my room and Father always insisting that I took plenty of exercise while studying. This was not difficult as the great open space, Royal Park, which we called the common, was always available for a late evening run - solo, but with no thought of danger.

Because of my very little background in German I had quite a struggle to achieve the combined honours degree which I was aiming at. The first year I only just passed, although I got a First in French and I had Latin as well. The second year I carried German I honours, with German II honours and French II honours and studied, for diversion, Psychology Logic and Ethics, which I greatly enjoyed. We had an excellent lecturer known as "Mac Ball" (Macmahon Ball). He was the student's dream as a lecturer, he was so systematic and you could get everything into your notebook without any trouble at all.

So finally when it came to the third year, having achieved German II honours as well as German I honours I could concentrate on German III honours and French III honours, and achieved a second class honours combined for the finals. One of my great helps was Monsieur Egremont, an extremely lively Belgian, who brought new life into the German course with his plays, German plays, which we did quite a number and performed them for the local German "Leseverein". I think they were a fairly Fascist lot, the Leseverein, anyway they used to give the Heil Hitler salute, but they seemed to enjoy the plays and it certainly improved my German and my capacity to speak it.



Monsieur Egremont had lived in Germany and described the situation before Hitler and he didn't judge them at all for having followed this man because the country was in such a terrible state, and the corruption and the moral depravity in Berlin, he said, was unbelievable.

Liza and I created a Freshers play which was obligatory for the first year students. I don't know where we got our theme. It was meant to be a film scenario and it was a lot about the Israelites and the Philistines and frequent references to the circumcised and the uncircumcised. As we really didn't have any clear idea what the word meant it caused great hilarity amongst the seniors and the play was a resounding success.

Apart from Elizabeth my special friends at that time were: Yvonne Aitken, who was a year or two ahead because she had come back after a battle with TB, a very gifted young woman. Could draw and paint beautifully. Was very, very keen on music and used to come and listen to records and things with me, and also doing agricultural science for which she has since become quite famous in her various pioneering experiments with cereals. Kathleen Blackwood was the daughter of the Archdeacon of Hobart, a cheerful, keen, first year medical student with a very clear-cut Christian faith, and a great friend. And Tanya Mattison from Adelaide whose father was a medical specialist; they were Russian Jews with all the flair and originality that goes with that, and her wild and unpredictable ways delighted me. As, for instance, we had a compulsory two weeks cooking course before the start of term. It was a condition for a grant given by a crusty old bachelor who thought women should be able to cook. We were doing baked apples and while my apple was doing nothing in an unlighted gas stove (I had never encountered gas), Tanya calmly was helping herself from the fridge to bunches of grapes and other luscious fruits and was making herself a fruit salad, quite calmly.

[At] our first common room dance Liza introduced me to Godfrey Topp, the nephew of the famous Miss West who was the founding headmistress of Frensham. Godfrey and I clicked and as he was doing the same course as Grant Pringle - Grant was now Alice's great friend - we used to do things as a foursome for a while, but Alice and Grant's relationship became much more intense and it wasn't long before they announced their engagement, which to me seemed horribly premature.

But Godfrey and I spent a great deal of time together for the next two years doing all sorts of things like going to the wonderful free organ recitals in the town hall when William McKie who was then city organist would play several very beautiful pieces at lunch time. And then there were all these other interesting things you can do around town and little cheap meals that you couldn't believe it but you'd get a three course meal up in Russell Street for 1/6d. Before I leave this group of friends, Tanya, alas, died of the dreaded polio soon after she left the university. She was 23, and I remember it was my first encounter with the death of someone I had known well. I wrote a poem about it.

Then there were the more formal occasions... balls were great social events and William, my cousin William Lempriere, invited me to the Trinity one and Freddy Eggleston took me to the Queens College Ball. On these occasions you turned up with a tiny little program with a small pencil attached and then you wrote in, against the numbers of the dances, the people who had booked you. Of course all the booking was done by the men, so you hoped that your program would be full and that you wouldn't have to spend too many dances sitting on the sidelines. Sometimes somebody came along and booked you up and you were very sad because a person you would much prefer came later.

However, on the whole, I enjoyed these dances and I enjoyed dressing up although I always thought everybody else looked more beautiful when I got there. Godfrey and I once went down to a dance at St Kilda, and outside the Palais was this wonderful merry-go-round which took me back to the joys of my childhood. So, it was a lovely way to cool off, to get on this lovely thing and whirl around in the cool night air. Amazingly this machine is now a focus in Civic Centre in Canberra. It was brought up here as a special feature as it is still very much looking like the original merry-go-rounds were. It has been rather special to be able to ride on it with my grandchildren.

I discovered a children's home down Sydney Road called the Victorian Children's Aid Society, and as I was always fond of children I paid them a visit and asked if I could help in any way. As I could play the piano we used to have songs and dancing and the children used to love it, and greeted me with cries of, "Here's Miss Good", but I found that a very fulfilling thing to be able to do that as well as all the other exciting intellectual and other activities that were filling my life. Funnily enough I went to live, after leaving college, in some digs which were just opposite so I was able to continue the association.

The Student Christian Movement with its worldwide connections brought in a lot of fascinating speakers we would hear from time to time. Three that stand out immediately in my mind were Dr T. Z. Koo, a most cultivated Chinese Christian leader with a delightful sense of humour, and he was an artist on the bamboo flute; and the famous C.F. Andrews, Charlie Andrews, the friend of Mahatma Gandhi and other Indian Christians, and they had a great impact, but they came later. At this time I think we just got together and talked about things and went to conferences and so on.

Stuart Wilson, the English tenor, gave a concert at the Melbourne Town Hall to which we went. I was bowled over by his artistry. We had very little first class concerts in Australia at that time, so I wrote him an enthusiastic letter. As he knew our family friend, Dr William McKie, who was the Melbourne City organist, he asked who I was and then invited me out to the Botanical Gardens where we went for a long walk and had, to me, the most fascinating conversation about music and life in England and all the rest of it. One of the vivid memories is that as we rose from having a cup of tea at the gardens cafe he tipped a tiny little threepenny bit onto the table as we left. My first encounter with English tipping. Never such a thing had occurred to us in Australia.

Godfrey was the most unselfish friend and gave me the happiest times and secure support during those first two years at JCH. But the sad part was I could never feel we could make it permanent, and after his finals, and he was leaving Melbourne, we had to make a break.

#### *6. Two meetings: M.R. Thwaites, and the Oxford Group*

The Michael Thwaites, or M.R. Thwaites, I had always had in the back of mind was now in Trinity College. I now knew what he looked like but I still had not met him and certainly I don't think he knew who I was. So, I devised a little plan to break the deadlock. I wrote to him congratulating him on his winning the Sanderson Essay prize which was a college essay competition, on the flimsy basis that we shared the Geelong Grammar background, etc.

To my delight a small note appeared on the college noticeboard brought over by the porter next morning which thanked me for my note and invited me to come over, at some point, to his study and see his poetry books, as I had mentioned poetry in my letter. I was delighted with this and went off to lectures in high spirits and over at the lecture theatre I saw him coming away from his lecture. I was also on my way back to college. I followed him along Tin Alley, which was the connecting lane that went between the universities and the college, and managed to catch up with him. Turned around and said, "Oh, it's you, is it?"

So the deadlock was broken. We walked on together and he went into his study and brought out a copy of Humbert Wolfe's "This Blind Rose" which he lent me and which I bore back to my study in triumph. I was so excited about the meeting and it seemed so strange that after all these years I'd had this in the back of my mind. Later on we began to read poetry together in his study. He had nice rooms in Trinity... this was the end of the year... [some phrases not audible].

I went to Tasmania that vacation to stay with Elizabeth in her very beautiful home called Panshanger, one of the old colonial built houses in the north of Tasmania. We had wonderful holiday times. Elizabeth, of course, was very studious and very much a reader but she had a lovely pony called Nora whom she allowed me to ride. I loved that. And her brother Ernest was there and he was also a great participator and used to take me out on the river in his boat. The weather was beautiful. The garden was full of lovely summer fruits and Mrs Mills, their mother, was one of the most charming women. Very quiet and reserved, but the sad part was that she and her husband lived at opposite ends of the house, only keeping up appearances for the sake of the family. Those were very sunny and beautiful days which I remember. Lots of social comings and goings. I played the piano a lot. A very sociable area with all the families visiting each other and going to dances and having a very active social life which I enjoyed to the full. Time to come home and get on with my next year. In the meantime Michael had also been in Tasmania with his mother so we compared notes when we returned.

Before I leave 1934 I must now recount a very important discovery. My friend, Kathleen Blackwood, who as you may remember was the daughter of an Anglican clergyman in Hobart, came back after the winter vacation with a visiting card from a certain Reverend John Sayers and he had under his name, Oxford Group. Now, Kathleen was aware of my search for this movement and these people, as were various other of my friends to whom I'd lent "For Sinners Only." However, Kathleen and I decided that we would run this thing to earth, so one Sunday morning when there was no public transport - the trams didn't run on Sunday in Melbourne - we walked out to Brunswick where this man had a church and joined in the service and heard him preach. He mentioned that the Oxford Group had started in Melbourne and that Ivan Menzies, the well known D'Oyly Carte opera singer, would be coming out next year to further the cause as he had had a dramatic change in his life. He also mentioned that there was to be a gathering, which was then called a house party, down at Seaford on the bay, on the Port Phillip Bay and gave us the dates, etc. So, in due course Yvonne and I went down to Seaford to join in this gathering and this was my very first meeting with the actual people.

When we arrived I saw a dark haired girl walking along in absorbed conversation with somebody and someone said, "Oh that is Sylvia Cust." Now, Sylvia has been my life-long friend ever since, so that in itself was momentous. Then it had meetings and Sylvia had started on her own initiative a small Oxford Group in the Brighton area with her contemporaries, gay young things who used to meet for tennis parties and so on. She'd had a

very revolutionary change in her life, to my amazement she had actually sacrificed what to me was the most costly thing that anyone could, and that was that she had fallen deeply in love, but because the man she loved - and he [with] her - because the man she loved was married, albeit unhappily, she decided that it was God's will for her to give him up and to try and help him remake his marriage.

It all happened as a result of a meeting on a cruise to Papua New Guinea and while on that cruise Sylvia had gone ashore with the other tourists to Kwato [pr. "Kwotto"], which was on a mission station, a very unique one, run on Oxford Group lines. Cecil Abel, the elder brother of the family who ran this mission, was the one who had helped her to find this idea that you asked God what to do and then obeyed what he said. When Sylvia returned to her home in Brighton she wanted to tell her friends, but she was a bit scared, especially of one friend who was rather a powerful personality.

However, she thought she made a little bargain with God and said, "Well, if she doesn't come I'll tell the others." But of course she did come. However, Sylvia still went ahead and told them her story and it was this friend, Marcella, who asked her to walk home with her and talk more about it. Her little group grew and flourished and this was the first gathering with others in the Melbourne area to pass on their experiences. I wasn't over-impressed by the general feeling; I thought there was far too much talk and finally I remember walking out and looking at the trees and saying, "Thank God the gum trees don't talk."

But I was still quite intrigued, and my friend Yvonne had done also something rather remarkable when she took "For Sinners Only" home on the vacation. When she came back to her lectures she went and told her chemistry demonstrator that she'd been cheating on some of her experiments. That to me gave me a shock too.

### TAPE 3:

[Inaudible]... the start of my final year in college with the realisation of the two dreams of my last year at school. I had now actually met the Oxford Group with their intriguing way of life described so vividly in "For Sinners Only", and I was beginning to get to know M.R. Thwaites, the unknown author of "Australia to her Children". I was beginning to think about the challenge of the absolute moral standards of the Oxford Group, absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. Their implications were vast but I was only capable of seeing a little of them.

Michael and I continued to see a lot of each other and were hoping to have Shaw's "Arms and the Man" put on as the college play. Guess who would be hero and heroine! There was another faction pushing for what we considered rather a piffling play. So the producer took advantage of the situation and decided he would do "Libel!" by Edmond Woolley [Wikipedia correction: Edward Wooll]. I was actually cast as the heroine, the leading lady, but Michael alas only got a rather dull part as a lawyer's clerk. I was able to pop in and see him quite frequently in his nice study in the Behan building on the way over to the university. This was not allowed by the rules of JCH: no woman could visit a man without a chaperone.

Then came the challenge of absolute honesty. Yvonne invited Sylvia Cust and her sister Pat, and Beatrice Kent. Beatrice's husband, Eric, had a poor parish in Moonee Ponds and both their lives had been deeply affected by Ivan Menzies. They came to a college supper party in

Yvonne's room to meet a few of us who were interested in the Oxford Group. They were so warm and real about their own experiences I was convinced that I must make a start myself.

If I really wanted to let God run my life I had to obey the thought that he gave me, and at this point I could not get around the fact that I was deceiving Miss Joske by visiting Michael in college. I coned myself along thinking she might be so touched by my honesty she could trust me to continue! I tapped on her door next morning and told her what I was doing. I was flabbergasted by the look of horror on her face; didn't she know that lots of people did it? I retired crestfallen and angry, with the message that the visits must cease. I phoned Michael; he seemed quite unfazed. We could meet somewhere else. I was hardly a humble penitent but I had obeyed that inner prompting and was now free to explore further as I was committed to this new way of living.

A lot of dormant Christian experience sprang to life, and as I read the New Testament it became a third dimensional document and part of present day living. I felt I had to pass on the experience to others as well as keeping in touch with my new Oxford Group friends and we soon had a small group of students in college who met to have quiet times and share their thoughts, the thoughts that came. Michael kept a fairly detached attitude to it all, though he did start having a quiet time in the morning. The Oxford Group in Melbourne multiplied. There was an extraordinary cross section of human beings from Toorak socialites and Pentridge prisoners who had responded to Ivan Menzies' message, to Methodist groups attached to the Wesley Central Mission, where the Reverend Irving Benson became a leading spokesman.

They used the Comedy Theatre for overflow meetings and I remember returning to college to be greeted with amazement by a couple of students who had been to one of these and seen me speaking on the platform. Sylvia's Brighton group joined in with it all. Another who had an early experience was Jean Macneil, a senior for me at school who lived in Kew and who had encountered the huge meetings in Denmark on the previous year.

We travelled round the country, once to the country home of our family friend, Mrs Roberts near Broadford. Her two sons, Ian and Ron became very enthusiastic. All this in my final year, but the necessary work seemed to get done. On my 21st birthday, Michael and I went to college chapel, the early service and we played in the Trinity mixed doubles tournament and enjoyed ourselves until we were knocked out, then packed our overnight bags and travelled down to Ariston in Geelong for the weekend for a family celebration.

My present from my parents was a lovely little mahogany coloured desk which is still the storehouse for family photos and diaries and precious documents. At this stage we were convinced that we were meant to be together for life, and we became unofficially engaged.

What the great public attraction of the Oxford Group was is hard to analyse. The world was just coming out of days of deep depression and now the threat of the fascist led war was arriving. For me [it was] the simple concept that if human nature could change it would go to the root of all the world's problems that surrounded us, the complex ones as well as the simple ones. And the second point, even more important, that God had a plan for each individual life and if they listened to him and obeyed his instructions it would be revealed step by step. Those who took on this commitment found a dynamic purpose for their lives and it took in the whole world.



My exploration of the meaning of the absolute moral standards was minimal. It remained so for quite a number of years. In fact at that point in college a group of the opposition got together and made a list of the places where I was not absolutely unselfish. I wish I'd seen it! But it didn't prevent me participating to the full in the outreach and expression of this message of hope for the world.

Then came the end of 1935: my finals, orals and practical, and eventually packing up to leave JCH. By this time Miss Joske and I were good friends and I had genuinely loved my three years there and was able to express real gratitude. Everything went down to Ariston in Geelong to await next developments. Michael and I decided to go to the Student Christian Movement conference in Mittagong which was happening in January and after that we were able to go down to "Woorilla".

This was the family's new acquisition, a beach house at Point Lonsdale with remarkable charm - a very simple, wooden house buried in the tea-tree but with a ladder that took you up to see over the tops of the trees to the bay where the ships came and went. I always remember the atmosphere, we had such lovely hot summers, and walking through the sand to the beach, either the front beach where it was nice and calm or to the back beach where we had wonderful surf and could lie in the sun, soaking it up without any inhibitions as unfortunately we have these days. Woorilla was magical and the evening walks along the back beach was something that Michael and I absolutely loved.

Mother simply slaved to keep us all fed. We had team work in setting tables and washing up and she'd created an "eat-out" which was just outside the kitchen; you would put your leg over the window-sill and got in and out and it was gauzed in and you looked straight into the bush with all the bird life and everything else that was going on. But we took completely for granted that she would toil up and down with her shopping and cook on this frightfully hot stove and it was quite often we had friends as well, there would probably be a household of at least 10. They were wonderful days and very happy days and something that Michael and I always remembered when we went and lived the other side of the world.

Then came a visit to Ballarat with his parents, and I'm so glad to have had those short times with them because they had died before we returned. His father was such a dear man, so scholarly and Yorkshire like, very reserved but at the same time you felt the warmth of his feelings and his mother, such an athletic and - loved gardens and loved talking, but even at that stage I don't think her capacities were at their full. So, I used to go and stay there and we would go out on Lake Wendouree in a canoe which Michael had built, and read books in the old house.

Then it was time to come back to start my next year, [in] which I had to learn typing and shorthand to give me some reason for being a secretary or getting some sort of job. I had my French and German but that was all. So I went to a local typing school and remember my humiliation as 14-year-olds took to shorthand like ducks to water and I never mastered it. But I rather enjoyed typing to music, Colonel Bogey and other rhythmic tunes, and I was able to type by the time I came away. Then what was I to do for a job? Uncle Roly, the family patriarch offered me to come and stay and do a job with him, which I did for a while. He was a great archivist and collector of things and the great thing was that I was to sort him out. I am

afraid I didn't do much about that but I did help with a book that he was writing about John Thompson who was one of the Presbyterian heroes in the early history of Australia.

I had found digs in Parkville. I went exploring one day and got to number 36 and an Irish lady came to the door. I asked her if she had a room. She looked me up and down and she said, "Well, I've only had gentlemen up till now, but I'll give you a try", and the result was I had a tiny room that opened out on to the balcony where my bed was, overlooking Royal Park. And it turned out to be the most wonderful home from home because she became an absolutely devoted friend, and when Michael and I went for weekend outings she would make picnic lunches for us, absolutely one of the ones we liked. Her name was Miss Cail.

After working with Uncle Roly for six months it seemed right to try for another job as more part of the community, and I applied when it was advertised that they wanted a secretary to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. The Dean at that time was the famous Professor Giblin, a wonderful character, totally individual and to my great delight he chose me to be a secretary, which meant that I had an office in the Arts Building which I was able to furnish and decorate to my taste. I used to have a table always with a beautiful vase of flowers on it and then I was at liberty to do all the jobs that were needed such as duplicating and so on but I also had the job of interviewing new students. So, slightly inky from the old Gestetner machine I would rush back to my office and don a gown and be there to advise prospective students on their courses.

But as far as the actual secretarial side went I can scarcely remember more than one professor. He had been in America and expected this sort of service but the others never came near me and asked for letters to be written. They were quite unused to having a secretary and they either preferred to write their own or got some idea of how deplorable my shorthand was.

I never had... that side of the work was not developed. But apart from the job itself the office became an enormous asset for the Oxford Group in the university because we could have meetings there whenever we wanted to after lectures and lunch time and so on. It was an enormous facility because right centrally in the university, and the Oxford Group team was growing there. I often think back to some of the people who used to come and wonder what has happened to them although I know some of them have had very distinguished careers.

I think some of the staff were quite intrigued as to what was going on. At that time the Oxford Group had produced its first coloured magazine called "Drums of Peace" and I always kept it on my desk. I remember once when our famous Mac Ball, the great lecturer that I mentioned earlier, came into the office for something and he fingered this magazine in a rather curious way. Nothing much developed in the senior part of the university at that time, except for the Master of Queens, Rayner Johnson, and he also later on became quite a supporter and we used to go to his home for gatherings.

I only discovered years later that Mac Ball had been one of a group of very promising students who had met and talked with Frank Buchman in 1925 when he came out to Australia on a visit at the university. No doubt his being slightly curious about "Drums of Peace" was to see what had happened to this idea 10 years later.

Miss Cail's establishment, 36 The Avenue, Parkville, was on the opposite corner to the Victorian Children's Aid Home which I had been visiting at intervals ever since I came up to



university. This was very handy and I used to go in quite a lot and see the children and got to know quite a few of them. It was enormously moving to find a whole family, five children, whose parents had died and they had nowhere to go. They'd lived in a bush setting up in the mountains, in Healesville or somewhere, and here they were in this home, all very distinct and real little personalities and I remember some of them still. Then there was a senior girl, Nellie, who was very responsible for the other children and we used to have a lot of talks about things. So that was an interesting aspect on life that continued. And then as the year went on Oswald Barnett who was a great social justice man and Methodist leader was very keen to have a mini-session in the slums like the universities did in England (went down to Bermondsey or one of those places).

So a group of us, including Yvonne and Michael and I and others decided that we would take this up and went to stay for several nights at a centre there run by a dedicated worker called Brother Bill. I think that was the first time I encountered the real scent of poverty. It has a special smell of its own. I don't know what it is quite but the centre had that smell and with all my hyper-fastidious attitudes to things I remember picking my way across the floor to the shower and generally finding it quite difficult, but it was a wonderful way of getting to know first hand the conditions that so many people were living in at that time.

And we wrote it up -I think I wrote the article, it went into "Farrago" and telling about it, actually I needed to do that because the reporter came down and gave the usual somewhat inaccurate picture of what was going on and who we were and what we were doing, but that was a memorable time and once again kept us in touch with the real world. Of course, that is the area that was later demolished, cleared completely and the inhabitants were relocated in those appalling high rise buildings in Carlton and elsewhere where the poor women had nervous breakdowns trying to look after their children without any ground round about and having to use the common lift which could be plagued by hooligans or whatever.

So that was hardly a better life for them. But now, at last, I think people are coming to realise what is the way to treat people in poor circumstances and to give them some sort of a quality of life together. I was in constant touch with Sylvia Cust. She and I became very close friends and running mates and she was a very good mentor for me with her greater experience. We used to meet - she had a job as a journalist in the local women's paper "The Woman's World" and we would meet. She would pick me up in her little car and we would go into town and have coffee in some little restaurant or cafe and it was a marvellous friendship which developed and which has lasted the whole of our lives. This went on until 1937 when she went north to live in Darwin with her sister Pat, whose husband had a patrol boat on the north coast.

1936 was also Michael's final year and he applied in June for the Rhodes Scholarship which he subsequently won. This was a great triumph but alas my still very unregenerate nature played quite a part and I wanted to celebrate with him on our own and all this sort of thing when he needed to be in college and be part of the whole scene. This and other things led on to constant little flashes and irritations, until I decided that I wanted to break free, and for the next two or three months we didn't see a great deal of each other, and I considered myself a free agent.

All this was very extraordinary because in the course of those past two years we had had the most marvellous times together and I was very much in love with him. I remember at one point walking gaily along to work and chanting to myself a little poem I'd written:

*In the sweet and tender morning  
Love, my heart for you so full  
Pours its praises with the magpies  
Choiring on the windy hill.*

That sort of thing was all part of life and I simply cannot understand how I had this feeling that I must throw it all away. But it was a very healthy experience and when another man started paying me attention and very urgently suggesting that I should marry him I went to his digs, and we were sitting there in front of the fire and he was making up to me, and the only person I could think of was Michael. So I knew deep in my heart that he still was the one and that we would somehow find a new start together.

It was all very strange because over the past two years we had had such wonderful times together. We used to go for walks in the country around Croydon and come back in the evening to have a late supper at a Greek cafe in Elizabeth Street. Probably the food was not of the highest quality but it was certainly plenty of it and quite cheap and then we would walk all the way back to college or to Miss Cail's as it became. A timeless thing in a relationship that is close, that really time ceases to exist and you can just talk and enjoy being together and we'd had so much of that and it was wonderful.

Also we had these mutual interests and there was a lot of poetry. He had written some very lovely poems for me in the course of this time and I also was inspired to write a few little verses. We knew we would marry some day but with all the uncertainty in the world we had no idea when it could be and he would, of course, have to get a job first and with four years coming up in Oxford and so on it was a distant date. We had so many interests in common. One of the earliest things we did when we first got to know each other was to go to meetings conducted by a most remarkable Japanese called Toyohiko Kagawa.

I had actually read his biography by William Axling and had found it absolutely fascinating because here was a man gifted in science, a real poet, in love with the beauties of nature and absolutely taken over by his commitment to Jesus Christ which took him to the slums in Tokyo to try and help those who were in desperate plight there. He was a small frail man but full of vitality and we used to love to go and hear him and once or twice we met him afterwards. Another aspect of my life at this time was what Michael called my lame ducks. These were people who were obviously lonely and looking for something for their lives and I used to spend quite a bit of time with them.

One of these was Ib Rowe. She was the daughter of a family who had a station out near Ballarat and her family were known to Michael's family. We went to stay with her and there was a dramatic incident whereby I was suddenly floored with the most violent pains in my inside, to such a degree that I had to be transported home. I absolutely insisted that Michael came with me. When we reached Geelong I was put into hospital and finally they thought it was arsenic spray on apples or something. In the meantime Michael was at Ariston. My mother was quite firm. She approached him very sweetly and said, "Michael, your train back to Ballarat is at such and such a time". He was not yet accepted as a surrogate guardian!

I used to travel down to the Kents' house in Moonee Ponds and - just an interesting comment - once again I would travel by myself in the evenings in practically empty electric trains there and back without any slightest feeling that I could be in any sort of danger. They had a particular parishioner called Mrs Wilkinson, a very charming woman. I don't know she must have started life in much better circumstances but she had TB, and I remember, the only thought I had that I could do for her was to give her a hot water bottle. That wasn't a bad idea really because in those terrible days of no heating and so on at least you can always boil a kettle and fill a hot water bottle and keep yourself a little bit warm.

As 1937 began Catherine came to join me at Miss Cail's and we shared a big room. She was also joining in with the St Johns Fellowship as well as the Oxford Group occasions and St Johns Fellowship was a brain child I think of J.R. Darling who thought there should be a special sort of church for people who would not necessarily appreciate the run-of-the-mill services, and Padre Baldwin, who was an ex Toc-H chaplain, was in charge. We used to have lovely music and lots of discussions. I remember now some of the people who were there, like George Lindon, who were killed in the war. Padre Baldwin suggested that in order to be a proper member of the Anglican Church I should be confirmed. I was rather taken aback because I had had a very real experience when I joined the Presbyterian Church in Geelong with our very splendid local minister and I had become a communicant of the church. So this gave me some pause for thought: why this should now be invalidated if I wanted to attend the Church of England communion? These days that has now moved a lot and people are freely invited to be part of the communion in the Anglican Church.

I was still in the Arts building, in my Arts secretary's office and as the weeks went by into 1937 Michael and I began to see more and more of each other and became increasingly close as the date for his departure came up. He was to leave for Oxford in July. He went, I farewelled him and letters began to flow but I also began to think, what about the future? I was still quite enjoying the work in the university and participating in a lot of university occasions. But my eyes were now on the other side of the world. Michael sent a beautiful present to me from Colombo, having sailed in the old Orana I think it was [MRT correction: Orama], one of the old Orient Line boats. It was a kimono accompanied by the wonderful little limerick, "Oh, that I were this kimono, Soon, unlike the wretched donor To embrace its future owner. Oh, that I were this kimono". Very typical I may say of the particular gift of my future husband.

### *7. Journey to Europe; arrival in Britain*

It was about this time that my mother presented me with a cheque for £50. That would be more like \$2000 today. It brought the dream of travelling to Europe into reality. With what I had in my own bank account - saved, £1 from my father each birthday and Christmas since I was born - I was ready to plan for the next adventurous chapter. I would go for two years and then return to get married. Instead, after nine years, having been through six years of war, Michael and I returned together with Peter aged four and Penelope aged two and leaving little Robert, our first baby, in a Scottish graveyard. My mother wept as we said goodbye at the ship, a most unusual thing for her to do, but I wonder if she had some foreboding. After all it was 1938.

I resigned my job towards the end of 1937 and said goodbye to all my university and Melbourne friends and packed up to leave Miss Cail's which had been such a home from home. Then back to Geelong. We had an absolute riot of getting ready for this wonderful journey. My mother was passionate about clothes and she had a wonderful little dressmaker so we were free to choose beautiful materials and design evening dresses and all sorts of things which would be likely to be useful in such a time overseas.

The irony was, of course, that I wore them about twice each before the war started but they were useful on the ship. Mother was so dedicated to this and I always felt it was such a pity that they were not used more, but there was one dress which had been made earlier which came from an opera cloak in Paris, which my aunt, Uncle Roly's wife, who died, had bought in Paris. This was made of the most wonderful brocaded ribbon and a very skilled dressmaker in Geelong had remodelled the whole thing and turned it into an evening dress. It's actually in my picture when I was 21 and it has gone on and on through the years. It was worn for Oxford occasions and never seems to have grown old. So I want my grandchild to enjoy it when she is old enough.

A great friend that we had made through the Oxford Group connection was Elizabeth ["Sandy"] Anderson. She was a marvellous character. Born in Dunedin [NZ], she was more Scottish than the Scots and she was matron of Mossgiel, a private hospital in Surrey Hills. We became very close friends and she also was thinking in terms of a trip abroad. Meanwhile Sylvia was in Darwin with her sister Pat and I knew that she also had hoped to go overseas. So I got in touch with both of them and said, "Should we try and get bookings on some economical ship the following year", and ended up in getting three places in an Italian cargo ship called the "Viminale", which was due to sail in April in 1938.

So Sylvia came down from Darwin and Sandy was there and we planned together how we would do it all. It was very funny because this ship certainly was economical but I could get from Melbourne to London for £60; that included the fare across Europe by train. Unbelievable now. After farewell visits to friends and relations all round the country the time approached and the great moment came to embark. The family came down to see us off. As I was leaning over the rail I observed, sitting on wharf, all my enormous amount of luggage. Fortunately it had a distinctive band of green and gold on it, but after all this preparation we just about sailed without it.

So someone amongst our number bustled down and got it aboard. Incidentally Sylvia's father was horrified at the standard of his daughter's accommodation. We were in the bowels of the ship, in a very small cabin. She and I were sharing it, with a porthole that came out on wharf level. However, we stuck to it and I will never forget the absurdity of me trying to sort through my belongings in this tiny little cabin, which a large room in a large hotel might have been more suitable for. But it was our first touch with the Continent and the whole Italian way of life. The meals were very cheerful and vino flowed and we had quite interesting people to meet, including a family called Ricaldone. He and his wife and young son, Paolo, became quite friends and they asked me to help Paolo learn English.

Also, one of my friends, Vera Blackburn in Sydney, had alerted me to the fact that her friend, Githa Connolly, was to be sailing on the same ship. Githa was in slightly better accommodation, I may say. She had been working in the Italian Consulate in Sydney. That, when we met, began again one of these lifelong friendships and she is now older than I but we

are still in touch. She seemed to be spending most of her time with an Italian contessa and they had long conversations in Italian. I tried to learn the language but didn't get very far. I noticed, though, if I had had some vino it seemed to flow better. One of the officers proved to be an attractive type, and very unprincipledly I cultivated quite a warm friendship with him on the principle that he needed to change! He was a devoted follower of Mussolini, an ardent fascist, and taught me their great motto: Credere, Ubiddire, Combattere - believe, obey and fight. That was the code which Mussolini gave a whole generation at that time.

What a voyage it was, bringing the first vivid touch with Asia in Colombo and then through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, to the first touch with the ancient civilisations of the Mediterranean, all in six weeks. Descriptions of my first ecstatic impressions of these places were sent to my parents in some detail and are still there in amongst my letters so I will not go into the details now. But the first touch with Asia was very important: Colombo with all its lush vegetation, and the strange sounds of the birds, and seeing these dark people walking along their streets in their dignity with their graceful strides and then going up to Mount Lavinia which was on the coast. It was all quite different from Australia and the first thing to launch us on this voyage of discovery. We disembarked in Genoa, I said goodbye to my officer friend, who gave me a well earned reproof on my behaviour, as a supposedly engaged young woman. I did like him and I often wonder what became of him because he was transferred to an oil tanker and as the war was very close, I doubt if he would have survived it.

Sylvia and Sandy travelled on to Germany and Switzerland, respectively. We were to meet up again in London.

[End of TAPE 3 Side A. Side B unused]

#### TAPE 4

[First words missing]... past. And the letters and diaries that I wrote at the time give the details of this wonderful time in Italy. I stayed with the Ricaldone family up in Biella near the foot of Mont Blanc. They were very kind to me and the only trouble was the English nanny visibly disapproved of the Australian accent that had crept into her Paolo's English. We went and visited a count in his castello and my Italian seemed to improve all the time. Then back to Florence and three magical days, which I have described, I think. The impact of Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" hanging superbly on one wall at the Uffizi Gallery has never, never left me.

Then I had to leave my little pensione and travel to Paris. This was fraught with difficulty. The poor little woman who ran it had no change and I had to explore for some smaller change before we left, then she put me on board the Paris express, I should think probably crossing herself at the same time because no respectable young woman travelled alone at night in Italy. This was confirmed by the behaviour of a passenger who got in, and after we had settled down for the night on opposite sides I felt a hand groping towards me. I sat bolt upright and poured out a stream of mixed Italian and English to such an extent that I think he realised he'd made a mistake. After that there was no more trouble, but in the morning he was very polite and got me some coffee and helped me with my bags onto the Paris platform. I was obviously so extremely naive, with no preparation for living in this part of the world.

After three days in Paris I got onto the train to go to Dover, so thrilled to be able to talk English I think I rattled along for practically the whole of the journey to the tolerant middle



aged Englishman who was sitting in the carriage. He must have been vaguely amused. Then up to London, and there was Michael on the platform of Victoria station, wearing a nice sports coat and Australian sized felt hat.

It was wonderful to be together again. In the course of the last month he had won the Newdigate prize for poetry [for] "Milton Blind" which he had finished writing in Florence. We went straight away to a jeweller and he used the money to buy my engagement ring. Then the announcement went into the Times, so we were officially engaged at last.

Those days in London and then almost immediately to Oxford brought me in touch with all the people he'd been writing about, and I was so thrilled with the Oxford scene. We met his friend, Kirsty Morrison, a wonderful tutor at the St Anne's College for Women, and many others.

He and his friend, Doug Allen, were sharing rooms in New College and we had little lunches there and the magic of those marvellous old buildings began to rivet itself in my heart and has never gone away. Then back to London to find somewhere to stay. Sylvia and Sandy were in rooms in Notting Hill Gate and Githa was with our mutual friend, Vera Blackburn, in Kensington. One began to understand all the different fine points about London, accepted addresses and the best addresses and all this sort of thing. I stayed with both of them for a brief time and then the wonderful friends, Campbell and Josie Milligan.

He was a surgeon in Harley Street and they had a big apartment there and they were like surrogate parents to Australians, young Australians in London. They had me to stay for a while. While there they introduced me to a lady who eventually got me a job. But before that happened the vacation was on and Michael and I went north to stay with his Aunt Eva in Yorkshire. That was the most superb introduction to the English countryside. Aunt Eva knew the name of every flower in the hedgerow. She was a very well read person and in spite of having lived all her life in a tiny village in a very small house, as well as looking after her invalid older brother, she absolutely gave her heart to us.

We went on a long planned expedition and holiday to stay at a place called Cropton and there we explored, always on foot of course, to see the old stone very ancient churches dating from Norman times and learning these wonderful names of the flowers. The heather on the moors was out and Yorkshire has a wonderful beauty of its own which I had never read about, really. All my reading of English countryside had been in the south. We had lovely days there and there was a whole saga attached to the way we got there because Michael borrowed Doug's small Triumph single seater car and the engine gave out. We had failed to confirm that the oil was replaced. So with this major trauma we proceeded by bus to our destination and the car was delivered later by the garage man. Quite remarkable how those things worked out because we were so totally clueless. What an extraordinary year 1938 was. Not only was the fascinating voyage and the first contact with continental Europe, then being together again, and one thing I have forgotten to mention was the main point in my going to Oxford: to be present at the great ceremony of the Encaenia (pr: "enseenya") when the whole of academic Oxford paraded into the Sheldonian Theatre, and there one M.R. Thwaites, amongst other events, was reading his prize poem. An amazing way to be introduced to Oxford.

## 8. Pre-war years

After our lovely holiday in Yorkshire we set sail for Europe again, for Switzerland, for two major conferences - one a World Student Christian conference which was at a place called Goldern high in the alps. That gave a wonderful sample of Swiss life. It was run by the Swiss and we had mountain climbing and breakfasts of black cherry jam and black bread and coffee. Makes a very good breakfast, especially when you were young and hungry. Then from there we went down to Interlaken for the first world assembly of Moral Re-Armament. Michael came as a concession, I think, but we had a very interesting time.

Of course it was coming up to the Munich crisis. Frank Buchman himself was there and in great battling form for the future. "Men must choose either guidance or guns" was one of his statements. They were hoping against hope that some solution could be found before it was too late. Michael went... Alan Thornhill, one of his Oxford friends whom I'd met also when I went down, took Michael down to the League of Nations, in those days in its last hours. They went to these League assemblies. One highlight was, he remembered, Surya Sena the beautiful folk singer from Sri Lanka, or as it was called in those days Ceylon, singing, "There is a balm in Gilead" to all the tired diplomats, for hope was rapidly receding.

I, in turn, was invited to stay with a Swiss teacher and his wife in Zürich. Again, a very special feeling of being included in a completely Swiss background and I was enjoying myself there. I had my twenty-fourth birthday in their home, but things were going from bad to worse. It was decided that we should return to England. Professor Spoerri, a senior man in Zürich, got us together and said: "All English people should leave." So we went by train along the border of France and Germany. I will never forget the atmosphere, everyone seemed to look white with fear and apprehension. Great mobilisations of barbed wire and sandbags, and for the first time I realised what it must be like to live on a border with another potentially hostile country.

We travelled through and finally arrived back in London. London was also in a state of panic really because there had been no preparation for immediate war. All the government could do was to issue everybody with gas masks which you were told you had to carry everywhere. Even that was not exactly morale-building and notices were going up about air raid precautions. I went to the Milligans' home and we had a little meeting there one afternoon when Josie in her very practical way was going through all the things we would need to be ready to do if there was an air raid. For the first time that haunting feeling of war on the horizon came to the surface and I realised that it could be absolute reality and all the hidden fears came to the surface and my blood turned to water, and I just felt utterly weak and overwhelmed with the prospect.

Strangely enough, that was the only time I really had real fear about what might happen, because although at that point Chamberlain went to Prague, and the Munich crisis was resolved with this statement that he thought he had brought back peace in our time, that was the beginning of a year in which, as it became more and more inevitable, we seemed to go ahead then in a very matter-of-fact way and I don't remember that terrible sense of panic ever seizing me again. With Michael going back to Oxford for his first term of his final year, and the clouds of war lifted for the time being, I needed to look for a job. After a brief visit to East London to join with the MRA team who were working there in the East End to bring a new way of life to some communist families, I stayed for a little while, two or three nights I think



only, in one little East London home. Once again, that strange smell of poverty I remember so clearly, but cheerful people doing their best under the most restricted and what we would regard as unacceptable conditions.

After that I went back to the Milligans and this lady that Josie introduced me to, a very distinguished historian and she gave me a chance to find a job at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, a very distinguished place. It was called Chatham House and was placed in St James Square in the heart of West London. A little period there of working as a part-time secretary for a certain Colonel Steward who was arranging informal discussion groups. These informal discussion groups included the most famous names, and I used to sit demurely in a corner taking notes while these people talked about world affairs and what Britain should be doing and even such things as how to manipulate the Hong Kong currency! It was all well above my head but I enjoyed it very much.

Then I needed to fill out the job and I could not do the really, really highly educated press cutting work that was needed, so my friend Lois Simpson said to me one day: "I think, dear, that you should do a job more concerned with people"! So I looked around and I can't remember how it happened, but I found a place with the Quakers in the Germany Emergency Committee because they were, as usual, doing a job which nobody else had thought of, and that was to help the non-Aryan Germans. These were people whom Hitler had condemned as non-citizens because they had a Jewish grandmother or something of that kind. Many of them were Christians but they had no organisation to help them. The German Jewish Aid was doing its best for its own orthodox Jews because they had to get out of Germany or face an absolutely non-existent future.

I began to work with this group of people and by this time I was staying quite close by with a friend called Kathleen McClintock in a flat in Bloomsbury. I used to go in every morning and face the chance of meeting these people across a desk and collecting their qualifications and their reasons for being able to enter Britain. We would gather up these things and post them in to the Home Office and then wait for their reply. I was overwhelmed by the tragedies because if the reply was in the negative then they had to go back to face whatever people faced in Germany at that time, whether it was concentration camps or some terrible future. My struggles to learn German came in very appropriately now because I used it all the time and became more fluent with that language than I have with French.

I used to go back at night to the flat and very often cry myself to sleep with the thought of the hopeless situations that these people were in, but some were granted the status of "friendly alien" and they could stay in Britain. One of these was a man called Siegfried Zinn. Actually, he was applying to emigrate to Australia and we sent his very outstanding qualifications to Australia House, but alas, he was refused. He stayed on in Britain until in Holland there was another debacle and the Nazis took over and the people who had been secretly friends of the Nazis rose up and opened many opportunities for the Germans to come in. This, again, produced a panic reaction in the British government.

They swept up all these people who had been classed as "friendly aliens" and deported them. Siegfried Zinn was amongst them. He had been billeted with a woman in the Midlands and he loved the woods and the out-of-doors. He used to go on long walks and then he would come back to his lodgings and he was also a very brilliant design engineer and he would be working out his own original plans. This woman put two and two together and made ten and reported

him as a possible spy going on these long walks and then coming back and doing these drawings. So he was swept up with the rest, and ironically, having been refused an immigration to Australia, the ship he was on was sent out to Australia.

But I have covered more than a year and gone into 1940. In the meantime, back to 1939, when we started another year of really coming to terms with the fact that war was inevitable. I continued in the Germany Emergency Committee. Actually, before I moved to Bloomsbury when I was working at Chatham House and so on, I had the experience of sharing a flat with another Australian in the very heart of London. It was in Essex Street which was next to the Temple, the Inner Temple, next to Fleet Street and I used to love the feeling of going to work in the morning as a London working girl wearing black, of course. You had to wear black, it was fashionable, but of course, the reason was that if you wore anything else it was grubby by the end of the day.

London had this fantastic atmosphere of sooty coal smoke in the air which blackened everything and had the effect of a colour scheme which was quite attractive in itself. The buildings were all smeared with black but it gave them a sort of ancient and long-established look. Then you had the scarlet buses and the scarlet letter boxes which added highlights to the colouring, and even that funny sooty smell I found quite glamorous, and I would walk through to my place of work which was in one of the most beautiful parts of the West End, in St James's Square, and I stayed with Nancy Osborne who was my Australian friend there. She was thoroughly rooted into the London way and we shared these digs until I was asked to go to this flat in Bloomsbury with my friend who became a lifelong friend, Kathleen McClintock as she was then.

Life had many facets of colour and experience in such a short time and as 1939 drew on, Michael began to suggest that we get married. This caused a considerable revolution in my thinking because I had always thought that we would go back to Australia and have a nice summer wedding with lots of flowers and all our friends and relations, but as time drew on it came to September 1939 and the moment of decision was there because Chamberlain - the government - had issued an ultimatum to Hitler that if he took one more step, i.e. into Poland, Britain would declare war. I remember on September 1st I was in the office with my refugee and Quaker friends and one of the young women who had been in one of the European countries came dashing in and said, "They've started", and we all realised that the moment had come.

So I packed an overnight bag and decided to go down to join Michael in Oxford. Blackout had been introduced immediately and you could hear the crunch of military boots as the troops were being marched through to different destinations. I went to Paddington Station; it was absolutely crowded and the train to Oxford seemed to be already full. I managed to wriggle on board and got half in and half out of a carriage. I think there were about 12 people in it, including somebody's cat, and we all felt that the people who were staying behind were heroic. I struggled down to Oxford and Michael found digs for me. Overnight we began to think of the future. He was quite determined that he would join up as soon as the war began, and he wanted to join the Navy because he had always been fascinated by the Navy.

## *9. War, wedding, first home in Ardrossan, Scotland*

Then came [December incorrect] September 3rd, a Sunday, a lovely sunny Sunday and we were sitting in the sun beside a field where some militia were practising, and then the radio came over with the statement: Chamberlain declaring war against Germany who had not answered the ultimatum. William McKie turned up, he was then organist and choirmaster in Magdalen College [pr. Maudlen]. He announced his intention of going into the Air Force. Then Michael and I decided that whatever happened we would get married but he was then enlisting in the Navy and that would have to depend on when he got leave. Coming up to Christmas, I wrote to my family, told them what we were planning. It must have been a profound disappointment for my mother who was not going to have any part in the wedding of her eldest daughter but she bravely sent over the family lace veil and said I could use it, putting it in some peril of course.

I found a wonderful dressmaker in the high street in Kensington. I had designed my dress and for my two bridesmaids who were Sylvia - Sylvia Cust who was still in London - and Kathleen McClintock. The Milligans were to be our sponsors and he would give me away. As the time approached we had to wait until we got word that Michael had Christmas leave as he was now in training down at Brighton at the King Alfred training school. At that signal, this wonderful dressmaker got to work and did the three dresses most beautifully in white and crimson velvet for the bridesmaids. They were ready in time and the night before the date for the wedding, 23 December 1939, we all embarked on the Paddington train, Michael with his new uniform in a dress box and Sylvia and Kathleen and I carrying ours as well. Of course the chaos was such that you could not entrust them to any post.

It was freezing weather and when we arrived in Oxford it was hard to get a taxi. But the taxi waltzed around on the icy roads and finally delivered us at Cherwell, the home of Mrs Haldane, a very famous character who was the widow of a famous professor and the mother of Naomi Mitchison and Professor J.B.S. Haldane who was a pioneer in the science world. She was heroically giving us a base for our wedding, giving us a party after the service the following day. She was a marvellous person with an enormously warm heart and the most militant Tory views that you could ever encounter, with her son and daughter having taken the exactly opposite road. J.B.S. was a Communist.

William McKie generously said that he would give us the music for our wedding with his lovely Magdalen choir, but with no bride's mother and a totally inexperienced best man and two very, very, raw bride and bridegroom there ensued a chapter of accidents, each of which could have been regarded as a catastrophe in other circumstances. I am afraid we hardly noticed them! The weather was absolutely abysmal, so cold and so dark with the fog that we couldn't have our photos as I had hoped, a nice colour film for the family. That was the first point. The second point was that we had spent quite a lot of time and care and thought in devising a very beautiful order of service and you could still get nice paper and it was produced in time, but my dear absent-minded bridegroom left the stack of them on the counter of a pub, and it took us some time to retrieve them. I think some weeks later we sent them out.

Also, again, totally inexperienced in ways of the English winter, we omitted to have the church heated. It was a beautiful little church, St Peter in the East, a Norman church with big thick pillars and the most beautiful little chancel. How much our guests enjoyed the beauty of the church I don't know because they must have been absolutely frozen to their pews. We

didn't notice it at all, we felt quite warm! Oh dear, what a wedding. And then, because of the fog, Campbell Milligan who was coming down from London to give me away was delayed four hours (he and Josie arrived half way through the service) by the fog, and the train. So when I arrived at the church I had to make decision, what should I do? Well, there was Mike in the church and we were going to be married so all that I could do was to walk up the aisle on my own with my bridesmaids.

However, just as I got nearly to the end I observed that there was no bridegroom at the altar and with a sideways glance I saw that he was singing lustily "Love divine, all loves excelling", still in his pew. Fortunately, younger brother Peter came along as he was a groomsman of course and jabbed him between the shoulders and got him out to stand and wait for me. Oh, what an extraordinary day. I don't know how much other people noticed, they must have all thought it was quite hilarious. Having never done it before, we had no standard of comparison and we breezed happily on to our long choral Eucharist which, again, must have tried the endurance of our guests to the limit. It was a very beautiful service and I hope they enjoyed some of it.

Then we walked out together afterwards into the wide world for one and a half minutes of black and white photography which was all that could be managed. Kathleen and Sylvia were wonderful supports as my bridesmaids. We all went along to Mrs Haldane's for the wedding breakfast. Mrs Haldane herself was the absolute acme of patriotism and she, of course, obeyed all the rules of blackout and rationing so I had a wedding cake the size of a teacup just as a symbol and that lasted until our 25th anniversary, nobody dared to eat it! So our children at our 25th wedding anniversary sampled this very dry and crumbly thing which had been our wedding cake in Oxford in 1939.

We waited happily on the Oxford station between three and four hours before our train came in that was to take us down to Somerset for our honeymoon. Amazing that condition one is in when in love, time doesn't seem to matter much at all, and people were very understanding and tolerant. When we finally reached our destination, the taxi man had been waiting the same incredible length of time but was not at all cross, and drove us out to this little remote farmhouse called Wheddon Cross. It took in boarders. We had made it all very correct and we were not being obvious that we were on our honeymoon but when it came to bed time, the lady said; "How do you like your tea in the morning? Do you like a cup of tea in the morning?" And Mike said; "Well, personally, I do." So they weren't very slow on the uptake, so the cat was out of the bag and then from then on, they couldn't have been more kind and attentive to us.

We had two rooms, a little bedroom and an extremely creaky bed and a little sitting room with a fire which was lovely. We could sit and read our books and go out for frosty walks on the moors. The ten days went very, very, quickly. We had Christmas there of course, but the final touch was that on the way down in the train I thought Michael was looking rather flushed and it turned out in three days time that he had German measles when the spots came out. Oh dear, fortunately in those days we were not aware of the full implication of German measles. Then three weeks later I got it too. Before I leave the honeymoon, while we were revelling in our little idyll in this little place near Dunkery Beacon, at the same time the terrible news was coming over the radio of the Russian bombings of Finland, the Soviet war machine unleashed against this very small country and the incredibly valiant resistance of the Finns.

In a strange way we felt glad that we were not going to be permanently apart from all this, but we had this blessed interlude before returning, when we could take part or play our part whatever it needed to be, in the general battle between good and evil. Meanwhile, our hosts could not do enough for us, even rustling up strawberries and Devonshire cream in the middle of winter which we consumed by the fire and just revelled in being together for that brief time before we had to go back. I must add one element which I forgot to mention in our extraordinary wedding service. As the service proceeded and Campbell Milligan had not yet arrived, the leading question was asked: "Who giveth this woman?" Nothing daunted, our gallant four square, Mrs Haldane, stepped forward and said: "I do."

As Michael returned to Hove and I went on with my job in London, I used to spend weekends down there with him. The question soon arose: where was he going to be posted? After about three or four weeks it was announced that he was to go to Scotland, to a shore job on the Clyde at a fishing village called Ardrossan. I decided I would go up and join him, finishing off my job and entering another chapter. So after fond farewells in London, amongst them to Marga Hirschfeld, who was my dear little secretary, interestingly the daughter of the famous doctor Ludwig Hirschfeld who came out to Australia and became very well known in Geelong Grammar circles, where he was a most creative artist and completely remodelled the art school. He had been part of the famous Bauhaus movement in Germany before he left and came to Britain, well ahead of the critical times. They had Quaker associations and Marga joined us at the Germany Emergency Committee. She was a dear little friend and many others I can't mention now, but Bridget was one of them who came out to Australia and became Bridget Hodgkin.

#### TAPE 4 Side B

My friend Bridget who was to succeed me in the job of casework in Bloomsbury House subsequently came out to Australia and her husband, David Hodgkin, became the first registrar in the Australian National University. I don't know that it was the first, it was probably just registrar. And there were so many people to say goodbye to, but a lot you couldn't because communications were already in very short supply and people had moved to new addresses and war time appointments and so life was already disintegrating in London as we had known it, but the wonderful Milligans were still there at 106 Harley Street, regardless of their personal safety and they were a great resort and reference point for those of us who had no other home. It was saying goodbye to them and Sylvia who was still in London, but it was the last time I would see her for a number of years and she went to Canada (see her book, "Mallee Roots to New Horizons"). When eventually we did meet it was back in Australia when she returned home from there.

Bloomsbury House friends were working harder than ever with fewer people to work with, and it was sad to say goodbye to them, they had been wonderful team-mates. So it was done and I packed up and farewelled to Kay and Bloomsbury and travelled north to Glasgow and to Ardrossan. Michael met me and we went and stayed in a boarding house not far from Ardrossan. It was a very interesting experience that, because it was inhabited by a lot of wives of men who were working for the ICI which had been transferred up there, very disapproving of Scottish ways. You saw this strange superiority coming out.

I continued to have a rather hacking cough after this German measles and was not particularly energetic, but what it did mean, it brought on a little miscarriage which meant that the child



that was conceived while I had German measles would not come, and knowing what we know now, it may well have been for the best. We went looking for lodgings and finally we found this tall red stone house right on the Clyde looking across to the beautiful island of Arran and in this house lived a widow called, Mrs Christina Gilfillan. She had decided to let two of her rooms. We looked at them and liked them and one was a living room with a dining room table in it, and the other was a little bedroom upstairs, with the use of bathroom and kitchen. She looked at us in her shy way under her eyebrows and said: "Would twenty-three and sixpence a week be too much?" We were very pleased to have a little nest again of our own and we hired a piano very quickly to complete the picture in our living room, as I was still playing quite a lot.

It was a shock to realise that I, who had perhaps boiled an egg once a week when the maid was out, had to provide our total nourishment. As I said to myself, twenty-one meals a week. This was very heroically borne by Michael. He did get some food on board the ship, but I learnt the painful way, having never done anything like that before. Mrs Gilfillan had a garden at the back, quite a large piece, surrounded by a red wall and as this was February, I saw this long stretch of earth with a few sticks, I had no idea what was going to happen. This was my first intimate experience of the change of season. In Scotland, of course, it is more dramatic than anywhere. Before two months were out, this was a mass of green beautiful plants, bursting blossoms, perennials that grew to six feet high by the summer. So that was a little of the background of our first lodging, 1 Burnfoot, Ardrossan.

We got to know two MRA families at this stage. The Hutchisons lived in Glasgow which was only a short bus ride away and I went to stay with them at one point before Virginia evacuated with her four girls to Canada. The four were Ann, Janet, Ruth and Lesley. It was a typically Scottish home. It reminded me a little of our home in Geelong, tall two-storeyed house with plenty of room and plenty of room to keep your circulation going in the cold weather! And this family, with their father, Archie, who was a very cultivated man, a lawyer in Glasgow, had always practised having quiet times together. This was my first experience of seeing small children listening to God and writing down their thoughts. They seemed a very happy family and it all seemed to be very natural with them.

When Virginia knew that I was going to have a baby she did all the things that my mother would have loved to have done. Helped me buy all the necessaries in the Glasgow shops. A very practical and experienced person, so it was an enormous help I had all the things that I needed. She later evacuated to Canada with the children, which was very hard for Archie but they decided that this was the next thing to do, and although the bombing in Glasgow never reached calamitous proportions, at least he knew that they were safe and was able to have that amount of peace of mind.

I had great difficulty in persuading Mrs Gilfillan that there was need for any sort of air raid precautions at all. I was very conscientious about it, and I had bought myself some overalls and a bucket and a long handled shovel and all the things that they said you should have if you wanted to dispose of a fire bomb, but she thought I was just a little strange and went on her usual simple way of having a little stewed apple with some "dough balls" and having what we would call the extremely simple life. I did persuade her to put up some black-out curtains and the conscientious air raid wardens would always be coming down and coming round and checking to see that people were not showing any light. However, one day as I was going up the stairs I observed that the skylight was completely uncovered and I tried to explain the



seriousness of this to "Tinny", as we had now begun to call her. "Och," she said, "The air raid warden will never see it."

However, we did hear an air raid warning siren, and as we retreated under the stairs which was supposed to be the safest place to be, Tinny was going through some deathbed penitence. We heard this aeroplane go over but, fortunately, nothing dropped. It was probably just a reconnaissance plane and when we came out of that experience I think she understood that she needed to cover up that skylight amongst other things. She was a delightful person and we so enjoyed her very individual ways. When Michael came home during the day she always made herself scarce with consummate tact.

We also got to know some other wonderful friends, the Cochrane-Patrick family who lived at Ladyland a couple of hours away from Ardrossan - Sir Neil and Lady Cochrane-Patrick and their three daughters, Nora and the twins, Margaret and Kathleen. Nora and Margaret were away quite a bit of the time at this stage when they were working for Moral Re-Armament in London, but Kathleen was at home, no less active, but with her parents and she became a close friend and used to come over in her little car to visit me in Ardrossan when Michael was at sea. The house I want to really describe because it was rather unique. It was a lovely old Scottish manor house or laird's home, I don't think they call them manor houses in Scotland, it was the residence of the laird and it was built of old greystone on the edge of a burn flowing nearby and it had a separate walled garden which was traditional in those days.

[inaudible] [Everything] during the day when not out of doors, took place in the big old hall which was on ground level. Also it was the domain of the three big dogs who gave it their own atmosphere! A conservatory opened out of it and there were always colourful flowers, winter and summer. Meals were upstairs in the dining room. At breakfast there was porridge and choice of one or two other dishes. Porridge might be consumed with home grown cream or milk and one was allowed to walk about while eating it. The laird always did, surveying all the approaches to the house. In more ancient times, the neighbours were not always friendly, but it is a very good digestive process I think, walking up and down while eating the porridge. Luncheon was always a full two course meal and tea was downstairs at 5.00 o'clock by the fire, with piles of fresh baked scones and jam to be consumed after a strenuous afternoon in the garden.

A full scale formal dinner in the evening after all this came as an amazement but I usually managed to eat most of it. Kathleen Cochrane-Patrick was an enthusiastic gardener, beautiful little plants were put in all along the banks of the burn and when they were brought into the house they were arranged in little bowls of the moss that they had been growing in. I always remember that very special touch. The bedrooms upstairs were very comfortable with open fires and I always loved staying there on the occasional weekend when I was invited to go and join them. It was a marvellous aspect of life in Ardrossan. The other was a very dear friend as I began to get to know her, she was the wife of an ICI worker, David Hunter, her name was Mary. She had a little three year old son. We met often and talked quite deeply, and she began to have quiet times. That friendship went on all the time I was there until I went away to have the baby.

There came a chance to have a leave with Michael over on the island of Arran, that was in June. This was an absolutely delicious summer and we were completely uninhibited by the fact that I was pregnant. We hired bicycles and rode round the island and on the very last

morning we decided we must get to the top of Goat Fell which is the great peak at the top of the island. We were terribly lucky, it was one of those absolute jewels of a morning, no mists or fogs and when we finally reached the top of the mountain after a pretty tough scramble there was the whole of the West Coast of Scotland, all the isles and mountains and bays looking absolutely like a Disney set, we couldn't believe the colours, everything ranging from turquoise through to emerald, through to sapphire to - it was just so breathtaking and although I never got to the highlands because they were a restricted area in the war years, I carry that with me always as my picture of the Western Isles.

Meanwhile, Michael was patrolling them regularly, up and down to the very north as part of the job of surveillance on that part of the coast. He wrote me once and said: "I am getting paid for doing this." This leave was the result of a decision which Michael had felt he must make after the Italians came into the war, that he would volunteer for service at sea. I naturally felt this was premature; why meet trouble half way? Here we were in this very happy little position on the shore. I felt very keenly about it so we both listened for [inaudible] ... telling us what to do. As we were quiet, it came to me quite clearly that it was the right move. We both agreed and went ahead and I went off and ironed a shirt for him.

That was a turning point for us and, of course, I feared that he would be putting himself in danger before he needed to, but who knows, if he had waited until he was posted somewhere we had no idea where that would have been or what would have happened. In this case I think we did make the right choice, me staying on at Burnfoot while he went down to Dorset to train. At this stage I think he and his little group of trawlers were the front line of defence against the continent and Hitler was poised on the other side of the Channel. They were strange and extraordinary days. I went down at one point to be with him at Southampton, I never felt the hot weather so much as I did down there. I was absolutely spifflicated with the damp heat, possibly partly due to being pregnant.

It was at the same time that we were hearing about the evacuation from Dunkirk and it all seemed very natural that the British were sending out rescue ships and nothing much was being made of it. But of course it was all due to this extraordinary damped-down news that we got all the time through the censorship and I expect if all had been laid bare as it is these days, morale of the country could well have collapsed. As it was, we just carried on day after day. Michael came back for a final leave and was posted to Ireland. We heard Churchill's famous speech, often referred to: "We will fight them on the beaches, etc, etc," in the midst of a most idyllic summer afternoon surrounded by the fresh spring leaves of the hedgerows and fields. Warm sun and everything - blue sky you could hardly believe. It was about this time that I heard from Sylvia to say that she was leaving for Canada. She tells the story in her book, "From Mallee Roots to Far Horizons." So that meant that my closest friend was also leaving Britain at the same time as Michael started to take up his training in Weymouth for anti-submarine detection.

So I was doubly glad to have these friends in Scotland. Of course the Milligans were still in London and kept in touch and my friend Kay Kinahan or Kay McClintock as she still was then, was practising medicine in the south but there was no to-ing and fro-ing in those days, every communication and every piece of travel had to have a special reason. So I was doubly glad to have the friendship of these Scottish people, the Cochrane-Patricks and my friend Mary and they were wonderful to me, especially the Cochrane-Patricks having me out to stay

in their lovely place. It was a real support and encouragement and, of course, I was becoming more pregnant and arrangements would have to be made. So, again, life was not simple.

### *10. Robert*

Various friends who had medical knowledge in Scotland suggested that we have the services of a very good obstetrician who was in Scotland in Edinburgh, but his hospital had been transferred to Dumfries. In Dumfries, there was a wonderful couple called John and Milly Gall [pr. "Gaul"], and they were very supportive if I had to go down there, but the whole emphasis was on having a good doctor and nobody really had the slightest idea of what the conditions were in this emergency hospital. The standards of hospitals, particularly of the public kind in Scotland at that time were never particularly high but in wartime it was even more difficult. However, the time came for me to go and look and we went down to be interviewed and to have a consultation with this doctor and Mary came down with me to Dumfries in the train. I can still see her little boy, Billy, marching up and down the platform singing, "High Diddle Dee, an Actor's Life for Me."

We decided that that was probably the thing to do. So when the time came I packed up all my things from 1 Burnfoot, my personal things and thought, well, I would have to bring the baby back there. There didn't seem to be anywhere else to go after the birth and we went off down to Dumfries. By this time, Michael had tried to organise some sort of Christmas leave as the baby's expected arrival was after 20th December or 15th or 18th December. As so often happens in these things, I went down and we were staying in a hotel, but for a whole week we stayed there and there was no sign of the baby moving or coming. Finally, however, he had to go back and on 22nd December I began to have labour pains and was taken to the hospital. Without these friends, John and Milly Gall, I don't know what I would have done.

I was supposed to have a private room, well, this turned out to be an enormous bare room, freezing cold, no carpets on the floor, no curtains, just the most bare necessities and one bed in the middle of it all. It seems extraordinary in the light of standards these days, but I was left with my pains by myself in that room for a very long time. Occasionally a nurse would come in and see if I was still alive, but it went on and on. I have never felt so utterly on my own. However, it came to an end and the baby was born and, again, I was overwhelmed by the most irrational bliss, bathed in it, I felt absolutely ecstatic and I didn't care a bit that I was left on the labour couch for I don't know how long after he arrived. They took him away of course. In those days the child was taken and cleaned up and only when presentable and wrapped up again was it presented to its mother.

At the same time in the same labour ward there was a girl having her baby. I tried to make conversation with her, but she would hardly talk and she was terrified during the labour process. I learned later that she was having an illegitimate baby and had no idea of what was to happen to her or to the baby after it was born. Also, beside me in the ward when I returned to it, there was a Canadian service wife in the next door room. I heard sounds of great grief and it turned out that her baby had been stillborn. This is in January in Scotland and I think the cold is the thing I remember more than anything else and these very starched sisters calling in and out. There was only one that I really felt at liberty to express any humanity at all. They were all extremely professional. However, our little Robert had arrived, and that was the main thing, and my great friend, Milly Gall, came to call and keep in touch at all possible visiting hours.

As the days went by I wasn't very happy about the baby and there was no one I could talk to. The obstetrician professionally appeared every so often, I don't think it was very often, and I asked the sisters if there was anything wrong with him. One of them said, "If you ask no questions, you will be told no lies." He soon got a cold and he was most reluctant to feed and the combination of that and the freezing air, no doubt, very soon brought on cracked nipples which are one of the most painful things when you are trying to help a baby to take his nourishment. By the twelfth day I began to feel that there was something desperately wrong and it was such an extraordinary situation for one like me who had been really so spoilt all their lives. If anything was wrong with us at home as I have described when I had diphtheria, everything was laid on, a special trained nurse at home and consultations with all the other medicos, and here there was no reference point.

I think in the excitement at getting the best obstetrician, there had been no thought of a paediatrician and there was no such thing in the hospital. By the 18th day, January 14th, it was right near the end. Just a day before that the obstetrician came in and spoke to me and told me that they had diagnosed what was wrong, it was an infection of the kidney, whether congenital or infected I was never to know. The result was he went first very, very yellow and then very, very blue, poor little mite. One night I heard him crying, I could recognise his cry, and I went along the corridor and there in a laboratory with a gas fire burning they had his little crib in front of the fire trying to keep some warmth around him. Fortunately, when the last moments came, I was allowed to get up and see him. They had a heating apparatus going and he was stripped naked and that was the only time I ever saw him naked, and this woman, this nice Scottish lass, who had some feeling was in charge, and I watched him struggle for his last breath. Finally, she said in a soft Scottish voice, "He's away."

At that point a very officious matron bustled in and said, "Now kiss baby goodbye, dear" and I had just had enough and I burst out at her, "Can't you leave me alone with him now?" So they all withdrew. I just knelt down and gave him back to God, there was nothing else I could do. I didn't even have the confidence to gather him up in my arms. In some strange way, he belonged to the hospital. I just went back to bed and went out to it. Michael, meantime, was still at sea thinking that all was well. So it was a very hard task and a terrible stunning shock for him when he rang Milly to get the latest news when he returned a couple of days later to hear what had happened. He had only had the one... I had been haunted by a growing feeling during the last six days that I was going to lose Robert.

I remember one grey afternoon, a black raven flew across the window croaking in a most ominous manner, and then when I went out for a walk to get some exercise, of course, I could have been out of the hospital by then, I wandered on fairly directionless and ended up at the cemetery. So I turned back and realised that it was going to be that way. The doctor was, although sort of not really expert in the baby situation, when he finally came and spoke to me was very human and also very real because they had had their own particular tragedy, when a three month old child had died of cot death, a very terrible thing for any family, and he told me this so that I knew that he was trying to convey that he understood what I was going through.

But above all through that time Milly's faithful and heart-whole friendship meant absolutely everything. In fact I think it saved my reason. She would visit me every day and I would tell her what I was feeling and she would reply with her own deep sympathy and faith. She was

over 40 and had never had a child, but she understood in the inspired way people do when they are in touch with God, and I will never forget how much she saved me at that time. And then her open-hearted way of inviting me to come back and stay in their home. At the same time she had had another friend, Isobel Gellatly staying with her who was due to go to the hospital and she went either a few days - a day or two before or a day or two after, I can't remember - a day or two before I went back to the Galls' home, because soon after, while I was sitting there trying to recover, she was due to bring her second baby home, with no problems, thank God.

But when I heard the movement at the front door and I knew that this was Isobel coming back with her baby I had a huge resistance to going to say hello. I just did not want to know, and as I sat there by the fire - I could still see the little mantelpiece as I was staring at it - a voice said in my heart, "If you close your heart now you will take a bitter turn. It's up to you to decide." I found myself getting to my feet and joining Milly at the front door to welcome Isobel and her baby and there seemed to come a healing out of that, because once I realised I'd never been very interested in small babies, very young babies. Of course Robert was different, passionately different, but now after that small decision I suddenly found I had a love for all babies, and that was a transformation in my nature and an enriching in my life from then on.

Meanwhile friends and family across the world were longing to help, but war restricted everything. Josie Milligan in London specially wanted to come up and be with me but she could not travel. So, she did the next best thing and asked a friend of hers who lived nearby in Dumfriesshire to come in and help and that was May Dauber, Lady May Dauber. She proved an absolute staunch support for the next month or so. She happened to come in the very afternoon that Robert was dying, she and Milly Gall, and they came the next day and took over all the arrangements for me.

Then I went back to stay with a very kind, very quiet lady called Mamie Reid who had a large grey stone house in Dumfries and there we had the little funeral. Robert died on the 14th and the funeral was on the 16th and Michael didn't get back into port until the 18th. It was an extraordinary reunion because we just seemed to be miles apart. He had all the Naval training now of keeping up morale and keeping a stiff upper lip and making sure we didn't collapse in any way, and he arrived in a very - sort of putting on a rather cheerful face, and I was devastated because I had just kept myself going in order to be able to comfort him and he didn't appear to be feeling it.

Of course it was frightfully difficult; he hadn't been through the whole business and he'd never set eyes on his little son, whereas he was desperately anxious about me, and as I seemed to have come through it and was able to face life again that was an enormous relief to him. But alas, the physical thing wasn't finished because I had these very swollen breasts with the extra milk that I couldn't get rid of and the weather still continued to freeze and frost. The result was that I developed an abscess in one breast.

The local GP tried to get me into a nursing home but they were all full to bursting with the flu epidemic. So instead he got me a bed in the local public infirmary in the women's surgical ward. There must have been about 20 cases in there. They put me up at the end with a little screen round which I think I asked to have taken away because really the plight of these other women was so much worse than mine that I felt almost an interloper. I remember a cheerful little body opposite me who had six children and was having a hysterectomy, and then another



poor old lady beside me who had some appalling stomach operation, and right at the end was another old woman who had gangrene and was in terrible agony. And I felt so spoilt because May Dauber used to come in every day and supplement the incredibly meagre hospital diet. Just for the public patients all that was supplied was a basic bread and margarine three times a day and a cup of tea, and in the middle of the day the main meal which could be a spoonful of fish and a spoonful of rice. That is what they were living on unless they had families who could bring in the extra supplies. So, May acted as family and she brought me all sorts of extras which made...

#### TAPE 5:

The nurses in the hospitals did their best with very poor working conditions and under very difficult physical conditions with the lack of modern conveniences. Every patient was looked after with bed baths and bed pans and a terrific amount of emptying and to-ing and fro-ing with these things. They really did their best. There were no walking patients. Nobody walked about.

I just had this general anaesthetic for the breast abscess and then every day the dressings would follow, so that it was a very strenuous life for the nurses. But I got to know the people round the ward and it really made me feel very, very fortunate that I had so little wrong with me.

I was there for three weeks. Michael came back on another leave and was able to come in and see me. Things were still not very good. I mean we were still a bit at cross-purposes but he had to go back to the ship again very soon. So, our friends arranged for us to stay, as I left the hospital, with the most remarkable character called Elsie Lindsay who had a home out in the country near Beeswing. Their place was called Locharthur. She most kindly had us to stay.

I remember she was one of these unique characters. Rationing, of course, was very, very difficult and meat was hard to get and as some visitors were leaving Elsie disappeared and there was a gun-shot from an upstairs window, and in less time than it takes to tell, they were presented with a warm parcel, a rabbit already skinned and cleaned and ready to cook. She was a character.

So, we stayed there - I think Michael stayed for a weekend and he had to go back. I stayed there a little longer, and finally the Cochrane-Patricks asked me to go there again, and that was a wonderful time of recuperation in that lovely home. They were still living more strenuously because their staff had been called up and Kathleen was working like a beaver to cover all that needed to be done, so I was doubly appreciative of all their care and thought.

Finally, Mike came for a leave. Really, an Easter leave I think it was, and we had some very, very wonderful times together, a really healing time. They were something to be deeply thankful for. I think I had got over some of my shock, and he had begun to understand more deeply what I had been through.

Mike was based on Belfast at this point and when he came over for leave we did various trips through the country, one to Oxford and then to Tirley and then back to Belfast where we got to know the delightful MRA team there who were full of life and humour and he had got to



know them and been convinced by them that it was a good way of life. Amongst them were, of course Denis and Nora Hanna who has remained a life-long friend since.

It was at this time that he had started writing the ballad of the Jervis Bay. I had written to him and said, "Why don't you write a ballad about this marvellous episode: 'Captain Fogarty Fegen sailed in the Jervis Bay?'" Well, it didn't exactly get to that rhythm but it was an increasingly wonderful poem. The Hannas were highly enthusiastic, and we had the first complete reading of it in their home.

We also went to a leave in Southern Ireland and explored the magical Wicklow mountains which are very, very special, with their series of tiny churches built by St Kevin. Then we went to a quiet little village in Antrim, County Antrim, to a house lent by a relation of Hilda Hannon and having completed that leave, we went back to Britain because Michael had a new - his ship had been altered and he was moving from "Gavotte" to "Wastwater", which was to be his home for nearly two years.

I went with him and we went and stayed in Aberdeen with some friends there. A unique place. Nothing could possibly be as cold, but it was a very fascinating - a headquarters for the fishing industry. The Woods, for instance, lived at Aberdeen. So, he was then being told that they would be posted to Iceland. This seemed appalling. However, off he went.

Then a little later I got a message to say he was coming back, but not for long, alas. Just at the point where we knew that Peter was on the way, I farewelled him at Aberdeen one chilly evening and he went off to Iceland. So, what was I to do next?

### *11. Invitation to Tirley Garth, Cheshire*

I wasn't left long in doubt. I was given a warm invitation by Nora Cochrane-Patrick to go and join the family at Tirley, Tirley Garth, near Chester. I was there for the Christmas and I remember it was the first time I had experienced a real Christmas tree with crib and all the magic and amongst other things while we were singing carols, "Away in a Manger" reduced me to tears because it reminded me so strongly of my childhood. One of the carols we always had.

I was there for 19 months, really, and Peter grew, became more imminent. I was sharing a room with Stella Corderoy and a couple of others. Joan Buxton, sacrificial Joan, who would keep her freezing window open so that I could have enough oxygen. Marvellous. The fourth member of the clan was Dilly, Dilly Dice. She was Dilly something else from South Africa.

In this very large and complex household, it was decided that it would be better for me if I could go and stay at the Lodge which is a little cottage at the bottom of the drive where Mrs Nicholson, the wife of the chauffeur, reigned supreme. She absolutely adored her little home and when it was proposed that some strange female should come and share it with her it really caused considerable resistance.

So, I went there and Stella came with me to keep me company in the two-bedroom upstairs. But dear old Mrs Nick, she came round and in the end became a most wonderful friend, as you will hear. We were, of course, just constantly writing letters and not getting any replies either to Australia or to Iceland. In fact, I heard later from Michael that they had been waiting

for their Christmas mail and there had been some muddle in the naval organisation and it was sent off somewhere else. So, they had no letters at Christmas. Thank God those who wrote, including me, did not know that at the time. There was nothing we could have done about it.

We lived in this little bedroom upstairs. There was no bath. Actually there was a bath. It was in the kitchen, but it was the workbench. So, you never looked at the bath, and there was a hand basin upstairs next door to the little lavatory, a hand basin, fairly small and half way up the wall, and I became expert at getting clean by standing in another basin and washing myself from the hand basin. This in an advanced stage of pregnancy was quite an athletic achievement!

Stella and I worked away. She used to go up to the house and do her jobs in the running of the place, and I would do what I could. Went up and did some laundry and sorting laundry and so on. Of course the gardens at Tirley were absolutely magical and more and more did they become so as summer advanced. We would have, you know, meals outside and so on. It was a very beautiful setting and the walk from the lodge up to the house was quite reasonable. It was just a short walk up the drive, absolutely smothered in daffodils in the spring.

In the end the moment came when I would have to go into Chester to have the baby. He was due on 12 July, possibly the 10th, so there being no private use of cars or anything like that, we had to make very sure that I got into the Chester Nursing Home in time. So, I went into this very nice homely place, about the opposite antithesis of the Scottish experience and they would bring me nice tea and thin bread and butter in the afternoon and I would go out and walk in the town and try and bring on the baby. But he wouldn't come. So, after having, you know, a heavy dose of castor oil and a hot, hot bath and all the things that are supposed to induce labour, I gave up and decided I would walk the whole way round the walls of Chester, which I most foolishly undertook by myself, because if anything had started I really would have been in a muddle. But round I went past the ancestral castle to King Charles' tower, which the Wettenhalls had been cavaliers, so they had been part of that part of the show - and back to the nursing home and at last something began to happen, and Peter arrived after not too bad a time.

The local doctor, Dr Paul, was quite a nice humane sort of man. But the usual thing happened, of course. My babies always arrived in a rush at the last minute and completely defeated the medicos because they weren't expecting them. I don't know, they thought they would be another day or two, or hour or so, or something. So, as I emerged from the rather crude chloroform which had been plugged on to my nose by the sisters to await the doctor, I blearily cocked an eye and said, "Who arrived first, Peter or Paul?" But, oh what a difference. The baby was brought in and put in a cot beside me, and although I was still in a state of delayed nerves, after Robert, there was only one occasion when I got a bit of a panic. I heard some rushing feet outside and Peter wasn't with me and I wondered if something had gone wrong. But it hadn't.

I knew that Michael by this time was in New York on the verge of going out for a three week tour of the Caribbean, at which point he would hear nothing. So, the day passed and we knew that he had gone and I sat up in bed and I prayed that he would know that all was well and that it was Peter. And a very strange thing happened because out at sea, far out at sea, he was having his quiet time in his cabin and the thought came to him, "All is well, and it's Peter."

So, that relieved the tension for a little while, until he could get back and get the established phone call from Key West, which was another three weeks away.

Peter on the whole was a very good baby and I just loved looking at him in his cot, very red in the face and large fists. But the nurses were all very cheery and very like a home from home. When I was getting to the walking about stage I wandered into the nursery, and there were all these nappies hanging on fenders around the fire and the idea of, you know, these frightfully aseptic set-ups with glass windows and all the rest was far from their mind.

He fed very well, actually. In fact he was an extremely good trencherman. Just got on with it. Maisie Fletcher was a wonderful friend at that point. She really tried to step in and make up for the lack of a mother in the situation, and also Irene Prestwich, who was the owner of Tirley and who was a very sweet and sensitive person. So, how I got back to Tirley, I am not quite sure, but I ended up back in the lodge with Peter and his bath and his cradle and all the things.

But one unfortunate thing was that he had collected a little set of boils on his legs. Now, I think that happened because I got a slight infection in my breast. Anyway, we went through the usual sort of minor unpleasant little hazards of boils and looking slightly jaundiced and one thing and another. But of course, he became the idol of every eye. Nobody had seen a baby around Tirley. I had to have an automatic answer to, "How is Peter?" every time I passed anybody.

But he was really a very good and cheerful and happy baby and I was meticulous in my program: 2, 6, 10; 2, 6, 10; 2, 6, 10. Yes, I had to start at 6 in the morning and feed him. I just spent the whole day feeding him and attending to him and bathing him and one thing and another. And I was allowed, very happily, to get on with that, for a while.

Approaching Christmas, with the dark days, something terrible happened with Peter. I went downstairs to collect a hot water bottle for him. He slipped off the chair where I had put him and fell on the edge of the fire. It was pitch dark, no telephone, absolutely no resource apart from legs - and dear old Mrs Nick, she absolutely ran all the way up to the house to get help. Then people began to come down and tried this and that.

But I, fortunately, gave him his evening feed. He was sobbing, and all of the rest of it, but he took it, every bit. But then the local doctor came and she said he should be taken into the hospital because shock in a 4½ month could be very fatal. We went into the local village and I stayed with someone over night. In those days nobody ever dreamt of a parent staying in a hospital, and I stayed and I fed him and gave him his last feed, went along at 6 o'clock in the morning to see if he was still going, and gave him another one, and from then on we knew that he had taken both, so all was well. The doctor was sure that having been able to have three feeds immediately following the accident had saved his life because it saved him from the shock. So, I was thankful for that.

Tirley Garth was a unique establishment. It had been the evacuation centre for the work of the Oxford Group and was being virtually run by retired women who had left their own flats and homes and come to live there and to help run it. Plus a land girl group who were making the gardens into a market garden. That worked very well.

Most productive, but all the lawn tennis courts and things that had been there before were ploughed up and they used to take the lorry in once a week with vegetables for the market in Liverpool. Amongst their number was a botanist, Margot Appleyard, Mary Wilson, who was the business manager, and Sherry Oram, who had never had a flat-heeled pair of shoes on in her life, I think, who had to get herself real mucky in the early morning as they got around and dug potatoes and so on.

And there were two or three others, but it worked extraordinarily well. It must have been terribly strenuous. They would get up in the small hours and very early hours of the winter morning, spend 7 hours in the garden, come in, get clean and dressed and in the evening they would take meetings and write articles. They were really quite inexhaustible.

Meantime, I was rather floating about with my baby in the pram, and I would do, you know, mild jobs, and sort the laundry and all that sort of thing. Light duties. But then when Peter was 10 months old, a friend from Surrey said, "Do come and stay." This was Ursula Hallows. So, Peter and I packed up for this great adventure. Went off in the train to Horsham.

Lo and behold, after we had been there two days a telegram arrived from Michael: "Arriving on" what ever it was: two days at that time. Of course, he had no idea where I was. So, we managed to be in touch and he came down to Surrey and met his son for the first time at the age of 11 months. So, it was a very great occasion, but alas that very second day, the adorable son of the Hallows, Rupert, aged 7, contravened the regulations and took his bike out onto the main road and was killed.

It was the most extraordinary coming together of joy and grief that you could possibly imagine. But we stayed there until after the funeral and Michael wrote a beautiful poem for him. Then we went back to Tirley to the little Lodge and dear old Nicky couldn't do enough for us. She was thrilled to have us. Stella had gone up to the house and we had the little upstairs bedroom and downstairs sitting room. I think she [Nicky] had moved out. I didn't try to take it in. Moved out of her sitting room - made it available anyway. I think she lived mainly in the kitchen. She made it available for us.

So, that was a very hot summer and we had great fun getting to know each other with the baby, with Peter. Michael started a course in which he had to bicycle into Chester every day in his full serge uniform. Poor man, and we didn't even have a bathroom. So, he would have to get cool with the double basin technique. At this point we realised a christening could take place and they put a lovely little service on in Tirley Hall, the hall at Tirley Garth, with one of the local parsons who was a very nice chap.

Doug Allen, Michael's friend, came up to be his godfather. Stella was godmother, and a good time was had by all. Lawson [Wood]'s presence as a godfather, which was prevented by the London fire service, was replaced by the gift of a teddy bear, which became part of the family for the next 50 years or so.

At that time, I had been doing quite a bit of singing. It was one of our main recreations in Tirley. We had a very good chorus of voices. Maisie Fletcher was the great supporter of this musical activity which was run by Mary Wood. Michael and I began to feel that it was time we started another member of the family, and this was rather deplored because it might make it impossible for me to be in the front row of the chorus. The extraordinary thing was that

Maisie aided and abetted this idea and as a result the second baby was on its way before very long.

## *12. Heswall*

That second baby happened to be our musician, so that was a rather amusing outcome: Penelope. As she progressed we began to realise the Lodge was going to be too small. So, where to go? Michael had gone back to base and we had to find somewhere else to live. Out of the generosity of her heart, Margo Stallybrass - no, Margo Bigland, as she was in those days - who lived in a big old house on the Heswall coast, offered to have us in her home.

So, the great move was made and in February or so, 1944, we moved out of the Lodge and went to stay in Heswall. Dear old Mrs Nick, who had so resisted the idea of her home being invaded, wept when we left. She adored Peter, and continued to do so all her life. We went to Heswall. We were there for about - a couple of months, and then I was due to go to the hospital.

Sure enough it turned out to be the same room where Peter had arrived. We had a rather, as usual, disturbed timetable. Michael had to take leave, you know to take spot luck really, or pot luck as to when to be free. So, he took leave ending on 18th April. No sign. No sign of a baby. However, on 16th, whether it was wishful thinking or whatever, I began to feel some "movement on the station", and in those days there was no way of getting, except by ambulance, so I had to go into Chester from Heswall by ambulance. And there I was landed in the hospital as a patient.

I was in my nightclothes, actually. Next day I woke. There was nothing abnormal at all. I rang Mike and said, "For heaven's sake come in" - it was the last day of his leave - "and bring me some clothes." So, we wandered about Chester and went to a movie to which I always attribute the final outcome. It was called, "The Nelson Touch" and it incorporated every single horror that can happen to a ship at sea.

So, we went back to the hospital when that was over and Mike had to go back to Heswall and take off the next day back to his ship. When we got back there was no sign of anything so we said good night and he said he'd call in in the morning on his way. Lo and behold it was quite soon after Mike left that Penelope started. After nine hours, 5.30 in the morning she arrived, and when he rang at 8 o'clock they told him that he had a daughter. He wouldn't believe it. Asked Margo to ring and find out if it was true.

So, he came dashing in and at about 9 o'clock that morning, here was this little daughter. I felt equally incredulous because up to then I had had two boys. We had a lovely time looking at her and enjoying her and so on. She really was a very sweet baby and had long spindly fingers that kept wiggling. Then after having met her he went back to the ship. That was Penelope's beginning.

They gave no preparation to potential pregnant women. You had no exercises or training of any sort or kind. So, you just took it the hard way. It was not until we came back to Australia that I learnt a few of the rudiments which was very revolutionary.

Living with Margo was a saga of dramatic events. At one point - we had missed, actually, the air raid which had happened just before we arrived. Margo looked after her old dad who was a very tough and sort of "Dad's Army" type. Great at making huge pieces of furniture out of huge amounts of wood. And an old nanny who was slightly querulous but was there, you know, rather incapacitated.

They had a very dramatic escape, really, when the Germans bombed Heswall, thinking it was Liverpool, and Margo woke to find the door blown in from her bedroom, lying on top of her on her bed, and then struggled out to find her father struggling into his battle dress to get them downstairs and dear old nanny who was slightly querulous but had to be helped down the stairs in a very deliberate and delaying sort of way, and then, of course, there was the dog Henry, a big black smelly poodle.

The great air raid shelter was under the kitchen table for this assembled company. We weren't there then. No, it was before we arrived, but Margo's graphic descriptions do not die. As she had her head under the table - nobody would move Henry, he was in his basket centrepiece under the table. The rest of them put their heads under. Margo, looking sideways observed that her father had achieved getting the top of his battle dress on, but his poor little unprotected behind in underpants, was sticking out in a very vulnerable situation. That is typical of some of the Margo stories.

Doing it the hard way was very typical of the British. They were restricted to two gas rings for cooking. I don't quite know why, but Margo used to dash from the dining room to the kitchen with these double boilers on the top of the gas ring, and at one point I suggested - they resided in the fender of two fires - I suggested that we might put them up on a box, we might get a little less stooping to do the stirring, but these sort of makeshift ways were totally accepted and gradually I worked my way into this household and trying to keep my babies fed and clothed.

Peter was an adorable 2 at that point and very, very communicative. He loved words and he practised them on everybody he met... Penelope screamed for the first two or three days she came back from the hospital. Heavens knows what had happened to her there. As usual there had been no bonding or mothering or any of these things they do for the newborn babies. It was just wrap the child up and take it away sort of thing.

Anyway, we got on all right and the children grew up happily and finally we decided that we must get some little place where we could live by ourselves. Margo had some Scottish relations called Hannay, Dorothy Hannay, and they most kindly allowed us to rent their little house, called "Thurston", where we could live at a very small rent. It was furnished and we had upstairs and downstairs. So we transferred over there and Lucy Todd, who was also part of the family in Heswall at that time, helped us move.

She was another very good friend who lasted through the years. She was teaching in Heswall. Then ensued the six most strenuous months of my life. I was on my own in a completely unusual environment. It was English conditions with wartime added on, terrific rationing, everything extremely short, and no transport except your bicycle. So I tried to keep the routines going with the babies, cook food, do the nappies and dry them, but the only place to dry them was in the kitchen where there was a boiler because the weather was pretty frightful.



We didn't have much fine weather and this boiler which heated the water for the bath, etc, had a certain amount of warmth you see which went into the kitchen and the rest of the house and I used to have to string the nappies up above the boiler and they'd sit there until they were pretty well stiff and about three days later I could pull them off and turn them into a useable article again, but everything was done very much the hard way and shopping, everything, you had to go and fetch on the bike and then sometimes it was out of stock and so on.

I had a couple of women who came in to clean. Mrs Hoyle was a delightful woman from Glasgow, very cheerful, the best of British, you know that cheerful type, and then there was Mrs Ledbetter and I left her in charge one morning while I went down to the village - it was Saturday morning - and Peter was about 2½ I suppose, yes, 2½, and suddenly when I came back there was no Peter and I said to Mrs Ledbetter, "What's happened to Peter?". "Oh, he ran away," she said. "I called him but he wouldn't stop."

So with a great gulp of panic I turned around on my bike and rode all the way back to the village asking if anyone had seen a little boy in green overalls and someone would say, "Oh, yes, I saw him running down there," or, "Oh, yes, I saw him this way." So I went back to the village street and looked right along - it was quite straight - and in the distance I saw this little figure weaving its way on and off the footpath in the distance, having great fun running around, and fortunately the traffic was not sort of formula [?] whatever it is, but I finally caught up with him and brought him back.

I said, "Peter, what on earth did you think you were doing?". "I wanted to go and play with Colin." Colin lived next door. So anyway that was one little episode of the stresses and strains of life, but on the whole we managed and I got so exhausted that I put off having my meal until I got the children fixed and so on and then I'd drop on the hearth rug and sleep about half past 8 and wake to the grizzly sounds of the national anthem being played by the [ABC incorrect] BBC at the end of the evening's program.

So life at that point was very difficult but it was cheered by the fact that Mike could come back every six weeks on leave from his shore job now on the east coast, so at least we saw each other occasionally and he could see the children occasionally. The only disadvantage was that my desperately constructed routines used to go all to pieces every six weeks, but that was a time when we began to realise that we could have a home life and so that went on until...

#### TAPE 5 Side B

I must mention the four good friends that gave me great support at this time. There was Margo, who didn't drop her connections with us when we left her home. She used to come round and she had a certain amount of commonsense advice which was always helpful. Then there was Dorothy Thomson, a sweet person who lived with a family up in Heswall. She used to come and play with the children and take them out and so on, which was another great thing, and she and her sister, Mona Rooke, presented them with this wonderful carved set of blocks and with all the pictures, the Victorian pictures. They must have been about 100 years old then. Victorian pictures and that wonderful wooden work - what do they call it when they have edges - dovetailed edges, so that they stood up to the most amazing wear over 100 years. Last of all was Pauline, a French-Swiss married to a very nice Englishman called - what was

his name - Milray Caine. They had a home not far away and they helped to look after the children occasionally and so on.

So with those four I was very greatly upheld and we used to try and work things out as to how you did things through teamwork and so on and we once sent an article to the Liverpool paper on the subject. Then at the end of this period, Michael having had his education officer trip - I mustn't forget that actually we spent the end of World War II together as we had spent the beginning. Margo came and looked after the family while I had some leave and went to, whatever the place was, Harwich, to be with Mike for leave.

It was a very exciting occasion. For the first time I was piped on board as the Captain's wife, as he now had his own ship at long last, and as we sat in the cabin we heard Churchill announce the end of World War II in Europe. So that was an interesting span from Oxford to the Harwich ship.

### *13. Post-war Oxford*

After Michael was demobilised he decided to go back to Oxford to get on with his degree, which was only half completed. So arrangements were made and he went to live in Oxford, so I was alone with the kids again for about six months, but they were getting more manageable, although each had a will of its own. Penelope was the most adorable little girl with curly hair and enormous vim. She used to charge across the sitting room with the playpen swinging in her wake, and they both loved singing, so we enjoyed the piano together.

Finally when the day came that we could move to Oxford it was a great joy and we began to set up house in the most extraordinary set up, as usual. This time it was a huge country house that had been built by Sir Kenneth Clark, a gorgeous house on the top of a hill near Oxford, but it didn't have one iota of convenience or furnishing and we were one of five rather out of the ordinary couples that was allowed to be tenants there. The owner was slightly eccentric and he liked people who were slightly eccentric, so because we were Moral Re-Armament we were given a berth in this house.

Unfortunately our flat was the front section of the house with the biggest rooms and a huge entrance hall and the beautiful front door and all, but very little carpeting or furnishing as you might call it. However, we were thankful to be there and have this lovely garden surroundings, because we arrived in May. What it would have been like in the winter, I dread to think, but we arrived in May and had a lovely time getting to know our Oxford friends again and Peter and Penelope enjoyed the out-of-doors with their little trikes and the space of it and the countryside.

I was completely unused to summer time and scandalised the neighbours because I'd start calling them in at 10 o'clock at night to go to bed. We had a very primitive water system which used to pack up occasionally, but then there was another eccentric family further up the hill called Polunin. He was a Russian and we kept the water longer than they did, so they would come down to help themselves from our tap and gradually we managed to get through.

Charis Waddy became a great friend at that time. She used to come up and beaver away in the kitchen. We got wonderful parcels from Australia which saved our lives because at that time rationing in Britain was at its absolute worst. In fact they were rationing bread and potatoes,

so what people did with children with hungry mouths, teenagers and so on, I just dread to think, but we managed all right with the small ones because they got two eggs a week and a pint of milk a day and free vitamins and so they were perfectly well looked after, plus the national loaf, which the British as a whole detested, but I was rather glad of. It had all the wholemeal and other ingredients in it which we needed.

So that period was very happy and Michael got well into the Oxford scene. He used to have an article in the "Isis" every week of an amusing kind. It wasn't an article. It was a poem, an amusing poem which became quite a word around Oxford. This is May. I think it was in July or August it was suggested that we might go out to Caux, and being more established perhaps than we had been for a while. We didn't have any money, but Irene Owens came into the scene. She had been in charge of war nurseries during the war, so I thought she would be up to dealing with Peter and Penelope.

She came and took them on and became beloved "Aunty Renie", an absolute part of the family. The Babar books were featuring at that time and after our visit to Caux we returned full of joy to see our little darlings and appeared in the doorway and they looked up briefly and Peter gave Aunty Renie a jab with his elbow and said, "Go on, Aunty Renie." They were sitting on the sofa.

There was a group of students who were involved with MRA in Oxford and they used to come up on Sunday afternoons and we would all bring what we had and do what we could. I remember one of them, Ken Rundell, arrived one day looking very sacrificial. He had found a banana and he had brought it up for the children, because everyone was scrounging for bits of extra food, and then one day one of them, a friend up till this time called Alec Gray, came and presented a little cubic parcel and he said, "I'm sorry, this is all I could find." It turned out to be a box of digestive biscuits made of charcoal one bought at the local chemist.

Both Renie and Charis did marvels with the food parcels that came and used to cook huge steamed puddings and make things eke out, so we managed to survive quite well. A more up-to-date picture of Penelope at Shotover Cleve. She had a high chair near a little round window that looked out at the various arrivals. She was still in nappies and they weren't always dry I'm afraid. Mothers didn't have the convenience of these beautiful things that you simply toss out with a wave of the hand.

She used to turn around on this high chair and plonk her little damp bottom on the crumby tray and stick her head out towards the window - this time it was the laundry[man] - and say, "Boo, lawnge-wee!" Never at a loss for a word.

Another of the eccentric families in the house we only discovered years later was a Communist family. We also had the great advantage of having the only telephone in the house, but the great disadvantage was that there was no system for paying. So very trustingly we used to put out a saucer and when people used the phone they were supposed to put the money in and we would listen for the tinkle and go on with our jobs and so on, but unfortunately we were miles in debt when the phone bill came in and it turned out this lady, whose little boy Bobby was a great friend of Peter and Penelope, Bobby Lathe, it turned out that she was secretary of the local Communist Party and we had been paying for the Party phone calls. Well, it must have been she just sort of tinkled the coins and said, "Well, that's their contribution to the cause."

Kirsty Morrison and her friend Ros James were in Oxford at this time and were quite a focus for the students. They had the most wonderful gift for friendship and interest in other people.

At one point we had a party to celebrate something or other. There was a large man called Neville Brazier-Crae, who was about 6 foot 6, and we were playing this wonderful game which Kirsty introduced called musical hats in which you pluck the hat from the person ahead of you before the music stopped. It's like sitting on a chair and you pluck a hat. Anyone bare-headed is out. Renie was a wonderful gamester. She used to play well in everything, but when it came to the finals of this little bit it turned out to be between her and Neville Brazier-Crae and you've never seen anything so funny as her wild leaps to get the hat off his head and he just simply put his hand down and popped it back, but that was great fun. We had lots of fun.

I must not forget the Commem Ball. In the midst of all this strange and strenuous life Michael had tickets to the Commem Ball in 1946, for New College. So I dressed up in my gold dress again and Catherine came to stay, so she came with us. Catherine was travelling at the instigation of the Victorian Society for Crippled Children doing a social work tour and of course when she came we began to see Oxford, because we hadn't bothered. Living in this glorious place for a limited period, we were always going to see it sometime.

So when Catherine came we went touring round Oxford, which was great fun, getting the first really good feel of the place, the miracle being that Oxford was intact after the war, Hitler having decided not to destroy it. Then soon after that, great news from Australia: Jan and Mervyn Brumley were being married on November 16. Once again I was missing out on the family weddings. They had a wonderful wedding in Geelong, Mother putting everything into the party afterwards and the beauty of the surroundings.

They came, but that was I think after Christmas. They came after I think, just after, but the thing is, Christmas was our last English Christmas, and we had a Christmas tree in the big sitting room and we had a door open - I don't know why - but in hopped a little red Christmas robin, a lovely fascinating thing and I was so thrilled for the children to see it.

The other thing that happened was that our dear old friend, Mrs Haldane, came on a visit. She was the most militant of atheists and Penelope met her at the front door with the most beaming hospitality saying, "We've got a baby Jesus," and led her in to the tree. "Oh, yes," she said, "and there's a little lamb." She wasn't going to knock it back. It was wonderful to see her again.

In the midst of all these bits and pieces there were so many things, of real family moment. When we went out to Caux we went through some very deep waters but found something brand new. And at the end of August Michael's mother died. That had extraordinary implications too because we had gone to Caux on the basis that if we sold our education policies we could rake up the money and alas, having embarked on the journey we were told we couldn't cash them, so we were pretty strapped, had 12 pounds in the bank, and then extraordinarily Michael's mother left him some thousands of pounds and that made it all right again.

So then after this when we came back in the later spring we thought we had better get Peter's arm fixed because he had an aftermath from his bad burn in Tirley and we arranged to go to some remote specialist again who was tidying up the faces of burnt airmen, Dr McIndoe, yes. We went down to the hospital. On the first visit Peter was full of confidence, walked in and said, "Where is Dr McIndoe (or Mr McIndoe)?" The nurses were quite shocked. In those days - I was going to say the holy man was kept absolutely in a special place.

We made a date and went down for the operation and, one of those hideous practices that still existed at that time, they separated us and we weren't even able to say goodbye to him. Poor little boy. He cried for three days, unbelieving of course, having never been separated from my side in all his life. But we eventually went and picked him up. Quite a self-sufficient little chap by then. We went to London on our way back and saw Stella, and back to Oxford but the time was drawing to a close and we had not very long to go.

Michael was working away at his thesis up in our big bedroom and come Christmas we were thinking in terms of packing and then Jan and Mervyn appeared after their wedding. They were on their way to teach at Marlborough on exchange from Australia. It was wonderful to see them, Jan still like a young colt. To our amazement they wandered around London in January, a very cold winter, wearing a scarf around their necks. Just with a scarf, no coat.

Sylvia also had paid a visit, as usual accompanied by a unique incident. In those days we couldn't get hot water bottles made of rubber. They all had to be of stone, so if you were making your guest cosy you had to put this stone object in their bed and, you know, full of hot water. So she came and occupied the spare room. It was a very nice room, but pretty chilly I think. In the middle of the night we heard a bonk, and we couldn't work out what it was and then a little bit later there was a sort of a rustling and a sound of something moving.

So Mike rose up and grabbed a walking stick or something and proceeded downstairs stealthily and gingerly pushed open the kitchen door to see if there was anything there and nothing to be seen at all. So we went back to bed and went back to sleep. In the morning it was revealed that our guest had by accident kicked her stone hot water bottle out of the bed and a little later thought to close a window and had got up and closed a window, but the funny thing about Sylvia is if she ever does anything a bit out of the way she always covers up. She doesn't like people to know. So this whole operation was conducted in a very surreptitious way. It was only when we cross-questioned her in the morning that we discovered what had happened and that it wasn't a burglar after all.

She had been four years away in America. It was absolutely wonderful to see her again. So it was a time of great reunions and collecting things together and so on, but we had to concentrate then on our packing and the winter really set in and I got a very bad flu. So there I was sitting up in our freezing bedroom trying to think what to put where as we had to take all our worldly goods with us.

Renie was absolutely amazing and we had by that time collected a couple more friends in Oxford apart from Charis and they rallied round and helped us to get off. We were booked on a troop ship to come back. It was the only form of transport because Mike had this repatriation ticket which meant we were getting home free, which was pretty good. We had to get everything ready to go on a certain date, by which time the winter was closing in with ferocity, and we only just managed to get off that hill with a big lorry - removal van.

We could only get it off by the skin of our teeth that day. The next day they wouldn't have been able to move it. So down we slithered to Oxford and to London and seeing our friends in London again for the last time before we boarded the ship.

I remember in those last days in London we suddenly thought, "Goodness me, we've been here for nine years and never visited the Tower." Those famous places of historic and tourist interest had to wait for a later date. We travelled down to Southampton and we had all our bags and boxes and the pram stacked very, very carefully with vital children's requirements and we finally got on board and as we were looking over onto the wharf history repeated itself. There standing isolated on the wharf was the pram. Somehow it had not managed to get on board. So Mike dashed down and wheeled it up the gangway.

Before I leave Britain, though, I must record a most important event which happened in Heswall while we were staying with Margo. She most hospitably and kindly put on a christening party for Penelope. Penelope had a beautiful christening robe which, alas, had been far too small for Peter when he came on the scene at the age of 12 months. She obviously loved it, sat spread out on a cushion with these lacy garments around her and a beautiful lace shawl and her reddish fair locks combed up into a little peak looking exactly like Queen Elizabeth. That was a very, very satisfactory angle.

William McKie was a godfather but because of service in post-war Philippines he couldn't get back, but dear Charles Burns, who was a Scottish laird who had lived in Tirley for many years because of terrible crippling injuries after a hunting fall, took on the job and presented her with a little coral necklace. Then Margo stood in for Sylvia who of course was in Australia and so was Catherine, two godmothers. [NB Sylvia was in Canada. PT] But a very nice chap took the service and she was really properly christened and we had a nice little party afterwards and Irene Prestwich wrote a dear little poem for her. Irene was the owner of Tirley Garth but entered fully into the lives of all her huge family.

#### *14. Return voyage to Australia*

In the train on the way down to Southampton we found ourselves sharing a carriage with another foursome, a German-Jewish refugee Richard Samuel and his wife Helen, and he was going out to an academic job in Melbourne, which was very coincidental, and we sat together in the carriage and got to know each other a bit and then formed a nucleus when we reached the ship.

There was another family who were also academics and when we reached the ship there were three of us, three academic families going to Melbourne, so that formed a natural nucleus on this vast deck of streaming humanity and 2,000 people on this ship, so we can make a little nucleus there and our children could find us and so on. Our cabins, we were most privileged because we get to keep our children with us. A lot of families were split up. They were in the bowels of the ship. The bunks were made of iron and were not exactly the acme of comfort, but at least we were together, and we had this amazing trip where the Army organising a ship full of troops was trying to adapt itself to a ship full of couples and squalling kids.

The highlight of the day was the children's tea. We used to go down to this huge refectory place and see these rows of anxious looking parents standing behind the chairs of their



progeny trying to get some of the food into them because it was mainly Army food and it was being fairly regularly expectorated, but after they got hungry enough they would eat anything I think, and of course there was a special concession where you had an egg, a special, but unfortunately it coincided on the morning when we had eggs for breakfast, which was also rare. However, that was their gesture towards something special for the kids.

I could go on forever of course. The funny part was being so far away from our cabins the children had quite a business finding their way and so we left them. We were not allowed on the sports deck, which was very pleasant, one deck up, with children. So we left the children to have their rests and then went to go up and try and have a nice half hour on the sports deck. When we went down to the ordinary deck we found Peter pretty well stark naked interviewing one of our friends and saying, "Where's daddy? I wanted him to wipe me." He had brought Penelope with him and they had both conscientiously donned their sandals and came out of the spifflicating cabin with nothing else on.

However, all things come to an end and we had one interlude which was wonderful in Colombo where we were taken ashore by some very distinguished Sinhalese who wanted to entertain us. It was the most extraordinary experience. Catherine, who was travelling with us, and I were in our sort of British clothes, wartime at that, totally colourless and shapeless and so on.

So we went along doing our best and it was like landing in a cage of glorious, glorious tropical birds with the Sinhalese ladies in their best silks and dozens of bracelets and all these things looking extremely glamorous. Our host was very ebullient. He was a doctor, he was a children's doctor. They also had her sister and a brother, who was a bishop, and greatly adored by all the family and everything he said was laughed uproariously at. [Passage contains errors, then corrections by HMT] He had been invited to the occasion.

Anyway we ate all of these gorgeous little dainties that they kept passing to us, it must have been for an hour or so, and having had very little variety or colour in our diet for some time and then just as we were feeling quite full and had refused the last round, Chummy, the host, came in rubbing his hands and said, "Well, now, let's go down town and have a good dinner." Well, we went down town. I suppose we picked our way along. It was somewhat daunting, but a great experience and very touching hospitality being given to perfect strangers. I think there was some link through MRA actually that this couple had had before.

I must describe [the] first arrival on land. Having been cooped up on the ship for a month, our two children went really wild when we went into an empty cafe hoping to find a drink of something. It was the wrong hour of the day, but as far as they were concerned, they just exploited it to the full, this empty place, racing between the tables and the chairs and round and round and round in circles, working off all their pent up energies that they had on board.

So back to the ship and Penelope had what she called "mine Colombo dress", which was a rather sweet little green and white check, and she had a label on the back saying where she came from, cabin whatever it was on the "Asturias" just in case she made her escape at some untoward moment. She had "mine Colombo hat" too of course. I think that was also tied on and separately labelled. But, alas, shortly after we got back on board she developed a very nasty attack which turned out to be pneumonia. The ship's doctor was rather worried.

So she battled her way through that and then an epidemic of measles broke out on the ship and unfortunately... I had been watching every spot and blotch on their skin that they should appear absolutely heavenly before their doting prospective family and all that happened was that the day we were due to berth in Melbourne Peter developed measles. So he came out with the most appalling blotches and rashes and everything. So our arrival was a bit chaotic and I remember Esther and Peter having made tremendous efforts to be there before anyone else, I saw them climbing up on board about an hour before we expected anybody and we were in total chaos in the cabin.

So we struggled to get ourselves into some sort of welcoming state with this little sick boy and what have you, but the worst part was we had these totally, totally transformed voices, we were speaking a sort of English that people speak in England and that had, I realised later on, a devastating effect upon the family. They thought we had become changed people.

Poor Mother, what a culmination after nine years, and above all she had to contend with what we called in Melbourne a north wind day. It turned out to be an absolute corker, extremely hot. However, the irony of it was that I couldn't get enough of it after all the cold years in Britain, to have this wonderful warm air all around. So we drove down the Geelong road in blazing heat and arrived at Ariston, and there the house was beautifully cool, all prepared with blinds drawn and everything ready to receive the travellers.

Peter tottered into his little bed with enormous relief, and Sandy Anderson, who was from then on an inseparable part of our family, was there also and helping in every way she could. Then - I can hardly imagine how dreadful it was, but I went round the house drawing all the curtains and putting up all the blinds trying to get enough warmth into the house. My mother must have thought I had gone mad the other side of the world.

## TAPE 6

### *15. Father and daughter*

One important element in my whole life which I have never really dealt with on this tape: the other day Michael found a most marvellous letter that my father wrote to us when we were to be married and it highlighted for me something which has become clearer to me through the years, how totally I underestimated him as a person. In fact when I was younger, in my teens and early university, there was quite a lot of hostility and we didn't seem to connect. Communication seemed to be lacking completely. Well, it turned out that when I first met the Oxford Group one of the things that really missed altogether in my thoughts of how I needed to change was this relationship with my father.

It is a classic thing that when you begin to look at your own nature, your relationships with other people become different. I had missed out in a number of different directions but with Father I had somehow taken it for granted that we were not good friends and that Mother was the one I would always turn to. I knew this was wrong and as the years went by and we lived quite close to each other in Mitcham, that I never gave him the benefit of the doubt or somehow I gave him the feeling that I was a loving daughter. He was a man of great capacity for affection. He was devoted to Mother, and here lay some of the trouble.

Finally I met some friends who helped me to see how terribly unfair this was. He was a very difficult man to talk to. I screwed up my courage one night living at "Minamere" to drive over and try and talk to him about these things. I did not know how to put it, I did not know what I had done wrong or what was wrong, but I knew it was wrong. So I found him alone in the sitting room and blurted out that I was sorry for having been such a very unloving and unsatisfactory daughter. The effect was quite overwhelming.

For all these years Father had felt this deeply, I think, and he started to pour out all the things that had hurt him through the years and the central part was that I had come between him and Mother in the matter of the Oxford Group and the church. He was devoted to the church and Mother was not devoted to the church and she had, with great relief, joined us in our Oxford Group activities, which left him more and more isolated. There was a long list of things. There was another couple in Geelong who had stepped in and taken over Mother's interests and life and he felt bitterly resentful against them.

It went on for quite a long time, it must have been about an hour, but it did not end in any solution. I just left feeling I had lanced a boil. Then some time later, on one of our journeys to other countries, this time to America for an MRA conference, there was a gathering in Mackinac [pr. "Mackinaw"] and relationships came up as the main subject. Three rather wise women talked to me about this business and asked me why I thought this chronic thing with my father had arisen, and through their insight I began to realise that Mother, being the centre point of his life, had been divided from him by my love and companionship and all those things, mainly through this common interest.

This was an amazing revelation really, because I could see it, I could see what had happened. Finally I wrote to Father and apologised deeply for having come between him and Mother through the association with MRA and other things, and I asked him to forgive me and to help us to rebuild a new, united relationship. I don't think I had an answer. Catherine who was at home said that he was so stunned by the letter that he didn't know what to say, recognising that I'd actually seen, put my finger on the thing that was hurting him. But the interesting part was that from then on we could rebuild a true father and daughter relationship, and although he was getting quite old by then, we gradually built up to a warm father/daughter relationship which I had always wanted, but hadn't seen what I had done to wreck it.

#### TAPE 6 Side B

##### *16. 1947-1950, beginning a new life in Australia.*

Two more important arrivals must now be recorded. When we arrived in Melbourne we went to a little university flat, which we were a bit choosy about until we were there for a short time and realised that a roof over your head was a privilege in Melbourne. We stayed there for about eight months and then Uncle Roly from the kindness of his heart invited us to go and stay at "Aberfeldie" in a lovely old home with a big garden, and gave us his room. He was so generous. I think we took it quite for granted really, I am appalled when I think of my lack of appreciation so often.

Anyway, Richard was now on the way. Sandy Anderson, who was now attached to our family, was always in attendance and gave great and important advice as far as the maternity was concerned and she strongly advised Margaret Mackie, who was a wonderful woman

obstetrician. I must say Richard's birth was the only one that I almost enjoyed, surrounded by all this expertise and knowledgeable support. It was decided I would go to St Andrew's Hospital, a place full of sunlight and very nice appointments and I was given a book by Grantly Dick-Read which gave a marvellous explanation to the pregnant mother of how the whole procedure happened.

I had already had three babies in total ignorance of the physiology of the thing, and how a woman in labour could affect and help herself. All this was completely new. So, you can imagine, I went into the whole process with a far more enlightened attitude. I had plenty of exercise, of course, and good food and compared with the other three births it was extraordinary. He was due to arrive on 2 May, and on 1 May I was walking round the Aberfeldie garden, no sign of any activity of any importance.

We had tickets for Richard III with Laurence Olivier that night at the Princess Theatre and knowing that my babies were usually considerably late we decided we would go. I climbed right up to the gallery and we saw this marvellous production of Richard III. I took a packed suitcase just in case. We found our way safely home afterwards, and then the next day things began to stir. Of course this was Sandy Anderson's great moment. She had been matron of a maternity hospital. So in due course we went into St Andrews and Margaret Mackie, in contrast to most that I had ever encountered, hardly left my side, and had this amazing gas arrangement which I could use as to whether I needed it or no, which was excellent. I never lost consciousness, but was able to administer it myself and before very long the little fellow arrived, right on the day, 2 May.

Then in came all the letters and all the Australian side of our life rallied round at the birth of another little Thwaites. It was so marvellous, such a wonderful warm feeling of support and it was so different. After due time in hospital, which I found mainly quite enjoyable, we came back to Aberfeldie, and Peter and Penelope were bobbing with excitement and we took him into our bedroom and laid him on the big double bed and Peter and Penelope both lay down full length beside him, peering at him with the most greatest of fascination and excitement. It was really a lovely scene.

So, he settled in there very happily. He had one or two minor upsets with a tear duct that was not operating properly and one thing and another, but on the whole he grew into a chubby, delightful little baby, exuding personality from the word go. As we were living across the road from St Johns, Toorak, it seemed the obvious place for Richard to be christened. So he was what you might call completely received into this world, and the next, I hope, and life moved on from there, but he was a great, great joy to us, all the family.

The other wonderful thing was that a friend of ours had found a delightful woman called Mary Reid, who had been a mothercraft nurse, and she was a huge help looking after him in the early days and became equally devoted. Penelope adored helping her with her gauze nappy in a nursing style on her head. Now, life is moving on and my strength will not cover the intervening times, I am afraid, but we lived at Aberfeldie for 18 months, and then all this time we had gone to stay with Uncle for six months while we found a place to live and we were there 18 months and at last - under the shower one day I had the thought, if we do not buy a car we will never get a house because whenever you got to somewhere it was already sold.

So, we bought an old second hand Chev, 1939, from Joyce Kean, a friend of ours, who had had it faithfully for many years too, and the day came when we heard about a family home out in Mitcham which seemed sort of promising. We read it in a newspaper. Seeing the advertisement we dashed out and looked around this absolute ramshackle house with all sorts of things wrong with it; no spouting and all sorts of things. It was really a house on a most beautiful position and that, of course, is a thing you can never change. So, the position was there and we decided that if we could rake up the money and spend it on this that would be perhaps the first step.

In the meantime Mike had been told at the university that he was no longer needed after this three years. I have skipped the whole time. He will have to tell that story about our life in Parkville and the university and all that. He must tell about the students and the life we had in the flat there. It was a wonderful time.

But when I sat on the veranda with rather peeling paint and looked out on the bushy surroundings I thought, this is the place. This is where we must be.

Joe had the only privilege of being born in his own home because when we finally secured Minamere, it was the first home we had ever owned. While we were settling in in somewhat strenuous circumstances we had wonderful friends helping us. Vera [Blackburn incorrect] Donovan came from Sydney and lived with us. She was extraordinarily tolerant and generous in her attitudes because I realised that I was then beginning a pregnancy with Joe. I had no idea of the right temperature and once again those around me suffered because I felt extraordinarily warm. It seems to be a pattern in our life, starting with the service in St Peter in the East.

Anyway Michael at this point was now looking for another job but in the meantime he was invited to go to New Zealand with the play "The Forgotten Factor". So, Vera manfully carried on with me at Minamere, and also seeing that car sitting in the garage I decided to drive it and got my licence. It must have been the easiest place in the world. I went for a few straight drives. I had driven before and then I drove down to the police station on Whitehorse Road and the policeman took me out for a spin. He said, "You can handle a car," and I got my licence. I have been handling a car ever since and never one accident. He may have been a man of insight.

As I got larger we had to make arrangements. I cannot make out why we did not go back to St Andrews because it was such a lovely hospital. I think the distance business probably decided it and I applied to go to St Georges in Kew. I had Margaret Mackie as my obstetrician, didn't I? No, I did not need to have her, because Chris Lancaster was now our local GP and everything had gone so straightforwardly that we decided we would just carry on with him. We booked a bed in St Georges, but a rather less well run place, I think. Nothing bad, but anyway Mike was back from New Zealand by then and one evening I began to feel some troublesome movements so we decided we had better go down to the hospital and we set off.

As soon as we got within cooe of the hospital the movement ceased so we drove around and drove round the hospital and finally came home again. Then the final moment came. Michael, at this point, had been called in to talk to Charles Spry, the head of ASIO, and to our amazement he was offered a job. Of course this would make all the difference, especially as we had had to buy the house and we had the money to gather for that. Finally I was accepted

into the labour ward and I cannot remember whether it was a very bad labour or no, but it was quite well monitored, except as usual they would not accept my warning that things always happened quickly at the last with me. So, there was a bit of a panic and Chris arrived rather late, I think, but anyway I came out of the quickly administered anaesthetic and Chris in his very typically casual voice said, "It's another boy, do you mind?" Sensitive on the point.

I was absolutely delighted, of course, with Joe. A lovely cuddly baby and the extraordinary thing was that he had chosen to arrive on the day when Michael's job began, and Mike called in to see him on his way in to the first day at the office. Unfortunately there were two rather objectionable nurses in post-maternity ward. I remember Margaret Mackie coming in to see me and saying, "Good heavens, it's like Bourke Street, isn't it?" I built up quite a head of steam about this and I was bound to write a book about hospitals, but I didn't. Anyway, you could not have anything more different from the wonderful treatment in St Andrews.

However, life goes on and we went home, and there on the veranda was this lovely assembled family and coming with me was Helen Nall. She came to help deal with the baby. Dad's got all that very clearly in his mind and so has Penelope. It was a lovely time being received into the whole family and being in our own home for the first time. Joe had a christening at home because we had not got any particular church affiliation at that time, and he was a very contented baby, I think, on the whole, I seem to remember. He had much affection lavished on him by his older siblings, although it is always hard for the one who has just been displaced, which was Richard at that point. It is very important to be sensitive to that member.

END OF TAPES