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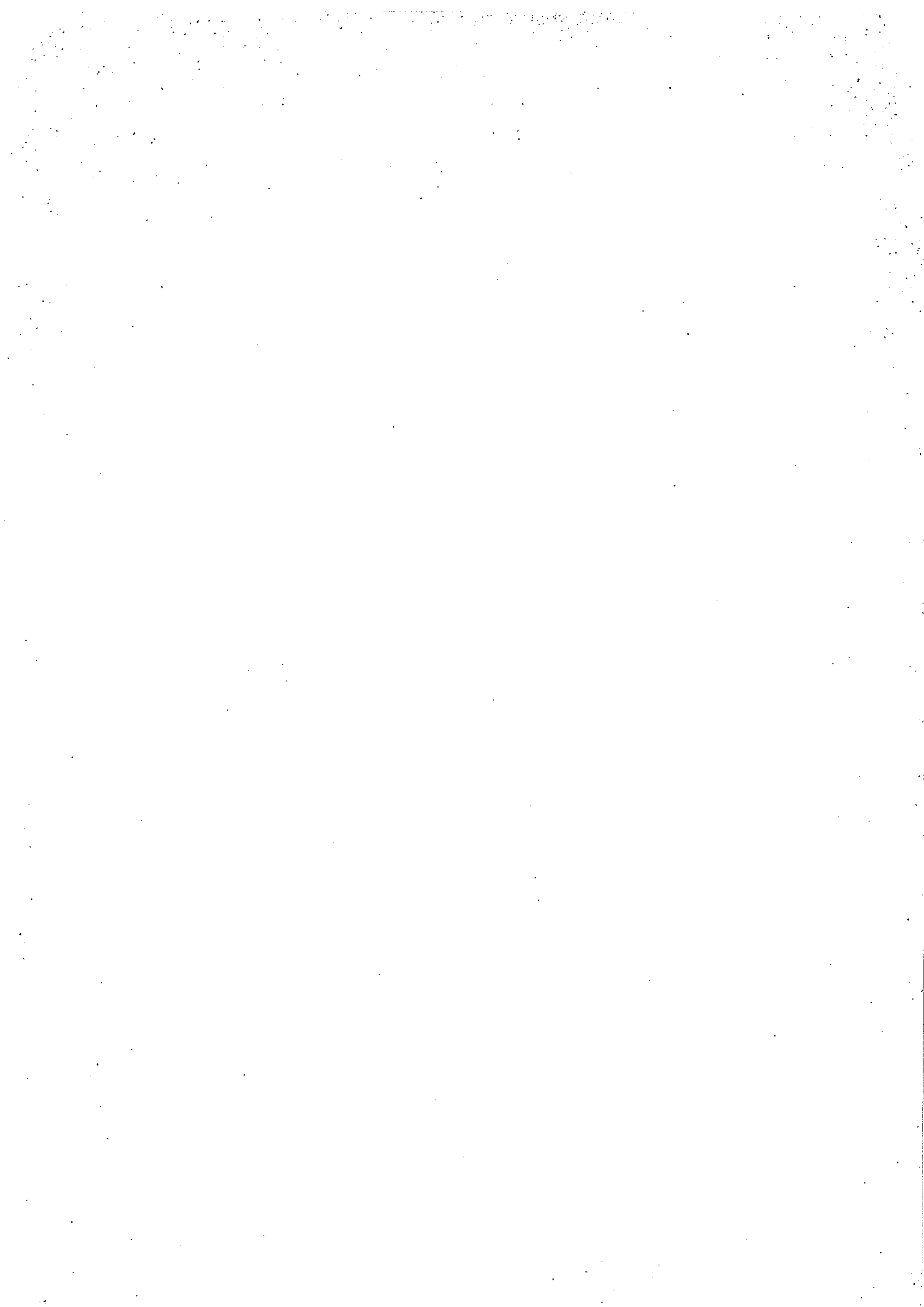
THIS IS MY LIFE

By K.J.M. Ross



I DEDICATE THIS STORY

To my wife Margaret,
to my two daughters Julie and Wendy,
to those of my wartime friends who returned,
- and to those who did not come back.

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FOREWORD

It was not until I was well into my seventies that I decided to write the story of my life. To possible future descendants this story may conceivably be of some interest as light reading and if that turns out to be the case it will have achieved its purpose as far as they are concerned.

For my wartime experiences I have included extensive extracts from my diaries written at the time; diaries which I had commenced but invariably abandoned after a short while due to a waning of enthusiasm or the pressure of other events competing for my spare time. These diary extracts have been given without alteration, except where sections have been omitted. They record my actual thoughts as well as minor details of everyday life at the period when they were written, a period during which important events were unfolding on the world stage. They are therefore of much greater value, to me at any rate, than recollections dredged with difficulty from the deepest recesses of memory. The overseas trips which Margaret and I took from 1980 onwards have been covered, but not in detail, as full diaries of these experiences were written as they occurred.

While I have been fortunate in leading an interesting life, this of itself may not attract readers, and to believe otherwise would be a conceit on my part. However I have lived through a major war as well as a period of vast technological change and I genuinely believe that the story of these events will be of more than passing interest. At any rate I leave the reader to judge.

K.J.M.Ross.
March 1993.

Revised 1997.

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS, - AND COOLIBAH

I was born on 22 January 1916. My birth certificate records the place of my birth as 108 North Street in the city of Rockhampton, which suggests that I was born in our own home, and that a midwife would have been present. In those days giving birth at home with the aid of a midwife was by no means uncommon.

I was the youngest of three children, my elder sister Dorothy being born in 1909 and Elaine in 1912. Our house at 108 North Street stood on an allotment with a frontage to North Street, opposite West Street. A block away was Hillcrest Hospital, where my mother had worked as a nurse for a number of years. Our allotment backed on to Turner Road, across which stood the house "Duranta", the home of my three maiden aunts, Ella, Irene and Ethel Wills. Having no children of their own they took a great interest in their sister's family.

The North Street allotment had been bought by my mother shortly after her marriage and she had then borrowed sufficient from my Aunt Irene to finance the building of a house. This house, which she named "Strathcairn", comprised three bedrooms, a lounge/dining room, a kitchen, a bathroom and a smaller room which served as an emergency guest room. There were verandahs along the front and one side, with a small verandah area at the back next to the kitchen and used as a breakfast room. Like most Queensland houses of that era, the house stood on timber piers some seven feet above the ground, thus providing ample storage space underneath the house, where the laundry facilities were located.

The first milestone of my early life was the shift to a cattle station in the Dawson Valley in September 1920, when I was a little over four and a half years old. I have just one faint recollection of the period prior to that departure from Strathcairn. We had been staying with friends at a house in Phillip Street, Emu Park. While the house was indeed in Phillip Street, that name also applied to the suburb itself. although one would find it hard to believe that Emu Park was large enough to have a suburb. However the suburb of Phillip Street had a separate train stop, with its own name proudly displayed on the "shelter shed", as it was called. My recollection is that a snake appeared on the side verandah and that someone went to our aunts' house in Emu Park for assistance. No doubt the snake made good its escape. When I mentioned this event to the family long after I had grown up they recalled it and opined that I was probably about two years of age at the time. I can't help feeling that it would be unusual for a child to remember events which had occurred when he was only two, and my guess is that I was probably about three at the time.

The transfer of the family to the cattle station in the Dawson Valley was the result of my father's obtaining the position of manager of the station "Coolibah", owned by Charles Barnard of Coomooboolaroo, near Duaringa. The Coolibah property straddled the Dawson River some twenty miles or so from the railhead at Baralaba. The land around the homestead was perfectly flat, but as you approached the Dawson River the level dropped quite suddenly some

fifteen to twenty feet, and this lower area, also flat, extended to the river. It was a curious formation which I instantly recognised when my sister and I visited the scenes of our childhood in 1986.

The homestead was a two-storey building. The upper floor comprised a number of bedrooms, with a verandah along the northern frontage and partly along each side. Downstairs were located the large lounge/dining room, an office, a pantry, a small room which doubled as a bedroom when required, a bathroom and a shower room. Like the upper storey, there was a verandah along the front and partly along each side. The kitchen block was a separate building some ten to twelve yards away, and was connected to the main building by a covered walkway a foot or so above the ground. The kitchen block comprised the kitchen and laundry, as well as a dining room and two bedrooms for station employees.

The homestead and the kitchen block were set on an allotment some two hundred feet by one hundred (about sixty metres by thirty metres). It was fenced all round, with gates half-way along each aide. A corner of the allotment was fenced off for a vegetable garden, while various fruit trees - orange, mandarine, cumquat and fig - occupied the remaining area. Grape vines draped themselves over suitable supporting frameworks. and a "summer house" about ten feet square and a fernery beside the main verandah completed an attractive arrangement.

The front of the homestead faced towards the north. A gentle slope led down to the land at the lower level, and a lagoon could be seen some two hundred yards from the house. To the left of the lagoon, but some distance from it, stood the tennis court, also on the lower level. The court was fenced in and also boasted two posts for a net. There was no net on the station, but Mother and my sisters between them knitted a net out of twine, and although the lack of tennis equipment meant that the net was a white elephant at Coolibah, it had plenty of use in later years at my aunts' home in the Brisbane suburb of Sherwood. However the tennis court area itself was suitable for use as a croquet lawn. We had a croquet set and played this game frequently.

A few steps outside the eastern gate of the allotment stood the toilet building, or, less euphemistically, the earth closet. The structure itself was transportable. First a pit was dug some six feet deep, over which the small building was positioned. A box of sand was placed beside the seat, and all our newspaper was conserved for use here. Eventually the pit would fill, and then a fresh pit would be dug nearby and the earth closet moved to this new site. Oh, the wonders of modern science!

Leaving by the southern gate, just outside the back door of the kitchen block, a well-worn track led towards a large corrugated iron shed. To one side of this path could be seen a mound, on top of which sat a small timber framework. This covered the well, unused in our time and filled in after we had left Coolibah. The shed itself housed the buggy and the buckboard (a sort of unsprung buggy), as well as an assortment of bridles and saddles, etc. Over to the right as you faced south were the milking yards, which opened on to the cow paddock, as it was called. Next to the cow paddock was the horse paddock, through which ran the road leading westward from the property and connecting with other properties in that direction. Technically the homestead allotment stood within the night paddock, which held horses overnight for everyday use on the station. The road towards the north led through the cow paddock to the racecourse paddock and onwards towards Harcourt station and eventually to Baralaba. The term "racecourse paddock" was a misnomer as Coolibah, unlike some of its neighbours, did not possess its own racecourse. Looking north from the house the blue silhouette of Mount Ramsay could be seen in the distance, and many are the times I have stood and gazed at it. On our return trip in 1986 I was delighted to see its familiar shape again.

Properties in the country around Coolibah were Harcourt to the north, Hinemoa, Mimosa Vale, Roundstone and Redcliffe in a general westerly direction, and Moura towards the south. Hinemoa and Mimosa Vale were owned

by our uncles who, like us, were descendants of the First Fleet convicts Henry Kable and Susannah Holmes. Elvina Adelaide Kable, the grand-daughter of Henry and Susannah, married John Hay Mackenzie Ross at Richmond in New South Wales in 1855, and the couple then went to live at Mimosa Vale in the Dawson Valley. They were my grand-parents.

It was dusk on a September evening in 1920 when we arrived at Coolibah. My recollection of this arrival is that the building was locked up and in darkness, but that I found the door to the laundry unlocked and thus gained access to the kitchen block. Presumably we were then able to obtain entry to the main building. My father would, of course, have arranged for food, furniture, bedding, etc., to be ready for our use.

As a child my most important task was to learn to ride a horse. Each of us had an allotted mount. I had a large but gentle animal, which was content to walk along sedately. I remember that while on one of our frequent jaunts my horse jumped over a slight depression in the road, and I proudly announced that I could canter. In due course I was able to canter and rise to the trot like any horseman and I soon learned the very important position of the foot in the stirrup. I remember an occasion, much later during my time at Coolibah, when I tried to get my horse to jump the sliprails giving access from the horse paddock to the cow paddock. I galloped towards the sliprails but just short of them the horse refused the jump and came to a sudden stop. I sailed over its head to finish up on the other side of the sliprails. Fortunately I emerged intact from my experience.

Life at Coolibah in those days presented a sharp contrast to city life. I have a profound respect for my mother, transported to this solitary home and obliged to raise a family there, manage the household, and receive unexpected visitors from time to time.

While Baralaba was the end of the railway line when we first arrived at Coolibah, work was in hand to extend the line to Theodore. First came the surveyors to determine the route, which lay through a large plain about a mile to the east of the homestead. Later the workmen arrived and the laying of the tracks commenced. The starting point, of course, was Baralaba, but before long a small village of tents sprang up where work was proceeding on the new line not far from Coolibah. To cross Kianga Creek a bridge was required, and the building of this bridge was watched by us all with great interest. My sister Elaine was told by the engineer-in-charge to hammer in one or two nails. He told her that she would then be able to say that she had helped to build the Kianga Creek bridge. Of course the laying of the tracks beyond the bridge could not be held up until the bridge had been completed. This would take some time, despite Elaine's help in its construction. Accordingly a deviation rail track was laid down into the bed of the creek and up the other side. Thus the train could continue to service the laying of the tracks as they proceeded southwards. In due course the bridge was finished and the deviation removed.

To return to Coolibah, one of its inconveniences was the distance from the kitchen to the dining table. While all meals were eaten in the lounge/dining room, the cooking was done in the kitchen block and the meal carried along the covered walkway to the dining table. During bad weather this was not always pleasant.

Coolibah was to some extent self-sufficient in food. Meat came from our own beasts that we killed from time to time and vegetables were from our own garden. Sweets were simple concoctions such as baked rice pudding, baked egg custard, lemon sago and baked sago plum pudding (one of my favourites), with egg custard as appropriate.

The killing of a beast provided us with fresh meat for a short period, but then everything went into a large vat of brine and we had corned meat for a while. When a beast was killed we three children were often called in to help. First the animal was shot in the cow yard and then hoisted up on an apparatus called the gallows. This was done immediately and permitted removal of the animal's blood before it congealed. The skin would then be removed and I usually took part in this procedure. Finally my father would

remove the various eatable parts of the animal, some of which would b allotted to the station employees.

My mother made the bread for the family from flour purchased in bulk Sometimes she would make a currant loaf, which was always much appreciated Our fruit trees provided both fresh fruit for eating and fruit for jam, including that prince of marmalades, cumquat jam. Mother also used to make tomato jam, but this was not one of my favourites. A small grove of lime trees not far from the house provided fruit for another enjoyable jam. Not all of our jam was home-produced. At intervals a case of assorted jams would arrive with other stores from Rockhampton, and we children would have fun examining the labels to see what treats were in store for us. Honey, however, was entirely a local product, and my father assumed responsibility for supply of this delicacy. When a beehive was located in a hollow tree my father would first prepare himself for the operation by draping a piece of mosquito net over his head and putting on a pair of thick gloves. The next step was to block up the entrance to the hive with clay and provide a small hole to the interior. He would now light his pipe and puff smoke into the hole until the bees were stupefied. The clay barrier could then be dismantled and the honeycomb removed piece by piece. It is not to be imagined that my father always emerged unscathed from these activities. Some bees are not affected by passive smoking! Back at home the honeycomb would be placed in a large flour bag or similar and suspended from the ceiling. Its sheer weight would force out the honey which would run in a steady stream into a suitable container. The remaining beeswax would be cleaned and then melted down for use around the home.

Iced sweets were of course impossible in a place where there was neither refrigerator nor icechest, but on a couple of occasions we had severe hailstorms, after which we foraged around with buckets collecting hailstones. Meanwhile Mother would make an egg custard and this would be packed round with hailstones and allowed to stand for some time. The result was the outback version of icecream and was highly enjoyable.

Soap was also a local product. Mother used to make the soap in flat dishes and cut it into suitably sized blocks while it was still soft. It was then allowed to dry completely before use.

The kitchen stove was efficient but a far cry from the stove of today. The oven, of course, took up the greatest area, while the grate occupied a space to the left of the oven. Against the grate was located the water tank, with its tap at the front. This tank provided hot water throughout the day, assuming that it was topped up regularly. The hot gases of combustion were directed into a space directly above the oven and immediately below the hot plates. These could be removed for faster heating of saucepans. After the fire had been extinguished for the day the ashes in the ash collector below the grate had to be taken out for disposal.

Lighting facilities were also primitive compared with modern lighting. We depended almost entirely on kerosene table lamps, with a couple of hurricane lamps for use outside. There was no such thing as a torch, of course. Matches were conserved as much as possible by the use of paper spills (i.e. tapers) for lighting one lamp from another.

Summer heat was always a problem where food was concerned. To keep butter and milk cool involved the use of the basic principle of refrigeration, viz. evaporation. The bowl containing the butter was placed in a large bowl of water and a cloth was draped over it and into the water. Water would seep up the cloth and the evaporation kept the butter cool. The canvas water bag worked on the same principle. It always had a taste of canvas but was always cool.

Life proceeded happily enough under these conditions, although not without some inconveniences. Snakes, spiders, sandflies, bushfires and floods were ever-present and we had to learn to live with them.

In the outback snakes are always likely visitors. Two incidents in particular occur to me. On one occasion a large snake slithered across the floor during a meal intent on making its escape through a gap in the base

of the wall. One of the railway surveyors, who was our dinner guest at the time, jumped up and grabbed the snake's tail before it disappeared from view. He then commenced to pull the snake back into the room. On the face of it this seemed an irresponsible act, but our visitor, obviously an experienced bushman, knew what he was doing. No sooner had the head appeared than he cracked the snake like a whip, breaking its neck. Another brownskin (or possibly a blackskin) bit the dust. On another occasion Mother was ascending the stairs to the upper floor. It was dark and as she walked along the verandah, running her hand along the balustrade as she went, she felt it run over a smooth, cool object. This was so unexpected that she ran for a lamp, and discovered a snake coiled around the balustrade. A call to my father quickly brought him to the scene and the snake was disposed of without delay. These were not the only incidents involving snakes and one had always to be on the alert, particularly when walking in long grass.

Among other unpopular fauna were the red-back spiders. These were quite common, but as they never attacked if escape was a viable alternative they did not constitute a menace and in fact did not worry us at all. The sandflies, however, were much more of a problem. As they were quite small an ordinary mosquito net could not kep them away and we had to use cheesecloth nets. The fine mesh kept the sandflies out but unfortunately kept the air out as well. In the summer these nets were extremely unpleasant, but not as unpleasant as the sandflies they were keeping out.

The hot season also brought other hardships and we had to keep a constant watch for bushfires. On many occasions all hands would proceed to a burning area armed with wet sugar bags or flour bags, and we were always so successful that the station buildings were never threatened.

When there was no bushfire to contend with there was always the possibility of a flood. The flat elevated land on which the homestead stood, and which stretched many miles to the east, was high enough to protect us and the stock from any floodwaters and the result was mainly inconvenience. An example of how bushmen handled floods is worthy of mention. My father had to make a visit to a neighbouring property which involved crossing the flooded Dawson River. I rode down with him to the river and we stopped at the edge of the swirling water. He then took off all his clothes, made a tight bundle of them and with the belt he strapped them to his head like an unusual sort of turban. He then mounted his horse, rode into the flooded river and swam the horse across. On the other side he dried himself with a piece of towel which he had brought for the purpose, put on his dry clothes and rode away. My sister Elaine recently told me that she had often asked Dad to let her swim a horse across the Dawson River, but wisely he would not allow this. Of course normally there was no problem in crossing the Dawson as there was an excellent ford where the water was seldom more than a foot deep. Here we could cross on horseback or buggy without any difficulty.

The dipping of cattle was a job for the men on the station, although Charles Barnard would usually send some of his men to assist. The dip was situated some half-mile from the homestead, and it drained into a nearby creek which itself emptied into the Dawson.

Of course we had stationhands most of the time, sometimes with children with whom I used to play. But time for play was not unrestricted, and for us children school lessons were an important part of life in the bush. We were enrolled as pupils with the Primary Correspondence School, but in addition had three governesses over a period of four years. There was Amy Pearson, whom we saw from time to time in later years, Madge Waldron and Marjorie Davidson.

Station residents in the outback had to find some means of entertainment when the chores were finished for the day. At Coolibah tennis was not practicable without usable racquets, but we frequently played croquet, while the lagoon provided excellent swimming except during the winter. In the evening we would play cards - five hundred and cooncan - or listen to the gramophone. My favourite records - seventy-eights of course - were Biddy, That Naughty Waltz, I'm Getting Tired of Playing Second Fiddle and others. In addition Mother often played the piano. She was a fine pianist and made

half-hearted attempts to teach me the piano. I have always regretted th she did not persist in this.

Our entertainment was not confined to activities at home and from ti to time we would visit neighbouring stations which could be anything fr ten to thirty miles away - not far in a fast car on a bitumen road, but qui a different proposition in a buggy on a rough and winding bush track. T picnic races were always an event and I still remember my cousin Cecil winni one of these races. That reminds me that it was Cecil who saved my life one occasion. Both our families had been enjoying a swim in the Dawson a I had managed to get out of my depth. I must have been about seven or eig at the time. Cecil, who was a strong swimmer, was on the spot in no ti and brought me to safety.

Numerous events from Coolibah days still remain in my memory. One th I now find rather amusing occurred whan a car arrived at the station - rare event indeed - and I was standing beside the road. The driver was bou for one of the properties to the west of us, and he had seen that fifty yar ahead the road forked. He asked me which road to take - the left or the righ I didn't have the slightest idea which was my left or my right, but decid to hazard a guess. "The right," I said, and then watched with considerab interest as the car took the correct road for the desired destination. Tl left-hand road led to the dip! After that I could tell my left from my rig with confidence, and I have since realised that the human brain acquir knowledge in a vast variety of ways.

Our cotton patch, some quarter of an acre in size, took up part of tl night paddock. Mother and we children used to collect the cotton after tl pods had burst, and it was then bagged and sent off to the ginnery. We gre cotton for two years but then discontinued the project.

The advent of the Christmas holidays always ushered in a period c excitement and pleasure for us. My Aunt Irene owned a cottage at Emu Pa and the three aunts plus our family managed to squeeze into it for the festi season. The main problem was to get there. In the early days of our st at Coolibah it was quite a hassle getting to the railhead at Baralaba. D used to drive us there in the buggy, and as he could hardly desert the static he would then return for the usual duties. The twenty-five miles was quit a lengthy trip, taking us past Harcourt Station, across the Dawson by for at that point, and then back across the Dawson, again by ford, near Baralaba which in those days was little more than a bag township. We then faced slow overnight train journey, and a lonely one, as I don't remember eve sharing the carriage with anyone else. Mother used to bed us down in a fashic which would only be possible in an outback train. She used to make up a be for each of us on the bench seats of the carriage and rig up mosquito net above each bed. This enabled us to sleep soundly as the train proceeded o its leisurely journey towards the coast. After passing through Mount Morga the train had to descend the range between Moonmera and Moongan with th help of a cogged central rail. A small but powerful engine was based her to push trains up the range and carefully shepherd them down again on th return trip. On an overnight trip we were likely to be asleep when thi interesting descent was being negotiated, but we occasionally made the tri in daylight and were intrigued by the operation of the rack engine.

At Emu Park the early morning swim was an unchangeable ritual. Firs we were each given a slice of bread and dripping - you'd be surprised a how tasty this is - and then we would walk down to the Fishermen's Beach where my aunts owned a small bathing shed. This was divided into two section to give privacy for males and females to use the shed at the same time. Her we could change into our bathing costumes and leave our street clothes i safety. While Dad could not spend these holidays with us he was frequentl able to make some arrangement which would permit him to join us for a fe days. Holidays eventually came to an end and we would start the long journe back to Coolibah. I remember on one occasion arriving at Baralaba shortl before mid-day. At this period the railway line to Theodore was largel completed, but a firm schedule was not yet in operation. We understood that

a train would be leaving from somewhere near Baralaba, but we had no idea of the point of departure, nor the time. A friend of ours, Stanley Easton, got his car out and drove from one place to another in an effort to locate the train. Eventually we were told that it would be leaving from the gravel pit at two o'clock. Stanley tore along one back road after another, finally getting us to the gravel pit just before the train left. After about half-an-hour we alighted at the shelter shed at Mungi, and in due course Dad arrived with the buggy.

Towards the end of 1926 it was decided that something would have to be done about my education, and a return to civilisation seemed unavoidable. Aunt Irene, who was the soul of generosity to our family, was kind enough to make her Emu Park house available to us as a permanent abode. Our own home at Rockhampton had been rented out, of course, but we could ill afford the loss of its rent if we had gone to live there ourselves. Aunt Irene's offer was therefore a timely one and was accepted with gratitude. Accordingly, in September 1926, we said goodbye to Coolibah. It had been a lonely existence, but it had endowed us with a feeling of self-confidence which would remain a life-long asset.

CHAPTER II

AT THE SEASIDE

Our new home, at Hunter Street in Emu Park, was of course well-knpwn to us. It was situated directly behind the Church of England, but nevertheless it commanded a good view over part of Emu Park and the sea beyond. Some three miles from the shore could be seen Pelican Island with its small companion, Pelican Rock, and beyond it North and South Keppel Islands stood out clearly. The latter island now bears the impressive name of Great Keppel. Barren Island appeared as a small grey stretch of land on the horizon.

Mother lost no time in starting a small vegetable garden and I soon made friends with children living nearby. In particular we became friendly with the Sharples family, and it was at a musical evening at their home that I first heard a harmonising part being sung. It was an alto part to the hymn "There shall be Showers of Blessing" and before the end of the evening I had learnt that part. Subsequently I sang it with great pleasure on many occasions and also made my first attempts to compose my own alto part to other simple tunes.

At the start of the 19~~62~~26 school year I became a student at the Emu Park State School, some three or four blocks from our home. Mother joined the local croquet club and I occasionally watched her playing when I had time on my hands. Later my two sisters joined a tennis group and I made my first unsuccessful efforts to play. It was here that I met the Leivesley boys, Percy, Doug and Frank, and so began a friendship, mainly with Percy, which was to last until we lost touch after I had gone to live in Gympie in 1938. Many years after World War II Margaret and I were invited to Percy's fiftieth wedding anniversary. I had been groomsman at his wedding and the anniversary was a happy reunion for those who had attended the original happy function.

A year or two afterwards my Aunt Irene paid for me to attend a term of drawing classes held on Saturday mornings at the Rockhampton Technical College. I thoroughly enjoyed these lessons, as I seemed to have some natural aptitude for this sort of activity. On the final day of the term the class proceeded en masse to a park a few blocks away, where we each did a pencil drawing looking across the Fitzroy River towards a small house and some trees on the other side. While we were engaged in this task a launch passed down the river and I seized the opportunity to include it in the picture. This was the best drawing I ever did and in later years I got it framed.

I left the Emu Park school at the end of 1927 and for the first few months I attended the Rockhampton Central Boys' School. To enable me to do this I stayed with my aunts at their Rockhampton home during the week, travelling down to Emu Park at weekends. It had been expected that the Rockhampton school would provide a higher standard of tuition than was available at Emu Park and this was considered important in view of the Scholarship examination to take place in May of that year. The Scholarship was successfully negotiated, no doubt vindicating the choice of school. I was now eligible for secondary schooling and the school selected was the Rockhampton Boys' Grammar School. My sister Elaine was already attending the Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School while Dorothy went to the Rockhampton High School.

For my first couple of months at secondary school I stayed with my aunts

in Rockhampton. This was for the purpose of helping me to settle in to my new school with a minimum of trouble, but at weekends I would return to Emu Park. On one occasion I spent the weekend at Rockhampton, and I remember my Aunt Ethel asking me whether there was any subject which I was finding difficult. I told her that I was having a little trouble with algebra, so she asked me to bring my algebra textbook and show her the chapter I had reached at school. She then turned to the exercises at the end of that chapter and told me to do every one. I ploughed through all those exercises and never again did I have any trouble with algebra. I am grateful to my aunt for having taught me a valuable lesson that day.

Living in Emu Park but attending school in Rockhampton resulted in a lot of train travel. The train left every morning at twenty minutes past seven, reaching the Archer Park railway station in Rockhampton at twenty minutes to nine. A short walk to Bolsover Street enabled us to catch a bus which went past both grammar schools. In the afternoon the train left Stanley Street railway station at thirteen minutes past five, arriving at Emu Park at twenty minutes to seven. It made a long day for us, and moreover after our evening meal we still had our homework to do, for which we had only the light of a kerosene lamp. Elaine, the Leivesley boys, Jean Sharples and others also followed this routine and were none the worse for it.

The weekends were a time for play and swimming, mainly with the Leivesley boys. One adventure in particular stands out clearly in my memory. A friend of Percy Leivesley's, a young man named Harold Head, had built a small sailing boat, mainly with his own hands. It was a very creditable piece of work indeed, and he brought it down to Emu Park for its maiden voyage. Four of us took part in this operation. Harold himself was captain and in addition there were Percy and Doug Leivesley and myself. We launched the boat from the Fishermen's Beach, and when some distance out decided that we should have the centre-board in position. However the short period of immersion had caused the timber to swell and we found it impossible to push the centre-board into the slot intended to receive it. We continued on to Pelican Island, some three miles from the mainland, and wandered around this rocky, picturesque spot. Then we retraced our steps to the boat for our return journey. Unfortunately we were confronted with an offshore wind and without a centre-board it was impossible to tack. Accordingly we resigned ourselves to the unpleasant task of rowing the three miles to Fishermen's Beach. We made it with aching arms and backs. A few weeks later Harold Head and the Leivesley boys unwisely took the boat out in rough weather and five hundred yards or so from the beach it capsized. They clung to the upturned boat while some experienced fishermen got their own boat ready and rescued them. Harold's boat was eventually washed ashore, badly damaged, near the Phillip Street section of the Fishermen's Beach, but was not used again to my knowledge.

Apart from this boating adventure there were plenty of pursuits in Emu Park to interest a young boy of my age. A short distance north of Phillip Street stood Mount Gilfillan, some three hundred and fifty feet high, and a climb to the top was rewarded with a 360° panorama well worth seeing. To the west of Emu Park were located large saltpans which filled at high tide and displayed wide expanses of sand when the tide was low. These saltpans were reputed to have extensive areas of quicksand, and after hearing Mother's vivid stories of quicksands near where she lived as a child I was glad to give the saltpans a wide berth. Another attraction took the form of a small cave set in a rocky headland at the further end of the so-called men's beach. A small fissure conncted the cave with the sea, and the sight of water rushing along this fissure and filling the cave brought many interested spectators.

On weekdays I enjoyed school life at the Rockhampton Boys' Grammar School. In particular the foreign languages intrigued me. During our first six months, the second half of 1928, we had a French master by the name of Troidhardt. He was hopeless as a teacher and moreover because of his

strong foreign accent we couldn't understand a word he said. There was a boy named Twigg in our class and we nicknamed him Monsieur Branche, which was the only French we had absorbed that half-year. With Latin it was a different story. I was fascinated with the declensions and conjugations of Latin nouns and verbs. The parrot-fashion method of learning required to master them suited me and the un-English pronunciation of vowels opened up a new door to me. Our Latin studies provided us with a nickname for one of our classmates, a boy named Farmer. He became Gric, from Agricola, the Latin word for farmer. After my initial trouble with algebra I enjoyed the three mathematics subjects - arithmetic, algebra and geometry - and did reasonably well at them in school examinations.

At weekends my time at Emu Park was usually fully occupied. Saturdays gave the opportunity for beach activities or long walks, while on Sundays we regularly turned up for church services. Although we were nominally Presbyterian, we attended the morning service at the Methodist Church every week. There was no Presbyterian Church, but once a month a Presbyterian minister from Yeppoon came over to Emu Park and held an evening service in the Methodist Church. We attended these also, and on occasions went to the service at the nearby Church of England.

Both these churches were lit by acetylene gas and many were the times that I prepared the gas generator for the evening service. This involved removing the airtight cover from the calcium carbide container, cleaning out the lime from its previous use, and filling it with pieces of fresh calcium carbide. The top was then replaced and securely screwed down, after which a small tap was opened allowing water to enter the carbide container and commence the generation of the acetylene gas. Gradually the upper half of the large gas holder would commence to rise, and as it approached the full position we would light the gas burners inside the building. The acetylene gas gave a brilliant light, but the preliminary work on the generator was a messy business.

Music at the Methodist and Presbyterian services was provided by a pedal-operated harmonium. A lady by the name of Miss Young played for most of the services but on those occasions when she could not attend Mother did the playing, and being a skilled pianist she did it very well.

During our stay at Emu Park my Aunt Irene bought a car - an "A" model Ford - and one afternoon after school I called by arrangement at a garage in Rockhampton where I was shown how to wash the car, grease it and mend a puncture. These chores then became my responsibility. Although Aunt Irene used to take her car to Emu Park for holidays the road was too bad for her to drive there and she used to send it down by train. To do this she faced the difficult task of manoeuvring it onto a railway truck, ensuring that it was properly secured, and then driving it off at the other end. A similar operation returned the car to Rockhampton at the end of her holiday.

Towards the end of 1930 I was due to sit for the Junior Public Examination, as it was called. It was equivalent to the Intermediate Examination in New South Wales. Mother decided that the long train journeys to and from school did not allow me adequate time for study, so she rented a house at 44 Wilkinson Street in the Rockhampton suburb of Wandal, about three or four blocks from our own house in North Street. The rent for this house was considerably less than the amount we were getting for our North Street home, so it would not have been good economics to get rid of our tenant. Because Dad's livelihood lay in the outback rather than in the city he could visit us only at intervals and the negotiations for renting this house were undertaken by Mother herself. She was a very independent and capable lady.

CHAPTER III

BACK AT ROCKHAMPTON

Our stay at Emu Park had come to an end. Our new home was a modest two-storey building with three bedrooms, a lounge upstairs and a kitchen, bathroom (rather primitive) and living room downstairs. It was very comfortable and we lived there happily for over a year. St. Peter's Presbyterian Church was only a couple of blocks away, and as Aunt Irene was the choir mistress I was enrolled as a member of that august body. Mother was soon requisitioned as church organist.

Meanwhile school studies proceeded normally. During the year I became specially interested in chemistry and I gradually built up a small stock of chemicals and equipment. The chemicals consisted mainly of the three major acids - sulphuric, nitric and hydrochloric - together with those salts which I had been able to make myself, such as the sulphates, etc. I remember the excitement I experienced when I placed a razor blade in a solution of copper sulphate and watched the iron gradually replace the copper in solution. The end result was a copper-coated razor blade. On another occasion I burnt a hole half-way through my bedroom floor by setting fire to a small quantity of gunpowder which I had made.

In due course I sat for the Junior Public Examination and managed to obtain good results for languages (French and Latin), the mathematics subjects and, not unexpectedly, chemistry. As soon as the examination results were published Mother took me down to the National Bank to apply for a position there, but as I was not yet fifteen it is not surprising that my application was unsuccessful. Mother then approached the school and arranged for me to complete the final two years of secondary studies in one year. Her motive in this request was probably to hasten the day when I was employed and could contribute to the cost of running the household. The proposal was assisted by the fact that another student, Cornelius Hally, had applied to do exactly the same thing. Accordingly, in early 1931 I commenced an accelerated course, the subjects being limited to English, French, Latin, Maths A, Maths B and Chemistry.

At about this time we had to leave the house in Wilkinson Street as the owner now wished to reside there. Our new home was at 109 Rundle Street, only a couple of blocks away. Shortly after moving in Mother was approached by the church authorities with a request that she take in as a boarder a young man by the name of Ken Innes, who was studying to be a minister in the church. Mother agreed to this and the new arrangement was a very cordial one with far-reaching and unforeseen results. Ken fitted in well with our family and when he added his gramophone records to our own meagre stock we enjoyed good company and good music.

My last year of secondary studies was now approaching an end and the Senior Public Examination, the equivalent of the Leaving Certificate in New South Wales, was not far off. The language master thought I would have difficulty in completing the full two-year Latin course in one year, so he suggested that I enter for the examination in Intermediate Latin, which would be adequate for matriculation purposes. In the event I managed fairly good results in French and Chemistry, with reasonable passes in the other subjects, including Latin. This gave me my matriculation, although I did not make use

of it until many years later.

Towards the end of 1931 we moved back into our own home at 108 North Street. We had always felt that this was our real home and were glad to have returned to it. A small stream ran through the front of our allotment, and although it was usually dry it would be running freely after heavy rain. A footbridge provided access from the front gate to the front steps. Weeping fig trees grew along the frontage just inside the fence, while here and there around the allotment could be seen three or four mango trees and a mulberry tree. The mulberry provided fruit for mulberry pie, one of our favourites,but the mango trees provided mainly flying foxes (otherwise known as fruit bats).

In January 1932 I applied for a position with the Commonwealth Bank - and was accepted. I still had some time to fill in before starting work and Ken Innes invited me to spend a couple of weeks at the Innes family home at Northgate, a suburb of Brisbane. This was a thoroughly enjoyable visit. I was greatly impressed by the tall buildings of the State capital - tall, that is, by Rockhampton standards - and admired the efficient tramway system, beside which Rockhampton's steam trams were rudimentary. But the most exciting event of my holiday was a short aeroplane flight which Ken and I took. To look down on the houses and fields of Brisbane's outer suburbs was a memorable experience.

I commenced work as a probationer at the Commonwealth Bank on 3 February 1932 at the age of sixteen years and twelve days. My salary was seventy pounds per annum, equivalent to one pound six shillings and eleven pence per week, tax not being deducted in those days. It was agreed that I give one pound to Mother as board and live on the six shillings and eleven pence. Out of my meagre bank balance I scraped up twenty pounds to buy a bicycle, which provided transport to and from work, with a trip home for lunch at one o'clock. In this way my salary was sufficient for my modest needs. It is worthy of mention that bicycles were the accepted means of transport for all the bank staff, with the exception of the manager, who indulged in the luxury of driving to work.

My first position in the bank was that of postage clerk. My job was the simple one of stamping and posting the outward mail and it was here that I first came up against addition as something which was part of my everyday work. Like most skills in life it improved with long practice and for many years I have preferred to add money columns in my head rather than use a calculator. There were, of course, no calculators in those days, but the Bank had three or four adding machines which gave you a printed tape with a roar and a clatter.

The Bank had about thirty employees. The manager was a tall, imposing man named Gavin Wald. The accountant, whose name was Forbes, was the second-in-charge, but he was transferred soon after my arrival. He was replaced by T.V.G.McWatters, who was soon nicknamed the Bullet, because - so the staff said - he was always going off. My immediate superior was a pleasant young man named Ray Bryce, while above him was a group of equally likable young chaps - Tom Lilley, Fred Galloway, Ken Woolcock and others. Galloway was given the nickname Breeze, because of a song popular at that time - "Breeze that Blew my Gal Away".

After three months as postage clerk another junior was taken on and I moved up to the next rung of the ladder - the position of check sheet clerk in the Savings Bank Department. It involved recording all deposits and withdrawals and handing back the passbooks to customers. The totals from the check sheets were required by the tellers at the end of the day for balancing their cash, and I found this aspect very interesting.

After six months as a probationer I was appointed to the permanent staff, with a salary of ninety-five pounds per annum, i.e. one pound sixteen shillings and six per week, which indeed was affluence itself. From then on my salary would increase by twenty pounds per annum on each anniversary of my joining the Bank.

In my leisure hours I found plenty of interesting things to occupy my

attention. In the evenings I read a lot, mainly detective stories, or played ping-pong on our small breakfast table or at the home of my uncle, Percy Wills. There were also films to be seen at Rockhampton's two picture theatres, the Wintergarden and Earls Court. The latter was an open-air theatre, very popular in the warmer months. My favourite film star was the singer Dick Powell, and I can still listen to his singing with pleasure. I also liked the English comedy team of Tom Walls and Ralph Lynn, and on the zanier side, the Marx Brothers. The earliest film that I can recall was a silent colour film, King of Kings, while the first talking picture I saw was the Marx Brothers film, Monkey Business.

At the weekends I played cricket as a member of the Past Grammars team, firstly on concrete and later on turf. My interest in cricket was probably the direct result of the amazing achievements of Don Bradman. I can still remember seeing his name in headlines across the front page of the paper after he had made the world's record test score of 334 in a test match at Leeds in 1930. At that time, of course, I was only a schoolboy, but my thoughts were turned towards cricket. Bradman became the idol of countless Australians, including, of course, myself. As a batsman this country lad towered head and shoulders above his contemporaries and he was superb in the outfield. After his 1930 tour he became a member of a team which E.L.Waddy took around country Queensland, with one match to be played in Rockhampton. Waddy's team fielded first and Don Bradman had the misfortune to sprain his ankle. Thus I was denied the opportunity of seeing him bat and was not consoled by a century by Archie Jackson.

One day my fellow-worker Ray Bryce came to my desk to say that he and his girl friend were going skating that night and would I like to come. I much appreciated this friendly gesture and although I had never skated before I accepted gratefully. On the rink Ray showed me the fundamentals of roller skating and my initial efforts were encouraging. From then on I went to the rink regularly, some times with Ray and his girl friend and sometimes on my own, and achieved a degree of proficiency.

During the second half of 1932 the English cricket team arrived in Australia. This was the notorious body-line series and on every off-duty moment we listened to the radio broadcasts giving ball-by-ball descriptions. I was fortunate enough to hear the whole of Don Bradman's innings of 103 not out at Melbourne in that year. For those who do not follow cricket, bodyline was introduced by the English captain, Douglas Jardine, as the only means of bringing Bradman's scores down to the level of the average batsman. It succeeded in this but at the same time put other fine players out of the game. It was quite dangerous and inflicted frequent injuries on all the Australian batsmen. The Australian team lacked the fast bowlers with which to retaliate but in any case the Australian captain, Bill Woodfull, would never have countenanced a type of bowling which he considered unsportsmanlike. Bodyline came to a quick end when the West Indies, with its complement of really fast bowlers, used it against the English team, and the English counties used it against each other. The English authorities soon called a halt.

By February 1933 I had been at the bank a whole year and was then eligible to take my three weeks annual leave. Ken Innes was then the Presbyterian minister at Mudgeeraba, inland from Southport in southern Queensland, and he invited me to visit him during my holiday. I did so and enjoyed the stay. Ken had a baby car which, as he proudly informed me, had Westinghouse air brakes and it was interesting to hear the hiss of escaping air as the brakes were applied from time to time.

Later that year we received an urgent message that Dad had had a stroke and was in a serious condition in Gladstone Hospital. Mother went to Gladstone immediately and a couple of days later sent for me to join her. We spent most of the day at his bedside but he did not recover consciousness and passed away two or three days later. We arranged for his body to be brought to Rockhampton, where he was interred in the Rockhampton cemetery. My father deserves a lot of sympathy. He was an experienced cattleman but

unable to find employment in the city. Unfortunately he did not have the means to establish a permanent home in the country and the need to educate his children forced him to let his family live away from the only area in which he could obtain employment. He was then spending his time mainly as a drover but was able to get down to the city and see us every few months.

My sisters' lives were not without romance. Dorothy's boy friend was a young man named Ken Macaree, while Elaine seemed likely to team up with Ken Innes, our former boarder. Some highly amusing situations developed when the three Kens were in the house at the same time. If Mother called me from some other part of the house with a loud "Ken!" there would be a chorus of replies accompanied by peals of laughter. Everyone, including Mother herself, used to enjoy the joke.

In 1934 Ken Macaree and Dorothy were married and initially they lived in a house in Henry Street a mile or so from our home in North Street. Despite a really charming personality Ken had difficulty in obtaining employment and at one period, during his bachelor days, he lived in a small hut at Cooraman on the way to Emu Park. Here he extracted eucalyptus oil from gum leaves but he was never successful at marketing it and the venture fell through. At the time of his marriage he was working in Rockhampton but they later transferred to Mount Morgan after he had obtained a position as engineer at the mine. On Sundays I often used to cycle up to Mount Morgan for the day and return in the evening. The only difficult part was the ascent of that part of the range known as the Razorback. This was the section mentioned earlier which the train negotiated by means of a centre cogged rail and a special engine, but other forms of transport had a long steep hill to surmount. I thoroughly enjoyed my trips to Mount Morgan and the days spent with Ken and Dorothy, who always made me welcome.

In 1937 Dorothy was expecting a baby and came down to Rockhampton to stay with us for a while before entering hospital for the important event. On the day before she left for the hospital I made quite a job of sprucing up her slippers and later I was glad that I had been able to perform this small service for her. Dorothy did not come out of hospital. Her heart was unable to withstand the pain of childbirth and early one morning we received an urgent call to come to her bedside. I can still remember Mother saying to her, "Dorothy, Elaine is here, - and Ken", and I think I saw a response gleaming from her eyes. Shortly afterwards she passed away.

We were devastated. Dorothy was no longer with us, but something of her still remained, - her little baby John. We took him home and had great pleasure in looking after his needs. Ken Macaree gave up his Mount Morgan job and returned to live with his parents in North Rockhampton. At his request we also cared for their dog, Tiger by name, a ferocious-looking but loyal Alsatian. Tiger was extremely aggressive towards tradesmen, but fortunately our allotment was divided by a fence into a front and back section. Tiger was confined to the back section and tradesmen learnt to come to the front door. This arrangement also made life bearable for our cat Chipperfield. An unusual name for a cat? Yes, you are right. Let me tell you how it came about. We had been listening to the cricket broadcasts from England in 1934. These broadcasts are themselves worthy of mention. The details of events on the field were sent by cable from England to Australia and then converted into a manufactured ball-by-ball description, complete with life-like background noises. It was superbly done and deceived most people until the newspapers gave the show away. The Australian batsman Chipperfield had gone to lunch with his score at 99. After lunch he was dismissed without adding to his total. Disgusted, I walked out into our back yard and saw there a little kitten which came over to me miaowing in a friendly fashion. We decided to adopt him if there were no other claimant and when the question of a name arose we immediately thought of Chipperfield. Carried unanimously!

Chipperfield was given occupation rights to the front section of the allotment while Tiger exercised sovereignty over the rear section. They gradually got used to each other and eventually it was not unusual to see our cat curled up asleep in the middle of the back yard. While Tiger was

antagonistic to all visitors he was as gentle as a lamb with us and was a fine watchdog.

John continued to make progress for a while and then that progress came to a stop. The cause was diagnosed as hydrocephalus, for which there was no treatment. The doctors said that it might stop of its own accord, but as things turned out this was not to be and John was never able to walk. He would just lie in his cot and smile at you but didn't learn to talk. Eventually he died, in 1945, while I was still overseas.

My evenings now became more occupied with table tennis. I had often enjoyed games at the home of my uncle, Percy Wills. He and his family were enthusiastic about the game and we had many fierce tussles over their tennis table. Soon after I acquired my own table, housing it in the large area underneath the house. With a group of my young friends I formed a team which we entered in the local competition at B grade level and while we did not top the competition we acquitted ourselves well. During practice sessions the intricacies of playing with rubber-faced bats were mastered and I also developed a fingerspin service.

In 1937 I bought a motorbike and discarded my old pushbike which had given good service. My new acquisition was a 500 c.c. side valve Norton. Shortly afterwards I was transferred to the Gympie branch of the Bank and this was the commencement of a more independent stage of my life.

CHAPTER IV

GYMPIE

Gympie was a city of some eight thousand inhabitants prettily situated among rolling hills alongside the Mary River. In its heyday it had been a goldmining centre of some consequence but when the mines became flooded it lapsed into the main outlet for a large dairying area. Some of its street names, such as Reef Street and Horseshoe Bend, betray its mining origin.

A short while before my transfer to Gympie the Rockhampton Musical Union, a well-known choral group, had competed in a musical festival in Gympie. Some of the members had stayed at a large boarding house run by a Mrs. Murphy, and had been quite satisfied with the accommodation. Accordingly I wrote to Mrs. Murphy, giving her the time of my arrival, and she replied accepting me as a boarder.

In due course the time to leave Rockhampton arrived and, armed with a first class sleeper ticket provided by the Bank, and with my motorbike in the luggage van, I commenced my journey. It was a delightful experience to travel in a first class sleeping coach. Our family had never been able to afford first class rail travel, but in those days the Queensland Railways provided second class sleepers amounting to hard beds with neither sheets nor blankets and these had met our needs for long-distance travel. Hence my first class sleeper was a real luxury despite the fact that I would be unable to enjoy it to the full as the train would be arriving at Gympie at two o'clock the following morning. The guard called me with a cup of tea shortly before we were due at Gympie - another rare luxury - and shortly afterwards I stepped out onto the platform at Gympie station, dragging my suitcase after me. I then followed up the unloading of my motorbike but decided to leave it on the platform until I could collect it next day. The three or four blocks to the boarding house were soon covered and there Mrs. Murphy, kind soul that she was, welcomed me with a cup of tea and showed me to my room.

At nine o'clock the next morning I reported to the Bank in Mary Street, the main street of Gympie, and commenced my duties as general bank ledger-keeper. At lunchtime I walked up to the railway station to claim my motorbike. I found it still standing on the platform, but with a large pool of oil underneath it spreading four or five feet in every direction. Nobody seemed to be interested in the situation so I carefully extracted it from its oily berth and wheeled it out of the station into the street. As it was almost certainly out of oil I free-wheeled it down the street towards the city area. After a block or so I came across a service station so I left it there for them to check over and walked the short distance to the Bank. After work I picked it up and was mobile again.

There were nine employees at the Bank, including the manager and one typist. They were a pleasant lot and I got on well with them. Life at the boarding house suited me. It was a long rambling structure with two annexes and could accommodate ten or eleven boarders. It answered to the name of Crescent House and this name appeared on a large board set on the roof above the entrance. It was situated in Crescent Road, about a mile from the city centre.

With my arrival, and with a little help from outside, we had enough

for a cricket team and were soon playing in the local competition. We also acquired a table for table tennis and with some other enthusiasts I organised a table tennis competition. This became very popular but I was unable to use my fingerspin service which had now been banned in table tennis. It was said that a certain American player could count on five points every time he served and this simply could not be allowed to continue.

Early in 1939 I traded in my motorbike on a small car, a Singer 9 h.p. dual-purpose roadster, to give it the correct title. I used to drive to work and park in the street just outside the Bank. At weekends a group of us would often drive to Tewantin or Noosa and occasionally as far as Caloundra. It should be realised that in those days the roads were very rough and did not encourage weekend driving.

While at Gympie I suddenly decided that I should learn to play the piano. It was strange that I had not taken this step many years before, particularly as I was very interested in music. I cannot offer any explanation for this delay. At Mrs. Murphy's suggestion I took lessons from a Miss Una Stitt, a charming middle-aged lady who lived about a block away from Crescent House. I found that I was able to pick up the rudiments quite quickly but was handicapped by my failure to commence learning while my fingers were still supple. However I progressed to the stage where I could play accompaniments for the more musical of my fellow-boarders as they grouped round the piano. We spent many enjoyable evenings in this way. There was, however, a tendency for the singers to select songs which I either didn't know or knew only slightly and I just had to keep pace with them as best I could. This was, of course, wonderful sight-reading practice and I benefited considerably from it. A young building employee from Brisbane, Owen Graham by name and temporarily in Gympie on a building project, had a beautiful natural tenor voice, but untrained. Many were the times when he sang the Donkey Serenade to my uncertain accompaniment. I was now taking great interest in the theory of music and devoured books on it. It seemed to explain so easily things which I had felt in my mind, such as the resolution of discords and other harmonic progressions. But World War II was to put a stop to my piano studies from which they never recovered.

We were not above a few harmless practical jokes at Crescent House, usually perpetrated in company with my friend Joe McKenna. On one occasion we experimented with a fuse and, having perfected it, connected it to a basket bomb, one of the exploding fireworks which were available in those days. It went off under the house in the middle of our evening meal, and peals of laughter from Joe and myself immediately indicated the culprits. Another of our pranks involved making iron pyrites out of iron filings and sulphur, and placing it in a jar of sulphuric acid. This flooded the house with the gas known as sulphuretted hydrogen; for those who have not studied chemistry it is the gas given out by rotten eggs!

A further exploit of ours required considerable preparation. Over the front entrance to the building was affixed a large sign bearing the name of the establishment, the telephone number and the name of the proprietress. Joe and I decided to paint an alternative sign on the back of this large board. We climbed onto the roof, making as little noise as possible, disconnected the board and then brought it rather precariously - it was about ten feet long - down into the bedroom which we occupied. Then I prepared my paints and brushes and started work. The completed sign would read as follows:

Ye beere and ye lodgings 5/- per week	YE ANCIENTE TIPPLERS' TAVERNE	Dame Nellie Murphy, ye olde innkeeper

Of course all this delicate brushwork could not be done in a couple of nights and moreover the board, with its correct side facing outwards, had to be in position throughout the day. Consequently the operation involved many trips to the roof and the inevitable happened. Fortunately we had foreseen it and had taken precautions. Mrs. Murphy had finally heard us on the roof and knocked

at the door of our room seeking an explanation of these strange noises. On hearing her approach we had turned the board over so that our literary effort would be on the underside. I had already commenced the repainting of the original sign, to be produced if we were interrupted, and this work was about half finished. We showed this to Mrs. Murphy and explained that we had intended to present her with the finished product as a surprise. She was immensely gratified, while Joe and I kept straight faces with difficulty. A couple of nights later I finished the painting on both sides of the board, while Joe had been occupying himself with the floodlighting equipment. Our handiwork, well lit up, was then presented one evening for public inspection, while Joe and I sat out near the front gate and listened to the comments of people strolling past. Mrs. Murphy, good sport that she was, took it all in a spirit of fun and laughed with the rest of us. After three or four nights we decided that enough was enough and the original sign, now with its fresh coat of paint, once again graced our establishment.

In 1939 war clouds were looming overseas. Russia and Germany had been at loggerheads and this ensured a balance of power in Europe which provided a degree of safety for the smaller nations in that area. However I still remember the nine o'clock news one evening while three or four of us were having a chat together. The headline was an announcement that a non-aggression pact had been concluded between Russia and Germany. We all realised immediately that war was inevitable. As all the world knows, Germany at once invaded Poland and on 3 September 1939 Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Initially nothing seemed to be happening in Europe. This was the period of the "phoney war". There were skirmishes around Saarbrucken but that was about all, and in Gympie - and indeed in most places in Australia - life went on as usual. Our cricket matches continued, while in early 1940 I managed to win the Gympie table tennis championship in singles, and also in doubles with George Harvey, one of my fellow employees at the Bank. Ken and Elaine were married and I went to Rockhampton for the occasion. But events were starting to move in Europe. While spending a few days in Brisbane I remember standing on the footpath outside a newsagency and listening with deep misgivings as the radio described the progress of the German armies across northern France. It seemed that the world as we knew it was coming to an end and the uncertainty of the times cast a gloom over everyone.

Towards the end of 1940 conscription was introduced in Australia and I was in the age group called up. This involved going into camp for three months and for me it entailed a stay in the nearby city of Maryborough as a private in the 42nd Battalion. We were lodged in the Maryborough Showgrounds, where some two hundred and fifty of us slept on straw-filled palliasses in the great show pavilion. The father of one of my bank friends was an officer of this battalion and he said a word on my behalf in the right quarters. The result was that they assigned me to the Intelligence Section. The Intelligence Officer was a surveyor named Mott, and our work consisted mainly of drawing maps of the areas around Maryborough for use on manoeuvres. Mott was the ideal man for this job and gave the members of his section an excellent training in the groundwork of surveying, which stood me in good stead when I was studying navigation in the Air Force.

There were three of us in the Intelligence Section - Ian Sharpley, Ted Dexter and myself - and we gave the Section a good reputation by turning out maps which the company commanders found to be accurate and tailored to their needs. Ted Dexter came from Bundaberg, while Ian Sharpley, whose permanent home was in Melbourne, was engaged to a Maryborough girl, Darda Boys. Ian had a good baritone voice, while the Boys family were all musical. We spent many pleasant evenings at their home and were always requisitioned for the church choir on Sundays.

It was about this time that numerous war songs swept over the Western world. The British songs in particular were plaintive numbers of a high standard, such as A Nightingale sang in Berkeley Square, Somewhere in France with You, Till the Lights of London Shine Again, When They Sound the Last

All Clear, and others. I was in England when they sounded the last all clear and the lights of London shone again, and that was a day I shall never forget. During the war a German song filtered over to the West and became a universal favourite. Everyone loved Lilli Marlene!

Shortly after my return to Gympie an Air Force recruiting train arrived for the weekend. On the Saturday night I spent a lot of time thinking about the action I was proposing, but finally I accepted that I could hardly stay at home when all my friends were enlisting. Accordingly on Sunday morning I turned up at Gympie Railway Station and entered the train. I was accepted, as I expected to be, and when I arrived at work the next morning I discovered that altogether five of the Bank's staff had enlisted. They were Arch Girle, Bert Austin, George Harvey, Ray Thurecht, and of course myself. It is sad to think that only two of us returned.

Such a mass departure would have wrecked the Bank's operations in Gympie and therefore we were transferred one by one to other branches over a period of some weeks. I was fortunate enough to find myself back at Rockhampton and able to live at home while waiting to be called up. I was now on the Air Force Reserve and occupied my spare time in doing a correspondence course in navigation conducted by the Air Force. At length this period of waiting came to an end and on 21 July 1941 I entered No. 3 I.T.S. (Initial Training School) at Sandgate near Brisbane, with the lowly rank of AC2 (Aircraftman Class 2).

CHAPTER V

LEARNING TO FLY

We entered Sandgate as Course No. 17 and lived in huts holding some twenty trainees. The subjects studied included navigation, mathematics, theory of flight and the Morse code (both sending and receiving). Depending on our results we would be selected for training at the end of the course as either pilots, navigators or gunners. After the final examinations I found that I had managed 100% in each of the three main subjects. All the trainees were then interviewed by a board of officers and when I was asked what I wanted to be I told them that I wanted to be a pilot. A few days later our postings were announced and I found myself directed to No. 2 E.F.T.S. (Elementary Flying Training School) at Archerfield, the Brisbane civil and military airport.

Here we took our first steps in learning to fly. In those days the elementary trainer was the De Havilland DH 82, known as the Tiger Moth, and on this aircraft I commenced instruction in climbing, turning and descending, as well as the take-off and landing. Initially I had some trouble with my landings and on this account it took me twelve and a half flying hours to go solo. However the big moment arrived when my instructor got out of the aircraft and told me to do one circuit and then come in. This I achieved without difficulty. It is appropriate at this stage to explain the problem associated with landing an aircraft before the advent of so-called tricycle undercarriages. Prior to this development the aircraft would finish its landing running along the ground on the two main wheels and the tail wheel, or, in the case of the Tiger Moth, the tail skid. Pilots were expected to ensure that these three points touched the ground together, an operation known as the three point landing. The technique was to fly just above the ground and reduce the speed of the aircraft to a point where it "fell out of the sky" onto the ground a foot or so below. But at this point the tail wheel would still be well up in the air and had to be brought down quickly by a smart pull back on the control column. This was easier said than done. If you pulled the control column back before the aircraft had lost flying speed you would find yourself fifteen or twenty feet up in the air and would probably have to put on full power and fly round for a second attempt. On the other hand if you delayed the pull back on the control column, the main wheels might hit the ground before the tail wheel and you would bounce high into the air with the same result as before. To execute the manoeuvre properly you had to be able to feel when the aircraft was about to "fall out of the sky" and this ability came only with practice.

Ground subjects, of course, were still very much in the programme. We learnt more about aircraft engines and airframes, as well as meteorology. This involved the study of weather forecasting as well as the recognition of cloud types and knowing the weather that went with them. In addition we continued our exercises in the sending and receiving of the Morse code. During this period Ken was stationed in the Brisbane suburb of Auchenflower, and this enabled me to visit him and Elaine frequently.

By mid-November we had completed our elementary flying course and were put on the train to Sydney, where we reported to No. 2 E.D. (Embarkation Depot) at Bradfield Park near Lindfield. On the morning of our arrival we

were asked whether we had received our pre-embarkation leave, and when we answered in the negative we were immediately given leave passes and train tickets to our respective home towns. That same night we were back on the Brisbane train.

It is interesting to describe rail travel conditions for servicemen during the war. We travelled second class, of course, being denied the luxury of a sleeping compartment. Instead we stretched out and slept wherever we could find enough space. When six of us found ourselves occupying the one compartment we would fill in the space between the seats with our kitbags to produce a large flattish but uneven area, on which four of us managed to sleep. The remaining two, usually the smallest of the group, slept with difficulty on the luggage racks mounted high on the walls of the compartment.

We were back at 2ED in early December and finally the big day arrived. Early in the morning of 7 December we boarded buses which took us to Darling Harbour where, precariously balancing our overloaded kitbags on our shoulders, we staggered up the gangplank on to the deck of the Mariposa. This ship was bound for the United States, whence we would cross to Canada. It was just breakfast time so we found our way to the dining room and commenced our meal. We didn't get very far with it. An urgent call came over the ship's public address system requiring all Air Force personnel to leave the ship immediately and assemble on the wharf. Completely mystified, we obeyed these instructions, then boarded buses which brought us back to Lindfield. To our further surprise we found ourselves listening to what almost amounted to an apology from a senior officer, who had made a point of meeting us on our return. We were then issued with leave passes and told to come back in five days' time. And the reason for these strange events? Japan had just attacked Pearl Harbour.

Our aborted journey to Canada would normally have been part of a plan known as the Empire Air Training Scheme, under which aircrew from various British dominions and colonies would receive further training in Canada before going on to Britain for active service. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour threw all these plans into the melting pot. It was no longer safe to send ships laden with partly-trained aircrew across the Pacific and therefore everything marked time while alternative plans were developed. During this period we all loafed around and did nothing. I had teamed up with two Brisbane boys, Kevin Hornibrook and Arthur Heap, and we spent most of our evenings going to Gilbert and Sullivan operas in the city. Some of them we saw two or three times.

Eventually the authorities thought up a better way of employing our time and I became a member of a small group of about ten or so trainee pilots who, with two sergeants in charge, were sent to Training Group Headquarters at Point Piper to fortify the building. Here we spent our time digging trenches and filling sandbags, the latter being distributed at various points of weakness. In between these labours we managed to find time to play cricket on the grass tennis court, using cricket material belonging to Hans Ebeling, a member of the Victorian State eleven, who was stationed at Point Piper at the time. The biggest bonus came when our two sergeants managed to arrange occasional flying for us at Mascot aerodrome, now known as Kingsford Smith Airport. Here we flew Tiger Moths and Moth Minors, and I still remember losing most of the loose change in my pocket while doing a slow roll over Maroubra.

But while we were engaged in these warlike activities those responsible for planning our training had not been idle and the day came when we were transferred back to No. 2 Embarkation Depot. Here we turned up on parade as usual but after a couple of days became acutely aware that our names were not being called out and therefore were not on the roll. This gave us the opportunity to do a little planning of our own. We immediately drew up a roster providing for one of us in turn to attend the morning parade, listen for any important announcements and answer the roll call if by any remote chance our names were called out. The rest

of us made ourselves scarce, spending most of the day lying under our hut reading. This idyllic existence continued for a couple of weeks, but when it came to an end we were fortunate enough to be given prior notice. Some of the boys had been taking out girls stationed at Training Group Headquarters at Point Piper, and when our postings came through on the teleprinter the girls passed this information on to them. The next morning we were all on parade listening to our names being read out. The parade officer stared. "I don't remember seeing you fellows here before", he remarked. "Oh yes, we've been here all the time" was the reply, and he had perforce to believe us.

Our posting was to the little Victorian town of Benalla, and at its nearby airfield we were given a refresher course of a couple of weeks on the Wackett Trainer, a small single-engined aircraft. It was a pleasant machine to fly and I enjoyed this brief interlude. It was here that I first met Bob Thorn, who later was to become a lifelong friend.

While I had been flitting from one Air Force station to another things had been happening at home. My mother and my aunts had been understandably most disturbed at the very real possibility of a Japanese invasion of Queensland. There had been a rumour, confirmed after the war, that in the event of an invasion the greater part of Queensland would be abandoned and a defence line established just north of Brisbane. My aunt Irene, who was in charge of the Domestic Science Department of the Rockhampton Technical College, managed to arrange a transfer to the Boonah Technical College. Boonah was a pretty little town some distance south of Ipswich in southern Queensland, and connected with that city by a small winding railway line. They were able to sell their home in Rockhampton - no mean feat in those days - and bought a house in the Boonah suburb of Dugandan. Mother found a tenant for our own home and went to live with them, bringing with her poor little John, still unable to move in his cot.

In the meantime I had received a posting to Point Cook, an airfield near Laverton just out of Melbourne. Here we had the doubtful pleasure of living in galvanised iron huts in the middle of winter. At our new station there were Airspeed Oxfords and Avro Ansons, the former being manufactured by Nevil Shute's company, Airspeed Limited. I was allocated to the group which would train on Oxfords and on the following day my flying instruction in a twin-engined aircraft commenced. The Oxford and Anson aircraft were both twin-engined and had retractable undercarriages, which marked a real step forward in our flying experience. To have two engines to control instead of only one was not as difficult as it might appear. However one of the first requirements after settling down in level flight was the synchronisation of the engines to eliminate annoying reverberation. Other novel features were the brakes - the Tiger Moth had none - and therefore the ability to steer while taxying by differential use of both engines and brakes. Flaps were also new to us, as were the trimming tabs on control services. While the new aircraft was much bulkier this factor did not make it more difficult to control and in due course I was flying solo without any problems. Then out of the blue came an incident, quite trivial in itself, which changed my whole attitude towards flying.

Some days later a friend of mine had been transferred to my instructor, a serious young man named Beaton, and after my friend's first flight he commented on the extreme accuracy of Beaton's flying. I must admit that I had not realised this, but then and there I made a resolution that I would strive for complete accuracy in my own flying. Accordingly I was careful to climb at 100 m.p.h., and not at 99 nor 101, and to descend at 85 m.p.h., and not at 84 nor 86. While doing turns, steep or otherwise, I aimed at neither gaining nor losing height, not even as much as a yard, unless it was my intention to do so. I found this new approach to flying quite absorbing and was immensely gratified - and rewarded - by receiving a good flying assessment at the end of the course.

It was at that stage that we received the coveted pair of wings worn

by pilots. They were pinned on our tunics by General Arnold, who had flown with General Doolittle during his historic air-raid on Tokyo. But for one of our group, a young man of Chinese appearance nicknamed Chang - for obvious reasons - it was not an occasion for celebration. Chang had been on a cross-country flight west of Point Cook and while returning to base had flown right over Port Phillip Bay without realising it. Now hopelessly lost, he made a careful reconnaissance of a field, made an excellent landing, and then telephoned Point Cook from a nearby farmhouse. For this wretched navigation but excellent flying they "scrubbed" him as a pilot and made him a navigator! Poor Chang was almost in tears as he watched our parade. Of course this action by the authorities was not the howler it appears. You can't have as a pilot a person who can get lost on the slightest provocation.

The end of our course at Point Cook also brought us promotion. Together with some of my Point Cook friends I became a pilot officer, the lowest rank of commissioned officer in the Air Force. We now headed for home to spend our second allotment of pre-embarkation leave. I spent this time with Mother and my aunts at Boonah, after which I reported to the Sandgate camp, now an embarkation depot. I entered Sandgate for the second time exactly one year after I had first reported there as a lowly AC2. Since then I had studied a number of very interesting subjects and had learnt how to fly an aircraft.

There was no work to be done at Sandgate and every few days I would visit Ken and Elaine, who were now at Goodna, on the railway line to Ipswich. Returning from one of these expeditions I found that Sandgate had become a closed camp. The next morning I embarked on the train bound for Sydney, where I reported to No. 2 Embarkation Depot at Bradfield Park. A departure for overseas again loomed ahead, but this time it was unlikely to fizzle out like our Mariposa attempt the previous December.

PHOTOGRAPHS, ETC.

The photographs and other reproductions included in this booklet have been culled from various black and white and colour photographs taken over the years.

It is regrettable that the black and white photographs, never of high quality in the first place, lost something in the printing process, but despite their lack of clarity they have been included as I felt that they would be useful in helping the reader to visualise some of the events described in the text.

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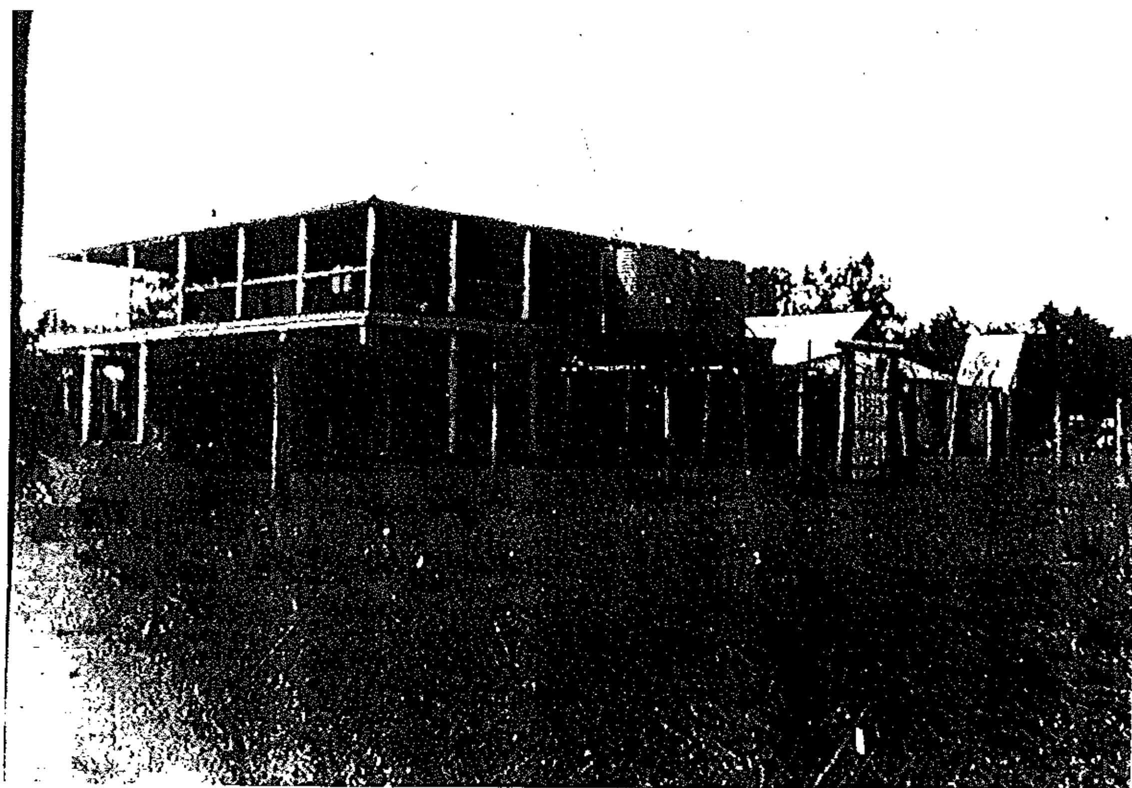
Opposite top:

Our home at 108 North Street, Rockhampton (pages 3 and 13-17), photographed about 1919 or 1920. One of my sisters can be seen standing on the front steps while below her is the small footbridge crossing the stream which passed through the front of our allotment. This stream was dry for most of the year and became a genuine stream only after a heavy storm or during extended rainy periods. The house, built about 1910 or a little earlier, was typical of Rockhampton houses of the pre-World War I period.

Opposite bottom:

The homestead at Coolibah (pages 3-9). The small white-roofed structure behind the main building and to the right of it was the kitchen block. The large water tank discernible at the first floor level was one of a number which represented our only water supply. In the event they proved adequate.

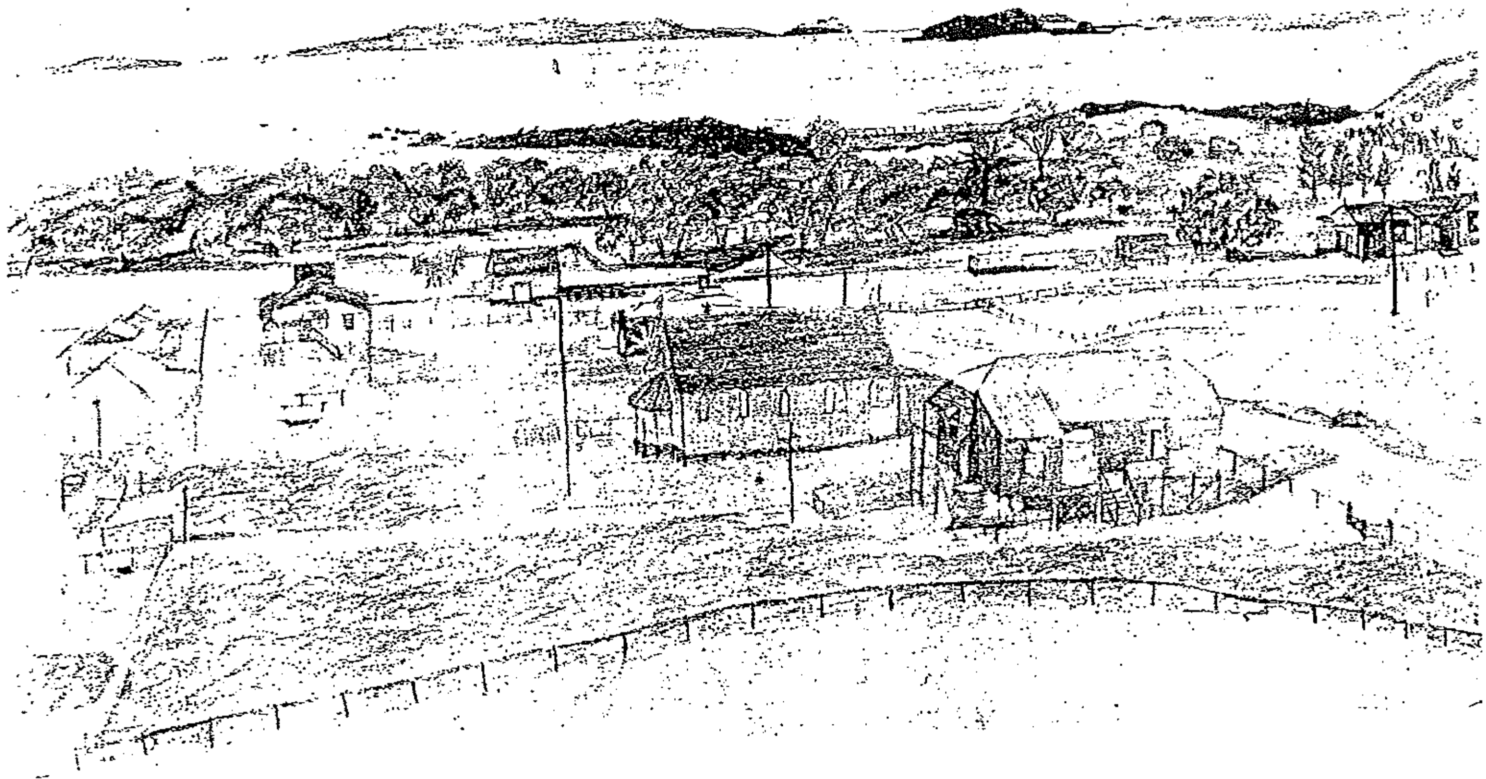


Opposite top:

This is a copy of a pencil drawing which I had made at the age of twelve, showing the view from the top of a hill overlooking that part of Emu Park in which we lived (pages 10-12). My Aunt Irene's seaside house is in the right foreground, with the Church of England immediately beyond it. The railway station can be seen to the right of thr picture; the rail service to Emu Park was discontinued and the tracks removed after World War II. The large island on the horizon, then known as South Keppel Island but since renamed Great Keppel Island, is some twelve kilometres from the mainland and is now a popular tourist resort. Pelican Island (page 11) is just over four kilometres from land and can be seen to the right of Great Keppel Island.

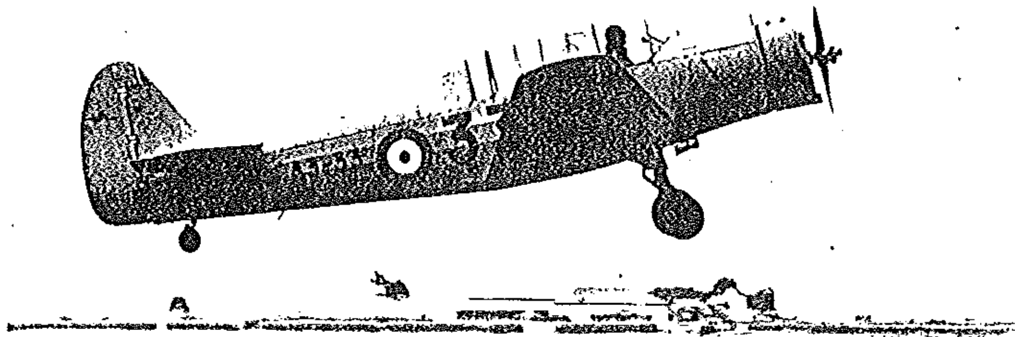
Opposite bottom:

Five eager young Air Force men have just returned from a training flight at Archerfield airfield near Brisbane. From left to right are Clifford Kingsford-Smith, nephew of the famous aviator, Jack Sandilands, Ted Williams, myself and Jack Steele. Behind us can be seen the Tiger Moth aircraft which we had been flying. The de Havilland Tiger Moth was the RAF's most famous initial trainer. and some 8800 were built. It was very light on the controls when flying, but manoeuvring on the ground in windy conditions was difficult due to the absence of brakes.



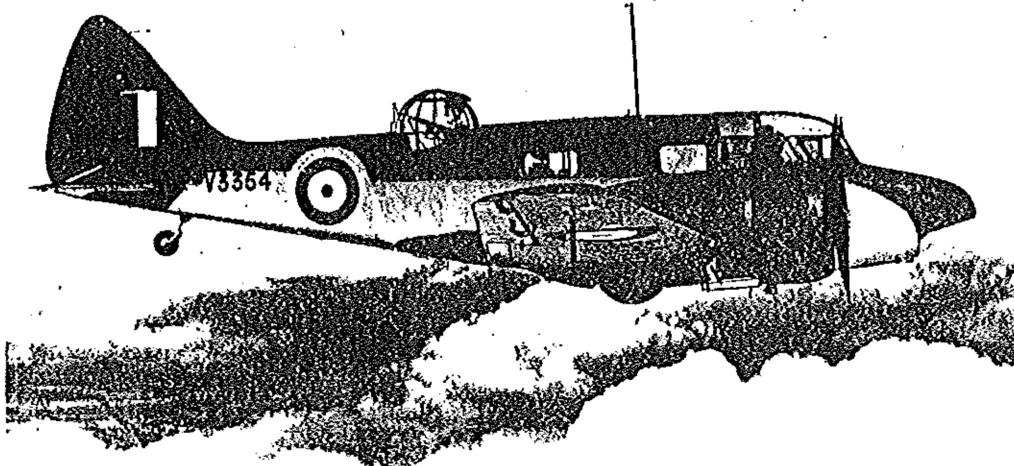
The two aircraft pictures opposite were taken from postcards showing the Wackett Trainer and the Airspeed Oxford. My experience in the Wackett Trainer was limited to a two-week refresher course in Benalla following the long delay brought about by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. In the Oxford, however, I finished up with 1130 hours, most of which resulted from a long term as a flying instructor in England. The Oxford was built by Airspeed Limited, a company owned by Nevil Shute, who was by trade an aircraft engineer but was better known as a novelist. It was an excellent aircraft for training purposes as it had a couple of minor vices which forced learners to remain continually alert for the unexpected.

Opposite bottom:
This photograph was taken in May 1942, when General Arnold of the United States Air Force presented me (and many others) with those coveted "wings" worn by every pilot. My rank at the time was LAC (Leading Aircraftman) and was indicated by the small propeller on my sleeve, while the white panel in the cap showed that I was still a trainee. This panel could now be removed, even though a great deal of training still lay ahead.



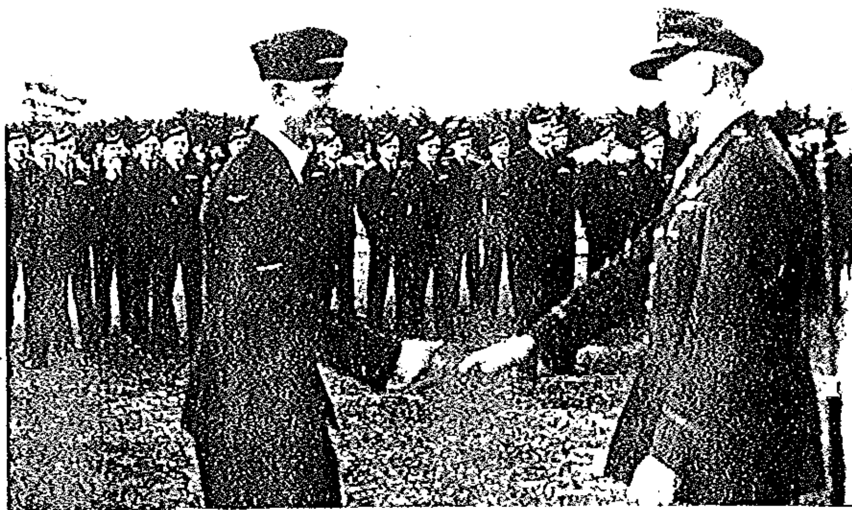
DEFENCE SERIES No. 140 "WACKETT" TRAINER: THIS STURDY TRAINER, DESIGNED & BUILT IN AUSTRALIA, IS NOW IN PRODUCTION FOR USE IN R.A.A.F. ELEMENTARY FLYING TRAINING SCHOOLS.

PHOTOGRAPH BY R.A.A.F. DIRECTORATE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS



DEFENCE SERIES No. 141 AIRSPEED "OXFORD" MONOPLANES, USED FOR TWIN-ENGINED TRAINING, REPRODUCE ACCURATELY THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAST HEAVY BOMBERS WHICH THE TRAINEES WILL FLY ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

PHOTOGRAPH BY R.A.A.F. DIRECTORATE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS



CHAPTER VI

VOYAGE IN CONVOY

A few days after our return to Bradfield Park, on 23 August 1942, we left Australia on the Westernland, a coal-burning ship of some twenty-two thousand tons displacement. There were about six hundred aircrew on board, together with a dozen or so passengers. We were allotted two to a cabin and I shared my cabin with a Royal Navy officer who turned out to be good company. While the bathrooms on board were equipped with hot baths the water was sea water and consequently they could not be used in port; water in the vicinity of docks is not recommended for its purity. Moreover ordinary soap was useless, but before leaving Sydney we had bought a product styled salt water soap, which gave a little lather with difficulty.

The description of the voyage is now taken over by my story at the time.

This is a record of my voyage from Australia to, I hope, England as a member of the R.A.A.F. I say "I hope" because at the present moment our trip is by no means complete, so there is every likelihood that we may not reach our destination. I do not intend to write this as a diary, because the daily routine on board ship is not worth describing in detail, and a whole week can well be covered by half a page or less. On our stay in the various ports I can enlarge a little, and although I have not the gift of being an interesting and fluent writer, it will at least help to recall to me the many pleasant times I have had. May they continue to be as pleasant.

We left Sydney on the 23rd of August. The previous day had been a closed camp at our embarkation depot, but nevertheless a number of the lads found suitable holes in the fence and dashed off to see their lady loves. Everyone was fully aware of the great necessity for secrecy, but I am sure that nearly all Sydney knew when we were going and by what boat.

The day previous to embarkation I had spent in getting my camp kit and tin trunk marked with my name and number and getting all my belongings packed. I am one of those unfortunate persons who seem to accumulate a vast quantity of rubbish, and I was flat out getting it all wedged into the corners of my trunk.

At length the long-awaited day dawned. Actually we got up at about 2.30 and by the time the sun had risen we were already on board. We had had early morning tea served in the mess at camp and it had certainly been well worth eating, being what was left over from a first class supper provided the previous evening.

The boat started to pull out shortly after breakfast, which we had on board. The tugs drew steadily away from the wharf and when at a safe distance turned her around and let her go. We passed under the Harbour Bridge, receiving from time to time tremendous waving and cheering from the passengers on the various ferries. Slowly the suburbs, Kirribilli, Woolloomoolloo, Taronga, Rose Bay, etc., passed before our gaze and eventually we cleared the heads and sailed out onto the Pacific Ocean. We were generously accorded a last view of Bondi, where we had spent many happy afternoons in the surf. Overhead an Anson cruised around while a Beaufort, and later a Boston, "shot us up" at intervals. Included in the convoy were a couple of other ships. We received an escort by Bostons for the rest of the day and the next morning an Australian cruiser had taken

us under her wing.

Conditions on board our boat were reasonably good for officers. Granted, the ventilation left a lot to be desired, but in this respect I couldn't complain as a well-placed vent brought a beautiful cool breeze right to my cabin door. In addition the bathroom and lavatories were only five yards away, so I was well satisfied. The food was good and was served by Goanese stewards, whose English was far from good. If you asked for jam they would grin at you in a very cheerful fashion and bring you butter, and so on.

There were a number of instructions to be observed whilst on board. I think perhaps the most important concerned the blackout, which necessitated the nightly patrolling of decks. It surprises me the number of people who appear quite ready to jeopardise the safety of all on board just to gratify their desire to smoke. However the majority of chaps fell into the new routine after an occasional lapse the first couple of nights. Another instruction of interest was concerned with the ship's rubbish. This was jettisoned each evening and at no other time was it permissible to throw anything overboard, as the presence of floating rubbish would indicate the passage of ships. Another interesting feature of wartime sea travel is the necessity for maintaining a zigzag course so as not to be an easy target for submarines. We have been told that from when a sub sights you it takes another six or seven minutes to aim and launch the torpedo. Hence the frequent changing of course.

The first leg of our journey took us down south below Tasmania. Here it was bitterly cold, with chill biting winds all day and often overcast. We actually sighted the Tasmanian coast once and this was the last time we saw land before arriving at our first port of call. This was Fremantle. We were outside Fremantle early in the morning of Friday the 4th of September, twelve days after we had left Sydney. We had been paid a day or so before, so our financial position was still reasonably good and the prospect of a couple of days leave, or even more, was very heartening.

The convoy wasted no time outside Fremantle, but went straight in to the wharf, where a band was playing to welcome us in. Within two hours our leave passes had been completed and we were ready to go into town. The transport arrangements were particularly good and we were able to catch the ten o'clock train from Fremantle wharf to Perth.

The journey to Perth station took a little over half an hour and then Perth was invaded by the R.A.A.F. Our first thought was for steak and eggs and we decided to ask a civilian the way to a good cafe. The first person to come along was a young girl of about fifteen. So we bowled up to her and asked where we could get a feed. The poor little kid took one frightened look at us and ran for her life. Anyway we eventually found a place and satisfied our hunger, after which we started to clean up our shopping lists.

The first item which needed my attention was a large suitcase. I have one somewhere at home but very foolishly did not bring it with me and as a result I had rather a hard job fitting all my clothes into my trunk. When I had boarded the ship at Sydney I had to strap to my small port a large cardboard box of the type in which men's suits are packed. However I got my large suitcase at Boan's but had to pay almost two pounds ten shillings for it. Another example of wartime prices! Having a few of the items off our shopping lists we were able to have a look round the city. Perth is rather a small city, built on the banks of the Swan River. It is connected by rail and road (including a bus service) with Fremantle, about twelve to fifteen miles away. In the city transport is provided by motor bus, trolley bus and tram. Some of the trams look rather antiquated, being about half the usual size. One of these midgets overturned in the main street and looked very inglorious lying on its side on the bitumen.

The cafes in Perth are very much overcrowded and not up to Eastern Australian standards. The best place to go to for a meal is a hotel and while in Perth we had many good meals at the Adelphi, one of the best hotels. Owing to the fact that Perth is a port of call for numerous convoys, foodstuffs - particularly chocolate - are difficult to procure. However at the R.A.A.F. Rendezvous I was able to buy three half-pound blocks made by the local firm,

Plaistowes.

Perth streets are rather narrow and as a result some of them are open for one-way traffic only. Like Eastern Australian towns, the shops are out of everything you want, only much more so. A very interesting spot in the city is an arcade known as London Court. This is built as a representation of a London street in Elizabethan times and each shop has an "Olde Englishe" sign in appropriate Old English lettering. At either end of the Court is a clock with an arrangement of figures on a small stage just above. As each hour strikes, St. George chases the dragon round and round dealing repeated heavy blows, culminating in a final mighty swipe of his sword.

Ten minutes' walk from the city through the best residential area brings you to King's Park. This is on a hill and commands a view of Perth, the Swan and the flying boat base.

We left Fremantle early on Monday morning the seventh of September. After clearing the submarine defence boom we lay outside while the rest of the convoy came out. This time the Kanimbla was included in the convoy and the Tromp, a modern destroyer of great speed and firepower, gave us additional protection. Some days out of port, however, a cruiser, rumoured to be the Devonshire, relieved the Tromp of her duties, enabling her to return to Fremantle. And so our westward journey continued day by day with little of interest happening. Each morning we would get up, bath and shave, and go to breakfast at 7.30. After breakfast we would walk up and down the promenade deck for the best part of an hour.

Here the first of my contemporary narratives comes to an end. Our first landfall after leaving Fremantle was the South African State of Natal. The ship berthed at one of the wharves of Durban and we emerged to our first experience of a foreign country. It was also our first experience of a multilingual country and we quickly started picking up a few phrases in Afrikaans. One warning sign impressed me particularly. "Moenie van skape op skapevaart praat nie!" This translated into "Do not talk of ships or shipping!" One evening, at the Durban Playhouse, we saw the film Mrs. Miniver, which we found very impressive.

On one occasion a member of our group decided to spend a night on shore with a girl who proved amenable. On this particular night the ship changed her position to a different berth two or three hundred yards away and when our friend arrived the following morning he was horrified to find that the Westernland had gone! He had a bad quarter of an hour before eventually locating the ship in its new position. That same day we took the opportunity to visit the aircraft carrier Illustrious and learnt the interesting requirement that all services salute the quarter deck on boarding a ship of the Navy.

Altogether we spent a week in Durban before leaving for the run down the eastern coast of South Africa to reach Capetown seven or eight days later. As we entered Capetown harbour the vast mass of Table Mountain, wearing its wellknown "tablecloth" of cloud, appeared before us to dominate the scenery. We drew into a berth at the wharf, but here we disembarked and were taken to a camp named Pollsmoor, about a mile from the station Retreat on the line from Capetown to Simonstown. Many years later I discovered that Nelson Mandela had spent some time in Pollsmoor as a political prisoner. We had an enjoyable three weeks stay at Pollsmoor and learnt more about apartheit as applied in South Africa. Railway stations had one area for "Blankes" and another at the other end of the platform for "Nie Blankes". Similarly with seats in picture theatres, trains and trams.

The scenery in the Capetown area is magnificent, but our most exciting trip was on the cableway to the top of Table Mountain. Bob Thorn, Keith Barnes and I later climbed a small mountain near Muizenberg and then enjoyed a swim at this pleasant seaside town. The train run from Capetown (Kaapstadt in Afrikaans) to Retreat was through delightful country, fringed on the western side with spectacular mountain backdrops, and we always enjoyed this journey.

While in Capetown we heard some intriguing stories about an Australian contingent which had overwhelmed the city a year or so previously. These men had on one occasion closed the main street, Adderley Street, and had staged

a horse race along it. This, they declared, was the Melbourne Cup. A lady driver, waiting for the traffic lights to change, was overheard making uncomplimentary remarks about Australians. A group of them promptly stationed themselves around the car and when the lights turned to green they lifted the back of the car, which effectively immobilised it. As soon as the lights turned red they lowered the rear wheels onto the road again. This yo-yo sort of game was continued for some minutes, after which they got tired of it and allowed the lady to proceed. Australia's reputation in Capetown was at a low ebb when we arrived on the scene and our Commanding Officer asked us to make a special effort to improve it.

One evening we were attending a concert in the mess and when it came to an end the band played "God Save the King". After standing for the national anthem we were about to sit down when the band commenced to play "Sari Marais" and all the South African servicemen remained standing for this also. Naturally we followed their example. It appeared that Sari Marais was a national song and we respected it accordingly.

We now heard that the ship which would take us to England had arrived in port and our C.O., Squadron Leader Sansom, organised an impressive march from Pollsmoor to Retreat station. We strode along to the stirring music of Waltzing Matilda, boarded the train and in due course arrived at the wharf where our new ship, the Highland Brigade, was berthed. But someone had blundered and she would not be leaving for two or three days. Back to Pollsmoor we went, this time without any display, - and without Waltzing Matilda. A couple of days later our embarkation was on again and this time it was the real thing. We felt that one glorious departure was enough and so quietly transferred ourselves and our luggage to the Highland Brigade, now ready to depart. As the ship drew away from the wharf we said farewell with regrets to the beautiful city of Capetown.

The monotony of shipboard life was soon on us again as the ship proceeded in a northwesterly direction, once again in convoy. As we approached the Equator the weather got steadily warmer. For the actual crossing of the line we had the usual ceremony, with King Neptune in charge and ready to punish these invaders of his kingdom. A few days later we entered the port of Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone. The heat was stifling but we were warned not to sleep on deck for fear of catching malaria from the resident mosquitos of that area. We spent three days in this sweltering heat without being able to leave the ship, but eventually our stay came to a welcome end and we proceeded northwards towards latitudes which were definitely cooler but also definitely more dangerous.

The monotony continued, but was broken without warning one sunny afternoon when the whole convoy suddenly made a 180° turn and proceeded at high speed in the direction from which it had come. For four hours we continued southward, while groups of airmen stood around conversing quietly and everyone seemed on edge. Then the convoy resumed its northerly course and we all relaxed.

We were now in the North Atlantic Ocean and my narrative written at the time, now in diary form, tells the story of the final stages of our long sea journey and describes our introduction to England.

10th November.

The entire personnel have now gone into blues and this morning we were able to pack most of our tropical gear in our trunks, which have been stored below in the baggage room. I have kept a shirt and a pair of shorts in my cabin for P.T. (physical training) and for wearing in bed. This sounds peculiar but the reason is that for the last couple of days, while in dangerous waters, we have had to sleep fully clothed and it is better to go to bed in shorts than in blues.

The sea has been very calm all day - scarcely a ripple - and I believe this is unusual for the North Atlantic. The latest "G.G." . . . . (the term G.G. is an abbreviation of a crude R.A.A.F. expression, the good guts, meaning the truth of the matter, the story that can be depended on: the R.A.F. had a more elegant phrase, the pukka gen, with the same meaning). To continue . . . . *The latest G.G. about our position is that we are in the neighbourhood of the Azores, somewhere near latitude 40 degrees North, and the rumour is going round that next Tuesday - a week today - we will be in England. What a day that*

will be!

11th November.

Today being Armistice Day, a short service was held in the Sergeants' Lounge just before eleven o'clock. The choir gave an anthem quite up to the high standard it has set itself. Earlier in the day two destroyers came over the horizon and relieved the two which had been with us all the way from Capetown. Our Royal Navy gunner, Mr. Boakes, says they are either from the A, B or H classes, but he can't be more definite until he gets a closer view of them. The old sloop is still with us in front of the convoy.

This afternoon it was rumoured that land was in sight on the port bow and half the chaps on the boat were soon hanging over the side straining their eyes. They say it was the Azores but I'm inclined to think it was merely a cloud bank.

12th November.

It has been fairly cold all day today and it is easy to see that we are getting into higher latitudes. I was on blackout watch early this morning and the biting wind with occasional light rain combined to make conditions rather unpleasant. So far the sea has been really calm, but we expect the next couple of days to bring rough weather.

The two destroyers which left us yesterday returned this morning, but I didn't notice if the relief escort remained or not. I hope so, because we need a good escort through the dangerous waters round England. The latest rumour tells us that Sunderlands will be along to guard us either tomorrow or the next day, which means we are only three or four days out of port, - I hope.

13th November.

Today is Friday the thirteenth, but so far, - and the time is 2315, - nothing disastrous has happened. In fact it was announced at midday that the Eighth Army had entered Tobruk. The sea has been slightly rougher today and the ship is pitching a bit. The wind is much colder and altogether the weather is very similar to that of Melbourne.

14th November.

The rough weather I was expecting yesterday did not eventuate and the sea is as calm as the proverbial millpond, which I understand is almost a miracle in the North Atlantic. There was quite a lot of whistling and zigzagging this morning and one of the destroyers dropped a depth charge. Apparently some disturbance was recorded on its detection apparatus, but I don't think it could have been a sub.

15th November.

It is bitterly cold this morning but the sun is half out and altogether the weather isn't too gloomy. Today is Sunday, and in England the church bells are being rung to celebrate the victory of the Eighth Army in Egypt. This is the first time the bells have been rung since June 1940. From that date instructions were issued that they were to remain silent except in the event of an invasion. I believe that all likelihood of a German invasion of England has vanished.

Dinner at night was quite a celebration and nearly everyone got drunk. Each person had a menu card and according to custom these were all autographed. My own card was covered with signatures on both sides. After dinner everyone went up to the lounge and had a singsong. The evening passed without incident and we all went to bed reasonably early.

16th November.

Today has been a notable day for us. Early this morning land was sighted on the starboard bow and we all crowded up on deck for our first glimpse of Ireland. I must say that the dark grey mountains showing dimly through the mist hardly suggested the emerald isle to us, but the sight of land was good after so long at sea. At this point the convoy left us and we proceeded unescorted. Scattered all over the skyline were numerous ships of various types and it was

obvious that we were near a port. All day long we followed the coast and late in the afternoon entered the port of Belfast. We only stayed for an hour or so, during which time a small boat towing a barrage balloon came out and transferred its burden to the stern of our ship, - so now we can boast a satellite. We took a keen delight in exchanging sallies with the crew of this boat and some good samples of wit were heard. After the balloon was made fast we turned about and headed once more for the sea.

Tonight we advanced our watches one hour thus transferring from G.M.T. (Greenwich Mean Time) to the time operating in Britain during the winter.

17th November.

It is mid-morning and I have just been up on deck to have a look round the horizon. The sky is quite clear with the exception of a few clouds here and there and the sun makes you think you are in Australia. The wind is cold, but not as much as we expected.

Away on the horizon on the port side you can see land - plenty of it - with a couple of scattered islands a bit closer. This is Wales. On the starboard side a couple of merchant ships can be seen two or three miles away. Overhead our balloon keeps vigil, although I'm sure I'd feel safer with a destroyer or two and a cruiser, especially as we are on our own and the water seems very cold. We are travelling at reduced speed because of the danger of magnetic mines.

We saw our first Wellington bomber, with its long fin sticking up like a Sunderland, but apart from this we have seen no sign of the aircraft with which England is reputed to be overflowing. A little later four Spitfires appeared, the first I have seen, and they patrolled the Bristol Channel for an hour or so, every now and then diving down and flying round us in steep turns.

There are quite a few ships round about, each towing its own balloon as a defence against dive-bombing. The coast of Wales is much clearer now and shows itself to consist of high cliffs as far as the eye can see. We are now in the Bristol Channel and hope to catch the tide to take us in to Avonmouth.

At midday we passed Lundy Island, made famous by Charles Kingsley's book "Westward Ho!" By mid-afternoon the coast of Wales was only a couple of miles away and you could see a coastal village quite distinctly back of the cliffs. Now and then an aircraft flew by. Off the starboard beam could dimly be seen the hills of Somerset, and Devon has been left far behind.

It is now half past four. We are off Cardiff and the pilot has just come on board to take us up the Channel. On the starboard side the coast of Somerset is just visible through the fog, which is steadily getting thicker. It is much colder now and we are all wearing our greatcoats. In the distance can be heard occasional bursts of machine gun fire.

By ten o'clock the ship had come to a stop and dropped anchor. If the fog permitted we would go into Avonmouth with the tide at four o'clock the next morning.

CHAPTER VII

IN WARTIME BRITAIN

My narrative written at the time resumes on 18 November 1942.

Today is our first day in Britain. For the greater part of the night the Highland Brigade was anchored not far from Cardiff but early this morning, round about four o'clock, she moved in with the tide to the wharf at Avonmouth. The result was that we woke up this morning with the shunting of trains and other typical land noises ringing in our ears. We lay in bed half asleep and half awake but were soon brought back to reality by the cabin steward's announcement that the first train left at half past nine. Accordingly I jumped straight out of bed, bathed and shaved, then finished my packing.

At half past eight we were called to the lounge where an Air Commodore addressed us, welcoming us to the country, telling us our immediate destination (Bournemouth) and of the hospitality which would be extended to us there. A couple of other short speeches were made and then we went to breakfast. After breakfast we collected our respirators, etc., walked down the gangplank and set foot on English soil. The sky was overcast and with the atmosphere of the wharf combined to suggest the dreary, foggy side of England, but we were too pleased to get on dry land again to worry about the weather.

A train was drawn up at the wharf and in due course drew out with our lads on board. The first thing that attracted our notice was a barrage balloon much bigger than that which had guarded our ship. Later we saw many more of these balloons and were impressed with their immense size.

The first town we came to was Bristol and here we saw for the first time the results of German bombing. Bristol had received rather a hammering, but you couldn't see very much from the railway line. At Bath, however, we saw where rows and rows of houses had been reduced to ruins. At Salisbury, where we got something to eat, we caught a glimpse of the famous cathedral. Everyone appeared happy to see us there and waved enthusiastically, particularly the members of the fair sex.

It is impossible to describe the beauty of the English countryside through which we passed. It is late autumn in England now, and the trees provided a wealth of colours - green, yellow, brown, red-brown and so on. Some trees have lost all of their leaves. In all the wooded areas could be seen a carpet of these yellow-brown leaves, giving a most beautiful effect.

We passed numbers of what appear to be typical English villages. The village church stands out as a prominent landmark and in many cases we could see the graves in the churchyard. The village inns came under our observation and the old-fashioned thatched houses looked simply delightful. The only ugly element in all this rustic English beauty was the frequent presence of barrage balloons as a reminder to us that England was at war.

We had often heard that England has gone in for vegetable-growing on a large scale and now our eyes have verified this statement. Nearly every house has its own vegetable plot. In the cities every available square foot of ground, even right up to the railway line, is nourishing its cabbage or beetroot.

We got into Bournemouth at about half past three. Our first action was to bring ourselves up to date with the news, so we purchased a copy of the Bournemouth Daily Echo. We were now driven to our hotels. Fancy staying in hotels! What a change from 2ED in Sydney and Pollsmoor at Capetown! Our next port of call was the post office, where we each sent a cable home to Australia telling of our safe arrival. Now I am back in our room after a very eventful day, putting my thoughts on paper. It is hard to believe we are in England and I pick up the Bournemouth Daily Echo to convince myself that it isn't all a dream. I have to view all the news from a new perspective. When I read an item about England I have to realise that it is this place of which I am reading and not some far distant land across the sea. Wandering back from the post office in the blackout tonight it was hard to realise that at any moment an air raid which up till now existed to us only in our imaginations might become a reality.

Our stay in Bournemouth was quite protracted. After an initial settling-down period we were given ten days leave and most of us spent it in London, where we had booked in at the Dominion Officers' Club at 46 Grosvenor Street in Mayfair. To me this was the realisation of an ambition. I had always dreamed of going to London some day, but never in my moments of wildest imagination had I really expected to see it. In the Club Bob Thorn, Keith Barnes and I had been allotted a large double bedroom in which three beds had been installed. Leaving our luggage there we sallied out in the blackout of London in search of a restaurant where we could appease our hunger. We found Oddenino's Restaurant near Piccadilly Circus more by accident than by design, and our navigation was given its sternest test as we returned to the Club later that evening. Then, on our very first night, we were brought face to face with the German air attacks against London. At about midnight we were awakened by the air raid warning, a sound then new to us but which would later become commonplace. What should we do? We lay there in bed rather uncertainly, listening to the German bombers overhead and the comforting noise of London's anti-aircraft guns. We were trying to decide whether we should stay in bed or wander around looking for the air raid shelter. But the noise gradually abated and with it our uncertainty.

During our short leave in London Bob, Keith and I visited the usual places of interest and particularly enjoyed a tour of Windsor and Eton. We were intrigued by the top hat and tails worn by the students of Eton College.

Back at Bournemouth after our leave we commenced a programme of lectures and other organised activities. In the evenings we frequently went to an opera or operetta, or were invited to dinner by members of an organisation providing hospitality to servicemen from overseas. We were informed that as an adjunct to our training we would spend a couple of weeks with the British Army, and on the 1st January I found myself on my way to the 133rd Regiment of the Royal Artillery, stationed outside Lenham near Maidstone in Kent. My companions for this trip were two Australian sergeants. The unit was equipped with 25-pounders and housed in Nissan huts which were decidedly on the cold side. We visitors took part in the various exercises which had been organised as part of the normal army routine. It was here that I first saw snow - a very light fall - but I would see plenty of it in the coming years. Baths at the camp posed a difficulty. There were cold showers, but in January in Britain these did not attract and the solution was to go into Maidstone on your day off and soak away a week's dirt in a hot bath in Maidstone's Public Baths. Although the men of the unit were very friendly and easy to get on with, the place was too cold for our stay to be really enjoyable and I have never felt so completely frozen as on the day when we took part in a shooting exercise at Lydd near the south coast. However all bad things come to an end and on 13 January I was back at Bournemouth swapping tales with Bob and Keith and ready for more lectures to occupy our time.

Our postings were out in due course and on 19 January 1943 Bob Thorn, Kevin Hornibrook and I set out for No. 11 (P) A.F.U., (Advanced Flying Unit - Pilots) at Shawbury near Shrewsbury, the county town of Shropshire.

Shawbury was a peacetime station, which meant that it had all the conveniences of a permanent establishment. However a large number of Air Force and Army units were housed in hastily-erected timber-framed structures, lacking in comfort. The station was equipped with Airspeed Oxfords, so I did not expect any difficulties. My first flying experiences in Britain are best described in my narrative written at that time.

This afternoon we did what we have been waiting for seven months to do. We had a flight in an aircraft. It was the Oxford again and I was pleased to get back to her. The first thing I realised was that it was almost impossible to see the airfield. I then realised that it was almost impossible to see anything. And on top of this it is more than ever necessary to keep a sharp watch out for other aircraft. Spitfires, Typhoons, Bisleys and our fellow Oxfords whizzed past us from all directions. The whole countryside, with its fields bordered by hedges, looks like a chessboard, with every square the same. You can stare at a part of the ground for a couple of minutes before you realise there is a city there. On returning to our airfield we couldn't see it until we were almost on top of it. However I am pretty certain that I will enjoy flying in this country.

Our flying training at Shawbury included a couple of cross-country flights which enabled us to see more of Britain from the air. We also had regular night flying exercises and these too included cross-country flights. Shawbury had been equipped with the B.A.T. (Beam Approach Training) system and like the other trainees I spent an entire week in this section. It enabled us to practise techniques which we had been learning in the Link Trainer. This trainer was a small box-like contraption slightly like an aircraft in appearance. It had a cockpit which was closed after the pilot had entered it, and inside were all the controls and instruments of an ordinary aircraft. It was "flown" like an aircraft and the instruments gave simulated readings. It was excellent for practising techniques for bad weather flying, but didn't teach you to fly.

The Beam Approach system enabled you to land when the cloud base was down to practically ground level. The final stage of the landing is effected with the assistance of "contact strip lighting". This comprised two recessed rows of bright lights on each side of the runway selected for this installation. For the first hundred yards or so the lights were green and for the last hundred yards they were red. The remainder were white. The beam instructors became remarkably efficient at instrument flying. When visibility was so bad that the other flights had grounded their aircraft the B.A.T. Flight carried on and it used to achieve some remarkable hours for the week. They were largely independent of weather and because of this they could turn out their fixed number of pupils each week. Even when the cloud was "down on the deck" and "even the birds were walking" these efficient instructors could still take off and land. On one occasion I was out on the airfield with some fellow pupils swinging the compass on an Oxford. A fairly thick fog was covering the airfield at the time and visibility was reduced to twenty or thirty yards. Then we heard the roar of motors and we realised that one of the beam aircraft was taking off on the nearby runway - and we couldn't see it! The thought of landing in zero visibility was frightening and so it was with considerable pleasure that, under the instructor's guidance, I performed this feat.

My time at Shawbury enabled me to see something of the surrounding places during my spare time. Throughout my stay in wartime Britain I always recognised that I was being given a sight-seeing opportunity which might never recur, and that I should take every advantage of it. Because my days off at Shawbury usually did not coincide with those of my friends I often found myself alone on sightseeing trips. I visited Chester and walked along the city wall. I went to Liverpool and thumbed a ride through the famous Mersey Tunnel. I spent a day in Manchester and a day in Blackpool. On one occasion a family by the name of Ford, living near Birmingham, friends of

Kevin Hornibrook's family, invited the three of us to stay for the weekend. Because our days off did not coincide I was unable to join them, but the invitation was extended to me for the following weekend and I was delighted to accept. The rather incomplete instructions for getting to the Fords combined with the blackout to make things really difficult for me. My narrative of the time gives some idea of the difficulties of trying to negotiate the blackout in a strange city.

I packed my suitcase in the morning and as soon as lectures were over I jumped into my uniform, grabbed a quick cup of tea, and rushed off to get the bus to Shrewsbury. There I caught the 6.25 train which got to Birmingham at about ten minutes to eight. My instructions had been to catch the Stourbridge bus and get off at the Shenston, whatever that might be. At the Shenston I was to catch another bus which would pass the Fords' home.

The first thing was obviously to find the Stourbridge bus. I had left the train at Birmingham's New Street station and, standing there in the cold at the station entrance this did not present an easy task. Even if the area had been lit up I would have had some difficulty, but everything was in complete darkness. Cars with their narrow slits of dimmed headlights required a constant vigil. I arrived at the footpath on the other side of the street. To be exact I nearly measured my length on it as my foot tripped on the curb. My next problem was to find a bus stop. Eventually I found one with a dozen or so people waiting. I asked my question of the last in the queue. The Stourbridge bus? He wasn't certain but he thought it was probably the next stop about twenty yards away. I pressed on in the icy wind, at the same time tightening my scarf for some protection against it. Peering through the darkness to get a glimpse of the bus stop, I eventually located it. There was no-one there so I assumed that the bus had just gone. After ten minutes someone came along and stood behind, evidently also a passenger for this bus. I asked whether this was the stop for the Stourbridge bus. "Oh no," he replied. "You are at the wrong stop. I am not certain, but I think that the Stourbridge bus leaves from round the corner over there."

So on I went, eventually coming to a bus stop with a queue about thirty yards long. At last I had overcome my first obstacle for this queue was for the Stourbridge bus. I then made some enquiries about the Shenston. The man in front of me had not heard of it, but being anxious to oblige and direct a stranger he made enquiries from the people ahead of him, and soon fifteen to twenty people were discussing my problem. I was quite taken aback by the publicity which my quiet question had evoked. However someone eventually recalled that the Shenston was an inn in Halesowen and my second obstacle was behind me.

After five minutes a bus came along, but being already half-full it took little more than half the number of waiting people. And so, in considerable discomfort, with a chill biting wind whistling around my ears, I continued to wait. After about twenty minutes, which seemed like an hour to me, another bus arrived and soon I was safely inside. I asked the driver if he would let me know when we came to the Shenston and after about forty minutes he called out to me. I thanked him and alighted.

I located the next bus - the Romsley bus - without difficulty and shortly after I arrived at the Fords' home where I was warmly welcomed.

Towards the end of our course at Shawbury a number of us who managed to achieve good flying reports were selected as flying instructors. With the large intake of trainee pilots from overseas they badly needed flying instructors and Bob Thorn and I found ourselves posted to No. 2 Flying Instructors School at Montrose in Scotland. The airfield at Montrose was adjacent to the town but was reserved for single-engined aircraft, while the twin-engined Oxfords were flown from nearby landing grounds at Edzell and Stracathro. The mess was located at Rosemount, a manor house near the little village of Hillside, about three miles north-west of Montrose. Here we slept in huts erected in the grounds.

The instructors' course at Montrose included the memorisation of a fairly standard sort of "patter" while taking off and landing to explain to the pupil exactly what you were doing. Experience over the following months enabled us to develop this patter into a more natural delivery suited to the particular situation. We also continued to improve our flying skills. On one occasion I had what was probably a narrow escape while practising stalling the aircraft with a fellow pilot. With an aircraft the term "stalling" does not have the same meaning as with a car. When you stall an aircraft you reduce its speed to a point where it simply falls out of the sky. In such a situation it can easily get into a spin. We had practised spinning and the recovery action on the Tiger Moth, but deliberate spinning of the Oxford was strictly forbidden. Once properly in a spin the Oxford will not respond to the normal recovery procedure and then your only hope of staying alive lies in abandoning the aircraft, by no means an easy operation. In this case we managed to get it out of the spin before the deadly circular motion had properly got going, by the use of inside motor, opposite rudder, and the control column right forward to get the nose down. This was the only time in the Air Force when my life was directly endangered.

My stay in Montrose had been an interesting one. During the course I had had the opportunity to fly with two Polish pilots, Flying Officers Wojda and Pawlikowski as fellow trainees, and also with Flying Officer Rusiecki, one of the instructors. These pilots certainly knew how to handle an aircraft.

During the course my flying had been mainly on Oxfords but I also managed to clock up over twenty-eight hours on the single-engined Miles Magister. Now, with three hundred and seventy total hours in my log book I was about to undertake the daunting task of coaching young trainee pilots from the far-flung corners of the British Empire. For the most part these would be Australians, but there would also be a smattering of Canadians, New Zealanders and British.

Bob Thorn and I were glad to be posted to the same station and on 26 May 1943 we arrived at No. 15 (P) A.F.U. at Grove, near Wantage in Berkshire.

CHAPTER VIII

A FLYING INSTRUCTOR

Installed at Grove, we soon settled down to the life of a flying instructor and found it a rewarding occupation. Grove airfield was still uncompleted when we moved in, and night flying had to be undertaken from an airfield some twenty-five to thirty miles away, at Aldermaston. We used to fly to Aldermaston before dark, fly all night, and return as soon as it became light. On one occasion the weather commenced to deteriorate as we were taking off for our morning return trip. At one thousand feet I suddenly found myself in cloud. The shortest way back was straight over the Lambourn Downs, but these could be avoided by flying due north over flat country and then west along the White Horse Vale to our airfield. Accordingly I made a 180° turn and retraced my path in the direction of Aldermaston. As soon as I came out of cloud I turned onto a northerly course, at the same time reducing height to stay below the cloud base. I came down to about three hundred feet and at this height was able to complete my journey back to base without further problems. A friend of mine, however, had continued on the correct course for base and was soon in thick cloud. When he felt that he had crossed the Lambourn Downs and could safely descend he commenced to lose height, when suddenly a hillside loomed up in the cloud dead ahead. A hectic 180° turn enabled him to avoid it. After this narrow escape from death he cruised around looking for a break in the clouds. He finally landed at Middle Wallop, where he was forced to spend a day or two until the weather improved. As we used to say, God made two types of pilots - the quick and the dead.

When we were not on duty we managed to indulge in occasional visits to London or we took cycle trips in the surrounding area. We walked to Wantage, which claims to be the place where King Alfred burnt the cakes. We cycled to Oxford and admired the various college buildings.

One day I cycled to Dragon Hill, just below one of Britain's famous white horses and just above the village of Uffington. On the way back to camp I saw a sign by the roadside indicating that the famous Blowing Stone, said to have been used by King Alfred to summon his troops, was on a farm property a hundred yards along a side road. I followed the directions to the Stone and paid the charge of a florin (two shillings) to blow into it. The farmer remarked that I was not likely to get any noise out of it, and that gave me the necessary clue. While at the Army camp at Maryborough in 1940 I had asked the bugler to let me have a blow. He agreed readily enough, but when I attempted a blast not a note emerged. The bugler then explained that you had to "spit into it" to get a note. I had done this and eventually was able to produce some uncertain notes. The farmer's warning about the Blowing Stone reminded me of my bugling attempts. Accordingly I "spat into it" and was rewarded with a healthy blast from the Stone and a gasp of surprise from the farmer.

After two months at Grove the whole station moved to an airfield on a flat hill looking down on the village of Ramsbury in Wiltshire. All flying personnel went by aircraft and trucks took the remaining personnel and the heavy items. Ramsbury was not an uncompleted airfield like Grove and life there was much more pleasant.

Shortly afterwards I became due for my first leave. Normally seven days

leave were allowed every three months, but a practice had developed of adding a 48-hour pass to it, thus giving an effective nine days. In line with my policy of seizing every opportunity to explore Britain while I was in that country, I decided to use this time touring the Midlands. But first I had to work out how to get there. As in Italy, where all roads lead to Rome, so in Britain all roads, including railroads, lead to London. This is an excellent arrangement for travellers to and from London, but for progress in other directions it leaves something to be desired. Accordingly I went into a huddle with a Bradshaw (a detailed railway timetable) and emerged with a workable itinerary. At eight o'clock in the morning a train was due to leave a whistle stop with the impressive but unmerited name of Great Bedwyn, situated about two and a half miles from the airfield. From here it proceeded in a semi-circle through Marlborough to Swindon, which would give me reasonable access to the Midlands. So before 7 a.m. on the first day of my leave I commenced the two and a half mile trudge across fields and along country lanes, finally reaching Great Bedwyn in time for the eight o'clock train.

At Swindon I caught the main line train running between London and Gloucester and in due course arrived at that city. Here I had a quick look at the cathedral, which seemed to be Gloucester's main claim to fame, and then pushed on to that beautiful city, Cheltenham Spa. Other places that I managed to cram into my itinerary were Stratford-upon-Avon, Coventry, Rugby, Warwick and Cambridge. At Coventry I stood at the entrance to the cathedral and saw the devastation caused by German bombing. The roof was now merely part of a mass of debris filling the space enclosed by the cathedral walls, which were still standing but looked precarious. At Rugby I was able to visit the school made famous by a book most boys of my generation had read - Tom Brown's Schooldays. This book also makes mention of the Blowing Stone near Uffington. What impressed me most about Rugby School was a tablet fixed to a wall alongside the playing field, with the inscription:-

> This stone commemorates the exploit of William Webb Ellis, who, with a fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time, first took the ball in his arms and ran with it, thus originating the distinctive feature of the Rugby game.

Shortly after my return to Ramsbury the station shifted again, this time to an airfield with the bucolic name of Babdown Farm, right on the crest of the Cotswolds and about two and a half miles west of the town of Tetbury. Here Bob and I shared a large room in the cramped officers' quarters. We spent some nine months at Babdown Farm and despite its relative isolation our stay there proved to be the happiest period of my Air Force career. It was here that I reached a level of complete confidence, not only with the actual flying of the Oxford, but also in my ability to improve the standard of those pupils allotted to me. I knew that it was also necessary for them to have confidence in me as a pilot and with this object in view I commenced to do slow rolls in the Oxford. This was not mere swank on my part, but a deliberate policy to ensure that the pupils had faith in my ability to handle the aircraft. Slow rolls, and indeed all aerobatics, were forbidden in the Oxford and I used to execute them sparingly - not more than once for each pupil.

I was a great believer in flying by attitude, and frequently I would drape my handkerchief over the airspeed indicator and force the pupils to trust the artificial horizon. If the attitude was right, I told them, the airspeed could not be anything else but right. I also took every opportunity to improve my instrument flying while carrying out my instructing duties. I realised that some day my life might depend on my ability to fly by instruments and I would often put on the instrument flying hood, tell the pupil to keep a watch for other aircraft, and for some three of four minutes do protracted steep turns with the greatest accuracy of which I was capable. Eventually I became completely at home in cloud or at night. I also used

to engage in "dog-fights" with Bob Thorn and we got a lot of fun, as well as excellent practice, out of these mock combats.

I did a great deal of night flying while at Babdown Farm. The first stage of instruction for new pupils would be "circuits and bumps", of course, but later there would be cross-country flights, sometimes with a W/T operator who could tell us exactly where we were, and sometimes depending entirely on our map-reading, or more correctly, our beacon-reading. We had maps with us giving the positions of all beacon sites in the area over which we would be flying, as well as the particular code letters which those beacons would be flashing that night. Even in the murkiest weather, and murky nights are by no means uncommon in Britain, a beacon flashing the expected signal would loom up through the haze, and all we had to do was to fly over it and then turn on to the next course. After the new course had been followed for the required number of minutes we would start looking around for the airfield lighting system or the next beacon, as the case may be. We never failed to locate it.

Although stationed well to the west of England we were always conscious of enemy air activity. While on night cross-countries it was not unusual to see the flashes of anti-aircraft fire over a city twenty or thirty miles away, and on occasions we felt it necessary to alter course for a while and later to set a new course for base. Once we got the tail end of a raid on Bristol, and German aircraft dropped their remaining bombs on our airfield. We had been engaged in night flying at the time and I had just landed after going through various routines with a pupil. As we walked towards the huts to sign off, the noise of aircraft and the whistling of bombs burst on us. The pupil and I threw ourselves flat on the ground as the shrapnel flew past.

Another incident, quite minor, provided the occasion for my receiving my only wound in the war. One of the student pilots was waving a Verey pistol - a signal pistol - as if he was going to fire it. As we were in a crowded hut at the time I went to take it from him. Just as my hand reached out for the pistol he pressed the trigger and discovered that the pistol was loaded. The charge caught the end of my finger and almost ripped the nail off. A doctor did the necessary repairs and I was soon flying again, but the outcome could have been serious. The story is told of how in a similar accident the charge went into the mouth of a W.A.A.F. standing nearby and there burnt itself out. What a horrible way to die!

Our after-hours activities were also of some interest. In the mess we frequently played darts and shove-halfpenny, but the pastime to which we were really addicted was snooker. We usually played a variant known as volunteer snooker, which prolonged the game and provided more excitement. We used to divide ourselves into two teams, such as M Flight versus K Flight, or the Airborne versus the Chairborne. When we got tired of such entertainment as was available in camp we would cycle the two and a half miles to Tetbury, where a delightful house did duty as an officers' club. Here the sport-minded could play tennis, while also available were plenty of books and a pianola. As the boys used to say, "It's a lousy war, but it's better than no war at all."

My first leave at Babdown Farm was in December 1943, with winter well on the way. I had planned to visit Devon and had armed myself with the necessary rail warrants and ration cards. On the morning of my departure the whole countryside was completely white with frost and it was bitterly cold. At Kemble, where the Tetbury branch line (no longer in existence) joined the main line, I boarded the London train, and as there was no seat available I had to freeze in the corridor instead of freezing in a compartment. From the corridor I looked out onto a white countryside the like of which I had never seen before. I changed at Swindon Junction and Bristol, eventually arriving at Exeter, where I planned to stay for a few days. I visited Torquay, that well-known seaside resort, and then Drake's city of Plymouth, which had been badly damaged by bombing. Later I took a train which meandered across Devon to the little town of Bideford. Here I inspected the Armada guns lined up in a park, and then took a bus to a village with the intriguing name of

Westward Ho!, nown to all who as boys have read and loved Charles Kingsley's booat name. Here the locals pointed out the home of Amyas Leigh (did he y exist?) and other places of interest. I left Exeter in due course pleted my holiday with visits to Southhampton, Salisbury and Stonehenge months later my seven days plus a 48 enabled me to tour Lancashir Yorkshire. I visited Blackpool, Manchester and York. The last-named d to be an interesting city with its magnificent Minster and its city while at York I went to a cinema and saw a picture which has since becote famous. It was most appropriate that I should see this picture ishire and not elsewhere, and I really enjoyed Lassie Come-Home.

My absenc Babdown Farm were not confined to holiday trips. In early 1944 I a an engine-handling course at Banbury, and for morning and afternoon e whole group of us used to go to a nearby cafe for Banbury Cakes ffee. We were billeted in private homes and found this a pleasant chaom camp life. I was also required to do occasional refresher courseam Approach Training.

While my h trips stand out clearly in my mind, none has the impact of one I took 1944. My leave (plus 48) had been arranged to commence on 6 June at t of a long period of night flying. During our briefing on the previousng the usual map of southern England had been displayed showing the crontry flights we were to undertake. On this occasion the whole eastef of the map had been marked as out of bounds and we were confined western area. With hindsight we should have realised the import of tstriction but were too busy with our own duties to think of anything els was obviously due to some major air exercise and we left it at thatr a long night's flying I returned to my room to throw some clothes andetries into a kitbag to take with me on my leave, which I had planned end in London. I had early breakfast at the mess and managed to get ft to Tetbury, where I caught the equivalent of the Titfield Thunderto Kemble and thence to London. There I booked into Ashton's Hotel te Paddington main line station and went up to my room for a shave andral clean-up. The wash basin was close to the window and while I wasing I was able to look down on the street below. I saw immediately thatds were milling around newsboys selling the morning papers, so out riosity I speeded up my ablutions and hurried down to the street. Heres fortunate enough to be able to buy a paper and then I saw the headlir which the whole world had been waiting. The Second Front, as it wasrally called, had commenced and Allied troops had landed in Normandy. The few days were a period of great anxiety for all the countries involvn this giant undertaking. I remember watching the persistent low c scudding across the heavens and bemoaning the weather which was puttincacles in the way of the Allied air forces just when they were most ne However after a few days the cloud commenced to lift and the Normandy dive could really get going.

Shortly afteretum from this holiday - a holiday taken during epoch-making events on world stage - our term of instructing came to an end. Bob and I had befered various alternatives for which to apply and one of these was to as night-fighters in the De Havilland Mosquito. To fly a Mosquito wasalluring prospect and in any case Bob and I had agreed that we had acquirnsiderable skill in night-flying and that this ability should be put to use. So we said good-bye to Babdown Farm, where we felt that we had mo small contribution to the war effort, and proceeded to Spitalgate on ttskirts of Grantham. During our period of instructing Bob and I had both to the rank of Flight Lieutenant and we felt suitably rewarded for our deion to this highly responsible work.

CHAPTER IX

FURTHER TRAINING

Spitalgate airfield was the home of No. 12 (P) A.F.U. Although we had been flying constantly for two and a half years, with the last sixteen months instructing on the Oxford at an A.F.U., the powers that be had decided that we should do a course at an A.F.U. as pupils. And on which aircraft? Correct! The Oxford! At this course we soon found, not surprisingly, that we could fly better than our instructors. Naturally they gave us excellent marks at the end of the course. A month of this stupidity was enough and we were then introduced to the Bristol Blenheim Mark V. This was not a training aircraft like the Oxford but an aircraft used on operations in the early stages of the War until it had been superseded by faster aircraft of more advanced design. It was an annoying aircraft to fly and I was always getting bits of skin taken off my knuckles by projecting bits of metal inside the cabin. For us, however, it was a means to an end and we accepted these minor inconveniences.

The flying bomb attacks reached their peak about this time. The first flying bombs, called by the Germans the Vergeltungswaffen 1 (or V1) were launched shortly after the Allied landings in Normandy. As is well known, they were actually small jet-propelled planes equipped with an autopilot and carrying a large bomb. When they ran out of fuel they dived to earth and exploded.

The first warning of the approach of a flying bomb was given to the people of London by the normal air raid alert. This was followed in due course by a couple of beeps repeated for some seconds on a public loud speaker system These were known as the imminent danger signal. The technique which I adopted whenever I was in London was to move out into the street and attempt to locate the "air raid spotters" on the roofs of nearby buildings. By the direction of their gaze you could usually tell whether the V1 was in your vicinity or not. If it was you would soon hear the jet engine and when that cut out you had about ten seconds to find a place of safety - if one existed. The best precaution was to move into a nearby doorway. It had long been recognised in England that the safest place in which to sit out an air raid was under a table or in a doorway, preferably an arched doorway. Here you would stand, rather uncertainly, and after the explosion the All Clear would sound and you would be on your way again.

The defence against V1s, the only defence, was quite simply to shoot them down before they reached London. Fast fighter aircraft, usually Typhoons, would patrol well out in the Channel. The next defensive line consisted of anti-aircraft guns mounted along the coast, while inland were more patrolling aircraft. Once the V1s reached the outskirts of London they were allowed to fly on; after all, they might fly right over the city before running out of fuel.

While warning of the V1s was minimal there was no warning whatever for the V2s. These bomb-carrying rockets arrived unseen and unheard - unheard, that is, except for the resultant devastating explosion - at any time of the day or night.

It was at Spitalgate that I first saw a fatal aircraft crash. Two fellow pupils had been practising single-engined flying and had ignored the strict

instruction that during this exercise it was essential to warm up the "dead engine" at frequent intervals. Having completed the exercise they had lowered the undercarriage for landing, at the same time opening up the throttle for the dead engine. Predictably this engine, having cooled down, did not respond and the pilot was confronted with a major problem. An experienced man might have got himself out of the mess he was in, but for this trainee it proved insurmountable and the aircraft stalled, flipped over and dived into the ground. The result was - two pilots killed because of inexperience. There was one thing, and very important it was, that our term of instructing had done for Bob and me. It had taught us the finer points of flying and thus helped us to stay alive when confronted with difficult situations.

Although we were based at Spitalgate we spent a lot of time at the satellite airfield near the small village of Harlaxton. Here we lacked the amenities of Spitalgate, which, like Shawbury, was a peacetime station. Moreover we were assailed by a particularly bitter winter. The snow lay thick on the ground, the water pipes froze and burst, and altogether life was uncomfortable. It was while we were at Harlaxton that an American pilot, in trouble on a stormy and murky night, landed on our airfield. He landed the aircraft on the centre of the runway in very bad conditions, but in his anxiety to get down on the ground he landed downwind. He must have been guided to this landing by the general airfield lighting, as the flare path would not have been visible from its upwind end. Careering across the airfield at high speed with the wind behind him he quickly ran out of runway and completed his landing by going straight through a house some hundred yards further on. When we visited the scene the next morning there was the house, still standing, but with a large circular hole punched right through it, while a little further on was a Douglas Dakota, minus its wings but otherwise not much damaged. Fortunately the house was unoccupied on that night and there was no fatality.

And so, after minor excitements like that which I have just described, our five months stay at No. 12 A.F.U. came to an end. It had been during this period that I started to play bridge. I had been taking singing lessons in London from an Italian named Bernardo Albini, who had indeed a beautiful tenor voice, and once he asked me if I could play bridge. Remembering occasional evenings of auction bridge at Rockhampton before the War I foolishly said that I could play a little. The upshot was that he invited me to his home to make up a four at bridge, and it was then that I discovered that I couldn't play bridge. The others were very understanding during the evening, but the experience resulted in my immediately buying a couple of books on bridge and studying them assiduously. During the following months I played bridge at Maestro Albini's home on many occasions with increasing confidence and much enjoyment. It proved to be the commencement of a long bridge-playing life from which I have derived great pleasure and a lot of mental exercise over the years.

After completing the course at No. 12 A.F.U. we received a temporary posting to an airfield at Hixon near Stafford. We spent a month here doing precisely nothing, although in reality we were merely filling in time until there was room for us at our next destination, which was to be No. 51 O.T.U. (Operational Training Unit) at Cranfield. The equipping of the camp buildings at Hixon was not yet finished and accordingly our accommodation left something to be desired. A few days after our arrival baths were installed in the ablution block near our quarters, but they had no bath plugs and moreover only the hot water was connected. We then evolved the technique of making plugs out of paper, filling the plug hole with these inefficient stoppers, and turning on the hot water. You had to return five minutes later to turn off the hot water, and come back after an hour or so for your bath. Occasionally someone else would use it first.

At last our posting to Cranfield came through and we arrived full of enthusiasm for our introduction to the De Havilland Mosquito. It was a plywood panelled aircraft, as light as a Tiger Moth to handle, but equipped with two powerful Rolls Royce Merlin engines. It could maintain height with ease

on one engine, and out of this arose an interesting and amusing occurrence which had a happy ending for the pilot and his navigator. Not every unscheduled landing had such a fortunate outcome. On this day one of the pilots in our course, accompanied by his navigator, had been practising single-engined flying. This was achieved by pressing the feathering button for the particular engine which you wanted to stop. As the propeller slowed down the blades would feather, that is, they would turn edge-on to the direction of travel so as to meet the least air resistance. To unfeather you merely pressed the button a second time. This pilot, having completed his single-engined practice, pressed the button in order to unfeather. Unfortunately he pressed the wrong button and discovered that he had now stopped the other engine also. I was standing beside one of the hangars when I heard an announcement on the station loud-speaker system - "Stand by for an imminent crash on the airfield!" Looking skywards I saw a Mosquito some six thousand feet up, with both engines stopped. The pilot then did an excellent job of positioning himself for a landing on the airfield. However having no engines meant having no power, so he could lower neither the undercarriage nor the flaps, and consequently had no way of getting his speed down. He shot across the airfield at two hundred miles an hour and disappeared in the distance. In due course he made a good wheels-up landing some two or three miles away.

The course at Cranfield was for training as night fighter pilots and the Mosquito was specially equipped for this purpose. Within the nose of the aircraft was positioned a small radar scanner connected with two display tubes directly in front of the navigator. One of these tubes gave the distance and bearing of any large object encountered, while the other gave its position in clock-face terms, e.g. a "blip" at eleven o'clock indicated an aircraft above you and slightly to the left. The aim of this A.I. (Aircraft Interception) equipment was to enable the navigator to give instructions to the pilot which would help him to bring the aircraft into a position close behind and a little below the suspect aircraft. This was then to be visually identified as German before being attacked. The navigator who teamed with me was another Australian, Sergeant Frank Rushworth, and we got on well together.

When we had first arrived at Cranfield we had immediately been asked if we knew another Australian, Keith Miller by name and a very good cricketer, who had just completed the course and had gone on to a squadron of night fighters. We had been asked a similar question on our arrival at Spitalgate, but the name meant nothing to us at the time.

Mishaps while flying are bound to occur sooner or later, and not every one has a happy ending. This brings me to describe the sequence of events on a murky night in April 1945. my navigator and I had been paired off with Frank Brosnahan and his navigator, both New Zealanders, to practise interceptions using the A.I. equipment. We were told to climb up through the thick bank of cloud and not to begin the exercise until we were in clear air. We climbed steadily, checking occasionally with base, and finally got visual contact at twenty-three thousand feet. We now practised our interceptions until suddenly recalled to base as weather conditions were deteriorating. It was intensely cold as we re-entered the cloudbank and I kept the motors at a moderately high speed so as to keep them warm, at the same time using a little flap to maintain an adequate descent rate. During our descent we were being tracked by base and given courses to steer from time to time. It was during this unpleasant night that I reaped the full benefit of all the instrument flying that I had practised so assiduously during my term of instructing.

Presently I heard Frank making a call to base. The pitot head of his air speed indicator had frozen up and this meant that he could no longer get an airspeed reading on his instruments. Without this he would be forced to maintain a high speed as a safety precaution and this would render landing at a standard airfield impracticable. He was diverted to a nearby airfield at Wittering, where an abnormally long runway had been laid down. Actually

there were two adjacent airfields with their east-west runways connected so as to form one long runway. Frank landed here with his usual skill and was able to return to Cranfield the following day.

In the meantime I had been continuing my descent under base supervision. At a thousand feet I levelled out and was just able to get glimpses of the airfield lights ahead. I did the usual pre-landing circuit, half in cloud and half out, while a steady light snowfall reduced visibility still further. Having lowered the undercarriage I started to lose height on the crosswind leg and turned on to the final approach leg with the flare path showing dimly through the snow dead ahead. Finally I touched down. It was the worst landing I had ever made since my first landings in a Tiger Moth. I "kangarooed" along the runway in a series of hops, but I was quite determined that I was not going round again for a second attempt. I was down, and I intended to stay down. Eventually the Mosquito was running smoothly along the runway and I was able to taxi back to the dispersal area. Later the ground staff checked the undercarriage for possible damage but nothing untoward had occurred. I signed off at the Flight office and then went to an adjoining room for a good midnight supper of bacon and eggs. There were four or five of us enjoying this tasty meal when from outside the hangar came a penetrating whine, becoming rapidly louder and also higher in pitch. We dashed out in time to see a Mosquito emerge from the low cloudbase in a vertical dive and bury itself in the ground just beyond the airfield boundary. Next morning we visited the area but all we could see was a cone-shaped depression some eight to ten feet deep, with a Mosquito tail sticking out from the bottom.

In addition to that sad event another pilot found himself in big trouble on the same night but managed to escape from it unscathed. This pilot, obviously lacking in proficiency in instrument flying, found he had lost all control of the aircraft and told his navigator to jump for it. No doubt he intended to follow him out. The navigator jettisoned the escape hatch and was half-way through it when the aircraft emerged from the cloud and presented the pilot with a view of the airfield lighting system, albeit at an unusual angle. Having now got a horizon to assist him he righted the aircraft with one hand while with the other he grabbed part of his navigator's clothing and prevented him from jumping. By now Cranfield was closed to air traffic and he was diverted to an airfield in East Anglia which was still open. The flight to this airfield, with a flurry of icy air and snow rushing into the cabin through the open space left by the escape hatch, was unpleasant in the extreme, but a safe landing was finally achieved. The tally for that frightful night was - two men killed, one aircraft destroyed and four men forced to land away from base.

Another tragic outcome of inexperience occurred a few weeks later. It was a delightful sunny day and I had landed rather on the late side, hoping to be in time for lunch. As I walked back towards the mess I saw a beautiful new Mosquito doing a "beat up" of our control tower. It was being flown by a New Zealand pilot who had completed his course at Cranfield a few weeks previously and had gone to a squadron. He decided it would be fun to fly back to Cranfield and have lunch with some of his old mates. One of the ground staff - they were commonly referred to as erks - came with him to see his girl friend, also at Cranfield. After lunch they took off for the return journey and it was then that the pilot decided to do this ill-timed beat up - moreover to do it on one engine. To an experienced pilot single engine flying presents no problem as he knows how to cope with the dangers inherent in this form of flight. This particular pilot had only two hundred and fifty hours in his log book and therefore by no means could he be regarded as experienced. I watched him as he emerged from his swoop over the control tower and observed that he had commenced a turn towards the dead engine. I was disturbed at this as I knew the danger associated with such a manoeuvre. But all might still be well, and with all thoughts of lunch driven from my mind I continued to watch. Then I realised that the aircraft's speed was perceptibly decreasing and I knew too well what the inevitable result was going to be. The speed fell away still more, and I remember saying to myself

as I watched the inexorable approach of disaster, "That pilot is going to be dead in less than a minute and if I were able to get a message to him I could save his life." It was soon over. The aircraft was now yawing and travelling quite slowly and I could imagine the pilot's desperate attempts to straighten up the aircraft with a rudder which had now become virtually useless. His only chance of survival at this stage would have been to throttle back the live engine and crash-land as best he could straight ahead, but he did not know this nor did he have any time to think. Suddenly the Mosquito flipped over and dived into the ground. In its demise it did a great deal of damage to other aircraft and might also have killed a number of people in addition to the pilot and his unfortunate passenger. The first Mosquito struck by the crashing aircraft was one which had been parked on a cross runway and was being checked over by a group of W.A.A.F.s - members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. They had just completed their work on the tail section and had moved to the front of the aircraft when the whole of the rear half was sliced off as the crashing Mosquito ploughed through it. If they had not moved forward they would all have been killed. The undercarriage wheels careered across the airfield and badly damaged a couple of aircraft in their path. Two other aircraft were damaged before the wreckage finally came to a halt. The fire engine was quickly on the scene and covered everything in foam to extinguish the flames. When these were under control two foam-covered bodies were taken away on stretchers, while we watched in silence. Meanwhile the remaining front half of the aircraft which had been first hit was burning away merrily, when suddenly the fuel tanks exploded, scattering burning petrol and bits of aircraft around the place. In a few minutes all that remained was a heap of ashes. One of our group, John Hinton, hurried up after the crash, as white as a sheet. Seeing me standing there he rushed over and grasped my hands in his. "Ken," he cried, "I thought it was you!" I was much touched by this proof of regard and friendship.

The lessons highlighted by this disaster were, firstly, that after two hundred and fifty hours of flying you were still a beginner and secondly, that the rules which were so flagrantly ignored that day had been framed expressly for the protection of pilots, particularly inexperienced pilots.

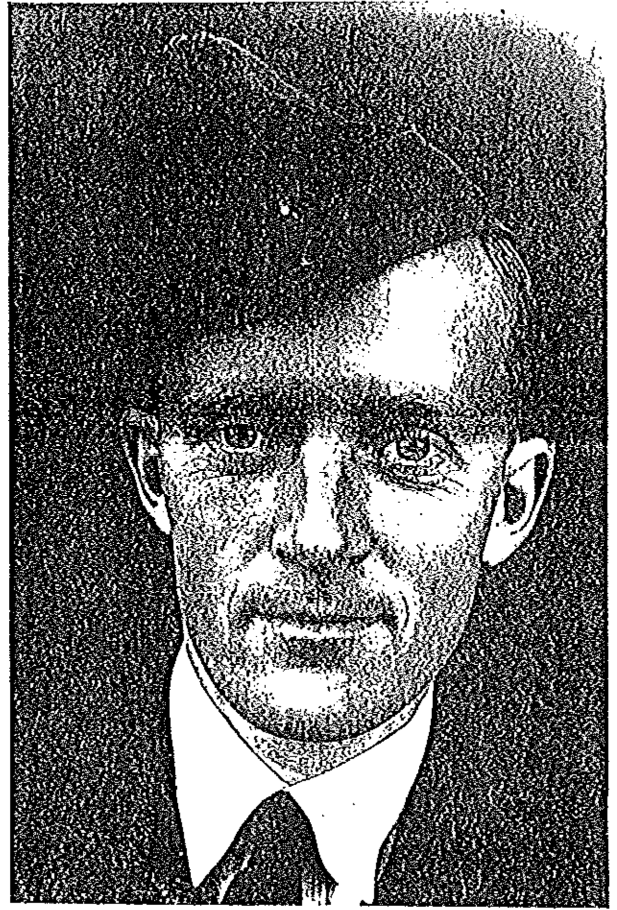
Opposite top:

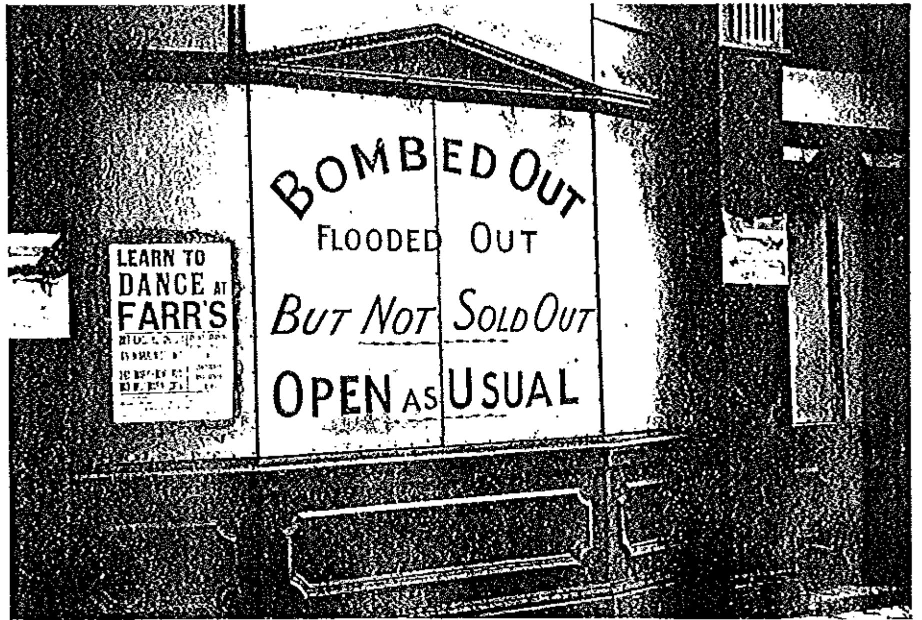
Bob Thorn and I took these photographs of each other while at the R.A.F Station at Grove near Wantage in southern England. This was our first posting after graduating as inexperienced but enthusiastic flying instructors from the Flying Instructors School at Montrose (page 36).

Opposite bottom:

My photograph was taken during the winter of 1942/43 while three Australian sergeants and I were on an Army Co-operation course at Lenham in Kent.

The store frontage illustrated is an excellent example of the defiant attitude of the British during the German "blitz" on London in 1940. The smashed windows had been boarded up but inside it was still business as usual.




BOMBED OUT
FLOODED OUT
BUT NOT SOLD OUT
OPEN AS USUAL
LEARN TO
DANCE AT
FARR'S

Opposite top:

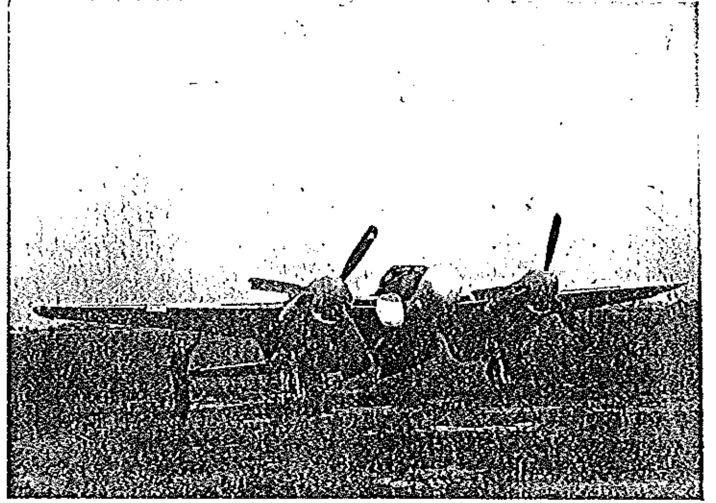
Myself standing beside a Mosquito aircraft, more correctly described as the de Havilland DH98. The Mosquito was one of the "glamour aircraft" of the War. It was technically classified as a fighter-bomber, and could fly very fast and very high. Construction was of balsa wood covered with birch laminations and spruce. It was first flown in November 1940 and was to prove a top performer.

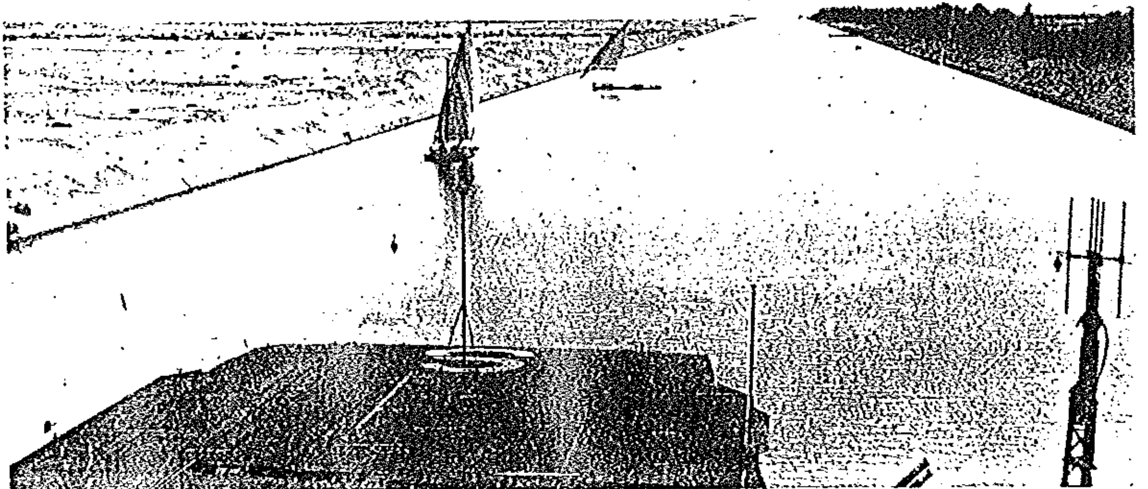
Opposite centre:

My singing teacher, Bernardo Albini, seated at his piano. He had a glorious tenor voice and was a very likable person. When he invited me to his home to make up a four at bridge he started me on a life of bridge-playing for which I shall always remember him with gratitude.

Opposite bottom:

The view from the "island" of the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Victorious as we proceeded through the Suez Canal on our way home to Australia.





During World War II the British defence authorities circulated a great deal of informative material within the armed services. To ensure that it would be read they dressed it up in an amusing and interesting text with illustrations by the country's top cartoonists. For the R.A.F. they introduced a training memorandum entitled Tee Emm and issued on a monthly basis. This publication proved so popular that it was rushed on its appearance each month. The following pages, giving entertaining instructions on how to use a parachute, are an excellent example of the style of presentation.

BALING OUT
or
HOW TO DESCEND BY PARACHUTE IN A CALM AND COLLECTED FASHION

There are many things which can mar the simple dignity of a parachute descent, but experience has shown that some of them are more likely to happen than others. Or, as an Air Ministry Order, dealing with the subject, pithily puts it, "the following phenomena occur with some frequency."

The phenomena to which this A.M.O. refers are all disagreeable, but all avoidable. They are :—

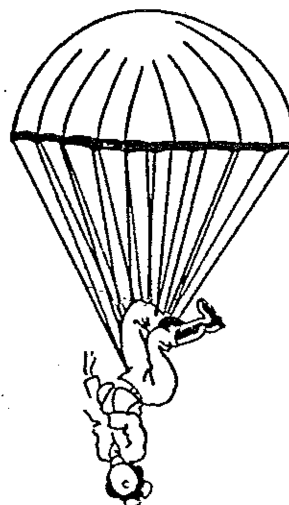
1. Somersaulting before the parachute opens.
2. Difficulty in finding the rip-cord handle after jumping.
3. Sickness due to swinging.

Let us deal with these troubles in order :—

1. *Somersaulting : or Aerial Acrobatics*

Somersaulting invariably occurs when you take leave of your aircraft by falling out backwards or forwards with your knees bent up. As a circus act it is no doubt pretty good, but from the practical point of view it has one grave disadvantage. If you pull the rip-cord while somersaulting you are quite likely to get the lift webs between your legs and thus hang upside down. A very good view of the ground is at once obtained but the position is extremely uncomfortable, and definitely undignified, and you may even lose things out of your pockets. Moreover, at the final stages of the descent it will be found inconvenient for landing.

The way to stop somersaulting before pulling the rip-cord is to stretch your legs out—keeping them of course together so as to frustrate any attempt at undue familiarity on the part of the lift webs. Curiously enough, you will find that, even though falling rapidly through the air, you can move



P.O. PRUNE knows all about this.

your limbs just as easily as if you were in bed. More easily, in fact, as there are no bedclothes. So far, so good.

2. *Parlour Games : or Hunt the Rip-Cord*

This pastime is not nearly as difficult as Hunt the Thimble, the reason being that you don't know where the thimble is—unless you've been peeping through the keyhole—but you do know the rough whereabouts of your rip-cord handle. This perhaps is just as well ; for if by the time you've got down to four hundred feet and are not yet "getting warm," you might as well give up and play some other game.

Now though you might not expect it, the quickest way of finding the rip-cord handle is simply to bend your head and *look for it.*

This shouldn't be difficult: after all, the rip-cord handle is much bigger than a thimble; moreover it hasn't purposely been hidden from you. And once you are clear of the slip-stream your body decelerates rapidly and you can open your eyes quite easily, even without goggles.

If, for any reason, it is impossible to see—darkness, oil in eye, fly in eye, etc.—you will have to feel. This isn't really so difficult either, as rip-cord handles for all types of parachutes are much in the same position, *i.e.*, on the front of the body just to one side or the other, and it is hardly a task that calls for a large search-party. If you are doubtful, however, the correct methods of finding the rip-cord handles on seven different types of parachute are listed in A.M.O. A.767 of November 17th, 1940. There is always a complete set of A.M.O.'s in the Station Orderly Room, and you can look up the method applicable. If you are wise, you will also practise shutting your eyes and finding your rip-cord handle on the ground, to make certain you know how to do it. There is unlikely to be a complete set of A.M.O.'s in your aircraft.

3. *Sickness: or The Ailing Young Man on the Flying Trapeze.*

Not only does swinging of the parachute lead to an undignified landing, particularly in water when it causes a much bigger splash than is strictly necessary, but it frequently tends to make you sick. Moreover, the required manœuvring so as to face down wind when landing is considerably hampered if you are swinging about like a conker on a string.

Swinging happens at all heights and is caused by the air spilling out of the canopy on one side and thus tilting it. This starts you swinging and the return swing spills out the air on the other side of the canopy. At 15,000 feet to 25,000 feet the swings can be very pronounced because the air is so rarefied. Also the lack of oxygen causes your head to "swim," and makes you sick from this cause as well, which seems rather unfair.

All this can be remedied if you know how.

If you are at a great altitude the first thing to do is to descend rapidly. Don't discard your parachute however; you will need it again at a later stage of your descent. Merely grasp the lift webs or rigging lines of the parachute with each hand and hold them down, at the same time looking up and watching the canopy. The effect of the pulling will be partially to collapse the canopy each side equally, and this will stop the alternate spilling out of air from the canopy. This in turn stops the swinging. You will lose height more quickly, and get more oxygen from the denser air. Be sure and keep on watching the canopy, so as to make certain that you aren't collapsing it altogether. If this looks like happening, leave go of the lift webs so that it can open fully. If swinging starts again, repeat the operation.

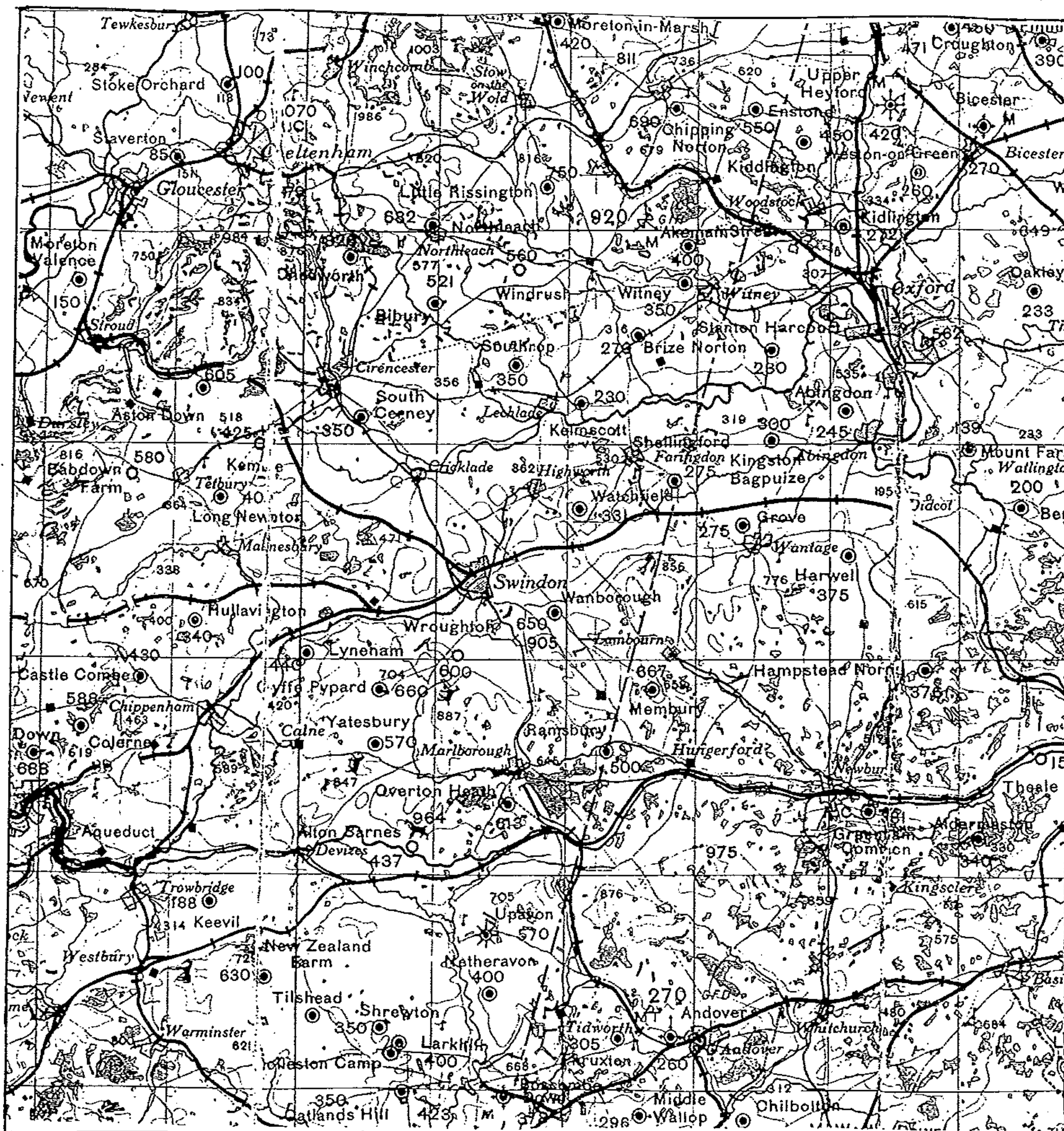
At low altitudes this method is not recommended as you might accelerate too near the ground and damage somebody's house. The method then advised is the obvious one of pulling hard on the lines on the opposite side to the swing, alternately. Thus if you are swinging to the right, pull on the left-hand lines, and then *vice versa*. This has the effect of spilling air to balance the air spilt and so "damping out" the swing.

Once again, don't forget to watch the canopy whenever you are swinging, even at low altitudes. Not only are you able to control it better, but also you won't notice the horizon moving about. It is seeing a normally steady-going horizon lurching all over the place that enhances the sensation of "swim" and consequent sickness.

Mind you, all this isn't going to happen every time you bale out. But if it does, you should now know how to deal with it.

One last point, and most important. Keep your rip-cord handle and hand it in to the store. They charge you for it if you don't!

SECTION OF MAP OF SOUTH WEST ENGLAND



The above is a section of a Royal Air Force map of the area where I did most of my flying. It shows the extent to which wartime England was dotted with airfields. Grove is to the east, near the town of Wantage, with Ramsbury just east of Marlborough and Babdown Farm well to the west. Heights of all airfields are given in feet, as well as spot heights here and there. The oblique dotted line is the line of 11° western variation of the compass. "White horses", which were cut into the chalk hills long ago, were an excellent aid to map-reading, and five are shown on this map. The Uffington white horse, of great antiquity, is just west of Wantage, and three others can be seen in the area south of Swindon, with another further to the south-west. Woods were also a help in map-reading and are shown as small shaded areas. The scale of the map is 8 miles to the inch or about 5 kilometres to the centimetre.

Month	Date	Aircraft Type	Aircraft No.	Pilot, or 1st Pilot	2nd Pilot, Pupil or Passenger	DUTY (Including Results and Remarks)	Single-Engine Day Dual (1)	Single-Engine Day Pilot (2)	Single-Engine Night Dual (3)	Single-Engine Night Pilot (4)	Multi-Engine Day Dual (5)	Multi-Engine Day 1st Pilot (6)	Multi-Engine Day 2nd Pilot (7)	Multi-Engine Night Dual (8)	Multi-Engine Night 1st Pilot (9)	Multi-Engine Night 2nd Pilot (10)	Passenger (11)	Instr/Cloud Flying Dual (12)	Instr/Cloud Flying Pilot (13)
Year 1945						Totals Brought Forward													
[ROM] OLD BOOK:		TOTALS COMPARED		[signature]		[struck out] ACHU CRANFIELD	48.00	43.20	2.45	.10	117.40	795.55	22.40	27.45	268.55	.50	15.45	45.30	79.00
A.C.H.U.		CRANFIELD:-																	
JUNE	19	MOSQUITO	117	SELF	SOLO	TO VALLEY						1.00							
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	F/L MASON	VALLEY – BASE						1.00							
	20	✓	353	✓	SOLO	TEST						.45							
	21	✓ MK XXX	327	F/O KIRKWOOD	SELF	DEMO					.25								
	22	✓	242	SELF	F/S CLOSE	TEST						.30							
	24	✓ MK XXX	467	✓	F/O HINTON	TO HATFIELD						.45							
JULY	9	✓	724	✓	F/O McCOY	TO EDZELL						2.00							
	✓	✓	✓	✓	W/O WILLIAMS	EDZELL – BASE						2.00							
	13	✓	985	✓	SOLO	TO EDZELL						2.30							
	✓	✓	✓	✓	F/O JENSEN	EDZELL – BASE						2.30							
	18	✓	606	✓	SOLO	TO KINLOSS						2.30							
	✓	✓	✓	✓	W/O WILLIAMS	KINLOSS – BASE						3.00							
	20	✓	711	✓	SOLO	BASE – WARTON – EDZELL						2.30							
	✓	✓	606	✓	W/O WILLIAMS	EDZELL – BASE						3.00							
	30	ANSON	506	✓	F/O KERLE	TO WITTERING & RETURN						1.30							
	31	✓	✓	✓	S/O ARMSTRONG	TO ACKLINGTON & RETURN						3.00							
AUG	2	OXFORD	168	✓	S/O WRIGHT	TO MOLESWORTH – HUTTON CRANSWICK – BASE						2.00							
	22	✓	168	✓	F/O McKEON	TO KEMBLE & RETURN						1.30							
[signature]				SUMMARY TO FOR 22.9.45		AIRCRAFT TYPES: MOSQUITO					.25	24.00							
				UNIT 16 ACHU		OXFORD						3.30							
				DATE 22.9.45		ANSON						4.30							
				SIGNATURE [signature]															
		GRAND TOTAL [Cols. (1) to (10)] 1360 Hrs. 25 Mins.				Totals Carried Forward	48.00	43.20	2.45	.10	115.05	827.55	22.40	27.45	268.55	.50	15.45	45.30	79.00

The above is a reproduction of the final page of my flying log book. The war in Europe was over and the R.A.F. Station at Cranfield had been designated an Air Crew Handling Unit. We were now occupying our time with ferrying aircraft and personnel to all parts of Britain. The trip on 24 June was to deliver a Mark XXX Mosquito aircraft to the de Havilland company at Hatfield, an interesting experience for John Hinton and myself.

CHAPTER X

AFTERMATH

The war in Europe came to an end shortly after the events described in the previous chapter. The gradual overrunning of Germany by the British and American armies in the west and the Russians in the east has been adequately described in history books. But these books do not describe the happiness of the British people, who in the dark days of 1940 and 1941 were in very real danger of being invaded. Occupation of Britain by Germany would have left their wives and daughters at the mercy of foreign troops. This menace had at last been removed and I was privileged to witness and share in their joyful celebrations.

On 13 May 1945 Winston Churchill delivered his victory speech. It was timed to be broadcast at nine o'clock in the evening, and the whole complement of the officers' mess had gathered round the radio in eager expectation. The item preceding the speech was the Tommy Handley show, I.T.M.A. (It's that man again). As Tommy Handley brought his show to a close he made a reference to this speech and sang the following little song. The melody was rather banal but the light-hearted words epitomised the feeling at that time.

> We're glad we walked behind the man who smokes the big cigar,
> Tra la la la, tra la la la, tra la la la, tra la.
> We're proud of the man whose master plan has carried us through the war,
> Tra la la la, tra la la la, tra la la la, trà la.
> One puff of the old Havana,
> And we'll follow him right to Fujiyama.
> We're glad we walked behind the man who smokes the big cigar,
> Tra la la la, tra la la la, tra la la la, tra la.

It was now nine o'clock and the man who smoked the big cigar began to speak. He gave a brief outline of the highlights of the war, but the only part which I remember, and I still remember it very clearly, is his reference to the attitude of Ireland.

> We had only the North-Western approach between Ulster and Scotland through which to bring in the means of life and to send out the forces of war. Owing to the action of Mr. de Valera, so much at variance with the temper and instinct of thousands of Southern Irishmen who hastened to the battle-front to prove their ancient valour, the approaches which the Southern Irish ports and airfields could so easily have guarded were closed by the hostile aircraft and U-boats. This was indeed a deadly moment in our life, and if it had not been for the loyalty and friendship of Northern Ireland we should have been forced to come to close quarters with Mr. de Valera or perish for ever from the earth. However, with a restraint and poise to which, I say, history will find few parallels, His Majesty's Government never laid a violent hand upon them, though at times it would have been quite easy and quite natural, and we left the de Valera government to frolic with the Germans and later with the Japanese representatives to their heart's content. When I think of these days I think also of other episodes and personalities. I think of Lieutenant-

Commander Esmonde, V.C., of Lance-Corporal Kenneally, V.C., and Captain Fegen, V.C., and other Irish heroes which I could easily recite, and then I must confess that bitterness by Britain against the Irish race dies in my heart.

The Polish pilots at Cranfield did not share our enthusiasm. "You are celebrating the freedom of your country," they told us. "But we have no such freedom to celebrate." They were referring to the Russian annexation of half of Poland, although in compensation Poland's western boundary was shifted westward.

On 29 May our course at No. 51 O.T.U. came to an end and we were moved to an Aircrew Handling Unit at Kirton-in-Lindsay, north of Lincoln. The Commanding Officer was a very unpopular wing commander and one day in the mess I heard him say to a friend of his who had just arrived in the camp, "They call this place Belsen and I'm the Beast." For those to whom this name is unfamiliar, Belsen was an infamous concentration camp, and its inhuman commandant was called the Beast of Belsen. Our stay at Kirton was brief and on 17 June we found ourselves back at Cranfield, now designated an Aircrew Handling Unit. There was a little flying available for those who were interested, mainly ferrying aircraft to various airfields around Britain, and Bob Thorn came up with the suggestion that we get some more solo hours on the Mosquito. It might well be, he argued, that vacancies could arise requiring a minimum of a hundred solo hours on this aircraft. This made sense and so we did as much flying as possible. We had put our names down for a Mosquito squadron which would be going to Burma, but the war against Japan came to an end before this squadron materialised. On 6 August 1945 the first atom bomb was dropped on a Japanese city and the inevitable surrender by Japan came shortly afterwards. This too was an occasion for great rejoicing and I decided to go to London to see the celebrations. It was a short run from Bedford to London and there the scene was one of joyous abandon. It was almost impossible to move around London because of the milling crowds, but I was glad that I was there on such a momentous occasion.

Back at Cranfield our flying activities fizzled out. The last entry in my log book, a trip to Kemble and back lasting an hour and a half, was on 22 August 1945, and on that day my flying career came to an end. Bob and I both fell a little short of our target of one hundred solo hours on the Mosquito.

All overseas servicemen were now keen to be on their way home, but the sheer numbers involved precluded any quick departure. To fill in the time profitably I sought and obtained two months' leave from the Air Force to work in one of the two London branches of my employer, the Commonwealth Bank. Two other Australians, both from the Air Force, had made a similar arrangement and we found the work extremely interesting and also helpful as a halfway step back to civilian life.

One event during this period that stands out in my memory is the granting of the freedom of the city of London to General Eisenhower. I was one of the crowd of spectators that packed the area in front of Mansion House, and General Eisenhower made a short speech to us. One of his quips went down particularly well. "Now that I'm a Londoner," he said, "I have as much right to be down there shouting my head off as you have." Much laughter and cheering. I also had the opportunity to see a number of cricket matches at the famous Lords Cricket Ground, and I managed to see the first postwar tennis match at Wimbledon, on the No. 1 Court, as the Centre Court had suffered some damage from bombing.

At this point I would like to include a mention of a humerous piece of graffiti to be seen on the London Underground. In the outer suburbs most trains ran above ground and during the many bombing raids there was grave danger to passengers if train windows were blown in. To minimise this danger a tough fabric with an open weave was glued to the glass. No doubt this was effective but it also meant that passengers could not read the station names, despite the small space left in the centre of the fabric. The inevitable

result was that passengers commenced to peel the fabric away so they could see out. This produced a smart reaction from the authorities, who displayed posters depicting a cartoon character with the name Billy Brown of London Town exhorting the passengers not to peel off this protecting fabric. Said Mr. Brown:-

I trust you'll pardon my correction;
That stuff is there for your protection.

These posters were obvious targets for graffiti and the following amendment soon appeared:-

I trust you'll pardon my intrusion;
That stuff is there for your confusion.

The crowning touch was given when someone added a second verse:-

I thank you for your information,
But I can't see the ruddy station.

At the end of November I terminated my short term of bank employment and was posted to Brighton, where I was billeted at the Metropole Hotel. As most Australian aircrew had by now left Britain I had practically the whole hotel to myself and could select any bedroom I wished. I searched in vain for a room in which the wash basin had not been smashed, as the Australian servicemen had vandalised this magnificent building. After a short stay in Brighton I received orders to report to H.M.S. Victorious, an aircraft carrier of about thirty thousand tons displacement, then at Plymouth. This would be our transport to Australia. There were some seventy Australian aircrew returning by this ship, and I was made the custodian of some seventy watches. These had been offered to Australian aircrew at absolute cost in recognition of the possibility that constant aircraft vibration had caused some wear and tear on their watches. There was no mention of wear and tear on the owners! The price range was from three pounds to five pounds, depending on the make. Everyone in the group had taken advantage of the offer, which included a condition that the watches were handed to their purchasers only after the ship had left Britain.

Shortly before midday on 13 December 1945 we left Brighton on the Plymouth train, arriving at Devonport after a slow trip. We were met by Air Force transports, and then commenced what appeared to be a tour of the dockyards. We passed many ships of various types but eventually a small illuminated sign with the single word "Victorious" emerged from the gloom to meet us. We proceeded on board and after allocation of cabins sat down to our first proper meal since breakfast before leaving Brighton.

The cabins proved particularly comfortable, being equipped with two good bunks, chest of drawers, wardrobe, table and chair, wash basin with hot and cold water, electric heater, fan and air ventilation. The junior officers were not as well off and had to be content with sleeping in dormitories. The flight deck was crowded with aircraft, securely lashed down, - Seafires, Fireflies and a Walrus.

Victorious was due to leave the next day but her departure was deferred because of thick fog. This enabled us to have a half-day's shore leave and with two other R.A.A.F. officers I caught a bus to the city centre. We spent some time walking around the bombed ruins of what had been Plymouth's shopping area, then decided it was time to return to the ship.

At 1.30 p.m. on the following day, 15 December 1945, the tugs were in position and Victorious gradually drew away from the wharf. After five or ten minutes the tugs cast off and the ship proceeded down harbour under her own power. Eventually we emerged from Plymouth Sound into the English Channel and the headlands of Devon steadily receded into the distance.

My last view of Britain after a stay of a little over three years was of Eddystone Lighthouse on our port beam as we proceeded on a southerly course. It had been a fascinating and adventurous stay; a period of intense interest, great friendships and a sense of fulfilment arising out of my instructing duties. I had seen Britain from as far north as Inverness to Penzance in the south-west, with a look at distant Belfast while acquiring our balloon shortly after entering British waters in 1942. We were now leaving

British waters, but this time we didn't need a balloon for protection. We were also leaving a nation of people who must command the deepest respect for the sheer "guts" displayed by each man, woman or child, particularly when bearing the brunt of German bombing in the dark days of 1940. Both in and out of the services they readily extended the hand of friendship to Australians and I found them great companions at the various places where I had been stationed.

Vale, Britain!

CHAPTER XI

A VICTORIOUS RETURN TO AUSTRALIA

H.M.S. Victorious would be our troopship for the whole of the return journey to Australia, and very comfortable that journey proved to be. Moreover it gave us some experience of Navy life and I could then say that I had served not only in the Royal Air Force but also in the British Army (the Royal Artillery at Lenham in Kent) and the Royal Navy. As already stated, the cabin accommodation was excellent. Meals were served in the wardroom, adjoining which was a spacious lounge with a good library.

On the morning after leaving Plymouth we had a special parade for the purpose of distributing the watches and this proceeded without any hitch. Many years later, when Maurice James had become a member of our circle of friends, we discovered in course of conversation that he too had received a watch from me on that day. The ship continued past the Bay of Biscay in unusually calm weather but on the second day out rough seas burst upon us and Victorious commenced to pitch and roll. By breakfast time next day she was really throwing herself around and we were glad to leave the Atlantic and enter the harbour of Gibraltar. Here she remained for a couple of days but unfortunately we were not allowed ashore.

After leaving Gibraltar we proceeded eastward through the Mediterranean, with a glimpse of the island of Pantellaria as we passed. Soon we were nearing the entrance to the Suez Canal, but our negotiation of this famous waterway is best described in my narrative written at the time.

On Saturday the 22nd December, at about half past one in the afternoon, we first saw indications of land on our starboard beam. They took the form of wireless masts and were probably situated near one of the outlets of the River Nile. No land was yet visible and the ship continued on her easterly course, leaving the wireless masts astern. Presently a number of black specks appeared on the horizon and these rapidly increased in size. The ship now changed to a more south-easterly course and the specks gradually revealed themselves to consist of the masts and superstructure of various ships and the sails of dhows engaged in their activities some distance from the shore. Some of the skyline silhouettes could now be recognised as the buildings of Port Said itself.

We approached the entrance to the port, which is also the entrance to the Suez Canal, and slowed down for the pilot to come on board. On the starboard side a breakwater extended for some distance, while ahead of us the city showed up with a predominant yellow colour in the bright African sunlight. After passing the statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps we proceeded along the Canal itself and had an excellent view of the city built along the water front. Some of the buildings which particularly attracted our attention as we glided past were the well-known Simon Arszt's store, the Cyma and Longines buildings, the beautiful headquarters of the Suez Maritime Canal Company and the British Admiralty. This we saluted as we passed. About a mile beyond the city centre we drew slightly to one side and tied up for the night.

In the meantime we had gathered in the lounge where Egyptian money was available in exchange for sterling. Armed with local currency we now waited impatiently for the boats which would take us off. They arrived just after

five o'clock, as the light was beginning to fail. Each boat was packed full and the owners must have made a good profit from their charge of one shilling per man. The boats took us back along the Canal to the city centre and drew up at No. 10 Jetty, outside the Police Station. We scrambled ashore and there I joined up again with a couple of friends whom I had lost in the mad scramble leaving the ship. The three of us commenced to walk along the esplanade, which bore the resplendent name of Sharia el Sultan Husein, and in no time were besieged by dirty Egyptian peddlers who did their best to persuade us to buy from their assorted miscellany. The only way to deal with them is to shout "No!" at intervals in a very loud voice, then walk on taking no further notice. We then came to Simon Arszt's large store, where I purchased a few postcards with views of Port Said and the Canal. Presently we realised it was time to eat and decided on the Restaurant Splendid, which had been recommended to us. A waiter came to our table immediately and he proved to be a very superior type. He told us our meal would cost us thirty piastres each, which we agreed was reasonable. We started with tomato soup, followed by an omelette, and then along came steak and chips. Last, but not least, came the fruit, - an orange and a banana each. I hadn't tasted a banana for almost three and a half years. It was a small banana and not first class by Australian standards, but it seemed wonderful as I picked it up (with fitting reverence). At first I couldn't think how one should eat a banana, but then I decided on the simplest method. I peeled the skin back, braced myself, and took a small bite. It tasted good. I took another bite, then another, and in no time my first banana since leaving Australia had been eaten. It was a very big moment in my life and for a short while I was strangely quiet, as befitting very big moments.

We paid our bill, collected our purchases, and descended once more into the noise and squalor of the streets. We continued to wander round the shops and the harbourside until about ten o'clock, when we returned to No. 10 Jetty and caught the boat back to the ship. It had been a wonderful evening, but we expected the next day to be equally interesting, because at five-thirty on the next morning we were due to commence our journey through the Suez Canal.

The Canal is 105 miles in length. It runs from Port Said on the Mediterranean, through Lake Timsah, the Great Bitter Lake and the Small Bitter Lake, to Port Tewfik on the Red Sea. The town of Suez is near Port Tewfik.

I had intended to get up early, but unfortunately I did not wake up until seven o'clock. By half past seven I had completed shaving and dressing and was up on deck armed with my camera. Apparently our departure, which had been timed for half past five, had been delayed, because although we were moving, Port Said was still in sight a few miles back. On our starboard side the Egyptian State Railway, also the road connecting Port Said with the rest of Egypt, could be seen following the Canal and only a few yards from it. Distances from Port Said were indicated in kilometres throughout the length of the Canal.

Owing to the care required in steering, and also to the damage done to the sides of the Canal by the not inconsiderable bow-wave set up by ships, the pre-war speed limit was six miles per hour, but I believe that this has since been doubled. In any case we certainly exceeded that figure, much to the annoyance of the smallest of the dhows which passed. These found the going very rough for a minute or two.

After breakfast a number of us went up to the top of the "island" where we got an exceptional view. At intervals a train would pass us, affording an amusing contrast with the British trains which we had left a week ago. Occasionally we would see Arab labourers on the Canal banks and they would shout at us as we went by. At about eleven o'clock we reached Kantara. Here we could see the railway to Palestine coming in from the port quarter across the great expanse of sandy desert. The motor road to Cairo could also be seen turning off at this point. At Kantara it was interesting to see the railway ferry, big enough to ferry a couple of railway coaches across the Canal.

Shortly after lunch we entered Lake Timsah, on the shores of which is built the town of Ismailia. The luxury yacht of King Farouk could be seen anchored just off the town. Some irrigation seems to have been carried on in this region and the western shores of the Canal are lined with avenues of palms and other trees. Ismailia itself appears a veritable garden town from our somewhat distant view. We passed on, out of Lake Timsah, past the Anzac War Memorial, and in due course entered the Great Bitter Lake. This is about eight miles across at its widest point. The occasional small towns which can be seen at intervals along its shore provided some relief from the monotony of the yellow sandy wastes.

The Small Bitter Lake adjoins the Great Bitter Lake, and the position of the deep channel through both lakes is clearly marked by buoys. It was dusk when we completed our crossing of the Small Bitter Lake and entered the last stage of the Canal. Altogether during that day we had seen the wreckage of three ships which had been either bombed or mined. This wreckage had been hauled up onto the bank and in one case the tangled mass of rusty metal had provided a home for some locals. The fire blazing inside could be clearly seen through the opening which served as a door.

As darkness fell the lights on the buoys were turned on, - red on the port and green on the starboard. The carrier's most powerful signalling lamp, with the brilliance of a small searchlight, was now turned on and we proceeded along the Canal without reducing speed. In the distance the twinkling lights of Suez grew nearer and nearer, and eventually at seven o'clock we passed Port Tewfik and entered the Gulf of Suez. Here we dropped the pilot and as we went below for our evening meal we could feel the mounting vibration of the engines as our speed increased. Later in the evening the lights of Suez and Port Tewfik vanished in the distance as we proceeded on our way down the Red Sea.

The next morning we found ourselves surrounded by the faint pinkishness of the Red Sea (sometimes requires a little imagination) and out of sight of land. In due course we arrived at Aden where we got ashore for a walk around the rather disreputable area near the docks. The next day we were away again for the two thousand mile trip to Colombo. Here we spent three days, which we were able to put to good use. First we visited Mount Lavinia and were highly amused when a train from Colombo arrived with more Cingalese on the roof and hanging on outside than could be fitted inside. Then we dined at the famous Galle Face Hotel. Next day a friend and I boarded one of Colombo's undersized trams and stayed on it until we reached the terminus. Here we found ourselves surrounded by breadfruit trees and coconut palms. We decided to sample a coconut, so we entered a nearby native store and bought one each. The man who served us cut a triangular piece out of the hard covering of each nut before handing them to us. We commenced the slow business of drinking the liquid, which was not very palatable, but eventually it was finished and we started on our return trip to the ship. Some of the boys managed to take a bus ride to Kandy, the capital of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and situated in the interior of the island, but we preferred to stay in Colombo.

Our next call was at Trincomalee on the east coast. We stayed here for an afternoon and evening, and although we went ashore there wasn't much to see, and we didn't regret that our stay would be a short one. It was long enough, however, for the ship to be divested of the aircraft which had encumbered the flight deck all the way from Plymouth.

We now set course for Fremantle, a week's sailing away, a week full of boredom, bridge, reading, - and doing nothing. Finally the low, flat, dreary coastline of Rottnest Island came into view, greeted by raucous laughs from the English on board, who had been expecting Australia to look more inviting after the glowing descriptions we had been feeding to them. A short stay at Fremantle was followed by a rough journey across the Great Australian Bight, and on 15 January 1946, exactly one month after leaving England, we entered Port Jackson. Back we went to Bradfield Park, no longer an embarkation

depot, but our stay there was brief and a few days later a large group of us entrained for Brisbane. It was wonderful to be in Australia again, but we were struck by the rather unpleasant Australian accent, while the glare from the strong Australian sun caused some discomfort to our eyes. But these minor disturbances were soon forgotten in the joy of meeting our families again and our appreciation of the warmth of their welcome.

CHAPTER XII

POST-WAR ACTIVITIES IN BRISBANE

It was wonderful to be back home again and to realise that World War II, which had brought suffering and death to so many, was now a thing of the past. For those who returned the War had been an unforgettable experience, and civilian life would prove to be very tame by comparison. A resumption of civilian life now lay ahead of me, and it was with sadness that I learned that of those four fine young men who had joined up with me in Gympie in 1940, only one other, Arch Girle, had survived the War. George Harvey and Ray Thurecht had lost their lives on bombing raids, but I never discovered how Bert Austin had died.

On my arrival in Brisbane Ken and Elaine immediately threw open their home to me. They were living in the Brisbane suburb of Bulimba, where Ken was the Presbyterian minister. But first I visited Mother and my aunts at Boonah and then Mother and I paid a short visit to Rockhampton to make arrangements for the sale of our home there.

On 28 February 1946 I reported to the Army centre at Redbank to complete my demobilisation. I had been in the Air Force for a little over four and a half years and during that time I had recorded 1360 hours of flying in eight different types of aircraft. While the training part of my flying career had been mostly in Australia, the major part had been in Britain and I have retained an affection for that country ever since. Furthermore my period of service and subsequent civilian life had been enriched by lasting friendships formed during the war. Some returned men and women found it difficult to settle down again, but I didn't expect any problem when I resumed work at the Commonwealth Bank's Brisbane branch in March 1946.

I soon discovered that the Bank would pay the cost of post-war studies by returned servicemen and that consequently a university degree, previously beyond my reach financially, had now become a possibility. Accordingly I enrolled in the Commerce degree course at the University of Queensland. It would take me six years to obtain my degree, plus a further year to complete some accountancy subjects. When my evenings were not occupied with study I used to organise evening gatherings of my friends, either to play bridge or to listen to my growing collection of gramophone records. A pleasant landmark in all these activities was Bob Thorn's marriage, and I was delighted to attend this important function.

Meanwhile my aunt Irene had retired from her teaching profession and had bought a home in the Brisbane suburb of Sherwood. However she had been unwell for some time and the cause was finally diagnosed as cancer. It was a bitter blow for a charming and highly intelligent lady, who had been looking forward to an enjoyable retirement. Soon afterwards she passed away, to our great sorrow. With no family of her own she had taken a great interest in our family, and when she made her Emu Park house available to us as a permanent home she rendered us a considerable financial service at a time when this sort of help was badly needed.

At this period Elaine's family consisted of a boy and a girl, Jim and Roslyn, but an addition was on the way and I shifted to private lodgings. In due course a baby girl, Elise, swelled the ranks of the Innes family. In the meantime I had transferred to a boarding house at Clayfield where

I fell in with a group of medical students and became a regular member of their tennis club. Eventually they finished their medical studies and moved to various locations and I too was able to finish my Commerce degree. I was now able to devote more time to bridge, so I joined the Queensland Bridge Association and was introduced to duplicate bridge. As everyone knows who has played this form of bridge, it is highly addictive and I have been a compulsive bridge player ever since.

It was in late 1952 that I first met Margaret Conn, the young lady who would afterwards become my wife. Without actually realising that this was to be a turning point in my life I took Margaret out on various occasions until in early 1953 she went to London for an extended working holiday. But I didn't forget her and on her return in late 1954 our friendship was resumed. After much persuasion Margaret agreed to marry me and the knot was tied at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church on 24 August 1955. So began a partnership which has stood the test of time over the years.

Our honeymoon took the form of a motoring trip, the first of many which we were to enjoy together from time to time. We took a leisurely three days to get to Sydney, arriving outside our hotel, the Adams Hotel in Pitt Street (where the Hilton now stands), at 7.30 p.m. on a Saturday evening. This was not the best time to double-park in Pitt Street, with theatre crowds milling round and cars everywhere. However we got our luggage across to the hotel entrance and I then drove off to a nearby parking station. We spent a week in Sydney, then visited Jenolan Caves before going to Canberra and on to Cooma. We made our first and only ski-ing attempts at Smiggin Holes and then commenced our return journey to Brisbane. On our way we stopped for a cup of coffee at the little village of Kootingal, near Tamworth. Here we were persuaded to buy a raffle ticket and after paying our money we discovered that the prize was, - a pig! We hoped that Dame Fortune would not give us a win - a somewhat Pyrrhic victory it would have been - but we needn't have worried and the pig was spared a journey north.

Our first daughter, whom we named Julie, was born on 1 May 1957 and quickly turned into a beautiful little redhead who attracted stares of admiration wherever she went.

Meanwhile at the Bank I had been appointed to the position of Security Clerk at the Fortitude Valley branch. Previous to this I had been in the Housing Loans Department and then the Security Department in the Brisbane branch where my duties had been largely the interviewing of customers and taking mortgages over property of various types offered as security for loans. The Fortitude Valley appointment involved similar work at a higher level of responsibility and I remember being advised that I had been authorised to approve loans of up to one hundred pounds. Big deal!

For relaxation Margaret and I played night tennis with a group of Bank friends and their wives, or enjoyed musical evenings at the home of Margaret's very musical cousins, the Maynards. On Friday nights I would go to the Queensland Bridge Association's club room for my weekly session of bridge. Thus life proceeded happily for us both. It was during this period that I composed a number of songs and piano pieces. These were for the most part entered in various competitions but without success.

During the second half of 1959 the Commonwealth Bank completed its assessment of staff requirements for Australia's new central bank, to be called the Reserve Bank of Australia, and gave its staff the opportunity to show an interest in joining this institution. The result was that towards the end of 1959 I was transferred to Sydney to take up a position in the Reserve Bank's Head Office. We immediately placed our home on the market and were fortunate enough to be able to sell it without undue delay.

Next came a period of farewells, - to family, relatives and friends, and at the Bank itself. As I was then due for holidays we decided to take them in Sydney and devote part of the time to a search for a new home. Our furniture would be taken down and placed in storage by a removalist company, while our car, an Austin A40, would have room for a lot of clothes and a whole heap of miscellaneous possessions, - and possibly even for us! We left

Julie in the care of Margaret's mother, to join us after we had found a place in which to stay. Once again we took a leisurely three days to get to Sydney, and on our way through Sydney's North Shore we looked at a house in Turramurra which we had learnt, before leaving Brisbane, was about to come on the market. We then looked at another seventy-five houses before finally selecting that Turramurra house. While searching for a home we also located an excellent two-bedroom flat at Cammeray and it was here that Julie joined us. She was then two and a half years old but had not yet done much talking. Margaret's mother put her on the plane at Brisbane in the care of an air hostess, and I can still remember this little girl standing at the top of the steps leading down from the plane as we walked across the tarmac to meet her. She didn't say a word as we took her back to the car, nor did she speak at all on the long drive to Cammeray. Once inside the flat she immediately started on a silent tour of inspection, going from room to room without a single comment, not even when we showed her the room she would be occupying. It was then time for lunch, and after eating with a good appetite she suddenly commenced to talk and hasn't stopped since.

CHAPTER XIII

SYDNEY AND THE RESERVE BANK

We moved into our home at 3 Spurwood Road, Turramurra, in February 1960 and commenced the process of becoming ordinary Sydney suburbanites. At about this time I traded in our old Austin A40, which had given twelve years of reliable service, for a second-hand FJ Holden. This too was to give good service. We now realised that Julie was spending more and more time in our neighbours' homes and that it was their television which was the attraction. Accordingly we felt obliged to buy a television set to keep our daughter at home.

At the Reserve Bank I commenced work in the Research Department, but also gained experience in other areas as the years passed. Probably the most interesting of these was the Rural Credits Department, which arranged finance mainly to various marketing boards, and I found myself making occasional flights to the irrigated areas of south-western New South Wales to check stocks of produce on hand. These would constitute the security for amounts advanced.

Shortly after we moved to Sydney I obtained a position as evening tutor in Accountancy with the University of Sydney, the professor in this discipline being Ray Chambers. Later I tutored at Macquarie University, the professor being Allan Barton. Altogether I spent fifteen years in this evening occupation and in addition I taught Monetary Theory by correspondence as a part-time teacher for the Department of Technical and Further Education, also known as T.A.F.E. All these additional activities brought in extra money, which became really important when I had two daughters going to secondary school.

Wendy, our second daughter, was born on 16 June 1962. She was a beautiful platinum blonde and, like Julie, attracted attention whenever we took her out. Julie had commenced her schooling at Pymble Public School in Crown Road, and Wendy would do the same five years later. Meanwhile it was becoming apparent that our home in Spurwood Road was on the small side for a family of four and we placed it on the market, at the same time looking around for a larger house in the same locality. We found it at 110 Bannockburn Road, Pymble, about half a mile away, and moved in during early 1963.

Two years later I became a member of the Reserve Bank's Decimal Currency Committee, which had the task of preparing instructions for conversion of the Bank's accounts on the day of the change, 14 February 1966. Then I was sent to relieve at Hobart for three months and was there when the new notes and coins hit the streets. On the long weekend in January 1966 the Bank offered to fly me back to Sydney to be with my family, so I asked whether they would instead fly Margaret down to Hobart. This was arranged and Margaret and I had a delightful extended weekend of sightseeing, while Margaret's mother did the babysitting.

A week spent in Papua New Guinea inspecting Bank properties was of great interest. I visited Port Moresby and Rabaul, and was able to make good use of a couple of hours spent in Lae while changing planes. In Rabaul I managed to get in touch with my cousin Bill Wills, who owned a cocoa plantation some distance away through the jungle, and we arranged a dinner together. To keep this appointment he used his motor boat to get to a landing spot which was

accessible by car from Rabaul. In the meantime he sent a radio message to a garage in Rabaul which then sent a car to meet him and bring him to Rabaul. He told me that when independence came to Papua New Guinea he and his wife would be quite safe as far as their own boys were concerned but that the boys from the adjoining property would certainly cut their throats. Some time later, shortly before Independence Day, Bill and his wife walked off their property and returned to Australia. Another interesting Bank trip was to Perth for a week. My last visit to that city had been in 1942.

In January 1968 my mother passed away at the age of 94. A phone call from Brisbane informed me that she had had a heart attack, but that it was hard to say how serious it was. When I arrived, however, Mother was lying there unconscious, and although she recovered sufficiently to give a gleam of recognition she soon lapsed into a coma again and passed away a few hours later. Elaine and I have many times voiced our admiration of our mother's courage and resourcefulness. For a city girl to travel to the outback to take charge of the distaff side of a lonely cattle station, with the nearest neighbours, all strangers to her, ten or more miles away and reached only by horse and buggy, must have been a daunting experience. The nearest doctor would have been at Baralaba, over twenty miles away, but Mother's considerable nursing experience had given her confidence in matters pertaining to our health. The frequent sightings of snakes could well have terrified a city girl, but fortunately Mother was not one to panic, and there were always men on the station who could come to the rescue. We felt that our mother was really someone special.

In the meantime our children took part in the usual activities of girls of their age. These included lessons in ballet, the piano and, as a safety measure, swimming. The last-named item was triggered off in Wendy's case by a narrow escape from drowning, of which more later. Julie was interested in joining the choir at Pymble Public School and eventually was given a part in the children's opera "The Little Sweep" by Benjamin Britten. This was actually part of his larger work "Let's Make an Opera". In due course, as they became old enough, the girls moved on to the Presbyterian Ladies' College at Pymble, where they completed their secondary schooling.

The most enthralling event of 1969, and indeed of the twentieth century, was the Apollo 11 mission with its successful moon landing on 21 July (Australian time). On that day Margaret came into the Bank and together we sat in the staff theatre and watched man's first step on the moon as it was taken by Neil Armstrong. The picture was upside down and not very clear, but nevertheless it was truly a memorable occasion. Over the next few days we were able to see the astronauts on television as they moved around the moon's surface while engaged in their various activities.

Our holidays after moving to Sydney fell into three distinct and different periods. For the first few years we used to motor to Brisbane, where Margaret's mother and my own mother both lived. After my mother died and Margaret's mother moved to Sydney we took our holidays in the Tuggerah Lake area. After I started working at Talbots we alternated between overseas trips and visits to Brisbane and Melbourne. There were also a few special trips to be made, such as for the marriages of Roslyn to Bob Chopping and Elise to David McCauley. Roslyn and Elise, daughters of Ken and Elaine, are my only nieces. Other special trips were to Surfers' Paradise in early 1996 (a short holiday trip for Julie during her visit to Australia) and to Brisbane in late 1996 for the wedding of Roslyn's daughter Alicia.

The holiday trip which we took at the end of 1969 will always remain in my memory. Our destination was Kingaroy, where Ken was the Presbyterian minister, and the main occasion, after spending Christmas with the Innes family, was to attend Elise's wedding. Our girls were not feeling at all excited at the prospect of the long car trip so I promised them a swim every day and this was an adequate inducement. Our first swim was at Norah Head, where there is a delightful rock pool with a sandy bottom. We stayed at a motel just outside Taree that night and the promised swim the next day was at Lake Cathie, a little south of Port Macquarie. The next night was spent

at Grafton and by lunchtime on the third day we had reached Brunswick Heads. It was here that Wendy had a narrow escape from drowning. After a take-away lunch we had driven to a pond in the estuary of the river for a swim in the pleasantly warm water. After a while Julie had decided to swim right across this pond, which was quite deep in the centre, and for some reason Wendy attempted to follow her. At that moment I was standing in the water with my back to the girls. I happened to turn round and was shocked to see Wendy struggling under water some two or three yards away. With a few quick strides I swept her out of the water to safety. She had not yet swallowed any water and was none the worse for her experience, a harrowing one for a child of seven. Then and there I decided that Wendy's swimming lessons would begin as soon as possible. The next two nights were spent at Tweed Heads, with the inevitable swim in between, and on the following day the girls enjoyed a midday swim at Margate near Redcliffe. In the late afternoon we arrived at Kingaroy and were welcomed by the Innes family. After some days at Kingaroy both families proceeded to Brisbane for the wedding, and it was here that Wendy received her first swimming lesson. On our return to Sydney Wendy was promptly enrolled with Forbes Carlile's swimming school in Pymble, and here she made good progress.

After Margaret's mother - Ladaska by name, but Laddie to her friends - came to live in Sydney there was no longer the same incentive to go to Queensland for our holidays, so we started to look for a place closer to Sydney. We found it in the Tuggerah Lake locality, and in 1968 rented a small cottage at Gorokan with a lake frontage. Here we had our own private beach (after I had cleared it of seaweed) and thoroughly enjoyed our stay. In the next year Gorokan was no longer available so we rented a house at Wyongah on the western side of the lake. In later years we used to stay at a house at Norah Head, not far from the rock pool. Here we had a fine view over the ocean, and a precarious path led down to the beach below.

We normally took our holidays in the summer but in 1971 we decided to let our children see something of the snow country. We booked in for three or four nights at Smiggin Holes, which bore no resemblance whatever to the place we had visited on our honeymoon in 1955. We left Sydney at 5.15 on a fine August morning and arrived at Smiggin Holes in the middle of the afternoon - and also in the middle of a blizzard. The short time we spent there was bitterly cold, but the children enjoyed immensely their first attempts at ski-ing.

Probably our best holiday as a family was spent in a caravan. In December 1973 we left Sydney, towing this unwieldy monster, and reached Cooma that evening. It was a six-berth van, which meant that we could leave the dining table in position throughout the trip. With a four-berth van - and after all there were only four of us - the dining table doubles as a bed. This sounds fine in theory but in practice it is highly inconvenient. I had never towed a van before, and at the first caravan park, the park at Cooma, I had no hesitation in asking the park manager to park it for me. At the next couple of parks I parked it myself but under the manager's supervision, but by then I had got the knack of it and needed no further help. While at Cooma we made a summer trip to the Kosciusko snowfields and then, after a hot day's drive, arrived at the Lake Hume Caravan Park. At nearby Albury Margaret did her usual weekly shopping for food, and then we decided to drive back to the park by way of Wodonga. Here we came up against a brick wall, or to be more exact, the State border complete with fruit inspection point. With a week's supply of fresh food, including a lot of fruit and vegetables, we had provided ourselves with a problem. This forbidden fruit (and vegetables) had to be disposed of before we crossed into Victoria, which was planned for the following day. That evening the caravan was converted into a food processing factory. Oranges became bottled orange juice, apples became stewed apples, and so on. Our meal that evening was heavily laced with green vegetables and when we arrived at the check point the next morning all we were obliged to throw away was a zucchini or two. We stayed a week at Frankston and then drove to Ballarat, rich in history. Christmas Eve was spent at Colac, with

distribution of gifts on the following morning. From Colac we were able to walk across London Bridge, but many years later the centre section collapsed and London Bridge was converted into a small island, rugged but picturesque. Next on the itinerary was Mount Gambier with its intriguing Blue Lake, then after spending a night parked in the yard of a service station at Kingston we drove on past that interesting elongated inlet, the Coorong. At Murray Bridge we had a swim in the warm, muddy waters of the Murray and next day were safely established in a caravan park in Adelaide.

As in Frankston, we used the caravan park as a base for visiting the surrounding areas. These included the Barossa Valley and the mouth of the Murray River near Goolwa. Here we saw the weirs across each of the channels through which the Murray empties into the sea, thus ensuring that water in the estuary lakes was kept above sea level and would therefore remain fresh (if you can really apply that term to Murray River water). In Port Augusta we stayed in a caravan park on the shore of Spencer Gulf and next day drove to that unusual geological formation, Wilpena Pound. Lunch had been taken at Hawker, which derived some fame at that time from the surprising occurrence of a local car driver being killed in a level crossing collision with a train which ran only once a week. After lunch we drove on to the Pound itself, where we climbed some distance up the side of this strange saucer-like formation. On the way back to Port Augusta I saw a car stopped at the side of the road with its bonnet raised. I drew in and asked the driver whether there was any way in which I could help. "Not really," was the reply. "I have lost the radiator cap and most of the water as well." It so happened that at the start of our trip I had experienced overheating problems while towing the van, and at Goulburn I had stopped at a garage, where among other things they had changed the radiator cap. The mechanic had given me the old cap and when I had suggested that it was of no use to me he insisted that I toss it into the boot as an emergency standby. I now went to the boot, rummaged around and eventually produced the cap which with a feeling of great satisfaction I handed to the stranded motorist. He was profuse in his thanks and declared that this would get him as far as Hawker, where he could get a new cap and carry out any necessary repairs. This made my day! Back we drove to the caravan park in contented mood.

The next morning, before leaving Port Augusta, I drove to a nearby service station to fill up with petrol and water. The location of the water tap was indicated to me but when I turned it on out came a brownish liquid. "That's quite O.K." they said. "It's Murray River water and you can't get better." I thought to myself that I could well believe that after drinking that water you couldn't get better, but then drove off, full of pity for the unfortunate people of Port Augusta. It was a couple of days before we were able to get purer water.

On our way east we stopped at Barmera, Mildura, Hay and Leeton. Here we spent some time exploring the irrigation network of that interesting area, then continued on through Forbes, Parkes, Bathurst and Katoomba to Sydney. It had been a memorable holiday, although slightly marred by rain in the closing stages. We had been away exactly one calendar month and were quite ready to resume life at Pymble.

In 1974 Julie's school organised a trip to South East Asia and she was delighted to be included in the party. The plan was to fly to Singapore, go by bus to Kuala Lumpur and then Penang, take the train to Bangkok, by plane to Chieng-Mai, then back to Bangkok and home to Sydney. Julie arrived back in Australia laden with gifts, a tape recorder, and a first class collection of photographs.

During 1974 it had become apparent that vision in my right eye was deteriorating and cataract had been diagnosed. In July 1975 I entered the Prince of Wales Hospital for the operation. Regrettably this was not completely successful and I lost the detailed vision in the centre of the field of view. I could therefore no longer read with this eye, although I retained the peripheral vision so essential for the judgment of distances.

Julie completed her secondary schooling in 1975 and in the new year

obtained a position in the Commonwealth Bank at Turramurra, later being transferred to Lane Cove. It was at about this time that Julie developed her love for singing and acting. She had been learning the guitar and taking singing lessons, and on top of all this commenced a drama course. Her long suit, however, was singing and she could present a song with much character and expression. Julie was no spendthrift and by 1976 she had saved enough for a second trip to South East Asia, this time in company with her grandmother, Laddie. They visited Singapore and Hong Kong, and Julie excelled as a guide. This was not Laddie's only overseas trip, and in the following year she and Wendy flew to New Zealand to attend a family wedding. They stayed in Auckland, but found time to take a conducted tour to Rotorua and other scenic areas.

In October 1977 I had my second eye operation. This operation was vitally important for me because if the results were no better than for the other eye I would no longer be able to read, although I would be able to see well enough to get around. Against this possibility I recorded some of my favourite books on audiotape. The operation was performed at the Royal North Shore Hospital and after a few weeks of agonising suspense I realised that the operation had been successful. The overall result of these operations was that when reading I was really using only one eye, but that otherwise my vision was practically normal. These operations were performed before lens implants became an established practice and I have worn contact lenses ever since. I have no cause to complain.

It was written that Laddie was not to be with us much longer. She had experienced heart problems on the plane back from Hong Kong with Julie, although she did not allow Julie to realise this. Back in Australia a few weeks of complete relaxation put her on her feet again, but in December 1977, while returning by bus from a shopping outing at Lindfield, she had another attack which she did not survive. She was rushed to Hornsby Hospital and although they did their best she did not recover consciousness. This was a particularly severe blow to Margaret, who was greatly attached to her mother, and was indeed a shock to all of us. However life must go on and everyone accepted this.

In early 1978 it became known that the Reserve Bank was going to amend its excellent pension scheme, unfortunately to my detriment, while the tax levied on lump sum retirement payments would increase. This provided a definite incentive to retire from the Bank if suitable alternative employment could be found. In any case I would have no option but to retire from the Bank when I reached the age of sixty-five, and I felt that as long as I remained in good health a considerable part of my working life should still be ahead of me. The mere thought of spending my time doing nothing at home when I was still capable of playing an active role in the workforce was anathema to me, and I commenced to look around for suitable employment. Initially I became interested in a position as accountant at the Hampton Court Hotel at Kings Cross, but further enquiries indicated that this was not exactly what I wanted. I then applied for a position advertised by F. Howe Talbot & Co., a firm of Chartered Accountants in O'Connell Street, and was appointed to it after an interview with the senior partner, R. E. Talbot. I immediately retired from the Bank, but in order to play fair with my employers of so many years I had indicated to them a few weeks previously just what I had in mind.

CHAPTER XIV

A NEW CAREER

I commenced my new career on 24 April 1978 and found it both interesting and rewarding. At that time the partners were Messrs. Talbot, Prowse, Bligh-Jones, Goldrick, Ward and Milsom. Although I had been lecturing and tutoring in Accountancy at two universities I still found that this change to the practical side was far from easy, but settled down to it happily after a few months. I had to learn how to prepare final accounts and income tax returns and all the other myriad things that fall within the ambit of a public accountant. Mr. F. Howe Talbot, founder of the firm, used to drop in every Friday but in due course the grim reaper put an end to these visits. As the years passed there were changes in both the partners and the staff. Trevor Ward left the partnership and R. E. Talbot retired. Jeff Fish became a partner and D. V. Prowse retired. Brian Goldrick, the most likable of men, fell victim to a rare complaint which gradually reduced his mobility and eventually claimed him. Brian Bligh-Jones retired, Jeff Fish left the partnership, but Doug Crew and Stephen Hollier became partners, followed by Allan Hesslein and later by Greg Miller. Then Doug Crew left the partnership. Of the partners and staff comprising the firm when I joined it in April 1978 only one remains - Warren Milsom, now the senior partner.

During my early years with Talbots the office was located on the fifth floor at 28 O'Connell Street, on the Hunter Street corner. In December 1983 the firm shifted its office to the tenth floor of the Bowlers' Club building at 95 York Street, close to the Market Street intersection. There we remained for some years until suddenly evicted without notice on 7 September 1994. This occurred shortly after lunch when our receptionist, whose office provided a good view of the lift lobby, suddenly noticed thick smoke pouring out of the lift shafts. She promptly alerted everyone, thus triggering an immediate exodus. When I opened the back door giving access to the corridor which connected the lift lobby to the tenants' entrances and the fire escapes, the whole area was full of dense smoke. Having taken part in various practice fire alarms I knew exactly where the fire escape was located and made my way down it in relaxed and orderly fashion. In York Street I joined the crowd of spectators and soon realised that the actual fire was confined to the second floor but that thick black smoke was permeating the rest of the building. Some tenants on the floors above us had to be rescued by the Fire Brigade. It soon became obvious that no work would be possible for some days, and actually a couple of weeks elapsed before there was any resumption of work. This took place, not at 95 York Street, which was no longer habitable, but on the first floor at 91 York Street, only a few doors away. Here we started to pick up the threads of our normal activities. While actual fire damage had been confined to the second floor of the building and floors adjacent to it, everything in the upper floors had been ruined by the black oily smoke which had infiltrated every office. Our records had been transferred to the first floor of 91 York Street, where a certain amount of disorder was apparent. Cleaning our files and furniture was accorded top priority, but at last we were able to get down to the job of turning out productive work. Meanwhile a start had been made on preparing the ninth floor of the building as our permanent future home, but it was not until April

in the following year that we were able to move into our new premises. Here we started work with everything completely new - computers, office equipment, furniture, partitions and carpet - all of these having been ruined in the fire. Fortunately all the information stored on discs had survived the ordeal intact.

When I first started at Talbots in 1978 all our accounts and other records were handwritten, but during the following years there had been steady transfer to computerisation.

While I was with the firm I had built up the friendliest of relationships with those clients allotted to me, particularly in the case of Paul and Eve Bear. Paul and Eve never failed to remember me with a gift each Christmas, and it was sad when he died in May 1996. From that time Eve started to lose interest in life, and in August 1997 she died during an operation. I shall long remember them both.

During all these years there had been no lack of activity at home. Julie grew tired of the humdrum routine of bank work and left the Commonwealth Bank in 1979. She did odd jobs and some television work before obtaining a part in the show Evita in 1981. For some months she was in her element until the show finally wound up. She then worked with the ANZ Bank until again obtaining a part, this time with Jesus Christ Superstar in 1984, and she played all round Australia as well as in Hong Kong and Singapore. When Wendy finished her schooling she started work as an office junior. Over the years that followed she learnt typing and word processing and filled various receptionist and secretarial positions.

In 1980 Margaret and I took the first of our overseas trips. Encouraged by Julie's example of an escorted trip she had taken to Singapore and Hong Kong we had decided to do that trip ourselves. While I was still working in the Reserve Bank our vague plan had been that when I retired on reaching the age of sixty-five we would take a world tour. My switch to a new job threw these half-formed plans into the melting pot and what emerged was what might be called a tour by instalments, the first being a short conducted tour of Singapore and Hong Kong. In this proposal we received enthusiastic support from Julie herself and so in March 1980 we boarded a QANTAS Boeing 747 for Singapore. We were thrilled with this flight, our first in a "jumbo jet". To be able to take a long walk around a large area somewhat resembling an elongated cinema was a completely new experience for us. We had a good view from our seats and were able to look down on Alice Springs - I took an excellent photograph of the town - and the coastlines of north-western Australia and western Borneo, before finally landing at the Singapore airport of Paya Lebar. It was strange to sit in the bus transporting us from the plane to the Immigration building and to hear a long announcement on the public address system without being able to understand a word. But we were quickly taken in hand after passing through the Immigration check and driven to our hotel. We enjoyed four days in Singapore before flying on to Hong Kong with Cathay Pacific. The thrilling descent past high-rise apartment blocks on to the runway at Hong Kong was a fitting introduction to this unusual city. Singapore was exciting to us because it was half Chinese, but Hong Kong was completely Chinese. We had varied the original package tour so that we remained in Hong Kong while the rest of the party went on a three-day jaunt to Macau, and we put this time to good use. We were able, for instance, to take one of the first tourist visits to China allowed by the Chinese government, in the form of a one-day trip to Shum Chun (as it was then called) just across the border. This was much better than merely seeing China from a distance. We still saw Macau, but as a one-day trip, which we found entirely adequate. When the other members of the party realised what we had done they regretted that they too had not made a similar arrangement. One important feature of our trip was the discovery that the tour operators had done nothing for us that we could not have done for ourselves. Accordingly we repeated that trip in the following year, but this time unescorted. The instructions we gave to our travel agent Ken Hatton, a close friend of ours, was to book air travel and accommodation according

to an itinerary we had prepared. This proved an outstanding success. We had no deadlines to meet other than those which we ourselves had established. We visited Jurong Bird Park in Singapore using public transport both ways. We took a trip to Ocean Park on Hong Kong Island and found it fascinating. We met a delightful English couple and spent a pleasant afternoon and evening at their flat in Kowloon Tong.

While this second overseas trip established our confidence in our own planning, our next trip would in any case have been self-planned, as it was to a country which we both knew very well. We proposed to fly to London, spend a week there, then hire a car and drive around the countryside of England and Scotland. The plane bookings and London accommodation were arranged by Ken Hatton but we conducted our own negotiations for the hire of a car, selecting a Ford Escort out of the vehicles available. When we arrived in London the Falkland Islands war had just commenced and as we passed through the Immigration Section at Heathrow I made the comment to the checking officer that every time I came to England the country was at war! He did not, however, realise the significance of this allusion to World War II.

One of my most stirring experiences on this trip was a nostalgic visit to one of my old airfields - Babdown Farm in the Cotswolds. We had been staying for a couple of days at Bath and there we had appeared on television as members of a background group of tourists while an attractive television personality was promoting the Bath Festival. On the next day we had driven north to see this particular airfield and our visit is best described in this extract from my diary written at the time.

We turned right at the Tetbury turn-off which is only about a quarter of a mile from my old airfield. I had a peculiar feeling of nervousness as I drove eastward on the Tetbury road. I knew quite well that the airfield was on the southern side of the road and right up against it. Suddenly a number of Air Force huts, in complete disrepair, came into view and there before my eyes was the entrance to the airfield. The huts were so badly damaged and the whole area was so desolate that a lump came into my throat. Over on the right of the entrance road I saw the control tower and ahead of me stretched the perimeter path. I drove up to it and turned left to follow it round the perimeter of the airfield. The surface was broken all over and it made very rough driving. I was able to identify the position of the main east-west runway, but of the runway itself, which was of grass over which "Somerfeld Tracking" had been laid, there was no sign. I continued round the perimeter path to my old flight, K Flight, and was able to identify the hangar. Nearby a young man was getting into a car so I stopped the Escort and walked over to him. I told him that I was an Australian who had flown from that airfield during the war and he was very interested. He told me that the building beside us was now a warehouse. It was not one of the original hangars but a building which had been erected some time after the war. I found I was unable to drive round to the M Flight buildings as the perimeter path had been blocked off at this point. Accordingly I drove back to the control tower area where I spoke to another young man. He too was surprised and interested to hear that I had come back to see my old airfield. I walked over to one of the dilapidated huts and peered through a broken window at the inside. Here everything had rotted away. The floors had gone and the lining had broken away from the outer walls and the partitions. With a sad heart I returned to the car and drove out onto the road.

A couple of hundred yards down the road I expected to see the camp site, but not a sign remained. There was a substantial stone wall, post-war, and a padlocked gate. Some distance away I could see the wood against which the camp had nestled, but everything had now gone. There was no point in remaining so I drove on past the village of Beverstone and its castle, which had once housed our Commanding Officer, and down to Tetbury.

After leaving Babdown Farm we returned to Bath, but the next day we visited another of my wartime airfields, near the village of Ramsbury in

Wiltshire, but this was completely unrecognisable and we did not tarry. During our tour we saw some white horses and other figures cut into the chalk hillsides here and there in Britain; we visited three battlefield sites of major importance in British history, viz. Hastings, Bosworth Field and Bannockburn; we walked along Hadrian's Wall, built about 120 A.D.; we took the small rack-and-pinion train to the summit of Mount Snowdon; we visited the grave of T.E.Lawrence (of Arabia) at the village of Moreton and the grave of Britain's great wartime leader, Winston Churchill, at Bladon near Blenheim Palace.

Our tour of Britain had gone according to plan, or rather according to itinerary, and we returned to Australia well satisfied. Of course we had met with no language problems, which would not be the case when we faced the unknown difficulties of the trip to continental Europe, which we proposed to undertake in a couple of years' time.

During the past two or three years we had become friendly with a Swedish family by the name of Lindman who had moved in next door. Jan Lindman was an executive of the Findus company, a subsidiary of the well-known Nestle group, and had been sent to Sydney to improve certain aspects of the performance of Findus in Australia. We first met Jan when he knocked at our door one day and introduced himself. In perfect English with only the bare suggestion of an accent he apologised for disturbing us, but could he borrow the necessities for a cup of tea? He had just moved in with neither food nor furniture. He left with an armful of food, our bridge table and a chair. His wife Alva and his two daughters Pia and Christina arrived a couple of days later, as also did the furniture. The two families soon became the best of friends. When the Lindmans returned to Sweden in 1983 they insisted that we spend a few days with them in their home at Helsingborg during our 1984 European trip, which was now well into the planning stage.

The farewell party given by the Lindmans prior to their departure put all other parties in the shade, with the possible exception of the two hundredth wedding anniversary (yes, two hundredth) of the Kables, of which more later. Margaret and I received a formal invitation but there was no suggestion as to the form the function would take. Neither was the venue given, but we were to be transported by bus and three pick-up points were named, one of which was at the Lindmans' home next door. On entering the bus on the evening of the party we were immediately served with champagne by the Lindman girls, while everyone conjectured as to our possible destination. When the bus turned city-wards and crossed the Harbour Bridge a whole fresh set of possibilities emerged, but these all foundered when the bus entered Kingsford Smith Airport. At last the secret was out. We were going to be entertained with a champagne supper over Sydney in a Douglas DC-3 aircraft. This was a superb celebration of an occasion with overtones of sadness, as we had been very close to the Lindman family and would miss them greatly. After our return to terra firma we all went to the Shore Motel at Artarmon, where the Lindmans were to spend their last few days in Australia. Here we had more champagne - by now we were well over .05 - and saw a T.V. film professionally compiled from Jan's still photographs taken round Australia. A couple of days later we all assembled a second time at Kingsford Smith Airport, but on this occasion it was to farewell our departing friends.

For our next overseas holiday, timed for May/June 1984, I drew up an itinerary with detailed timing. This was prepared after extensive reading of travel books and with the aid of the Thomas Cook Continental Timetable. The itinerary took the form of a complete guide to our journey, giving the starting and finishing times of all rail journeys, the tourist attractions to be seen at each stop-over, and even the adjustments to our watches as we entered different time-zones. All this information can be acquired quite readily in the comfort of an easy chair in the weeks before the commencement of our holiday, but not as easily on the holiday itself. Moreover by keeping to a planned itinerary we would be able to see all the tourist attractions recorded on it.

The first stage of our tour took the form of a stopover in Athens, with a flight to the island of Mikonos and a return to Athens by ship and train. Just before we had left Australia Julie had been successful, as already stated, in obtaining a part in Jesus Christ Superstar. The show would open in Perth and be presented in cities all round Australia. Later, after our return, Jesus Christ Superstar was taken to Hong Kong and Singapore, a memorable experience for Julie. We sent her a cable from Athens wishing her good luck for the opening night.

From Amsterdam we visited the beautiful Keukenhof gardens. In Paris we took the lifts to the top of the Eiffel Tower for a breathtaking view, and saw the usual scantily-clad shows at the Moulin Rouge and the Lido. The Louvre was a "must", as was the Notre Dame Cathedral. We also saw the procession commemorating La Déportation, the name given by the French to the killing of two hundred thousand French civilians by the Germans during World War II. We took a two-day trip to Mont Saint Michel and the castles of the Loire valley, and a couple of days later left Paris on the world's fastest train, the T.G.V. (Train à Grande Vitesse). At the French Riviera we saw a few topless women and other interesting sights, then on to Rome, where we fitted in a two-day trip to Naples, Pompeii, Sorrento and the island of Capri. In Rome itself the basilica of St. Peter and the Vatican Museums were outstanding, but we also saw the usual tourist attractions such as the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, the Spanish Steps and the Trevi Fountain. Other Italian cities we visited were Florence, Pisa and Venice (what an amazing place it is!) before taking an overnight train trip to Vienna. Here we managed to attend an actual performance (standing room only) of the Spanish Riding School, and we also took a couple of conducted tours, including a visit to Mayerling. Here Prince Rudolph and Marie Vetsera committed suicide in 1889, after the Pope had refused the Prince a divorce from his wife. After Vienna we visited Munich, from which we took a trip to the concentration camp at Dachau. This camp had been retained as a memorial to those who died in concentration camps scattered across Europe. We took a conducted tour to Neuschwanstein, the fairy-tale castle of the mad King Ludwig of Bavaria. We spent a few days at Interlaken in the Bernese Oberland, and took the train trip of a lifetime - up to the Jungfraujoch. As the train approached Kleine Scheidegg we saw unfolding before us the magnificent spectacle of, firstly, the Jungfrau, then the Mönch and finally the Eiger of ill repute. The line winds up inside the Eiger and the Mönch, with the Eigerwand station halfway up the north wall of the Eiger, where you can stand at the windows and gaze down the near-vertical wall from which so many climbers have fallen to their deaths. A day or two later we took a magnificent scenic trip to Zermatt, where we drank coffee for a couple of hours hoping against hope that the cloud cover over the Matterhorn would lift. We were disappointed in this and had to wait a further five years before seeing this beautiful mountain. For our next stopover, Frankfurt-on-Main, we paid a visit to the headquarters of Ferdinand Pieroth, wine merchants, whose good customers we had been for many years. We also took the ferry down the Rhine from Bingen to Bonn, then by train to Cologne. Before returning to Australia our itinerary provided for the long-awaited visit to the Lindmans in Helsingborg. We made an overnight train trip to arrive at Copenhagen in time for breakfast, and after taking a taxi to see the Little Mermaid we caught the afternoon Stockholm train. This train boarded the ferry at Helsingør and crossed to Helsingborg in Sweden, where we alighted. It was great to see the Lindmans again. They made us welcome and entertained us royally. A few days later we returned to Frankfurt, again an overnight trip, and had just enough time for a quick look at Heidelberg before boarding the plane for our return to Sydney. It had been a delightful trip and allayed the itchiness of our feet for a while.

At this stage some mention of my bridge activities would not be out of place. In Brisbane I had been introduced to duplicate bridge and had played regularly as a member of the Queensland Bridge Association. After my transfer to Sydney in late 1959 I joined the Sydney Bridge Club, but after a year or so got tired of the long train journeys into the city and back, so I let

my membership lapse. For some time four of us at the Reserve Bank played bridge every lunch hour, but later I switched to social bridge with some friends living in nearby suburbs. Two of the wives in our group had commenced taking lessons at the Lindfield Bridge Club and had followed these up by playing in the club's duplicate sessions. On guest nights they would frequently invite a couple of us to be their partners and this prompted me to join the club. This would have been about 1971 or 1972. From then on I played regularly at Lindfield and progressed steadily through the lower grades. I eventually realised that to achieve a grade which would really satisfy me I would have to do more than just play in the club's duplicate sessions. The points that really counted, viz. red or gold points, could only be acquired by playing in the numerous congresses being held in the Sydney area. Accordingly I took part in various congress teams events but progress, while encouraging, was still too slow and in January 1990 I entered a team in the National Open Teams event in Canberra. The results, while not at all outstanding, were still worth the effort and for some years I continued to organise a team for Canberra.

It was in 1985, on 13 June, that Ken Innes left us, after a serious illness. I made a quick trip to Brisbane and David and Elise opened their home to me. I said my last farewell to Ken and thought sadly of all those enjoyable times we shared in Rockhampton. Ken had made himself one of the family in those days when he was a boarder in our home, and we used to enjoy listening to his gramophone records. I can still remember one song in particular, "When I Heard the Robin Sing, Dear," and it always brings back memories of Ken.

The following year, 1986, was a year of particular significance. Firstly, it was the year of Halley's Comet, which turned out to be a great disappointment. I remember my mother telling me how in 1910 its tail filled the sky. It was, she said, a truly awesome spectacle. Our best view of this celestial visitor was obtained just before sunrise from a headland near Mona Vale, where we joined a number of other interested people anxious to see this phenomenon.

In that same year I developed the idea of a return visit to Coolibah, Emu Park and Rockhampton to see again the scenes of my childhood. Margaret was also interested in this proposal as her early childhood was spent in Rockhampton. Elaine would, of course, be one of the party and I dubbed it the "Nostalgia Trip." We spent the first few days of our holiday in an apartment in Surfers Paradise and on the commencing day of our Nostalgia Trip we picked Elaine up at her home in Fig Tree Pocket and were soon on the Ipswich Road heading west. We continued on through Toowoomba, lunched at Dalby where Ken and Elaine had been stationed in the middle 1950s, and at Miles turned north on to the Leichhardt Highway. Our first intimation that we were nearing our objective was when we crossed the Dawson River, which flows through the Coolibah property about a mile and a half from the homestead. That night we stayed at a hotel in Theodore and the next morning drove on through Biloela to Moura, where we took the road north in the direction of Coolibah. In our childhood days Moura had been merely another cattle station, but later coal was discovered on the property and now there is a flourishing township of that name. We arrived at the Coolibah property and drove up to the homestead. Everything had changed completely. All the scrub areas had disappeared and the homestead was a small modern bungalow. There was nobody at home so we started to look around on our own. I immediately took an interest in an old house nearby, suspecting that it may have been one of the original buildings. To be more precise I wondered whether it might not be the old kitchen block, but after studying it intently I decided that this could not be the case. Driving further on we came to that distinctive drop in the land level which positively identified the area as being in the vicinity of Coolibah as we had known it, and then we reached the Dawson River, likewise a familiar part of the scenes of our childhood.

We felt that in the circumstances this was all we could do and, greatly disappointed, drove on to Baralaba for lunch. Then we continued through Mount

Morgan to Rockhampton, where we booked in at a motel. When we had last been in Rockhampton there had been no such thing as a motel! This was the city in which all three of us had been born and we wished to see as much of it as possible. We drove to the old Ross home in North Street, now relocated and facing in the opposite direction towards Turner Road. The Wills family (my mother's family) had been asked to name two streets in this locality and Robert Street and Turner Road perpetuated the memory of Robert Turner, a former benefactor of the Wills family. While in Rockhampton we took a day-trip to Emu Park and found that Aunt Irene's house there was still in excellent condition. Also intact was the Emu Park State School, the first school which I attended, at the age of eleven.

On our return to Sydney I wrote to the family at Coolibah, - having noted the name on a board at the entrance gate, - and received a courteous reply informing us that we would be welcome visitors if we should ever be in the vicinity in the future. They also informed us that the old building which had caught my attention was actually the upper storey of the original homestead, lowered to ground level. If we could have envisaged this at the time the whole jigsaw might well have assembled itself on the spot. However, as my mother used to say, if ifs and ans were pots and pans there'd be no need for tinkers.

I was able to conjure up one little extra piece of nostalgia from our 1986 trip. On the return journey to Brisbane we stopped overnight at Gympie, where I had lived for three years or so before the War. We parked the car outside Crescent House, the boarding house which had been my Gympie home for the whole of my stay there, and introduced ourselves to the current owner. In the course of conversation I asked whether the sign displayed on the roof was the original sign and on being told that it was not I asked if they remembered some painting on the back of the original sign. This brought an immediate reaction and the man said that there had indeed been painting on the back and it had intrigued them considerably. He then went to the rear of the building and returned with the original sign. On the back could still be seen the words that I had painted forty-six years previously. They were delighted to hear the story of how it came into being, and we all had a good laugh over it.

1986 was also the year in which Julie decided that she would try her luck in London, but would get there by a rather roundabout path. On 12 June of that year we joined a large group of her friends at Kingsford Smith Airport to wish her bon voyage and success in London. She flew first to the United States, visiting Los Angeles, Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon, New Orleans, Boston and New York. After flying to London she visited Edinburgh for the Commonwealth Games and then crossed to the continent, calling at Amsterdam, Paris, Marseille, Nice, Interlaken, Munich (with a visit to Dachau concentration camp and Neuschwanstein), Salzburg and Aachen. Julie returned to London to find some sort of employment and in due course became a dresser for Phantom of the Opera.

In 1987 Margaret and I visited Melbourne where we both had relations to be visited. We first drove west to Dubbo, an old historic city but well-known today for its Western Plains Zoo, where the animals could be seen in their natural surroundings. After Dubbo our itinerary took us to Don Bradman's birthplace at Cootamundra, then through Deniliquin (with a quick look at its famous Siphon) and on to Melbourne. We called on our relations as planned and finally took the Hume Highway back to Sydney.

The first highlight of 1988 was the Australian Bicentenary celebration, which was indeed a magnificent event. Wendy took an early train into the city and stayed there all day, getting quite a good view of the proceedings. We preferred, however, to get an even better view in the comfort of our own home, relaxing in comfortable armchairs before the television set. We recorded the broadcast as it proceeded and have since replayed the tape with much enjoyment. In the evening we drove to Balls Head where we watched the excellent fireworks display. The Bicentenary celebration, which was on a truly majestic scale, was followed by a function which was relatively minor

but was still of great significance to those qualified to attend. It was held in the ballroom of the Regent Hotel on 10 February, and was actually the two hundredth wedding anniversary of Henry Kable and Susannah Holmes, who with four other couples participated in the first marriage ceremony in the colony on 10 February 1788. The romantic story of this young couple makes interesting reading. Henry, under sentence of death for theft, met Susannah in gaol in Norwich and they fell in love. In due course Susannah had a child, and when she was selected for transportation to Botany Bay there was great difficulty in getting approval for her baby to accompany her, and in getting Henry transported as well. These events are more fully described in Appendix II. The function on 10 February 1988 was attended by the governor of Parramatta Gaol (the inmates of which made the two magnificent wedding cakes), a descendant of the warder who escorted Susannah and her baby to Plymouth, a descendant of Philip Gidley King who had arrived with the First Fleet and was later to become Governor, and over five hundred excited descendants of Henry and Susannah. A number of entertaining speeches were given by the more important guests and all agreed that it was a magnificent party. Wendy, of course, attended as a descendant in her own right, as did Elaine's daughter Roslyn, who made a special trip from Brisbane for the occasion. Elaine herself decided not to make the arduous journey.

The year 1988 was also the occasion for Expo 88 in Brisbane and we timed our holidays to include a visit to this event. We again spent a few days in the Surfers Paradise apartment which we had found so comfortable two years previously, and made two visits to Expo. On one of these visits we had lunch with Charles and Muriel Fotheringham. Muriel, who is Marcia Bath's sister, is my second cousin and I have known the family from my Rockhampton days. Expo 88 was indeed a magnificent exhibition and this alone should have been sufficient for any holiday. However I still had Coolibah in the back of my mind and had already arranged with Mr. and Mrs. Price, the owners, for a suitable time to make a second visit. Accordingly, after leaving Surfers Paradise we picked up Elaine and again turned the car Coolibah-wards. This time we took the road through Kingaroy and Gayndah to Mundubbera, where we spent the night. Our arrival at Coolibah on the following day is best described in my diary entry for 29 May 1988.

We left Biloela at 1.15 p.m. and proceeded westward along the Dawson Highway through Banana, a one-horse town if ever there was one, and arriving at Moura we took the Bindaree road going north alongside the railway line. Shortly after we crossed the line at the entrance to Coolibah station and soon covered the short distance to the homestead.

Here we were welcomed by Glen Price and Mrs. Price, and also met their son Wayne and his attractive wife Lenore. After a pleasant chat we drove over to the old house building which we had seen two years before but had been unable to identify. We had later been informed that it was the top storey of the original homestead, lowered to ground level.

We saw the tank and tankstand which was all that remained of the old kitchen block, burnt down in 1968. We were shown the site of the well, since filled in and now practically indistinguishable from the surrounding area. To our great surprise the old shed was still standing, although in complete disrepair, and some alterations had been made to it. The blacksmith's shop (as we used to call it) had gone although a few posts remained.

Large sections of the milking yards were still standing, including one of the posts of the gallows. The gate posts at the corner of the milking yards were still there as well as the posts of the fence leading south from it. The fence leading west, which formed the boundary between the horse paddock and the cow paddock, had been renewed, but with a gate replacing the sliprails down on the flat. The fence separating the night paddock from the plain paddock had been replaced with a new fence on the same line.

The house itself was superficially the same as it was when it had been the upper storey of the old homestead. The original roof, dating back to 1910 or probably earlier, had been painted with a silver-coloured paint

resembling Silvafros and was in perfect condition. The wall between the two main bedrooms had been removed and two other walls added to provide three smaller bedrooms. Elaine's bedroom was still intact but Dad's dressing room had been combined with the back landing and the small bedroom opening on to that landing to form a large kitchen. The governess's bedroom was turned into a toilet and a bathroom. Every room was stacked full of furniture, appliances and machinery, but this did not prevent us from identifying the rooms and the alterations done since our time.

The lagoon was still there, but was dry at that particular time. An old fence post once forming part of the garden fence was still standing and while we were talking Mrs. Price noticed a piece of barbed wire protruding from the ground. Glen Price removed it and declared that it was part of the original fence round the homestead. He said that type of barbed wire was not manufactured now.

We then drove back to the homestead where we enjoyed a cup of tea and some cake, after which we started out on our return journey, but not before we had expressed to the Prices our gratitude for the trouble they had taken to show us over the scenes of our childhood. Margaret too had found it an intriguing exercise and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. That evening at our motel we discussed the events of the day and concluded that our Coolibah excursion had been an outstanding success. We had been able to relate what we had seen that day with what we remembered from our childhood days. That, together with the kindness of the Price family, made the occasion a memorable one.

In 1989 we set out on a further tour of Europe, which would include nine days in London to see something of Julie again. As in 1984 the itinerary was planned in detail, but an unexpected operation on Margaret for gallstones forced a short deferment on us. By early May Margaret was ready to venture on what might well be a strenuous trip and on the 6th of that month we were on our way. Our first sight of Julie was on the stage of the Donmar Theatre on the evening of the day of our arrival. This was a show put on by the Actors' Choir, of which she was a member. During the days that followed we saw Julie on every possible occasion. I took some time off from these family effusions to buy a copy of Shirley Temple's autobiography at Harrods - and have it autographed by its very gracious author. I was glad to be able to hire a car and take Julie for a couple of days to places she might not otherwise have been able to visit. We drove through Oxford and on to that delightful little town, Boughton-on-the-Water, with the sleepy Windrush roaming lazily along beside the main street. Here we inspected the famous model village. Margaret and I had seen it in 1982 but were delighted at the opportunity to see it for a second time. After lunch at Boughton we drove on to Stratford-upon-Avon, where we showed Julie the Shakespeare Museum and other places associated with the great bard.

A couple of days later Julie saw us off at Heathrow Airport and shortly after we landed at the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris. We saw the usual Parisian tourist sights and also paid a visit to Monet's house and delightful garden at Giverny. A quick trip to Lyon (we know it as Lyons) on the T.G.V. enabled us to enjoy a dinner at one of the world's top restaurants, that of Paul Bocuse. This had been organised before we left Australia and was one of the highlights of our tour. It was also the most expensive meal that either of us had ever had. We saw M. Bocuse himself who was in attendance and spoke to us at our table for a few minutes. The south of France has a beauty all its own and while we were at Lyon we visited Marseille (with a boat trip to the Chateau d'If), Avignon (famous for its bridge - "sur le pont d'Avignon, l'on y passe, l'on y danse" - we danced a couple of steps on it) and Nîmes with its Roman ruins, and particularly Les Arènes (the amphitheatre), which, as is the case with Verona, is in use today. On these journeys we grew quite familiar with the magnificent T.G.V.

We next took the train to Geneva, which we made our base for exploring the surrounding area. Our most interesting trip was to Chamonix and the most

exciting part of that trip was the ascent by cable-car (the French call it the téléphérique) to the Aiguille du Midi on the shoulder of Mont Blanc. To look down from the cable-car and see a glacier a thousand feet below you is a stirring experience. We also visited the Mer de Glace, but due to a very warm spell the lower sections of most of Europe's glaciers had shrunk considerably. The Mer de Glace was no exception and we were disappointed with what we saw.

From Geneva we took the train through the Simplon Tunnel to Milan. Soon after the commencement of our journey an official opened the door to check the passports. All he did was to ask us our nationality and when we replied that we were Australian he merely nodded and disappeared. We stayed a few days at Milan and were surprised and delighted when we walked into the booking office of the famous La Scala Opera House, more correctly the Teatro Alla Scala, and were able to buy tickets for a Verdi opera, Luisa Miller, on the following evening. This performance, at the Mecca of all opera lovers, was a major highlight of our tour. While at Milan we made a one-day trip to Verona, of Shakespearean fame. The Arena at Verona is probably the best preserved of all Roman amphitheatres and is used frequently for operas and concerts.

Our next stay was at Florence, and at the top of our list was a second inspection of Michelangelo's David. We also saw some places that we had missed on our 1984 trip, including the Medici Chapels, the Bargello (for sculpture and art generally), and the Church of Santa Croce, housing the ornate tombs of Galileo, Dante, Rossini, Macchiavelli and Michelangelo. While in Florence we made a one-day trip to Rome, where we simply had to pay a second visit to Michelangelo's Pieta in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. We also visited the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle and the Farnese Palace, but were unable to go inside. The first was closed for a long lunch hour, while the palace was occupied by the French Embassy. These two locations are the settings for Acts I and II respectively of Puccini's opera La Tosca, one of my favourites. Act III is set in the Castel Sant'Angelo, which we passed in the bus on a number of occasions. Three years later, in 1992, there was a television performance of La Tosca in its actual settings and at the times when the action is supposed to have taken place. The cassette of this performance is one of our treasured recordings.

Back to 1989. We again spent a couple of days in that incomparable city, Venice. This time we managed a gondola ride, complete with music. One of the gondoliers had a really fine voice and we wondered why he wasn't on the stage of the nearby Fenice Theatre. Perhaps he was! We went on to renew our acquaintance with beautiful Vienna, and on this occasion were able to visit the Schönbrunn and Belvedere Palaces and have a ride on the Giant Wheel, known to so many after being featured in that excellent film, The Third Man. In Salzburg we took a "Sound of Music" tour. This tour exploded many Hollywood myths about the activities of the von Trapp family. Using Salzburg as a base we made one-day trips to Oberammergau and Innsbruck, while in Salzburg itself a visit to Mozart's birthplace, now a museum, was impressive. But perhaps our most interesting trip in this locality was to the small town of Oberndorf. It was here, in 1818, that the church organist Franz Gruber and the young priest Josef Mohr presented their unpretentious but unforgettable carol, Stille Nacht, which was later to sweep across the whole world. The next year I wrote to a museum in Hallein, near Salzburg, and was able to obtain a copy of Gruber's own arrangement of the carol.

In Switzerland we established our first base at Chur, from where among other places we visited the interesting Principality of Liechtenstein. We then transferred to Interlaken, familiar to us from our 1984 tour. Here the highlights were a view of the Matterhorn from the pretty little town of Zermatt, - the cloud completely obscured it in 1984, - and an ascent of Mt. Pilatus by the incredibly steep cog-rail line from Alpnachstad. Our last base in Europe was Frankfurt-on-Main, and from here we found time to take a trip on the Europabus to the old walled city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, which was really fascinating.

Back in Australia we resumed our usual social activities, which in my case were confined mainly to bridge on Friday nights and over weekends. Margaret made herself busy on the committee of St. Ives VIEW Club. This is a women's charity club which occupies itself in raising money for the Smith Family. Margaret became club secretary and filled this position over a number of years. The position of secretary was a demanding one and I was very happy to be able to help with advice and clerical work from time to time. Our circle of friends was drawn mainly from the VIEW Club, with the exception of the Taylor family - I had known Neville Taylor from my Rockhampton days - and John Hinton and his family. John was one of my wartime friends in England and his sudden death in the 1960s came as a shock to us. Our night life comprised mainly dinner invitations from close friends which were reciprocated in due course. We occasionally spent an evening or a Sunday afternoon at the cinema, usually at Roseville, and Margaret sometimes took the girls to an event in the city. In this way they were able to see Nureyev, the Monkees, the Bolshoi Ballet, Torvill and Dean, etc.

The year 1990 opened with my first bridge-playing trip to Canberra to compete in the National Open Teams event. This was spread over five days with three sessions each day. Gold points were awarded for each win, while in the event of a draw the points were shared. We stayed at the Gowrie Private Hotel in Northbourne Avenue, only a five-minute drive from the Lakeside Hotel, where the events were staged that year. In subsequent years we shifted our accommodation to the Macquarie Private Hotel in Manuka, while the Congress venue was changed to the National Convention Centre. I continued to take a team to Canberra until after the 1993 Congress, when I gave up the project.

Our annual holiday for 1990 was spent in Melbourne. We drove first to Canberra where we took the opportunity to have a tour over the new Houses of Parliament. We thought them decidedly unusual, very impressive, and certainly worthy of their high purpose. Arriving in Melbourne we stayed at Aston Apartments in South Yarra and found them so pleasant and convenient to transport, with the added feature of security parking, that we decided to stay there on future occasions. We did the usual round of relatives and shopping, but on our return trip we first drove west to the Grampians, where we stayed overnight. The next day we drove to Stawell, famous for its footrace, then on to Shepparton, where we had planned to spend the night. But oh, the best-laid plans! It was a Saturday night, which brought its own peculiar problems. Poker machines being illegal in Victoria, each weekend brought a mass migration of a large part of the State population to the New South Wales border across which it gambles to its heart's content. The innocent traveller attempting to find somewhere to lay his weary head at a weekend is likely to be disappointed and remain weary. In our case, after leaving Shepparton in disgust, we drove on through Cobram, Yarrawonga and Rutherglen, finally reaching Wodonga at half past ten at night. Here we decided to fill up with petrol at a roadhouse (so-called) which included an all-night cafe and a small grocery store. The lady operating the store was impressed by our difficulties and obligingly telephoned motels and hotels in neighbouring towns, but without success. She then offered us a "shake-down" in her own home, but while most grateful for her kindness we declined the offer, having by now made a decision to sleep in the car as best we could. Initially we considered driving to the nearest police station and parking outside it, where we would surely be safe. However it then struck us that we could hardly be safer than parked in the well-lit area outside this all-night cafe. And so it proved. We had a late snack and then curled up in our car, wrapped in as many blankets as we could muster. We were occasionally disturbed by late eaters or a road transport monster pulling up nearby, but altogether we managed to get a certain amount of sleep, and moreover to feel we were quite safe while we were getting it. Next morning we had a clean-up at the excellent toilet facilities and after enjoying breakfast at the all-night cafe we were on our way again. Lunch-time found us at Temora, where we booked into a motel and slept for most of the afternoon. A couple of days later we were back home at Pymble.

It was on 7 July 1990 that the Three Tenors concert burst on the world. It was then regarded as the concert of the century, given by the world's three best tenors, and we taped it as we watched with enjoyment. It was, I must confess, the first time that we had really heard of Carreras, although his name seemed vaguely familiar to us. When we heard of his dramatic fight against leukaemia he became our sentimental favourite. His autobiography, which includes a description of what he had undergone during treatment, is a moving story of a modest person endowed with great natural talent. All three tenors, Carreras, Domingo and Pavarotti, gave individual concerts in Australia which we attended. The warm-hearted applause which greeted Carreras when he walked out on the stage of the Entertainment Centre was conclusive evidence of the extent to which he had won the hearts of Australian music-lovers. Later these three tenors gave a second concert in Los Angeles and this proved to be an even greater success than the first. They were then induced to give further concerts at various venues, including Melbourne, of which more later.

In January 1991 the great storm hit the upper North Shore. I was in Canberra at the time, playing bridge in the National Open Teams competition, and had decided to telephone home every day to make sure that everything was alright. My first call was at about seven o'clock in the evening of Monday, 21 January. But everything was not alright and I then learned of the storm which had devastated the area shortly after five o'clock that afternoon. Our house had been inundated with water after roof tiles had been smashed by falling trees from the property behind us, while all windows on the western and southern sides of the building had been demolished by hail. Two large gum trees occupied our back yard - and they didn't belong to us! I realised that I would have to return immediately, but Margaret was insistent that I was not to attempt the journey at night as there was every likelihood that I would be unable to negotiate a way to our home in the darkness. I imparted the bad news to the rest of the team and while they could probably have obtained a substitute locally they all lived on the North Shore themselves and were not averse to returning to their own homes. So after breakfast on the following morning we drove away from Gowrie, along Northbourne Avenue and onto the Federal Highway bound for Sydney. At Berrima we stopped for a break and a cup of tea, and the rest of the team sorrowfully wished me a happy birthday.

Arriving in Sydney I dropped the ladies off at their various homes, where damage had been negligible, then proceeded on a tortuous path through narrow side streets, eventually reaching home just before half past two. I was appalled at the damage I had seen in the area, where many houses and whole streets were covered with a conglomeration of tree trunks and branches. I was able to contact the insurance company late that afternoon, and having received their approval I arranged with one of the glass repairers which were operating throughout the worst-hit areas to replace the smashed glass in our windows. To our intense relief this was completed that afternoon. We then went for a drive around the area and were dumbfounded by what we saw. There were large numbers of houses with trees across and through their roofs. Some streets were impassable and in many places the State Emergency Service and other organisations were hard at work. All the shopping centres were in darkness and traffic lights did not operate, while at nightfall the whole area was in darkness. Many telephones were out of action, but we were among the fortunate ones who still had a telephone service.

Gradually the neighbourhood emerged from its state of shock and after licking its wounds commenced the long period of convalescence. For the first few days we had no electricity and made do with candles, kerosene lamps and a Primus lamp. For cooking we used a small Primus heater obligingly lent by a neighbour who had gas laid on and was not dependent on electricity. Then one day, without any warning, the power suddenly came on and life became much easier. Meanwhile a carpet layer had unfastened the wet carpet and had left it raised off the floor resting on various pots, pans, buckets and the like to give it a chance to dry out. During this drying period progress from

room to room was only possible with some difficulty and when the carpet had dried out we found that all this inconvenience had been for nothing as the carpet proved to be unusable. We now had to select replacement carpet which would harmonise with the undamaged carpet. A builder's quote was accepted for the repair of the roof and the replacement of the ruined ceiling. Our collection of gum trees spread over the back yard was removed, fences were repaired, and a new clothes hoist ordered to replace the existing hoist, now bearing a strong resemblance to a monkey puzzle. And so, little by little, our house resumed its normal appearance.

As a talking point the storm provided us with conversation material for months to come and we felt a certain sense of pride as members of the group of owners of storm-damaged homes. Of course our damage was slight compared with that of many people who had been obliged to demolish and rebuild. A year after the storm there was a reunion of storm victims which was well attended and many interesting stories were exchanged.

1991 saw us going north again. We spent the usual few days at the Surfers Paradise apartment before going on to Brisbane to visit Elaine and our other relations and friends there. We stayed for a few days with Elaine but also spent some time with our friends Geoff and Biddy Hocker at their holiday home in Buderim, then back we went to Elaine for another couple of days before commencing the return journey to Sydney.

Our 1992 holiday was planned to include two cultural highlights. The first of these required a stop at Canberra to see an exhibition of paintings entitled "Rubens and the Italian Renaissance" on display at the National Art Gallery. Here we realised what a great portrait painter Rubens was, although his painting of figures inclined very definitely towards misshapen bodies. We recalled our short visit to Liechtenstein in 1989, when we saw the Prince's collection of Rubens paintings in the Museum at Vaduz. From Canberra we drove on through Yass but diverged from the Hume Highway because I had hatched a plan to have a further search for Yeo Yeo, where Don Bradman spent the first two years of his life. We had attempted to locate it on a previous trip but without success. We drew into a park at the township of Wallendbeen and as the car came to a stop we were approached by a man in the yellow working dress of the State Emergency Service. To our surprise he offered us a cup of tea which we accepted with pleasure. We discovered that this arrangement was part of a campaign to encourage motorists to take a break every couple of hours to avoid the danger of driver-fatigue and its possible fatal consequences. I wandered over to their serving counter and asked one of the men if he was from the nearby town of Cootamundra. He and his assistant both answered in the affirmative so I then asked if they knew Yeo Yeo. One had not heard of it while the other had heard of it but that was all. Out of interest they asked if I was going there and my reply was to the effect that many years ago a baby had been born in Cootamundra and after a few days the mother had taken her child back home to Yeo Yeo. When the kid - to use my actual words - was two years old the whole family had moved to Bowral. "Oh, <u>that</u> kid," said one of the men, to which I replied, "Yes, <u>that</u> kid." Meanwhile the other, bemused by this conversation, just gaped at us, not being a Bradman fan, so we enlightened him. A detailed map of the area was then produced, showing exactly where the Yeo Yeo railway station was located. With mutual expressions of goodwill we drove on to the place shown on the map. Alas, there was no longer any station, and I realised that, no matter what Yeo Yeo had been in the past, today it was merely a district and not a village. So Yeo Yeo was laid to rest, as Coolibah had been a few years earlier.

Continuing on our somewhat devious path to Melbourne, we spent a day at Bendigo, where we had the unusual experience of a conducted tour down a gold mine. The mine was still operating commercially to a limited extent, but the two hundred feet level had been allocated to tourists and we spent an extremely informative couple of hours. We arrived at our South Yarra apartment and during our stay there did the usual round of visits, but probably the highlight was our evening at the Phantom of the Opera. This

much publicised show was very entertaining but I felt the "explosions" on the stage smacked too much of gimmickry. Nevertheless we had an enjoyable evening.

On our return journey we headed towards Dubbo for a second visit to the Western Plains Zoo, which is always worth seeing. Being able to drive round the zoo and take advantage of the many parking areas caters in particular for those averse to excessive walking. For the more energetic there is also the option of hiring a bicycle.

For the following year, 1993, we made no plans for a joint holiday, as Margaret had expressed a wish to go to London and spend some time with Julie if this was convenient to her. Julie had no hesitation in confirming this proposal and on 20 March 1993 Wendy and I saw Margaret off at Kingsford Smith Airport. Julie had rearranged her room at Shooter's Hill Road in Blackheath and found space to install a bed borrowed for the occasion, as well as sufficient room for Margaret's belongings.

Margaret thoroughly enjoyed her stay in London. She and Julie visited a number of places of interest, notably Leeds Castle in Kent and Hatfield House in Hertfordshire. She also saw a performance of Phantom of the Opera, where Julie was working as a dresser, and after the show met the cast, including the principals. Margaret got on well with the other tenants at Shooter's Hill Road and was able to take a group of them, including Julie, to dinner at nearby Greenwich. However all good things must come to an end and on 7 June Margaret arrived back in Australia and was glad to be home again. During her absence Wendy had looked after our home and had done the cooking. We had gone for occasional drives at weekends, once to Berrima and Bowral and on another occasion to Katoomba. We returned from Katoomba through Kurrajong and stopped at Windsor to inspect a house in North Street originally owned in his later years by our First Fleet ancestor, Henry Kable.

In November 1993 we were obliged to put down our little cross-terrier Honey. She had been our loyal little companion and watchdog for over fourteen years and her death left quite a gap in the family. This gap was filled in a most unusual fashion. A neighbour's cat, which had previously shown a desire for our company but had been kept very much at a distance by Honey, now commenced to spend a large part of his time with us. Not for food, however, for we didn't give him any, but for the affection he gave and received in our home. Eventually he was badly mauled in one of his frequent skirmishes with the local wildlife and succumbed to a severe infection. He was put down, to our great regret, in December 1996.

For our 1994 holiday we headed north again to Surfers Paradise and Brisbane. In planning this holiday we decided to take Wendy with us as far as Port Macquarie, where we would book into a motel for two nights. This would give Wendy a full day with us at Port Macquarie and on the following morning we would continue northwards while Wendy would return to Sydney by bus. A change of plan became necessary when I discovered that I had omitted to pack some essential items. After much thought I decided that a return to Sydney was unavoidable and Margaret agreed with me. Consequently Wendy returned to Sydney by car instead of by bus, and we didn't hear a word of complaint. Back in Sydney we rectified the omissions in our packing and after a quick snack recommenced our drive north. All this extra travel meant that our arrival at Surfers Paradise was delayed by one day but otherwise things proceeded as planned. We had twelve days of complete relaxation in our apartment at Surfers Paradise and then drove on to Elaine's home in the Brisbane suburb of Kenmore. During our stay with Elaine we visited a number of relations and friends and paid an evening visit to Southbank, the former site of Expo 88. The time came to say goodbye to Elaine and commence our return journey to Sydney, which we reached on the afternoon of the next day.

In March 1995 Wendy decided that she wanted to live in Brisbane. This city had always held an attraction for her and she had in fact spent some time there on a previous occasion. She travelled to Brisbane by bus with as many of her belongings as she could manage and has lived there ever since.

It was Melbourne's turn for a holiday visit in 1995. As on a number

of previous occasions we spent the first night at Canberra, and drove on to Albury the following day. The third day saw us arriving at Aston Apartments in South Yarra, which had now become our favourite venue for Melbourne, and we wasted no time in transferring our luggage to the unit. During our stay we received dinner invitations from the Florences and the Hannahs, while we ourselves took Allen Bath to lunch. When in Melbourne we had always managed to visit Allen and Marcia, but Marcia, who was my cousin, had died some months previously. We had always liked Allen and were reluctant to let our friendship drop.

Our sightseeing this year amounted to visiting the Dandenongs, Southgate, and the zoo and mansion at Werribee Park. These were interesting, but the zoo cannot compare with its counterpart at Dubbo.

We left Melbourne by the Westgate Freeway and proceeded along the Princes Highway and then the Surf Coast Highway, arriving at Anglesea in time for lunch. This was taken at the Anglesea Golf Club, where we enjoyed the spectacle of large numbers of kangaroos feeding on the lush grass of the fairways. We stopped overnight at Apollo Bay and the next morning commenced our drive through the Otway National Park. We turned off onto the road leading to Cape Otway but, much to our surprise, were informed that access to the cape would not be permitted for a couple of hours. Disappointed and annoyed, we drove back through the park and eventually arrived at the spectacular limestone formations of the Twelve Apostles, Loch Ard Gorge and London Bridge. We had seen them before, of course, but they never fail to impress with their magnificence, while the stirring tale of the two survivors of the Loch Ard shipwreck never fails to interest.

We stayed overnight at Port Fairy and the next day drove on to Mount Gambier. This city, famous for its blue lake, is in South Australia, and we soon had our timetable upset when we forgot that we were now in a different time zone. After seeing all that Mount Gambier had to offer we drove back into Victoria, reaching Halls Gap in the Grampians by the late afternoon. Here the weather turned bad, so we cut short our stay and next morning commenced our drive across western Victoria along roads which were up to a foot under water. Here we seemed to be driving through a lake, following the car ahead and hoping he knew what he was doing. Conditions improved as we approached Bendigo, but the rain continued all the way to Shepparton, where we spent the night. The continual rain made me anxious to get across the Murray River as soon as possible, but when we reached it the following morning we saw that the water level was still quite low and there was nothing to fear. During the day we found ourselves leaving the rain-affected area and we arrived home without further problems.

Early in the following year, on 22 January, I reached my eightieth birthday and a celebration was planned for the occasion. To our great joy Julie was able to come over from London to be part of this function, and Wendy arrived from Brisbane. We had a small family dinner at our favourite restaurant, Chez Rene, to mark the occasion, but the big party was timed for the following Saturday. The celebration was a distinct success and a good time was had by everyone. I received numerous gifts, mainly books, and it took me a long time to write all the letters of appreciation - and longer still to read all the books!

While Julie was in Sydney she took the opportunity to visit all her friends, but we had our own ideas of entertaining her during her stay. Accordingly I took some holiday leave from Talbots and we motored up to Surfers Paradise where we rented a two-bedroom unit at Beachpoint Apartments, our favourite holiday home when on the Gold Coast. From here we were able to visit my sister and Margaret's aunts, and to see Wendy again in her own habitat. On our return trip to Sydney we dropped Julie off at Lismore, where she was to spend a few days with an old school chum, Andrea Loquet. When Julie joined us again in Sydney she had more old friends to see, but her allotted time in Australia was running out and on 9 March 1996 we drove her to Kingsford Smith Airport for her return flight. It had been great to see her again and I was saddened by the thought that it could be the last time

I would see my daughter.

Later in 1996 Margaret and I received an invitation to attend the marriage of Elaine's grand-daughter Alicia with Stavros Amarandos. We decided to make the journey to Brisbane by car and I planned to take two days each way for the trip, with three days free in Brisbane, one of which would be reserved for Wendy. We stayed with Elaine and were delighted to see her and my Brisbane relatives again. We spent a day with Wendy as arranged and also visited Linley and Lucas Tooth, Margaret's aunt and uncle. We thoroughly enjoyed the wedding and a couple of days later started on the drive back to Sydney.

Towards the end of 1996 I began to wonder whether at my age I was still welcome at Talbots. After much thought I indicated to them that I was considering retirement, and suggested 20 February 1997 as my last day at the office. I had selected this date as Margaret and I had planned to take a holiday in Melbourne so as to be there for the Three Tenors concert on 1 March 1997 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The partners at Talbots accepted this date as my final day at work.

Before I left Talbots I completed the lengthy term of sixty-five years in the workforce, having started work at the Commonwealth Bank in Rockhampton on 3 February 1932. Now, on 20 February 1997, I was saying goodbye to Talbots. Strange to say it was not the emotional event that it might have been, as by then Margaret and I had our minds fully occupied in preparing for our Melbourne trip and thinking about the concert we would attend while there. The enjoyment we had experienced in watching videotapes of the Three Tenors' Rome and Los Angeles concerts, and the fascination of the story of the fight by Carreras against leukaemia, made us realise that we just couldn't let these famous artists give a concert in Australia without being there to see it.

And so, after almost nineteen years in my second career, I said goodbye to Talbots. When I joined their staff in 1978 all records were handwritten, and I now realise how fortunate I was to have the opportunity to move into the computer age with the firm. I had found the accountancy profession to be absorbing, rewarding and never boring. What more can anyone ask of life? I was aware that I was going to miss work at the office, but felt that there might be compensations. With mixed feelings I caught the train home.

Opposite top:

On my sixty-fifth birthday the family helped me celebrate with a dinner at Chez Rene Restaurant at Willoughby. Because Margaret took the photograph she was regrettably unable to be in the picture.

Opposite bottom:

This is my handiwork painted on the reverse of the Crescent House name sign in Gympie in 1938 (page 19). Forty-eight years afterwards, Margaret, Elaine and I were returning from a motor trip embracing Coolibah, Emu Park and Rockhampton (page 68), and we called at Crescent House to introduce ourselves to its current owners. There was now a new sign, but the old sign had been kept because of the unusual display on the back. The main lettering had managed to some extent to survive the ravages of time but the smaller printing at each end had long since disappeared. We were glad to be able to satisfy the curiosity of the owners with a brief history of this interesting relic.

TIPPLERS

Opposite top:

My sister Elaine watches the camera while Margaret is preoccupied with Elaine's dog, Jasmine. Elaine was then living at Fig Tree Pocket, but later moved to Kenmore, another Brisbane suburb.

On the left is a photograph of me in my first car, technically described as a Singer 9 h.p. dual-purpose roadster. In the background can be seen one of Gympie's picturesque mullock heaps, dating from the days when Gympie was one of Australia's major gold-mining centres.

Opposite bottom:

My eightieth birthday, on 22 January 1996, was the occasion for quite a party (page 76). Here the family - Julie, Wendy and Margaret - gather round to give me support as I prepare to cut the birthday cake.

When it was announced that the Three Tenors would give one of their world-famous concerts in Australia we immediately decided that we would have to see it if at all possible. The concert was to be presented at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 1 March 1997 and we arranged our holiday to be in Melbourne at that time (page 78).

Although featured in the advertisement reproduced here, illness prevented James Levine from conducting, and his place was capably taken by Marco Armiliato. The weather that night was ideal, with not a cloud in the sky,.

The concert certainly lived up to our expectations, but there were complaints from people seated in some parts of the arena about echoes from the sound system. However our position in B Reserve in the Great Southern Stand was completely satisfactory even though quite a distance from the stage. We had, of course, realised that this would be the case and the binoculars we had brought came in useful. As we made our way back to our apartment we agreed that the concert was a major event in our lives.

MATTHIAS HOFFMANN

PRESENTS

CARRERAS DOMINGO PAVAROTTI WITH LEVINE

THE 3 TENORS™

IN CONCERT 1996/97

ANOTHER TIBOR RUDAS PRODUCTION

PROUDLY SPONSORED IN AUSTRALIA

MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

JOSE CARRERAS, PLACIDO DOMINGO & LUCIANO PAVAROTTI will perform their only Australian Concert at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on **SATURDAY MARCH 1ST, 1997.**

Brought together by impressario Matthias Hoffmann, The Three Tenors will reunite for a spectacular world tour consisting of five concerts only, which will see them perform together for the first time under the baton of Maestro James Levine.

The Concert, which will be two and half hours long, will see the Tenors perform a unique mixture of material, drawn from the 1990 Rome and 1994 Los Angeles concerts, along with new material, which will remain a closely guarded secret until the tour begins.

BOOKING INFORMATION & CONDITIONS OF SALE

- The Three Tenors will perform only one Concert in Australia.
- The concert takes place on Saturday 1st March, 1997 at 8.00pm
- The venue is the Melbourne Cricket Ground.
- Bookings are now being accepted by mail ONLY
- Bookings will be processed in order of receipt until sold out!
- Tickets will be mailed no later than 30th June, 1996
- Tickets are not refundable or exchangeable
- If adverse weather conditions, concert will be postponed to Sunday 2nd March
- If concert is cancelled, tickets will be refunded less the $7 booking and handling fee per ticket
- Producers are not liable for any other costs

MAIL BOOKINGS

CUT OUT COUPON AND MAIL TO:
THE THREE TENORS PTY. LTD.,
LOCKED BAG NO. 5
A'BECKETT STREET POST OFFICE
MELBOURNE, VIC 8006
REMEMBER TO COMPLETE THE CREDIT CARD DETAILS OR ATTACH YOUR CHEQUE

The Three Tenors choose to stay at the new Crown Towers

PRESENTED IN AUSTRALIA BY KEVIN JACOBSEN AND MICHAEL EDGLEY

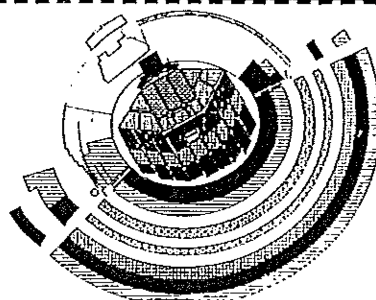
MAIL BOOKINGS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

TICKET PRICES:

VIP	$1357.00
GOLD	$757.00
SILVER	$482.00
A RES	$357.00
B RES	$257.00
C RES	$192.00
D RES	$102.00

Includes booking/handling fee of $7.00

SEATING PLAN
Diagrammatic only/not to scale



BOOKING REQUEST PLEASE BOOK ME THE FOLLOWING SEATS:

AREA	NO. OF SEATS	X AT	$ PER SEAT	= EQUALS	$ TOTAL PRICE

IF MY FIRST CHOICE IS UNAVAILABLE, PLEASE BOOK ME:

AREA	NO. OF SEATS	X AT	$ PER SEAT	= EQUALS	$ TOTAL PRICE

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I AM ENCLOSING A CHEQUE MADE PAYABLE TO "THE THREE TENORS" OR CHARGE MY CREDIT CARD.

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ BANKCARD ☐ DINERS ☐ AMEX AMEX SECURITY NO ☐☐☐☐

CARD NUMBER: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

SIGNATURE ______________________ EXPIRY DATE ______

In making this application, I agree with the Conditions of Sale

TT3/5

CHAPTER XV

WINDING DOWN

The first day of my retirement dawned bright and clear. It felt strange not to be getting up at six o'clock to get ready for work, but I still had things to do before our holiday departure the following morning. The day passed quietly enough and we did some of our packing so as to get a reasonably early start next day. This we were able to do, and by mid-morning had reached Bowral, where we took the opportunity to visit the Bradman Museum, now in its new premises. We had lunch at a roadhouse on the Hume Highway, and spent that night in a motel in Queanbeyan. After breakfast the next morning we saw an exhibition of paintings, "Paris in the late 19th Century", at the National Gallery. Painters whose work was displayed included Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Degas, Cezanne and Toulouse-Lautrec.

We reached the Dog on the Tucker Box in time for lunch, which we had at the restaurant, and then drove on to stay at Albury for the night. The next day saw us on the road again and by mid-afternoon we had arrived at Aston Apartments in Melbourne.

The big event in Melbourne, of course, was the concert. On Saturday evening we took a taxi there, knowing that parking would be impossible, and after some enquiry located our seats. which were well up in the Great Southern Stand. We looked out over the ground and were impressed by the transformation which had taken place. A large stage had been erected to house the singers and the orchestra, while a section further back had been prepared for a choir. Columns on either side added a Grecian touch, with masses of flowers and some palm trees as further decoration. On each side of the stage, but at some distance from it, a large screen had been erected which would show selected close-ups of the performers. The playing field itself was covered with rows of seats, with different colours for the differently priced sections. The tenors sang with the elegance and perfection we had come to expect from them, and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra was up to its usual high standard. In the closing stages of the concert all three tenors donned Akubra hats and sang Waltzing Matilda, which brought a special round of applause. The next day we read in the newspapers that some of the audience were dissatisfied with the sound. This is probably inevitable with such a large venue, but we certainly had no complaint to make, and as we left for home we felt that this was one of the musical highlights of our lives. We were able to watch the same concert on television a few nights later, and when we arrived back in Sydney Judy Ireland presented us with the recording she had taped at our request, so now we can see a repeat of this concert whenever we wish.

While in Melbourne we had lunch with Neil and Marion Florence, and later with Allen Bath. When we left on our roundabout return journey we drove first to Drysdale, near Geelong, where we had lunch with the Hannahs, who were now living in that area. We then drove to Anglesea, where we again saw its well-known kangaroos, and then on to Lorne for the night. The next morning was spent in getting across country to the Grampians, where we booked in for the night. Our previous visits to this area had been marred by heavy rain, but on this occasion the weather took pity on us and the skies were cloudless. We allotted a whole day to visiting the various attractions and

then set a course for Sydney, arriving there a couple of days later.

Back home at Pymble, I was now a person of leisure, but this situation changed when Talbots invited me to return to work on a part-time basis. I decided that such an arrangement would suit me and we agreed on a 3-day week with working time totalling about twenty hours. It would also suit some of my older clients, who had been disturbed by the thought that I would no longer be handling their accounts and tax returns. I soon settled down to this new routine and found it to my liking.

When I am not at the office my time is mainly occupied in reading, doing work round the house and, at weekends, in playing bridge. I make a point of allotting some of my time to reading French books. French and Latin had been among my best subjects at school and when Julie and Wendy were studying French at P.L.C. I undertook some revision work so as to be able to give them help when needed. After their French studies came to an end I felt that it would be regrettable to lose this knowledge of the language - meagre though it was - which I had built up with so much effort and I continued my study by the simple process of reading French books. Initially these were of beginners' standard, being mainly for high school students, but eventually I graduated to books written for the French public and I have continued reading these on a regular basis. This activity certainly paid dividends on our visits to France and Switzerland in 1984 and 1989.

The story of my life would not be complete without a mention of my activities in the field of music. I really don't know what prompted me to commence singing lessons, but it was in Rockhampton, about 1937, with Dr. R.E.Streeten. I was, however, a "problem child" as far as singing was concerned, and indeed remained so despite the efforts of various singing teachers. I had come to the conclusion that learning singing was like climbing a mountain backwards; you discovered what you should be doing only after you had done it! In my case my voice remained "back in my throat" despite my mentors' attempts to get it placed in what singing teachers describe as the "mask of the face". When I was taking lessons from Bernardo Albini in London during the War he was always complaining, "You go me from the mask!" I got on well with Maestro Albini and was frequently invited to his home to make up a four at bridge. My bridge technique, I regret to say, showed far more improvement than my voice production, and I returned to Australia with the strong suspicion that my singing lessons were not producing any worthwhile result. But hope springs eternal in the human breast and I persisted in taking lessons up to the time of my marriage. Since then I have continued to sing around the house and I'm afraid I am a very noisy person in this respect. I freely and with much gratitude place on record my tribute to Margaret's forbearance. Over recent years I have become aware that my voice was gradually coming "out of my throat" into a more forward position. This change, excessively slow, is still far from complete, but the fact that there is now some discernible progress gives me a degree of satisfaction, and I continue to make a lot of noise at home and place a further strain on Margaret's patience.

Playing the piano has provided me with pleasant relaxation despite a low level of ability and I now content myself with playing by ear, which means that I decide in my mind the harmonies I prefer and then translate them into notes on the piano. In addition, over the years I have composed a number of songs and piano pieces which I fondly imagine have some merit, an opinion not shared with me by anyone else. My most ambitious project was a ballet in five movements and I submitted it for a competition. I got a courteous little note from the judges but, alas, no award was made in this event.

And what of my wartime friends? There is an old belief that friendships developed during the hardships of war are the greatest friendships, and in the main I have found this to be true. John Hinton's father welcomed me to his home on my return from overseas, before I went north to Brisbane. John had been a good friend in England, but we lost touch after I resumed civilian life in Queensland. However when Margaret and I came to live in Sydney in

late 1959 the old friendship was resumed and the two families spent many pleasant evenings together. John died suddenly and most unexpectedly a few years later but we still see Marie from time to time.

Of those five young men from the Commonwealth Bank in Gympie who joined the Services that day in 1940, only Arch Girle and I returned. Arch left the Bank and took up cane-farming in northern Queensland. George Harvey had been a good cricketer and tennis player and had won the Gympie table tennis doubles championship with me in 1940, while Ray Thurecht was an excellent pianist who introduced me to the fascination of musical theory. Bert Austin's service career was in the Army, and I have not since heard any details. They were all fine young men and would have put their lives to good use if extra time had been allowed to them.

Frank Brosnahan was from New Zealand and consequently more difficult to keep in touch with. Nevertheless whenever he passed through Sydney on his way to overseas destinations, which occurred surprisingly often, we usually managed to spend some time together. When his overseas travels petered out we lost touch to some degree, but whenever he has the occasion to come to Sydney we have lunch together. We intend to keep in touch, even if only by correspondence.

My closest wartime friend was undoubtedly Bob Thorn. We had been at the same R.A.F. Stations throughout our stay in Britain and have been able to see each other occasionally after our return to Australia. I was delighted to be groomsman at his marriage to Joan. After Margaret and I came to live in Sydney we still managed to see Bob from time to time whenever we went to Brisbane on holidays. The news of Joan's death in late 1992 came as a shock to us.

Percy Leivesley was a very close friend from pre-war days but we entirely lost touch when I left Rockhampton in 1938. In recent years I have seen Percy again and now that he and his wife Ethel have moved to Brisbane we shall be able to visit them on future Queensland holidays. Neville Taylor was a close friend both before and after the War, but our paths never crossed while we were in the Services. I had been in Britain for over three years during the War while Nev found himself going to Canada, where he spent considerable time.

When Margaret and I paid a visit to some of my wartime airfields in England in 1982 it helped to bring back many memories of wartime friendships and these memories have been further revived while researching this book. It is a fitting note on which to end the story of my life.

EPILOGUE

Now that all the events which I have described are behind me I have time to ponder over the changes which have taken place during my lifetime. When I was a small boy nothing ever changed. The standard means of individual transport was by bicycle and remained so. Our neighbours at Emu Park were well-to-do and owned a T-model Ford. Later my aunt Irene bought an A-model Ford, which I learnt to drive when I was old enough. Air transport had not yet been developed, but I remember when Harold Fraser gave "joy-rides" at Emu Park to various paying customers, taking off and landing in a nearby field with a reasonably level surface. The aircraft was either a Tiger Moth or one of its predecessors, the same type of machine as that in which I had my first flying lessons in the Air Force in 1941.

In the home all food was hand-prepared. There were no refrigerators and even ice-chests were a luxury. All bread and milk was delivered, - and there was no such thing as flavoured milk or sliced bread. Bread was delivered unwrapped and the milk arrived in a specially built horse-drawn vehicle with a small tank installed in the back to hold the bulk milk. The milkman opened a tap and filled a billycan with the amount of milk required by each customer. Septic tanks and sewerage had yet to be developed and a "night-cart" made the rounds once a week to remove the pan and leave an empty pan in its place, and to refill with sawdust the box kept in the earth closet for that purpose. At the Emu Park school, a primary school, there was no such thing as an exercise book. We used slates and cleaned them from time to time with a damp sponge brought to school in a small metal container.

Few people had radios, but gramophones, and to a certain extent pianos, were fairly common. Our first radio was a crystal set which I made myself, and which had earphones instead of a loud speaker. To receive a broadcast you had to explore the surface of a special crystal with a length of coiled wire known as a cat's whisker, and when you found a contact which gave good reception you left it at that. Gramophones were powered by a spring which was wound each time before playing, and the tone arm, containing a needle which had to be changed after each record, was carefully lowered on to a record travelling at the breakneck speed of 78 r.p.m. Crystal sets and gramophones were standard items of equipment in any home. The invention of the recordchanger brought a new era in the enjoyment of recorded music. A stack of records, usually four or five, would be placed on the changer, which would then drop them one by one onto the turntable as the previous record came to an end and the tone arm automatically swung out of the way. This device became obsolete in its turn with the advent of the long-playing record, with a speed of 33 r.p.m.

At the Bank, where I commenced work in February 1932, all records were hand-written or typed, but the office also boasted three adding machines. They were true to their name in that they did not subtract, but delivered a long roll of paper with the amounts and a total. There was no such thing as a photocopier, a calculator, a word processor or a computer. Banking hours were from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays. In those days all writing was with a pen and an inkwell. Blotting paper was used to dry the writing before turning the page. Fountain pens, which contained a refillable ink reservoir, became very popular, although I preferred the hard steel nib which I normally used at work. The ballpoint pen did not appear until after World War II. When a letter or other document was typed the typist as a matter of course produced one or two carbon copies

as required. If more copies were needed a stencil was cut on a special type of paper and then inserted into a machine which produced as many copies as desired.

The advent of talking pictures came when I was still at school but they certainly involved a giant leap in sophistication. The movies, or non-talking pictures, provided conversation by means of sub-titles and they all possessed the distinctive feature that any walking by the actors was at about three times the normal speed. One got used to this little bit of unreality and accepted it. As the picture proceeded a sort of descriptive musical accompaniment, usually on a piano, provided a pleasant background.

Long distance train travel had its unique features. On the run south from Rockhampton the train always stopped at the village of Bororen so that passengers could appease their hunger with the famous Bororen pies - very tasty they were - sold by vendors walking up and down alongside the train. In addition trains stopped for about three quarters of an hour at selected railway stations for meals. At these stations the railway refreshment rooms provided excellent hot breakfasts, lunches and dinners. The staff did a really first-class job in feeding practically a whole train load of people in the short time available. One of the stops on the train going south from Brisbane was at Coffs Harbour. Here the station was only a short distance from the beach and some enthusiasts used to forego their meal for the pleasure of a swim. They would then rejoin the train wet and covered with sand, and probably hungry as well.

Seasonal celebrations were strictly family affairs. You never went out to a restaurant for a Christmas dinner and there were no Carols by Candlelight. Small gifts were exchanged on Christmas morning and presents were given for birthdays. The commercialisation now so widespread had not yet developed and there were no such things as Christmas and birthday cards. On Mothers Day we each wore a chrysanthemum to church and that was all. Fathers Day had not yet put in appearance.

What sort of books did boys read in those days? I was an avid reader from an early age and I still have a book, "The Son of Tarzan", the fourth in the Tarzan series, on the flyleaf of which Mother had written, "Kenneth Ross, Xmas 1923". Like most boys I couldn't read enough Tarzan books. During my schooldays I became acquainted with what might be called classical boys' books. My favourites were Westward Ho!, Windsor Castle, Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea, The Swiss Family Robinson, The Arabian Nights and, of course, that perennial favourite, Treasure Island.

And what of the future? I have already done all I can for the family and apart from caring for Margaret my primary aims are purely personal. I would like to continue at Talbots as long as I am able to maintain my existing standard of work. At bridge I am proceeding steadily through the various grades of National Master, but my ultimate goal of Life Master is still many years away. This striving for higher grades provides a constant purpose in my life and for this I am grateful. The absence of a purpose in life would remove the savour from living, for striving towards achievement is part of life itself.

We all ponder over what the future may hold. For me, will my remaining years be years of achievement and fulfilment? Quien sabe?

APPENDIX I

THE LIFE STORY OF MY MOTHER, AMY BEATRICE WILLS

In January 1832 Emmanuel Wills, of Axminster, England, married Frances Clapcott Bartlett. Emmanuel, who was a publisher by trade, was born on 5 January 1800, and was some three and a half years younger than his wife. Frances Bartlett was a talented girl who could write poetry and paint. She came from a large family, having four brothers and six sisters. She in turn had six children, and the fifth child, Samuel Joseph, with whom we are most concerned, was born on 26 July 1840.

While a boy Samuel became a chorister in Exeter Cathedral. When his schooling was completed he wished to become a doctor but at that time doctors made only a mediocre living whereas veterinary surgeons were doing very well. Accordingly Samuel was sent to Edinburgh University, where he qualified as a veterinary surgeon. On 29 March 1864, shortly before his twenty-fourth birthday, Samuel Wills married Agnes Henderson Dick and their first child, Herbert William, was born at Blandford on 26 December 1864. Shortly after the birth of the child Mrs. Wills contracted tuberculosis. At that time her uncle lived in Brisbane, Australia, and he wrote to her suggesting that the Brisbane climate would be better for her complaint than the cold moist air of England. So in 1866 we find Mr. and Mrs. Wills and their child on the high seas on their way to Australia. While still at sea, on 8 August of that year, their second child, Ella Frances, was born.

In due course the family of four reached Brisbane, only to find that Mrs. Wills's uncle had died some three weeks previously. Samuel Wills's efforts to find employment, either at his profession or otherwise, were unsuccessful and shortly afterwards he took his family north to the little town of Gladstone, where with the help of Kanaka labour he established a saltworks beside the tidal flats near Barney Point, a mile or two from the town. He built a hut with his own hands and roofed it with bark. Here the family lived in primitive conditions and here a third child, Leonard, was born on 14 December 1868. By this time Agnes Wills was a very sick woman and when her child died after only sixteen days her health continued to deteriorate. She died on 18 August in the following year, leaving her husband with two children in his care.

It was about this time that the saltworks commenced to be a paying proposition. Additional capital had been necessary and this had been provided by Campbell Praed and another local man. Improving circumstances permitted Samuel Wills to build a house near the saltworks. This house was for occupation by his new wife-to-be and on 1 March 1872 he married Jane Ann Harvey. Jane Harvey was born in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, on 4 May 1848. When she was twelve the family migrated to Australia and when she first came to know Samuel Wills she was a teacher at her father's school in Gladstone. On 12 August in the following year her first child, Amy Beatrice, was born, and a couple of years afterwards another child, Arthur Ernest.

While young Arthur was still a baby an event took place which had far-reaching consequences for the Wills family. The government removed the duty on imported salt and the saltworks at Gladstone was forced out of business. There was no possibility of alternative employment in Gladstone and Samuel Wills took his family to Brisbane, where he rented a house in Stanley Street,

backing on to the river and just below Victoria Bridge. Here he studied for, and succeeded in passing, the final examination for teachers. This enabled him to obtain a position as a classified teacher and for some months he taught at the Normal School in Edward Street, just above the Adelaide Street intersection. Later he was transferred to the school at Belmont, a Brisbane suburb, and as occupancy of the school residence went with the position it represented some improvement in their living conditions. On moving into the residence they found it disgustingly dirty and overrun with cockroaches and other vermin. Arthur was still a baby and when he contracted dysentery it was attributed to the condition of the house. Arthur recovered, but the strain of moving house, cleaning the new home, and caring for the sick child affected Mrs. Wills's heart, and although she lived to a good old age she never fully recovered her strength.

At the age of four Amy Wills commenced school at Belmont. However the following year, 1878, saw Samuel Wills transferred to Westwood, a village some thirty miles from Rockhampton, and here he remained for twenty-three years until his retirement. A further four children were born in Westwood - two girls, Irene and Ethel, and two boys, Percy and Mervyn. The children attended the school under their father's tuition and the family lived in the nearby schoolhouse. Mr. Wills became popular and respected in the district. His medical knowledge acquired as a veterinary surgeon became invaluable to him and he became an unofficial doctor and dentist to the locality, setting broken limbs, extracting teeth, treating snake-bite, etc. Herbert, and later Amy, studied to become teachers. Herbert completed his studies and having become a classified teacher was appointed assistant teacher at the Westwood School. Amy passed the first examination but then decided that she did not, after all, wish to become a teacher. Arthur and Irene both passed the Junior Public examination and Arthur was articled to a Mr. Whittall, the principal Rockhampton dentist.

Both Amy and Irene showed particular talent, although in different fields. Quite early in life Amy had given indications of more than average musical ability and by the age of twenty-one she had become a capable pianist. How far she would have risen in this direction is hard to say, but an unfortunate accident in which she lost the tip of one of her fingers put a stop to all thoughts of a musical career. She commenced teaching the piano and was in some demand as a pianist for local dances.

When Samuel Wills retired from the teaching profession in 1902 he bought a block of land in Rockhampton and erected a house which he named "Duranta". On completion he moved in with his wife and other members of the family. Amy became a trainee nurse at nearby Hillcrest Hospital and later, when she had acquired enough experience, did some private nursing to supplement her meagre income. In or about 1907 a certain Alfred Ross, living in the Dawson Valley, had developed a carbuncle in the back of his neck and had gone to Hillcrest Hospital for treatment. Here he met Amy Wills and the couple fell in love. They were married in 1908, the ceremony taking place at Duranta, with the wedding breakfast being held downstairs. Amy and Alfred spent their honeymoon at Greenmount Boarding House in Tweed Heads. To travel from Rockhampton to Tweed Heads was no easy matter in those days as the railway to Rockhampton had not then been completed and a couple of rivers had to be crossed by boat.

Amy Wills (my mother, as the reader will have realised) had visited the Ross homestead, Mimosa Vale in the Dawson Valley, before her marriage. It is probable that she met my paternal grandmother, who died in the same year. Mrs. Ross had been born Elvina Adelaide Kable and was the grand-daughter of the First Fleet convict couple, Henry Kable and Susannah Holmes, whose story is told elsewhere in this book.

The details of my mother's married life can be gleaned from my own life story. She continued in excellent health until well into her eighties, when she broke her hip as the result of a fall at a shop in the Brisbane suburb of Sherwood. From then on she was troubled with arthritis, but could still make occasional journeys to Sydney to spend some time with us. When her

arthritis grew worse she moved into a nursing home in Clayfield, a Brisbane suburb. Elaine, then living at Kingaroy, took tremendous trouble to locate a suitable place, but eventually one was found. Here Elaine and I were both able to make visits to our mother from time to time.

Finally, in 1968, at the age of ninety-four years, Mother was laid to rest, and truly it may be said of her, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

APPENDIX II

THE KABLE STORY

In 1783 Henry Cabell, a young man of twenty-one years, together with his father and a neighbour, were convicted at the Assizes in Thetford, in the county of Norfolk, of stealing a large quantity of goods from a shop in nearby Aldburgh and were sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out on the two older members of the trio, but for young Henry it was commuted to life imprisonment. As an inmate of the gaol at Norwich he met Susannah Holmes, also convicted of stealing, and the young couple fell in love.

In 1787 a baby was born, and shortly afterwards Susannah was selected for transportation to Botany Bay. Henry applied for permission to marry her but this was refused. In due course the warder John Simpson escorted Susannah and her child to Plymouth to board the Charlotte. However the captain of the Charlotte refused to accept the child on the grounds that the transportation order was for Susannah only and made no mention of the child. Susannah had no option but to go on board and John Simpson was left quite literally holding the baby.

Simpson appears to have been a man of great compassion and determination because he immediately journeyed to London and succeeded in obtaining an audience with the Home Secretary, Lord Sydney. Lord Sydney was also a man of compassion and on hearing Simpson's story he made two orders. Firstly, the child was to accompany the mother to Botany Bay and secondly, Henry Cabell was also to be transported, and in the same fleet, although not necessarily in the same ship.

This engaging story attracted some publicity in England, and donations were made towards helping the young couple in their new life. The money was used to buy items that they were likely to need and these were placed in the care of the captain of one of the ships. Not surprisingly they disappeared during the long voyage and later Henry Cabell, who seems to have been a determined young man, brought an action against the captain responsible - and won it! The equivalent of the missing items was finally handed to Henry Cabell.

On 10 February 1788 five couples were married in the colony's first wedding ceremony and among them were Henry Cabell and Susannah Holmes. They survived the difficult years of the colony, and in 1791 received a pardon. Henry, who had previously been an overseer in the colony, was now appointed Chief Constable, a position which carried with it a modest residence (of sorts). It was about this time that the spelling of his name was changed to Kable, but as he could neither read nor write the change could well have been the fortuitous result of a mistake by someone else. The site of his residence when Chief Constable is now occupied by the Kable Restaurant in the Regent Hotel in George Street. Later Henry shared in various business ventures with prominent businessmen of Sydney, including James Underwood. In his declining years he lived at North Street in Windsor and is remembered by Kable Street in that city. He died in 1846 and his tombstone can be seen in St. Matthew's churchyard.

In 1855 Henry's grand-daughter, Elvina Adelaide Kable, daughter of Nathaniel Kable, married John Hay Mackenzie Ross at Richmond, and her sister Agnes married John McLean. Both men came from the Dawson Valley in Central

Queensland and returned to their cattle stations with their young brides. It must have been a daunting experience for these young girls, slightly alleviated by the fact that the sisters lived reasonably close to each other.

Elvina had a number of children, one of whom was my father, and the certificate of his birth records the fact that Agnes McLean, Elvina's sister, was present at the birth. The Ross family home was at Mimosa Vale station, some twenty miles or so from Coolibah, and when Mother visited my father's family during the year before her marriage it was probably while Elvina was still alive. Elvina died in 1907, at the age of seventy-five.

APPENDIX III

AIR FORCE FLYING HOURS

AIRCRAFT TYPE	DAY FLYING			NIGHT FLYING		
	Dual	Solo or 1st Pilot	2nd Pilot	Dual	Solo or 1st Pilot	2nd Pilot
De Havilland DH 82 Tiger Moth	31.45	21.40		2.45	0.10	
De Havilland DH 93 Moth Minor	1.10					
Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Wackett Trainer	6.40	1.25				
Airspeed Oxford	103.30	744.15	21.35	20.55	240.05	
Miles Magister	8.25	20.15				
Vickers-Armstrong Wellington			0.40			
Bristol Blenheim V	6.25	8.00	0.25	5.50	6.10	0.50
De Havilland Mosquito	8.10	71.10		1.00	22.40	
Avro Anson		4.30				
Total hours	166.05	871.15	22.40	30.30	269.05	0.50

SUMMARY

Day Flying	1060.00
Night Flying	300.25
Total Flying	1360.25 hours

Note: The above times do not include 15.45 hours as passenger.

APPENDIX IV

SCHOLASTIC RECORD

State Scholarship Examination, May 1928 — 67.7%

Junior Public Examination, November 1930

Subject	Grade	Subject	Grade
English	C	Arithmetic	B
French	A	Algebra	A
Latin	A	Geometry	A
Physics	B	History	Fail
Chemistry	A	Geography	Fail

Senior Public Examination, November 1931

Subject	Grade	Subject	Grade
English	C	Mathematics A	C
French	B	Mathematics B	C
Latin	C	Chemistry	B

Intermediate Latin — Pass

Bachelor of Commerce Pass Degree at Queensland University, Brisbane

Year	Subject	Result
1947	Banking, Currency and Exchange	Distinction
1948	Economics I	Pass
	Accounting I	Distinction
	Economic History	Pass
1949	Economics II	Pass
	Accounting II	Distinction
	Auditing	Credit
	Taxation Law and Practice	Distinction
1950	Philosophy I	Credit
	Organisation and Managerial Accounting	Credit
	Money and Banking	Pass
1951	Philosophy II	Credit
	Jurisprudence I	Distinction
	Statistics	Pass
1952	Political Science I	Credit
	Company Law	Pass
	Bankruptcy Law	Credit
1953	Accounting III	Distinction
	Elements of Mercantile Law	Distinction
	Final Mercantile Law	Distinction
	Law of Trustees	Distinction

Bankers' Institute of Australasia, Associate Certificate
All subjects passed or exemptions granted in view of passes in similar subjects for University.

Commonwealth Institute of Valuers, Provisional Associate Certificate
All subjects passed or exemptions granted.

APPENDIX V

THE VISION OF ARTHUR E. WILLS

On the night of 25th June 1939 I had just been tucked up for the night, the 5th of my illness. It was about 9.30 p.m. My temperature was normal, so was also my pulse. I was awake. I closed my eyes and immediately saw in front of me a very beautiful building. It was built of some white material. I did not see the full height of it, but it was a two-storied house. I find it hard to describe, as the architecture was different from anything I have seen. I was standing in front of it and someone was with me. I did not see who was with me, but know he was there. It did not seem strange that I did not see him. He said, "Mum is there!" I knew he was speaking of Winnie (for years before she died we called her Mum always, and still do when speaking of her to each other). While we were looking at it, the house became lit up with a beautiful light of various colours which seemed to pour out of a curious shaped window in front, which I can only describe as like water flowing over the edges of the window in cascades, but upwards instead of downwards. I said, "This is the light that never shone over land or sea", meaning that it was not an earthly light. Why I remarked this I don't know. I thought I was going to be taken into the house to see Winnie, but as soon as this thought formed in my mind the whole scene faded out. Then I heard my guide or companion say to me, "Have you seen her?" He then conducted me to a beautiful garden, and in a corner of that garden Winnie was standing. She was dressed in a dress of absolutely brilliant white, so brilliant that I could hardly look at it. I was not allowed to see her face clearly or to speak to her or she to me, but I was allowed to come within a few feet of her. It did not seem strange that we were not allowed to speak or that I couldn't see her face clearly. It was just lovely that we could be together again. The garden had a low wall round it that I noticed particularly. It was about 2 ft. high, made of some reddish-brown material - not bricks - all in one piece like cement or rock, and half way up on the inner side was a ledge about 6 in. wide. Flowers were growing along the ledge and along the top of the wall. There were flowers and shrubs in the garden and a nice lawn. When I had noticed all these things everything faded out. I was back in my own bed again, and I know I had not been to sleep. Someone came through my room and I turned onto my back - I had been lying on my right side. I lay there for some time thinking over what I had seen, then I turned onto my left side and closed my eyes again. Immediately I saw before me an area of country, about 10 acres I should say, and over this area were scattered a number of beautiful houses, built of some white material, standing in gardens with trees and shrubs and flowering creepers. I can't describe the the houses. The architecture was different from any I had ever seen. Curves came into the design wherever possible. I can only say they were beautiful. My guide took me close to one of them. We stood just outside the entrance, which was in a corner, with two doorways about 20 ft. high. The walls at the doors must have been about 2 ft. thick. I looked up and noticed that there were high arched fanlights above the doors. One of the fanlights was open at the top a few inches. The building itself was built outwards at the top, so that the top overhung the walls for some distance and there were festoons of flowering creepers along the top. I thought of the verse - "In